Interview with Anarchist from Muktiwadi Ekta Morcha

Salish Sea Black Autonomists

In the run up to the Indian general strike being called for the 7th, we interviewed an Anarchist from Muktiwadi Ekta Morcha (Libertarian Solidarity Front) in Bhopal, India.

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1. Can you give us a brief overview of your group? How did you all start, how long have you been around, what kind of stuff you do, that sort of thing.

Our group is based in Bhopal, India. It's called Muktiwadi Ekta Morcha (Libertarian Solidarity Front). We are 4 mementos. We work with contract, informal workers. But up to this point the interaction has been mostly talks and discussion, no on ground action.

We are in informal discussion with bus workers, garbage collectors in Bhopal.

But since last October the group has shift attention on climate change. We are now working as Extinction Rebellion (XR) in Bhopal and India. XR began in UK by the libertarian socialist group Rising Up. Now, we are mostly working on climate education and mobilization.

2. Can you give us a rundown of what Anarchism looks like in India? What is it like to organize as Anarchists there and what its relationships to other social movements looks like? In particular we know there is an ongoing Maoist insurgency and we are interested in what, if any, tensions exist with that.

The reaction you get in India for being an anarchist organizer depends significantly on who you are talking with. The "educated" classes – the urban middle class etc. having being swallowed the state propaganda quite thoroughly, to be able to survive in India, finds you crazy or dangerous. While the labouring section empathize with the essence of anarchist values and desires.

I should mention and this should be stressed that, there is no anarchist movement in India. There are scattered anarchists (of sorts) all over India. As far as I know, ours is the only organized small section.

Individuals from other movements come in our contact and, most of them who are not connected with the mainstream Marxist-leninist movements do synthesise towards some elements of anarchism. We would like to be able to establish better links with the feminist and the Dalit and tribal movements.

We have had no connections with Maoists. We on principle are against the Maoist ideas, the violence this movement is based on and the ugly turn the Naxalbari movement soon took. That being said, it is quite apparent that the state violence in the region is barbaric and criminal. And the drive for resource extraction and tribal displacement and ecological destruction is devastating. And the state uses the blanket of Maoism to discredit and suppress all genuine struggles in the region – the justification being provided by the actual Maoist violence. But now the blanket has broadened to cover all and any mild progressive social action.

3. One thing that we have been following recently is news of this general strike being organized for the 8th and 9th, it's being hyped up in the news as one of the biggest in Indian history, what is it looking like from the ground there? Are you all participating in it and if so what does Anarchist intervention in that look like?

Strikes in India are a political spectacle, without any radical meaning. It's being organized by the unions affiliated with political parties in the year of general election for electoral gains. That might have some value, but it must not be confused as a working class mobilization. Also it is worth bearing in mind that, most of these unions, more times than not, have suppressed all spontaneous labour demands and actions, and have played there part as an arm of management.

And as far as I am aware, in the 12 demands there's no demand to stop the Labour Code bills, the new legislations that will effectively make strikes in India illegal. That's what make this strike more ironic.

The grievances of the labouring class will not he addressed by this strike. This is the saddest part of this spectacle.

Given these facts and our inability to mobilize at this point we will not be participating in the strike.

4. In the neighboring country Bangladesh there is a growing anarchist movement, particularly around the Bangladesh Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, do you all have any contact with them or have any plans to work with them?

We know some comrades from B-ASF. We are in regular communication and their work, from the looks of it seems very impressive. But we haven't participated in a coordinated action.

The relationship of the Indian nation state with Bangladesh is quite complicated. Bangladesh was part of the British India colony and later a part of Pakistan – or it's colony. In the India, in the nationalist and patriarchal language Bangladesh is still referred to as "grandson." And Indian intelligence agencies have from time to time committed acts of terror in Bangladesh. And very soon, as the low lying plains of Bangladesh drowns, the migration – which will over shadow the European "crisis", will create militarism and jingoism. This has already begun.

This is worth keeping in mind, especially to Indian and Bangladeshi working class people and organizers.

5. What other struggles are ongoing that should be on the radar of Anarchists outside of India?

The Kashmir struggle should gain more attention in international anarchist movement. The situation in the valley has significantly deteriorated in last couple of years. Killing of civilians, tortures and militarization of all aspects of life defines Kashmir today.

Also, the dalit movement. The caste system in India has been the biggest hinderance to liberal and socialist ideas in India – as Rudolf Rocker also noted, more than capitalism or even imperialism. The dalit community's struggle against brahmanism is an essential libertarian struggle.

The biggest challenge that India faces and the whole world faces is the climate catastrophe. We only have one decade to stop the run-off climate change that can end, literally, all life on earth. India will soon face severe food and water shortage. That coupled with migration from drowning Bangladesh is projected to lead India into a state failure. And no one in India, is paying any attention to it. This should also be talked about more in anarchist movement and that should lead to more collective, coordinated actions.

6. How can Anarchist outside of India support you all and what you do?

Anarchists outside India can help in many ways but I will focus on two. First, by supporting Indian struggles, specially the ones I mentioned above; but also focusing on Indian human rights violations. Second, financial aid. We are mostly, students and unemployed or underemployed individuals; organizing, mobilising takes some resources that we at time fail to attain and have to give up even basic projects.

You can reach us from The Coming Anarchy website (thecominganarchy.wordpress.com) if you wish to assist us.

7. Anything else that you feel like adding or talking about that you think international Anarchists should know?

One thing, some of the anarchists might find interesting is the history of first Indian anarchist MPT Acharya. Who was friends with many Spanish, British and American anarchist during the 30s-50s. A collection of his writings will be coming out in spring this year from AK Press.

South Asian Anarchist Library

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