They don’t share the profits-

We won’t share the pain!
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Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Draft)

Português: www.nestormakhno.info/portuguese/platform2/org_plat.htm
Français: www.nestormakhno.info/french/platform/org_plat.htm
Arab: www.anarkismo.net/article/9237
Castellano/ Español: www.nestormakhno.info/spanish/platform/org_plat.htm
Deutsch: www.zabalaza.net/theory/txt_platform_de.htm
English: www.zabalaza.net/theory/txt_platform.htm

or download the pamphlet from:
www.zabalaza.net/pdfs/varpams/platform_2006_en.pdf

Southern African Anarchism Online

Links to local groups, educational material, email discussion lists, PDF leaflets for you to distribute etc. etc.

www.zabalaza.net

ZACF Contact Details

Post: Postnet Suite 47, Private Bag X1, Fordsburg, South Africa, 2033
Email: zacf@zabalaza.net Website: www.zabalaza.net Phone: 084 946-4240
When we published Zabalaza 9 in September 2008, in the wake of the xenophobic pogroms which swept across South Africa in May of that year, leaving over 60 people dead and hundreds of thousands displaced, we took a distinct regional focus in giving the issue the theme of opposing xenophobia and nationalism in South Africa. Since then the ZACF has been involved with the Coalition Against Xenophobia in organising a 24-hour picket outside the Lindela detention center in Roodepoort, and has worked to raise awareness against xenophobia and nationalism through distribution of our journal and by other means.

Since September last year, however, the global political and economic landscape has changed dramatically, and we have therefore deliberately broadened the focus of Zabalaza 10 to have a more international perspective.

Locally, former President Thabo Mbeki was unceremoniously removed from office by the ruling party, and replaced by President Kgalema Motlanthe; and the ANC formally split, spawning yet another bourgeois-nationalist party, the Congress of the People (Cope), intent on ruling - or is it ruining? - our lives.

Regionally, months of stop-start negotiations around a power-sharing deal in Zimbabwe finally led to the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai becoming Prime Minister in a government of national unity, prompting South African politicians to say that the crisis in Zimbabwe was now over - despite the ruin of the economy, complete lack of infrastructure and basic services and Mugabe’s continued control of the police and armed forces and the continued militarisation of society - so that Zimbabwean political and economic refugees living in South Africa “must now go home”.

In Swaziland, as the year drew to a close, the 2008 deadline for liberation from the Tinkhundla regime of King Msawati III, declared by the People’s United Democratic Movement (Pudemo), was missed with little sign of liberation.

In the Middle East, the Israeli Zionist regime attacked the Gaza Strip, killing hundreds of children and other civilians while at the same time failing to achieve their alleged objective of rooting out Hamas and destroying its supply-lines, leading to massive pro-Palestine mobilisations across the world.

Likewise there was war in Georgia and South Ossetia, and the continuation of the US’s war against the people of Iraq, as well as a shifting of forces and focus towards Afghanistan.

In the context of the US’s continued ‘war on terror’ Democrat Senator Barack Obama was elected the first-ever black US president on the ticket of much-needed ‘change’. Despite his failure to commit to pulling troops out of Iraq, or his support for the Israeli Zionist regime he has been lauded by so-called progressives and some leftists across the world as a God-send, here to save the world. His first acts were to bail out the banks and corporations, leaving the workers and poor to pay.

All of this happened in the context of the worst global economic downturn since the 1930s, with hundreds of banks and companies being declared bankrupt and hundreds of thousands of jobs lost. With bailouts by states and the nationalisation of banks and large corporations, the economic crisis has been called the end of the neo-liberal era - only going to show, probably to the distress of some on the left, that nationalisation does not equal socialism.

In this context the popular uprising in Greece, sparked by the police murder of a 15-year-old boy, with massive popular demonstrations and occupations, has shown the way forward for the popular classes to respond to the crisis of capitalism.

It would seem that the lead role of leftists in African politics in the south/central part of the continent has taken a beating. The paradox of Zanu-PF being one of the loudest ‘socialist’ parties in the region does not help much.

The existence and persistence of the International Socialist Organisation of Zimbabwe as a clear alternative voice to state socialism and the surviving civil society organisations in that country will not get much relief from the new ‘power-sharing’ arrangement.

Zambian civil society organisations sometimes seem to be Zimbabwe’s dialectical opposite. Larger unions and non-governmental organisations do their dealings in well-carpeted offices. There always seem to be a compromise that can be made, ‘constitutionalism’ as described by [Kwame] Krumah has held us in a vise grip for the best of 13 years.

What was left of the Angolan and Mozambican struggle, has been overwhelmed by the deep divide between rich and poor. Nowhere do the raw remains of our colonial past raise their head in an uglier manner than in the daily life-threatening circumstance of the people of the DRC. And if no other country can outrage us, surely the misery there should move us to action?

And what is the question? If the rhetoric of the left in this region is a monopoly of an elite, used by the same people to get into power and then used against the rallied mass of the population, the obviously we do not want to establish structures in any way similar to these mass political parties. What we do need to do in our structures is to continue to demand more and more accountability.

As we strengthen the accountability of our own structures, we build our capacity to demand the same from the men and women who call us their leaders. We moderate our strategies better when we are able to see each other as individuals. This is the beauty of the anarchist approach. No masks, we see each other as who we are.

After years of worrying that our socialist grouping was too small, I am now enlivened by the idea that the movement should move on basic structures of as few as 15 people. Because of the limitations of communication and transport in our region, we are better off developing ourselves this way. Where we operate together, where we are unable we continue to spread the socialist message of the fundamental equality and dignity of all human beings.

The struggle is OUR struggle. We need to take ownership.

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**Unite Against the Minority, then Unite Against the Majority (Zambia)**

by Malele D. Phiri

Lusaka, 2 March 2009

Phiri is a libertarian socialist comrade who I first met in Zambia in 1998 as a Socialist Caucus member when I gave a talk at the university there as a Workers’ Solidarity Federation delegate invited by our late comrade Wilstar Choongo, founder of the now-defunct Anarchist & Workers’ Solidarity Movement of Zambia. Here is a brief, yet telling letter from her to Zabalaza reflecting on the challenges facing serious socialist activists in her region.

- Michael Schmidt
The Lies of Democracy-for-the-Few

There are numerous outright lies concerning the state of democracy in South Africa that are slavishly repeated by our centrist-neoliberal mainstream press and all our conventional political parties - especially those that consider themselves part of a “National Democratic Revolution” tradition. The most obvious, so close-up that most people can’t see it, is the lie that some 400 MPs can in any way, shape or form actually represent the interests of almost 50-million people living within our borders. In the anarchist form of democracy, direct democracy, only you can represent your own interests (or only mutually-agreed groups can represent their own) - and have the responsibility to do so. In any case, the inexorable shifts from parliamentarism towards a president-dominated system advanced under Thabo Mbeki (and ironically, shorty to be taken advantage of by Jacob Zuma) has meant that Parliament is merely “a rubber stamp” for the will of the ANC executive. Those were the words of Independent Democrats leader Patricia de Lille. Even veteran ANC MP Prof Ben Turok, who was involved in the forming of the Freedom Charter in 1955 and who has been intimately involved in ANC policy-making at least since the Morogoro Conference in exile in 1969 (when he castigated his cadres for their drunkenness, authoritarianism and maladministration), admitted on a recent S4m radio interview with Tim Modise that Parliament was a powerless talk-shop: “We [MPs] just talk; the executive does.” This weakened parliamentary system has been further bastardised by the opportunism of floor-crossing (where MPs are able to continue to eat off the fat of the land while betraying their voters), by many MPs’ complicity in outright defrauding of the public (the Travelgate scandal), by the fact that parties with seats in Parliament get SABC election coverage - and taxpayer’s funding for their campaigns - depending on their current seats in the House, and by the maintenance of the paper-thin farce that MPs have “constituency offices” in which they work for the good of all people in their constituencies (whereas in fact MPs have no constituencies and these offices are party-political offices where they serve party interests exclusively). And on top of all this, it is blindly clear that our parliamentary parties, whether they are “communist,” “revolutionary socialist” “African nationalist,” faith-based, or outright neo-liberal, are all staunchly pro-capitalist, for how else would they feed off the labour of the majority like ticks on what would otherwise be a healthy dog?

