



WORKS

The early stages of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was a contrast in many ways to any Black freedom group to come before or after. Part of the SNCC activists were middle class college intellectuals, with a small number of working class grassroots activists, but they developed a working style that was very anti-authoritarian and was unique to the Civil rights movement. Instead of bringing in a national leader to lead local struggles, like Dr, Martin Luther King Jr. and his group, the Southern Christian Leadership Council, was wont to do, SNCC sent in field organizers to work with the local people and develop indigenous leadership and help organised, but not take over local struggles. They placed their faith in the ability of the people to determine an agenda which would best serve them and lead themselves to obtain their goals rather than being inspired or told what to do by a leader SNCC itself had no strong leaders, even though it had persons in decision-making authority, but they were accountable to membership boards and the community in a way no other group in the civil rights movement was.

SNCC and the Soviet Bloc

SNCC was also a secular organization, in contrast to SCLC, which was formed by Black preachers and had co-opted their style of organizing from the Black church, with a religious authority figure who gave orders to the troops. Today most political commentators or historians still do not want to give full credit to the effectiveness of SNCC, but many of the most powerful and successful struggles of the Civil rights movement were initiated and won by SNCC, including most of the voting rights struggles and the Mississippi phase of the freedom movement. I learned a lot about internal democracy by being a part of SNCC, how it could make or break an organization, and how it had so much to do with the morale of the members. Everyone was given an opportunity to participate in decision-making, and felt part of a great historical mission, which would change their lives forever. They were right. Even though SNCC gave some lifelong lessons to all of us involved, even if it was destroyed by the rich and their own, who resorted to an authoritarian style in later years.

I also began to have a rethinking process after I was forced to leave the U.S. and go to Cuba, Czechoslovakia and other countries in the "Socialist bloc," as it was called then. It was clear that these countries were essentially police states, even though they had brought many significant reforms and material advances to their peoples over what had existed before. I observed also that racism existed in those countries, along with the denial of basic democratic rights and poverty on a scale I would not have thought possible. I also saw a great deal of corruption by the Communist Party leaders and State administrators, who were well off, while the workers were mere wage slaves. I thought to myself, "there has to be a better way!" There is. It is Anarchism, which I started to read about when I was

