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Sébastien Faure
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1927

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the triumph of fascism in Italy and the Bolshevik victory in Ukraine have destroyed.

There exist in France, as indeed in many other places, numerous groups who have already applied and currently apply the concept of the *anarchist synthesis* (I shall not name any for fear of omitting some), groups in which anarcho-syndicalists, libertarian communists and anarchist individualists work together in harmony; and these groups are neither the least numerous nor the least active.

These few facts (and I could mention others) show that application of the *synthesis* is possible. I am not saying, nor do I think, that it can be done quickly or without difficulty. Like everything that is still new, it will come up against misunderstanding, resistance, even hostility. If we need to remain impassable, we shall so remain; if we need to resist criticism and malice, we shall resist. We know that it is the way to a healthy future and we are certain that sooner or later anarchists will find their way there. That is why we shall not allow ourselves to become discouraged.

What has been done in memorable circumstances in Italy, Spain and Ukraine, what is being done in many places in France, can and, under the pressure of events, will be done throughout the country.

The problem and the remedy

The problem is a big one; but it can, it must be only a temporary problem — the remedy is close at hand.

Anyone who has read the preceding lines carefully and without any preconceptions will guess it without any effort: the remedy lies in the idea of the *anarchist synthesis* gaining ground and being applied *as quickly and as well as possible*[2].

What is the anarchist movement suffering from?

From the fact that the three elements that make it up fight tooth and nail with each other.

If, by reason of their origin, their nature, their methods of propaganda, organization and action, these elements are fated to rise up against each other continually, then the remedy that I am proposing will be pointless; it will be inapplicable; it will be unworkable; we shall abstain from trying it and look elsewhere.

On the other hand, if the above opposition does not exist and, even more so, if the elements — anarcho-syndicalist, libertarian communist and anarchist individualist — are instead made to join forces and form a sort of anarchist synthesis,[3] an effort to achieve this synthesis must be made — and today, not tomorrow.

I have discovered nothing nor am I proposing anything new: Luigi Fabbri and several Russian comrades (Volin, Fleshin, Mollie Steimer) with whom I have had discussions over recent days, have told me that attempts of this nature have been made in Italy, by the *Unione Anarchica Italiana*, and in Ukraine, by the *Nabat*, and that both these attempts have had the finest results, which only

[2] The expression *Anarchist Synthesis* should be taken here in to mean a grouping, association, organisation and understanding of all the *human* elements who support the anarchist ideal.

[3] In talking of association and studying whether it is possible and desirable for all those elements to unite, I could only call this grouping of forces, this basis for organization, the *Anarchist Synthesis*. Quite something else is the synthesis of anarchist *theories*, an extremely important subject, which I intend to deal with when my state of health and circumstances permit me.

This is, we believe, the first English translation of Faure's article on the "anarchist synthesis", the response by a certain sector of anarchism to the theories set out in the "Draft Organization Platform for a General Union of Anarchists" published by the "Delo Truda" group in France in 1926. We are unsure as to the exact publiction details of this text (some sources say 1927, others 1928), but this has been translated using the text given in "Volonté Anarchiste", No. 12, 1980, Edition du Groupe Fresnes-Antony de la Fédération Anarchiste.

* * *

The three anarchist currents

In France, as in most other countries, three main anarchist currents can be distinguished, which can be named thus:

- Anarcho-Syndicalism;
- Libertarian Communism;
- Anarchist Individualism.

It was natural and inevitable that, having reached a certain stage of development, an idea as vast as anarchism should end up with this triple manifestation of its existence.

A *philosophical and social* movement, that is to say one of ideas and action, that seeks to do away with every authoritarian institution, would necessarily give rise to those distinctions that obligatorily determine the variety of situations, environments and temperaments, the diversity of sources on which the innumerable individual formations and the prodigious body of events draw nourishment.

Anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian communism and anarchist individualism, these three currents exist and nothing and no-one can

prevent them from doing so. Each of them represents a force, a force that it is neither possible nor desirable to destroy. To be convinced, it is enough to place oneself — as an anarchist pure and simple — at the very heart of the gigantic effort that must be made in order to demolish the principle of authority. One would then become aware of the indispensable contribution that each of these currents can make to the fight we carry on.

These three currents are distinct, but do not oppose each other.

I have, therefore, three questions to put:

- the first is from the anarcho-syndicalists to the libertarian communists and the anarchist individualists;
- the second is from the libertarian communists to the anarcho-syndicalists and the anarchist individualists;
- the third is from the anarchist individualists to the anarcho-syndicalists and the libertarian communists.

Here is the first:

"Considering anarchism as social movement and popular action, when the time comes that anarchism delivers the inevitable and decisive assault on the capitalist, authoritarian world that we call the Social Revolution, can it do this without the help of the great masses who are grouped together in the labour organizations?"

I believe that it would be folly to hope for victory without the participation in the liberatory uprising — active, efficient, brutal and persistent participation — of these working masses, who together have a greater interest than anyone else in social transformation.

I do not say nor do I think, in view of the necessary cooperation in the period of revolutionary ferment and action, that both the syndicalist forces and the anarchist forces should already unite, associate, mix together and form a homogenous, compact entity. But I do think and say, together with my old friend Malatesta:

sition they have each taken towards each other: a position of open, bloody, implacable warfare.

Each faction has employed equal malice during these harmful rifts. Each has stooped to distorting the theses of the other two, to reaching almost ridiculous levels in their statements and negations, and to bloat or mitigate their basic lines to the point of painting an odious caricature.

Each tendency has carried out the most perfidious manoeuvring against the others and has used the deadliest weapons against them.

Had these three tendencies, even in the absence of understanding between them, been a little less intent on waging war against each other, had the will to struggle both within the various groupings and without, been directed towards fighting the common enemy, even separately, the anarchist movement in this country would, given the right circumstances, have acquired considerable influence and surprising strength.

But the intestine war of one tendency against another and often of one individual against another, has completely poisoned, corrupted, ruined and rendered fruitless everything, including those campaigns should have seen the hearts and minds of the lovers of freedom and justice group around our beloved ideas, who are, above all in popular environments, much less rare that it is often claimed.

Each current has spit, drooled and vomited on its neighbouring currents in order to smear them and give the impression that it alone was right.

And, faced with the lamentable spectacle of these divisions and the odious goings-on that they have produced on all sides, our groupings — all of them alike — gradually lost much of their content and our forces exhausted themselves instead of joining together for the battle to be waged against the common enemy — the principle of authority. That is the truth.

This particular compound is created by the combination of three elements: anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian communism and anarchist individualism.

Its chemical formula could be $S_2C_2I_2$.

The proportions of the three elements can vary according to events, circumstances and the multiple sources that the currents that make up anarchism spring from. On analysis, experimentation reveals the proportions; on synthesis, the compound re-forms and and if one element is missing or lacking, its place may be taken by another. $S_3C_2I_1$; or even: $S_2C_3I_1$; or yet again: $S_1C_2I_3$; the formula reflects the variable proportions locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

Whatever the case, these three elements — anarcho-syndicalist, libertarian communist and anarchist individualist (S.C.I.) — are made to combine with each other and, by amalgamating, go to make up what I shall call "The Anarchist Synthesis".

How has the existence of thse three currents come to weaken the anarchist movement?

Having reached this point in my presentation, it must be asked how it is that, above all in recent years in France particularly, the existence of these three anarchist elements has not only failed to strengthen the libertarian movement, but has ended up weakening it.

And it is important that this question, put clearly, be studied and resolved in an equally clear way.

The answer is simple, but it requires great honesty from everyone, without exception.