ANC Minority Rule in South Africa

But by far the biggest lie is that South Africa has a majority-rule government. In September 2005, I examined this widely repeated lie in a newspaper column which is worth repeating in its entirety:

On a couple of occasions over the past two weeks, I’ve sat at night around a candle with a group of black “squatter camp” youth and listened to talk of the forthcoming local government elections. The less-than-weatherproof, concrete-floor ed shack we met in was far away from the Matrix-style world of groovy youth of the “Power of X” advert promoting voter registration on television. The government pays so much to persuade people to register for local and national elections because South Africa is experiencing a very real - but officially denied - crisis of confidence in paper politics. No I’m not talking about Armsgate, Travelgate and Oligate - or even about floor-crossing. Those national issues were far from the minds of the group of four young women and twelve young men squeezed into the gloomy shack. What concerned them was the lack of development in their settlement over the past decade.

Let me begin with what will prove the most controversial assertion: that the ANC is in power thanks to a minority of eligible voters – not the more than 2/3 majority it so brahly claims. In 2004, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) claimed a 76.7% turnout in the national elections. But our comrades of the Landless People’s Movement (LPM) – which had conducted a “No Land, No Vote” campaign - replied with a stinging critique that broke this figure down, noting that the IEC’s own figures claimed 20,7-million people entitled to vote, yet only 14,9-million actually did so. This showed, the LPM argued, that only 72% of registered voters actually voted – and that almost 28% of registered voters chose not to embrace the “Power of X.” Even ignoring a 2% per annum population growth, the latest census showed at least 27,4-million South Africans aged 18 and over were eligible. So with one in four eligible voters having failed to or having chosen not to register, and with almost one in three registered voters having failed to, or having chosen not to vote, in real terms, the ANC government garnered only 10-million votes - a shoddy 37,3% of eligible voters. Party spin-doctors performed damage-control rain dances, as did scores of policy wonks and media pundits, most of whom spewed hot air, laced with cognac fumes, into the “lazing-about” last of the country’s “depoliticised” youth. The more honest of them were only prepared to admit that South African voting patterns were settling downwards in the direction of the “normal” (read: abysmal) poll levels that mark most “mature democracies”. The rest simply pretended the crisis did not exist – and made it seem that the ANC had achieved its desired “two-thirds-majority” mandate.

But the youths I was listening to, unlike the gravity-defiant youth in the “Power of X”, have their poorly shod feet firmly planted in the mud. They are active and political - and they were debating whether there was a “power of X” as they subscribed to the gattuw of political allegiances, from anarchist-communist to ANC. But common cause among the youth clustered by candlelight was that the current ANC ward councillor was a useless, ne'er-do-well bastard who was there to serve the community or to receive its petitions for development. Also common cause was that the lack of development is dire: there are no proper houses, no electricity, sewerage, schools, in fact no facilities other than a muddy soccer field and a library built by the community with no activist assistance. Beyond that, there were two blocks of opinion among these earnest youth: one that favoured the election of their own councillor, under community control, taking orders directly from mass meetings of residents; and one that favoured surrendering the hard-won right to vote in favour of a militant acosite boycott. Last Friday, on the eve of voter registration, a democratic community mass meeting decided in favour of a boycott. This was despite the pleas of the faction that argued for electing a “controllable squatter camp councillor” – and despite the late arrival of the ANC councillor, flanked by police thugs, who ordered two youths arrested.
for “intimidation” (apparently they walked away from him while he was trying to speak to them). Come voter registration on Saturday the turnout was deliberately, defiantly, exceptionally low. Beyond the flicker of the wafer-thin world of television, thousands of residents of this shabby, but proud squatter camp, young and old, played their game of noughts and crosses. The game was won by participatory politics, by the “Power of O”.

And from what I’m told by an anarchist resident of that particular squatter-camp (Elias Motsoaledi, next to the Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto), on the eve of the 2009 General Election, nothing much has changed – either in their lack of access to development or in the arrogant attitude of their ANC councillor. This is a party that is a minority rule government dramatically upsets the argument that Cope’s challenge may cost it its prized 2/3 majority – because it never had one! But all parliamentary parties go along with this fiction because it supports their pork-barrel politics which is entirely dismissive of the wishes of the majority of South African residents.

This is the logical conclusion of the “democratic centralism” practiced by the ANC and all other mainstream parties: the disembowelling of the very meaning of democracy, but reserving it to ever tinier elite circles of the wealthy where we the people not only have no say, but are daily mocked over snifters of cognac for our gullibility in believing that the political aristocracy rules in our best interests.

**The Elephant in the Room:**

**The Unelected State**

As communists we need to ask ourselves the pressing question: what exactly is “democratic” about our society? If our Parliament for whom we are begged to vote by its thieving beneficiaries is toothless and ruled by a one-party executive – according to both De Lille and Turock – then where else in our society is true democracy to be found? Is our working life democratic? Can one really openly challenge the owner of a business to debate about their workers’ starvation wages? Look at the hierarchy of bosses, from foreman up to deputy-director, a group of lazy, shady operators telling those who really know how to do the job how best to do it! Is the trade union made up of those who don’t allow this squatter camp to be mentioned in the mainstream media where owners tell editors and editors tell journalists what to do? OK, so the corporate world is obviously not democratic, but is our civil society life democratic? Sure, we don’t have to register all social organs from chess clubs, to churches and mosques, from soccer clubs to stokvels and debating societies with the police as in many other African countries, but how are these civil organs structured? Do they not replicate the oppressive hierarchy of the capitalist system with a minority of committee members determining the policy, direction and health of the majority of the membership? Again we see the dead hand of “democratic centralism,” and again, we must answer “No, this is not democracy!” And what about the state itself, that elephant in the room, the one question most people avoid addressing? There is this naive socialist assumption that the state is everyone’s “progressive” elite, especially one that calls itself socialist, and revolutionary, is transformed by that “socialist” ruling party into a democratic organ that functions for the good of the people in the manner of the ANC. On the one hand, the state is a capitalist employer of tens of thousands of public servants who are poorly paid and shabbily treated; and on the other hand, the state is the armed wing, the repressive force, of the bosses who run the national corporation nick-named “South Africa Incorporated,” an artificial entity like all states, based in this case on colonial borders, that is the capitalist business of the political elite. But the state is more than that: it is an unelected bureaucracy that, as an organisation that outlasts all political parties, has its own interests that are sometimes different from those of its political bosses (in this case the ANC), but always radically different from the interests of the people. Also, Aubrey Matshiqi of the Centre for Policy Studies warned us that “the conception of the state, the confluence of political, criminal, intelligence and business interests”.

This is the truth that communists who have succumbed to Stalinism and other forms of state socialism fail to recognise: that even under “communist” regimes as in the USSR, China and elsewhere, the state becomes the capitalist landlord and acts harshly towards its “tenants,” the hungry work-force that keeps its parasitic power alive. And if we look within specific entities of the state, is the SANDF internally democratic? Hardly! Is the National Intelligence Agency a democracy? Obviously not! Are our health services, the police, our schools, our refuse-removal systems or anything else that the state does with the money they steal from every loaf of bread bought by a poor woman feeding her family, in any way democratic? If the entire state is not a democracy, and our civil society, fails to operate along democratic lines, and the parliamentary system is not only unrepresentative but powerless, then where does democracy reside in South Africa? The answer is: only in our hearts and in the way in which we treat each other with respect. The anarchist model of direct democracy is the total opposite of these vertical systems: firstly, the entire membership of an organisation is its policy-making body (ie: there is no “central committee” that takes decisions over the members’ heads); secondly, those who take decisions are those who carry them out (ie: there is no class/ labour division in the organisation where a lazy overseer group gives orders to those who do the actual work); thirdly, members given tasks by the membership are narrowly mandated (ie: they cannot take broader decisions that affect the majority without being authorised to do so) and immediately recallable if they fail in their duties (ie: they lose their positions immediately if they betray the majority); lastly, our organisations are federated horizontally with sister organisations who work alongside each other in mutual respect in our struggles (ie: there is no pecking-order of organisations in partnership as with the ANC telling the much larger Cosatu what to do).

**The Truncheon**

There is the old US imperialism that we are accustomed to, and which, as outlined in *Zabalaza #8* is expanding into Africa. But what about South Africa’s role as an alleged upholder of democracy on our troubled continent? Surely, as the continent’s supposed leading light regarding the advancement of at the very least the adult franchise across Africa, we are in good standing? Well, I don’t believe so. For instance, Midrand between Joburg and Pretoria is the host to that farce called the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), which must surely be seen by all true democratic revolutionaries as a poor-woman’s meal of *pap* without meal! How is it possible to have a continental “parliament” when many of the countries represented there are oligarchies, personal multi-decade dictatorships and military juntas? This is monstrous lie that we must not suffer to live another second! The lie’s most noxious recent offspring is this false settlement achieved in Zimbabwe (see page 14) – only after South Africa tolerated murder, rape, expulsion, torture, arson, starvation and the playing of the public purr on an astronomical scale for the better part of a decade. In short, the MDC and Zanu-PF, having ignored the cries of dying Zimbabwean civil society, finally shook hands over the corpses. We, the ZACF, find *nothing* to celebrate here: instead we grieve for the destruction of a people by the cynical parasitic elites on both sides of the border. Then we look at South Africa’s reputation abroad for business skulduggery: whether it is Shoprite apparently dumping its rotten produce on the shelves of its Mozambican stores, or Tokyo Sexwale/ Sun International’s failed bid to bulldoze a woman’s modest hotel on Ilha do Luanda...
in cahoots with a friend in the Angolan Cabinet to erect a multi-storey monolith, our reputation out there sucks. And let’s not forget the drunken, rapine behaviour of our troops abroad. We currently have more than two battalions of our soldiers out of SA on “peace-keeping” missions: one in the DRC as part of the UN contingent, one in Burundi as part of the African Union force, sizeable contingents in Darfur (AU again) and on the Eritrea/Ethiopia border, as well as military advisors and observers from Namibia to West Africa. Sadly, despite honourable members in their ranks, their reputation has been sullied by our troops raping under-aged girls, and a wide variety of ill-disciplined behaviour such as theft, corruption and public drunkenness. So despite our best intentions, we come across looking like the region’s rapist and scavenger, and worse, its corrupt, swaggering policeman wielding the truncheon against the poor in favour of parasitic US, EU and SA interests.

The Baited Hook

So what was the baited hook that induced the leaders of our “National Democratic Revolution” to so fall from the manufactured heights of grace of the Mandela myth to the sleazy swamp in which they now wallow? There is a foolish argument on the left, that replicates the delusional Trotskyist argument around the succession in Russia, that Lenin was cool and right-on, but he was supplanted by treachery by Stalin who was an outright bastard — and only Trotsky stood up to him as a critic of the decay of “real, existing socialism”. The SA left argument goes similarly. Mandela was cool and right-on, but he was supplanted by Mbeki who was an outright bastard — and only Zuma stood up to him as a critic of the decay of “real, existing democracy”. Unfortunately for these partisans of wishful thinking, it was Lenin, not Stalin, who reintroduced capitalism via the New Economic Policy, Lenin who had established the Cheka and had crushed the revolutionaries at Kronstadt — and it was Trotsky who ordered Kronstadt and the Ukrainian Revolution destroyed. Likewise, sadly for the SACP and Cosatu who somehow conjure up a “socialist” in their balyoyo-like [witchdoctor-like] probing of the lower intestines of Jacob Zuma, it was Mandela who scrapped the quasi-socialist Reconstruction and Development Programme and substituted it for the outright neoliberal Gear, Mandela who in 1997 granted neo-fascist, mass-murdering dictator Mohamed Suharto the Star of Good Hope for his $60-million donation to the ANC — and it is Zuma who has sworn to business backers abroad that it will be business as usual during his reign. In other words, the corruption and anti-working-class violence of the current government stems directly from Mandela, that smarmy glad-hander of parasitic interests, and there is a direct line of virulent, albeit disguised, anti-worker self-interest that runs from Mandela through Mbeki to Zuma. I have argued in a piece shortly to be published in the Chilean journal *Hombre y Sociedad* entitled *PW & Pinochet: The Dictatorial Roots of Democracy in South Africa and Chile*, that the Mandela regime (and those who got fat off it including Mbeki and Zuma) was the logical culmination and realisation of the strategy of the old PW Botha regime: that so long as real, structural apartheid kept the poor apart from the precious classes, the Nats had achieved in Mandela and the ANC what they were incapable of achieving themselves because of the lack of a popular mandate. But in more specific terms, what is it that induced the alleged corruption of Zuma over whose head a corruption and racketeering trial still appears to hang? It is sufficient, to my mind, to note that during the trial of Zuma’s erstwhile financial advisor Schabir Shaik in October 2004, it was revealed that while he was still KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Finance, Zuma had accompanied Shaik to Indonesia where he bluntly lied to Indonesian Cabinet ministers that Shaiks’ Nkobi Holdings was a major SA defence contractor. Not only was this when Nkobi pretty much existed only on paper, but four years before French arms dealers dangled the bait of an alleged half-million/year bribe in front of Zuma. Of course the National Prosecuting Authority screwed up by not trying Zuma alongside Shaik, but it appears clear that Zuma’s *mens rea*, his “evil intent,” to engage in corrupt dealings well before he could even be induced by actual cash was proven long ago. He has lurked in the shallow waters of our body politic for years like a fat trout with his greedy mouth open... well before any baited hook was dangled in front of him by the French.