I believe that it is not the existence itself of these three elements — anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian communism and anarchist individualism — that has caused the weakness or, more precisely, the relative weakness of anarchist thought and action, but only the po-

> "Anarchists should recognize the usefulness and importance of the syndical movement, they should encourage its development and make it one of the levers of their action, seeking to ensure cooperation between syndicalism and the other forces of progress for a social revolution that results in the supression of classes, total freedom, equality, peace and solidarity among all human beings. But it would be a dire illusion to believe, as many do, that the workers' movement by itself, by virtue of its very nature, will bring about such a revolution. Quite the opposite: in every movement based on material, immediate interests (and a vast workers' movement cannot be established on any other basis), the agitation, drive and concerted efforts of men of ideas who fight and sacrifice themselves for the ideal are essential. Without this leverage, all movements tend inevitably to adapt themselves to the circumstances, breed a conservative spirit, a fear of change among those who would seek to win better conditions; new privileged classes are often created which attampt to win support and consolidate the status quo that we are seeking to destroy.
>
> Hence the pressing need for specifically anarchist organizations which, both inside and outside the syndicates, struggle for the complete realization of anarchism and seek to sterilize any germ of corruption and reaction."

As you see, it is not so much a case of organically linking the anarchist movement to the syndicalist movement, as linking syndicalism to anarchism; it is only a question of working for the complete realization of the anarchist ideal both inside the syndicates and outside.

So I ask the libertarian communists and the individualist anarchists what reason of principle or of fact, what essential, fundamental reasons can they have for opposing anarcho-syndicalism thus conceived and practised?

Here is the second question:

"As the indomitable enemy of the exploitation by one man of another that is generated by the capitalist regime, and of the domination of one man over another that is spawned by the State, can anarchism conceive the effective and total suppression of the former without the suppression of the capitalist regime and the pooling (libertarian communism) of the means of production, transport and exchange? And can it conceive the effective and total abolition of the latter without the definitive abolition of the State and all the institutions that result from it?"

And I ask the anarcho-syndicalists and the anarchist individualists[1] *what reasons of principle or of fact, what essential, fundamental reasons can they have to oppose libertarian communism so conceived and practised?*

Here is the third and final question:

"As anarchism is, on the one hand, the highest and clearest expression of the individual's reaction against political, economic and mental oppression which is brought to bear on him through the authoritarian institutions and, on the other hand, the firmest and mostprecise affirmation of the right of every individual to complete fulfilment for the satisfaction of his needs in every domain, can anarchism conceive the effective and total realization of this rection and this affirmation by any means other than an individual culture pursued to the greatest possible extent towards a social transformation that breaks every cog of constraint and repression?"

[1] It being understood, as the libertarian communists themselves "explicitly" stated in Orléans, that within the Libertarian Commune, as they conceive it, "all forms of association will be free, starting from the whole colony *and including work and individual consumption*".

And I ask the anarcho-syndicalists and the libertarian communists for what fundmental reasons of principle or fact can they object to anarchist individualism so conceived and practical?

I call on these three currents to ***join with each other****.*

The Anarchist Synthesis

From everything that has thus far been said and in particular from the three questions above, it would appear:

1. that these three currents — anarcho-syndicalism, libertarian communism and anarchist individualism, distinct currents but not contradictory — have nothing that makes them irreconcilable, nothing that puts them in opposition to each other, nothing that proclaims their incompatibility, nothing that can prevent them from living in harmony, or even coming together for joint propaganda and action;

2. that the existence of these three currents not only does not harm in any way or to any degree the total force of anarchism — a philosophical and social movement envisaged, and rightly so, in all its breadth, but can and logically must contribute to the overall strength of anarchism;

3. that each of these currents has its own place, its role, its mission within that broad, deep social movement that goes by the name of "anarchism", whose goal is the establishment of a social environment that can assure the maximum well-being and freedom to each and every one;

4. that in these conditions, anarchism may be compared to what in chemistry is called a compound, that is to say a substance made up of a combination of various elements.