The “National Democratic Revolution”

So how exactly did “Jay-Zee” (note the Americanised hip-hop pronunciation) rise to the top? Well, this is laid out in better, if mind-numbing detail, by various books on the topic (such as Jeremy Gordin’s *Zuma*), all hoping to cash in on our sickly fascination with the creature of the moment. But one has to look deeper, to find the origins of such a golem, deeper to the very roots of the ANC’s bogsus “National Democratic Revolution”. The roots of the rot lie in the very concept of this “Revolution,” and how transformative is it truly for the poorest of the poor? The NDR has its roots in the opportunistic 1928 saddling-up of the black nationalist petit-bourgeoisie by the then-tiny and pretty much all-white Communist Party with the “Native Republic” doctrine, a fatal idea that has firstly allowed an anti-working class ideology to corrupt liberation politics, and which secondly has raised up the inheritors of this betrayal to fat-cat positions of power over the poor. There is a general fallacy that the anarchist movement, because of its implacable opposition to the reactionary nature of statist nationalism, had nothing to say over its 150 year history about national liberation struggles against colonialism and imperialism. This is fundamentally untrue.

In fact, as will be demonstrated in great detail shortly in the book *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1880-1940: class politics, imperialism and the national question in three continents*. Co-edited by ZACF associate Dr Lucien van der Walt, this groundbreaking book examines critically how anarchists engaged with the national question in the Andes, Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Far East. What the book’s collection of new academic studies makes clear is that the very reason that anarchism...
gained significant ground among mass working-class organisations in the pre-1917 period (and classical Marxism was relegated to tiny ineffective grouplets) was that it actually did engage with the national aspirations of oppressed and colonised peoples. This engagement took three main forms, but each sharing as Van der Walt put it, “a fundamental opposition to empire in favour of some form of secession”: a minority of anarchists were entirely opposed to working alongside nationalists who they argued intended to be just as capitalist and oppressive as the empire they wanted to break with (so in effect they abstained from the nationalist struggle to concentrate on working-class organisation); and yet others believed that national liberation struggles would inexorably be forced by circumstance to become revolutionary (so in effect, they merged with the nationalist forces and pushed for a revolutionary line within them); but the majority of anarchists welded the class struggle to the struggle against empire, insisting that class aspirations dominate the liberation process by forming class-based fronts rather than multi-class fronts (in effect pushing for social revolution as the content of the national liberation vehicle). By stark comparison, the Marxists, driven by their mechanical view of progress towards socialism that in effect limited its possibility to the developed North Atlantic countries (in effect the colonial powers themselves), saw no possibility of a socialist revolution arising in the colonised and post-colonial worlds against those colonial powers. This disdainful North Atlantic attitude in classical Marxism lies at the base of why anarchism and syndicalism rooted themselves deeply across much of Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Far East in the 1860s-1920s, with their militants dominating the organised working classes in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Mexico, Ukraine and Uruguay, establishing powerful minority movements in Bulgaria, China, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Korea, India, Peru, Poland, Puerto Rico, South Africa, and other countries, and founding important pre-Communist Party revolutionary socialist networks in colonised countries like Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Malaysia, Macedonia, Morocco, Mozambique, the Philippines and Vietnam. Lenin and the Bolsheviks finally took the national question seriously and broke Marxism out of its North Atlantic ghetto, but “solved” it in the crudest fashion possible: by lumping together genuine working-class communist aspirations with bourgeois-nationalist plotting, and by short-circuiting the hard work of building mass revolutionary organisations of the class in favour of militarist coups d’état, with the result that merely adding a red star to one’s flag and an appeal for financial aid was sufficient for the Soviet Union to consider a post-putsch country to be “socialist”, an instant “people’s republic”. In addition, most versions of Marxist-Leninism have always been hostile to worker’s control of industry and the socialisation of life in general, preferring state-capitalist nationalisation and centralisation under iron-fisted totalitarian control.

The JZ Cargo Cult
According to the late SACP leader Joe Slovo in his 1988 piece The South African Working Class and the National Democratic Revolution, “A tendency, loosely described as ‘workerism’, denies that the main content of the immediate conflict is national liberation which it regards as a diversion from the class struggle. Even if it admits the relevance of national domination in the exploitative processes, ‘workerism’ insists of a perspective of an immediate struggle for socialism. A transitional stage of struggle, involving inter-class alliances, is alleged to lead to an abandonment of socialist perspectives and to a surrender of working-class leadership. The economic struggles between workers and bosses at the point of production (which inevitably spill over into the broader political arena) is claimed to be the ‘class struggle’. This is sometimes coupled with a view that the trade union movement is the main political representative of the working class.” What Slovo describes as “workerism” is a caricature of what we anarchist-communists would call revolutionary syndicalism. Syndicalism is anarchism’s industrial strategy – horizontal, directly-democratic revolutionary unions organised by industry, not craft – and it entirely dominated the organised working classes in Spain, Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Portugal, the United States, the Netherlands, and briefly Russia, at different periods in the decades from the rise of anarchism in the First International in the 1860s until the First World War in 1914. But unlike those revolutionary syndicalists and especially of explicitly anarchist unionists (the anarcho-syndicalists) who feel that radical trade unionism is sufficient for the overthrow of capital and the state (and in line with Marxist-Leninists), we recognise that a specific political organ of the working class is also necessary to push forward the struggle within class-based mass organs of the national liberation struggle such as trade unions. Unlike the SACP’s pretensions, however, the ZACF recognises that it is not the only communist organisation in the country and willingly works alongside any communist who takes a working class line, rather than a cross-class line like the SACP.

Slovo, the SACP’s prime apologist for the Party’s shift in the early 1990s from proletarian Marxist-Leninism towards watered-down parliamentary social democracy, continued: “A more sophisticated version of the left-workerist position has recently surfaced among union-linked academics. This version conceals the need for inter-class alliances but puts forward a view of working class political organisation more appropriate to a trade union than a revolutionary political vanguard.” This approximates in some respects De Leonism, a version of syndicalism that tries to fight on both the union and parliamentary fronts. While recognising De Leonism’s historical origins in the anarchist movement, the ZACF avoids this flawed line of march. Instead, the ZACF conceives the need for a revolutionary political vanguard that combined, in its truly communist sense of anarchist and other communist militants being at the forefront of struggle, not directing it from the rear as with Lenin, Trotsky, Mao & Co. Warnings about the inherent flaw in the cross-class nature of the NDR were spelled out so by Peter Hudson in the journal Transformation in 1986: “That the oppressed nation needs to reappropriate from the oppressing nation its economic resources if it is to attain a proper independence does not guarantee the anti-capitalist character of such a reappropriation. The resources in question
could conceivably be transferred into the control of a class of black capitalists and state functionaries. This is precisely what seems to have been envisaged by Nelson Mandela in 1956.” I’ve already summarily dispensed with the money-grubbing Mandela and his tacit endorsement of mass murder. But what Hudson could not see – and his fears are echoed in the left’s whining about the supposed implosion of ANC Alliance politics, the rise of pork-barrel patronage and the opportunism of the supposedly selfless cadres of the NDR – is that the very reason for the rise of the JZ Cargo Cult lies at the heart of the NDR. “Cargo cults” arose in many underdeveloped parts of the world upon first contact with Western imperialist wealth, but the term gained currency in the Pacific Ocean during World War II when the Allies tried to buy the loyalty of Polynesian and other peoples with material goods dropped from the sky by planes in cargo crates – and the gullible among them took this as a sign of favour and of perpetual replenishment by the gods. A similar fever has taken hold in South African “liberation movement” politics, not least among the ANC Youth League, in which effusive praise for the new sky-god Zuma is expected to benefit destroying itself rather than surrender. waBenzi [the Mercedes Benz-driving planes in cargo crates – and the gullible of Polynesian and other peoples with from a shower of gifts from above. So via cronyism, nepotism and outright looting, all of the heartfelt desires of the aspirant waBenzi [the Mercedes Benz-driving elite] are realised.

The Roots of the ANC-Cope Split
In his reappraisal of the fascist phenomenon of the 1920s-1940s, The Anatomy of Fascism, Robert O. Paxton writes that in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the two cases where fascist parties, based in part on mass right-populist movements (and back-room deals with the conservative elites), came to power and ruled in their own name (rather than as junior partners in a coalition as in Francoist Spain), the new rulers were faced with a conundrum regarding how to adapt the radicalism of their early mobilisation to the more prosaic realities of rule. Paxton argues convincingly that two paths were open to them. Either as in Italy, the regime stabilised itself by RETREATING from its early radicalism (although maintaining the rhetoric of the Fascist Revolution), becoming in essence a conventional conservative-authoritarian regime. In Germany, the path chosen was that of ever-increasing radicalism, notable in the progressive escalation of measures against the Jews, culminating in the execution of the “Final Solution,” a path that took the regime ever closer to the edge of the precipice, finally destroying itself rather than surrender. Now the ANC is very far from fascist, but what intrigues us is the similarity not between their politics and those of the defunct fascist ruling parties, but between the processes in play. The ANC came to power based in part on mass mobilisation (and back-room deals with the conservative NP elite) and now rules in its own name. But as even the ANC leadership has often publicly conceded, the party has experienced difficulty in translating its culture of early radicalism into conventional politics, of channelling the energy of the mass mobilisations of the 1980s into the narrow slot of the ballot box, of moving from operating as a “liberation movement” to working as the judiciary when in fact the target was predictably those within the ANC’s own ranks who stood for the choice of retreating from early radicalism (except in rhetoric), settling the ANC into power as a conventional centrist neoliberal party. This explains why the SAPC and Cosatu leadership backed the Zuma camp. Only a fool would presume that Zuma was in any way more worker-friendly or “socialist” than Mbeki, but that was not the point for the Communist and Cosatu leadership. The point was that strategically, they believed that the best way to rein in the aspirations of the working class, peasantry and poor was to try and radicalise their “Revolution” by emotional and often racist appeals to the dismembered aspirations of their masses. Not that they intend satisfying those aspirations as this is impossible under capitalism, but they intend keeping the people mobilised in their favour by continually raising the spectre of enemies within (the Mbeki faction and quasi-syndicalist tendencies in Cosatu) and without (other political organisations, the media and the “counter-revolutionary” judiciary). It is a strategy for adhering the masses to the elite despite the elite’s clear intentions not to deliver on promises, a bourgeois strategy successfully applied in, for example, China under Mao Zedong’s populist “Cultural Revolution”. Now we don’t expect Zuma’s experiment to go as far as Mao’s but the genie of populism, once released from its bottle, is hard to put back in. And when that period starts to wane, and Zuma’s chauvinism, it moves inexorably in the direction of right-wing populism, shifting the ANC as a whole towards the cultural and economic right. One last point: while the ANC under Zuma is a neoliberal party that disguises this fact thanks to the pink tint given to its policies by the SAPC and Cosatu leadership, Cope is little better, and in fact appears to be distinguishing itself as an unabashed neoliberal party, thus a false choice between the two is presented to poor and working class voters. We may use the anti-Cope taunt “Nope! Our Dreams Can’t Fit in Your Ballot Box”, but the ANC, because of its flirtation with populist mobilisation and false radicalisation, because of its self-congratulatory myth-making capacity vested in the state broadcaster, because of its position in charge of the firearms of the security forces, and because of its vast ill-gotten wealth, stripped from the poor, still represents the greatest threat to direct democracy and true liberation in South Africa.

Against the NDR: Towards a Fresh Revolution
So what do we believe in? And how is our revolutionary fervour different to
the kits-konstabel ["instant constable," a state-sponsored, ill-trained Zululand policeman of the late 1980s / early 1990s] radicalism of the Zuma camp? After all, in the major revolutions that have decayed into totalitarianism – Mexico, Russia, Ukraine, Spain and Cuba – the power moves by the anarchists and syndicalists to push the revolution forward in the direction of free communism. As the Russian Revolution slid into state-capitalist dictatorship under the Bolsheviks, for instance, by 1921, the Kronstadt Soviet was dominated as it had been since 1917 by anarchists, Left Social Revolutionaries and Minimalist Social Revolutionaries, with as many as 776 Bolsheviks defecting to these groupings that year. In February 1921, these groupings reacted strongly to a bloody Chekist crack-down on a general strike by workers in nearby Petrograd with the Petropavlovsk Resolution, taken at a mass meeting on board the battleship Petropavlovsk. The Resolution called for “new elections to the Soviets,” “secret ballot,” and “preceded by free electoral propaganda” and coupled to “Freedom of speech and of the press for workers and peasants, for the anarchists, and for the Left Socialist parties” (ie: for all progressive forces, but not for the right wing) and the “right of assembly, and freedom for trade union and peasant organisations”. But these direct-democratic demands threatened Bolshevik power and the Kronstadt Soviet was drowned in blood, forced to call for a “third revolution” against Bolshevik power, necessary in Kronstadt’s eyes to complete the liberation struggle which had defeated first the Tsarist regime and then the bourgeois-democratic Kerensky regime. The immediate socialisation of the economy and destruction of state-capitalist (Boshevik) power was necessary in order to complete the revolutionary process. Likewise, as the Spanish Revolution decayed under Spanish Communist Party (PCE) influence – aided and abetted by those “anarchist” leaders who had betrayed the working class and anarchist principles by entering into government – the Friends of Durruti, a grouping of revolutionary militarism and militiawomen named after the famed guerrilla fighter Buenaventura Durruti, issued a call, Towards a Fresh Revolution, to complete the revolutionary process. It advocated a break with the Popular Front government, the military defence of the remaining collectives against the PCE and other reactionary forces, and argued that “there are active moves by the anarchist-syndicalist National Confederation of Labour (CNT) entry into the government showed the lack of a serious plan to extend and defend the revolution. The Friends of Durruti advocated the formation of a “Revolutionary Junta” or “National Defence Council” that would undertake the management of the war against fascism, the supervision of revolutionary order, international relations and revolutionary propaganda. This Council (junta means council in Spanish) was to be based on the unions and militia, and would include the United Marxist Workers’ Party (POUM), an anti-Stalinist communist party, as well as those anarchist organisations still dedicated to the Social Revolution. The Friends of Durruti advocated the seizure of all arms and financial reserves, increased socialisation of the economy and food distribution, thus completing the process of collectivisation, the equalisation of all pay and the restructuring of the armed forces, armed defence against attacks on the enemies of the people, working class solidarity, including a policy of unity with the socialist General Union of Workers (UGT), and non-collaboration with foreign and local capitalist forces. In Towards a Fresh Revolution, the Friends of Durruti’s demands constitute a key document of the anarchist-communist tradition to which the ZACF belongs and which runs from Mikhail Bakunin and his Alliance for Socialist Democracy in which anarchists acted as “invisible pilots in the centre of the popular storm,” through Nestor Makhno and his Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine in the 1920s in which anarchists acted as a “leading echelon” of militants within the working class, through Georges Fontès and his Libertarian Communist Federation in France in the 1950s which anarchist-communists constituted as a “vanishing vanguard” that gradually disappeared as anarchist-communism advanced, and through the Anarchist Communist Federation (ACF) of the 1990s in Britain in which the anarchists are the “driving force” of the revolutionary process – albeit only as an integral part of the working class. As the ACF put it, they and we are opposed to “the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia which seek to dragoon the workers into a new form of oppression: the worker’s state”. So this is the anarchist-communist conception of revolution: socialism from below, created by horizontally federated, directly-democratic working class organs, leaving the parasitic classes totally out in the cold. Our revolution is an international socialist revolution by a front of the oppressed classes (of which the anarchist-communists are an integral part), crossing all false colonial borders, and as such it is against a narrow, nationalist pseudo-revolution that subordinates the interests of the poor to those of the rich who live off them.

Conclusion: For Revolutionary, Grassroots Communism

But are we, the ZACF, who admit openly that we are a tiny force on the extra-parliamentary left, calling for a fresh revolution against the ANC? We don’t believe either that conditions for a true social revolution are imminent, nor do we believe in the correctness of the strategy of those factions of the communist left who want to adopt a quasi-De Leonist approach of combining valuable street power with useless ballot-box “action,” a strategy we are convinced supplants the former with the latter and herds true working-class strength into the slaughter-house of bourgeois politics. Yes, we recognise that South Africa’s revolutionary potential is great thanks to us living in one of the world’s most unequal societies, but as Lenin accurately said, “Without revolutionary theory, there can be no real revolutionary movement.” The role of true communists in South Africa on the eve of the 2009 General Election – whether they find themselves in the rank-and-file of the SAPC (and we are aware of many good comrades there), or of extra-parliamentary communist outfits such as our own is to educate the people about the false promises offered up by the parasites and wanna-be parasites, whether of the ANC, Cope, DA, IFP, ID, UDM, ID or any other pretender to the throne of ruling our hard-working but bitterly poor productive classes. The revolutionary, grassroots communist line of march is this: to eschew all forms of bourgeois compromise and to move in the direction of a true future social revolution, driven by one-watched of the earth, that goes beyond the fake “National Democratic Revolution” by destroying the power of the capitalist state and socialising and redistributing in equal, directly-democratic fashion all the stolen wealth of this country.
This pamphlet is the result of more than a decade’s militant support by southern African anarchists for the Swazi liberation struggle. The southern African anarchist movement arose in the late 1980s as a rejection of the militarized race-supremacist apartheid state in South Africa, a state that undermined democracy and propped up autocracy in the region, including the Kingdom of Swaziland where multiparty democracy had been outlawed by royal decree in 1973. Initially the movement’s focus was narrowly on anti-conscription, anti-racism and anti-fascism within South Africa, but as it established an organised presence in the early 1990s, it firstly recovered the syndicalist tradition that had founded the first black, coloured and Indian trade unions in South Africa in the late 1910s, and secondly established a broader set of principles around, among others, national liberation struggles that took a distinctly anarchist working-class line. The movement matured and became first a national, then a regional presence in the late 1990s/early 2000s, with organised anarchists emerging in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Swaziland. This collection of writings represents the collective effort of two organisations, the Workers’ Solidarity Federation of 1995-1999 with its journal Workers’ Solidarity, and its successor, the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Federation founded in 2003 (restructured as the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front in 2007) and its journal Zabalaza: a Journal of Southern African Revolutionary Anarchism. For the impoverished majority of the Swazi people, there is a bitter taste to the sugarcane, that crop that is so emblematic of their hard labour. With this collection, we appeal directly to those who support the parasitical King Mswati III by the back-breaking work of cutting the sugarcane with which he sweetens his tea. The oppressed and exploited of Swaziland need rather to be cutting the walking-cane which props up the parasitical Tinkhundla monarchy – in order to move rapidly towards true and full democracy. As readers will readily see, our analyses shifted from a rather simplistic syndicalist hailing of the wave of general strikes by the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) of 1994 (this first precipitated by South Africa’s first democratic election), 1995, 1996 and 1997 to a more nuanced understanding of the non-party Tinkhundla electoral chieftaincy system and of the struggle against it. But Workers’ Solidarity’s 1998 prediction that within a few years, Swaziland would be multi-party democracy with a constitutional monarchy (perhaps not dissimilar to Lesotho) was proved wrong: on the one hand, the Swazi monarchy dug in its heels while offering false “consultative” conferences and foot-dragging constitutional review commissions to the disaffected Swazi people, and on the other hand, other than from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), sadly, little real support was forthcoming from South Africa’s new African National Congress (ANC) government. The king played for time... and the workers, their backs bent like sicks, carried on cutting his sugarcane.

By 2005, the ZACF had members in Swaziland itself, working within the Swaziland Youth Congress (Swayoco), youth wing of the outlawed People’s United Democratic Movement (Pudemo). The improvement in the quality of our analysis, based for the first time on grassroots Swazi militant knowledge, becomes immediately apparent with a far more detailed understanding of the inner workings of the Pudemo, Swayoco and trade union movements – as well as improved insight into the manoeuvres of the parasitic Swazi elite. We end the collection with our most controversial contribution to the Swazi pro-democracy debate: two of my articles published in the Saturday Star covering the emergence of the clandestine Swaziland Liberation force, an officially-denied but strongly-hinted-at armed wing of Pudemo, driven it seems by a panic that it’s “rush-hour” strategy for liberation by 2008 was behind schedule (and in fact, as we now all know, it has failed) - and the ZACF’s response to that. These newspaper articles, it must be admitted, led to bitter recriminations against myself personally by the Swaziland Solidarity Network (SSN) - Pudemo/Swayoco and supporters - in exile in South Africa, with whom I had worked for over a decade, and from exiles and supporters as far afield as Canada. In my defence, I can only say that as a journalist I conducted a proper in-depth investigation into a vital regional issue, and that as an anarchist-communist militant, in line with my organisation, I take a strong stance against premature militarist adventures which we believe will only alienate the liberation movements from the bulk of the Swazi people, and expose Swazi militants to unnecessary risk. This argument aside, we hope that relations will be repaired with the SSN, and we remain staunch supporters of the Swazi struggle and of our tactic of Swazi anarchists working within the rank-and-file of the SFTU, Pudemo, Swayoco and any emergent mass social movements to push the struggle for democracy forward in a free communist direction. Our longstanding support for the Swazi liberation struggle has clearly shifted from early, crude sloganeering towards a much clearer understanding of the battlefield. But there are still some glaring gaps in our analysis of the situation in Swaziland. We require a proper balance-of-forces analysis to understand the political paralysis that still grips Swaziland. We require a sociological study of the reasons why patronage by the chieftaincies manages to continue to tie many Swazis to the undemocratic system. We require a comprehensive analysis of the economic foundations of the Swazi state and the supportive role of South African and British capital. We require an analysis of the nature of the state’s armed forces, especially the King’s traditional regiments and how these secure loyalty to the throne through status and employment. And we need to develop a deeper understanding of the SFTU’s, Pudemo’s and Swayoco’s many-layered – and sometimes contradictory – approach to the democracy question. These are weaknesses we will readily admit, but we remain committed to trying to cut the Gordian knot of Swazi politics which has held the people in thrall for so long, a knot that in today’s global recession looks more and more like a hangman’s noose. We offer our insights humbly to our Swazi friends and comrades, both at home and in exile, as starting-points of debate which we hope will help advance your struggle for full social, political and economic equality and freedom.

Download the PDF pamphlet from: http://www.zabalaza.net/pdfs/sapams/zacf_bitter_sugarcane.pdf
Mutual Aid is an important and relevant anarchist concept. It shows how aspects of a better world already exist everywhere, including in Southern Africa, and how we can achieve this world, building on and extending existing cultural practices.

Kropotkin’s Research is Still Relevant

The Russian Piotr Kropotkin was not only a key anarchist militant and thinker but also a well-known geographer and scientist. His most famous book “Mutual Aid”, a concept to be discussed in this article, was a strong critique of Social Darwinism [1], and generalisations about human nature [2]. Starting in the 19th century there has been an ongoing debate about human nature around the question as to whether humans are either essentially good or bad. So-called idealists have held that humans are actually good and that civilisation is the cause of war. Realists on the other hand have claimed - and this is the dominating idea within politics in general (all over the world) - that humans are essentially bad and Piotr would always kill each other (Hobbes’ war of all against all) if it wasn’t for the state to intervene, making the state look like a conservative religion including the necessity to bring about and uphold peace. The theory of the “survival of the fittest” therefore justified the existence of the state and disasters that came along with it: colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, as well as every other form of exploitation not necessarily connected to the state (but often religious institutions including racism, sexism [3], heterosexism [4] and ableism [5]). However, as Kropotkin has extensively shown for the first time, and what is now common sense within anthropology [6], is that there is no such thing as human nature. Humans are neither inherently good nor bad, but both. The question therefore is if they are more good than bad and how to deal with conflict, poverty and other problems arising in our society today.

What is Mutual Aid?

Mutual Aid, the concept that people help one another, was first thoroughly studied by Kropotkin and published as a book with the same title in 1902 [7]. This study of mutual aid, which he thinks is an important factor in human evolution, was an important critique of the idea of the “survival of the fittest”. In this book Kropotkin shows the importance of mutual aid amongst various animal and human societies. He shows how societies based on mutual aid are more peaceful, a concept that is taken up again by anthropologists to describe common practice among peaceful societies [8] which exist all over the world. Modern anthropology has confirmed Kropotkin’s theory that there is no human nature. Contrary to taking any side in the big debate, Kropotkin said that there is both mutual struggle and mutual aid among humans and animals but that mutual aid was more important for the survival of the species. This means that even though humans sometimes fight each other, they nevertheless cooperate more than they fight.

Mutual aid means that people help one another, not only materially but also emotionally, instead of individualism or worse even, fighting each other. It means that they cooperate instead of compete in many aspects of life for everyone’s benefit. It means realising that social support is better for everyone and that we survive better when we help one another instead of fighting. It means that you see other people as comrades and friends and not as enemies. Mutual aid means sharing without the expectation of equal return. Furthermore, mutual aid is an example of living in harmony with one another instead of having conflict. General examples of mutual aid are hunting in common to achieve better results, living in common for mutual protection, helping one another with work of all kinds, giving each other mutual support in times of need. Concrete Southern African examples will be discussed below.

Mutual aid does not imply that aid has to be totally equal. Mutual aid rather operates on the principle “from each according to ability to each according to need”. This comes from the idea that we are all one, that all of humanity belongs together, that we all should work for everyone. Because of the practice of mutual aid, Kropotkin writes, people realise that they depend on one another, that everyone’s happiness depends on the happiness of all and it shows that all are equal. As one can see, this is close to the meaning of Ubuntu, an African concept to be discussed below. However, mutual aid does not imply that aid only goes in one direction. This is charity.

“Church” and Charity

Just like the state (see below) has tried to intervene and destroy mutual aid, the church has done similar things. In general churches, mosques, synagogues and temples [9] destroy people’s self-help and put charity in its place.

Charity is not mutual aid. It is a way of giving from someone who has to someone who doesn’t have, thereby creating a situation of dependency. Charity does not empower people, it does not help them to get back on their own feet, to try help themselves. According to Kropotkin, charity “bears a character of inspiration from above, and accordingly, implies a certain superiority of the giver upon the receiver” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 233). It rids the donor of feelings of guilt when s/he can give money to an organisation which then gives food or clothing, for example, to people in need. As the saying goes, philanthropists give back in public a portion of what they steal in private. Of course, in times of huge crisis such as a famine, when there is not enough food and people are starving, food needs to be given to those who starve. In general, however, giving food creates dependency and destroys the local economy by importing free foreign food. It destroys people’s independence and self-help.

Charity, not only coming from churches but also NGOs, is therefore counterproductive to the development of a better world in which everyone is equal and free.

Mutual Aid Among Animals and Humans in General

Kropotkin spends a lot of time in his book describing mutual aid among insects and other animals. This is not of immediate relevance for this article nor for Southern African society, yet it links with human society in general. Describing mutual aid among animals supports his argument, which is based on evolutionary facts, after all, humans are descendents of certain animal species. It shows that mutual aid has been a natural instinct among humans even before they were humans. Kropotkin gives great examples of mutual aid among animals and that in most of the animal kingdom mutual aid - and not what we usually hear, the survival of the fittest - is the rule. As he writes: “The ants and termites have denounced the “Hobbesian war,” and they are the better for it” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 11).

As we can see in nature, there are many species of animals that live in herds. Kropotkin shows how animals not only cooperate with members of their own species but also across species for mutual protection (e.g. Zebras and Giraffes). He does not deny that animals kill each other because they need to eat or because they have to compete over potential partners. However, he makes it clear that what we are told (kill or be killed) is not the full story. Animals don’t just kill each other and those that kill most are not always the fittest. He shows that most animals can only survive because they cooperate and watch out for each other.

Kropotkin shows that mutual aid is a general rule among animals and links this to humans. He writes that humans are no exception to this rule of
nature, especially since they have been very defenceless creatures for most of their existence (before they invented weapons). Therefore, humans have always lived in societies to protect and help one another. As Kropotkin writes: “Unbriaded individualism is a modern growth” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 71).

Kropotkin shows how mutual aid has existed among humans at all times, from hunting and gathering societies, to agricultural, to medieval societies in Europe up until modern times. He shows how mutual aid was a means of protection of poor and working class people against exploitation by slave-owners, bosses, authoritarian chiefs, kings or other politicians who not only led wars against other groups of people but also against their own people. They exploited them as well as punished them for not paying taxes or not joining the army. Kropotkin makes it clear that it is only a minority of humans that love to lead wars, most people just want to live peacefully with their family, friends and neighbours. As he writes: “At no period of man’s life were wars the normal state of existence. While warriors exterminated each other, and the priests celebrated their massacres, the masses continued to live their daily life, they prosecuted their daily toil.” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 94)

Furthermore, Kropotkin shows how the state has tried to destroy practices of mutual aid, for example by trying to destroy self-help among poor people and putting a state bureaucracy in its place. Instead of leaving poor people alone so that they can continue growing their own food, they imposed taxes so that poor people had to seek additional work in order to pay them.

But not only politicians tell us that we need to lead wars to protect us from other “evil” people and that we need states to protect us from our own evil human nature: also historians have tended to “exaggerate the part of human life given to struggles and to underrate its peaceful moods. […] but they paid no attention whatever to the life of the masses, although the masses chiefly used to till peacefully while the few indulged in fighting” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 96). This means we cannot get sold that humans are war-like creatures and would kill one another. Reality, however, shows the opposite, and Kropotkin was one of the first to point this out. Most humans prefer to live peacefully. Kropotkin writes “In reality, man is so far from the war-like being he is supposed to be” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 113). Mutual aid is one sign of how many of us live along peaceful lines and how we prefer to help each other instead of fight each other.

Furthermore, without mutual aid, poor and working class people could not survive. The capitalist system makes it nearly impossible even for workers to survive on their own. This is why mutual aid still exists in a capitalist society and this is also why it is growing and has to grow if we want to build a better world.

Even though the state and other institutions (such as various churches) have tried to destroy mutual aid, it still exists today, even after over 100 years of capitalism which created individualism and gave the ‘survival of the fittest’ new meaning. Indeed, often it seems that within capitalism you have to exploit and be selfish in order to get by. But, as Kropotkin writes: “The Mutual-Aid tendency in man has so remote an origin, and is so deeply interwoven with all the past evolution of the human race, that it has been maintained by mankind up to the present time, notwithstanding all vicissitudes of history. It was chiefly evolved during periods of peace and prosperity” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 184).

Mutual Aid in Southern Africa

Mutual aid is something that everyone growing up in a family or a close community knows about. Family members usually help each other out without expecting equal return. In small rural communities worldwide this is still common practice not only among family members but also among neighbours. In many parts of the world, and especially in Southern Africa, we can see mutual aid on an even bigger, cultural scale. There are even specific terms for mutual aid and it is still widely practised with new forms evolving due to harsh circumstances. Kropotkin already wrote about mutual aid among the Bushmen [10] in the Kalahari, of which he talked with admiration. According to him they lived under “primitive [11] communism” (that is communism in a non-industrial society). Like many other groups in Africa (and around the world), the Bushmen not only practiced [12] mutual aid and shared everything with everyone - even people not belonging to their group - but also did not have chiefs and can therefore be considered to have been “primitive anarchists” [13]. They mistrusted chiefs who tried to get a bigger piece of the cake thereby threatening to destroy egalitarian practises. Kropotkin wrote about the Bushmen that “they used to hunt in common, and divided the spoil without quarrelling; that they never abandoned their wounded, and displayed strong affection to their comrades” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 72). And: “If anything is given to a Hottentot, he at once divides it among all present […]” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]): 72. He also mentions the term ubuntu, Kropotkin already wrote about the Bushmen that “he calls those who pass by to share his food” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 73).

However, mutual aid has not only existed among the Bushmen in Southern Africa and it is by far nothing that was only practised in the past. There are many examples of mutual aid in Southern Africa that are known under various terms, but all of them are similar. Furthermore, we can see mutual aid among all ethnic groups in Southern Africa. In Southern Africa mutual aid is often based on the idea of ubuntu, which even though it is a Zulu word, is commonly used among other groups throughout Southern Africa. Ubuntu is often written and talked about, especially in South Africa. It is also often connected to the church. While certain aspects of ubuntu are similar to mutual aid, there are many aspects of it that lead people to accept their poverty and are therefore contrary to the advancement of the human condition. It is therefore much more interesting to talk about real mutual aid practises that are not connected to any religion.

In general, helping one another in the fields is very common in rural Africa. Most of the time fields are worked in commom and the person whose fields are being worked on that day provides meal and drinks for everyone helping. Fields are worked rotationally and so everyone’s fields will have been worked and everyone will have had food during ploughing and harvesting season.

The same communal effort can be seen all over Southern Africa when it comes to helping one another building houses.

In addition to cultural practises, new examples of mutual aid are emerging all over Southern Africa when people (especially women) get together to form social societies, such as burial or funeral societies, in which they help each other to save money for a funeral and help each other out in the case of a death in the
family. Such societies also give emotional support to relatives of the deceased. These recent creations mainly have to do with the consequences of poverty.

Another new example in South Africa are stokvels in which people help each other save money which at the end of a decided period of time can be spent on decided upon necessary household products (such as fridges).

Crèches in poor areas in South Africa in which an otherwise unemployed woman takes care of employed women’s children are very common and the caretaker will get food in return.

Culture-Based Mutual Aid

One good example of how only chiefs or a minority of people wanted to lead wars and the majority of a certain population wanted to live peacefully are the Zulus, who are said to be very violent. But mutual aid is just as common among Zulus, if not more so, than in other ethnic groups in South Africa. While some Zulu chiefs obviously were violent (like all chiefs because power corrupts) the masses lived peacefully and always supported each other. Up to the present there are many examples of cultural based mutual aid among the Zulus.

In general, Zulu society is built around the saying “umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, which translates to English as “a person is a person through other people”, which means that one needs the communal whole to advance one’s individuality.

Mutual aid is known under various terms in Zulu. One of these terms is ilimo which refers to the working of someone’s fields in common during ploughing season and everyone who helps will get food and traditional beer. The following week someone else’s fields will be ploughed.

The other Zulu word for a funeral society is masingcwabane and it literally means “let’s bury each other”. People in a community contribute a certain amount of money every month. This money is used when someone else who was contributing passed away. A fixed amount is withdrawn from the bank account and given to the family of the deceased. It covers funeral costs, buying a coffin, hiring a tent and chairs etc.

The Zulu word masakhane, which means “let’s build one another” refers to the building of houses in common.

Izandla ziyagezana (Zulu) literally translated means “when washing one’s hands, the one hand washes the other one” and vice versa. Each hand helps the other one to get clean. Therefore as humans we should help each other like our hands help each other.

In Sotho and Tswana culture mutual aid is known as letsema. Letsema is the coming together of people for a common purpose, and further results in the benefits flowing to all of those who are part of a letsema. It refers to cooperative village work on common projects, for example building infrastructure.

Another communist aspect in Sotho and also Pondo culture is the raising of children communally which means that everyone takes care of all the children, they are seen as children of the whole community. In other words, everyone helps to raise everyone’s children.

In Pedi culture kobufedi refers to working each other’s field in common. Everyone helps in the planting of vegetables and taking care of the crops and the herd because it serves the purpose of the whole community.

In Xhosa culture dibanisani means “let’s work together for a better future”. It is a general term that refers to people coming together and helping each other. For example initiatives take place somewhere else every year and people in one place prepare everything for it. If shacks burn people help each other to build them up again. At funerals or weddings people help each other, for example to clean and cook.

In Venda culture mutual aid is known as uthusana which means “helping each other”.

In Swaziland, lilima is the Swati term for mutual aid. It refers to neighbours helping neighbours.

There are many more examples from all over Southern Africa which cannot be included in this article, yet they are all very similar and very alive, showing that despite the high level of crime (which has to do with the immense inequality in South Africa) and also anti-social crime, there is already a lot of potential on which we can build to create a better world.

Relevance for Our Society Today

A lot of the practise of mutual aid has been forgotten, mostly because it has been destroyed by the state. The state does not want people to be independent, to grow their own food and be autonomous from it, but it wants to control people. People even forget how to grow their own food. They become workers if they are lucky, or unemployed workers whose only chance to get by is to beg or commit crime. City life often not only destroys people’s cultures, it also destroys our society by creating individualism and making people forget about mutual aid. Kropotkin showed this when he wrote that while “among the Hottentots, it would be scandalous to eat without having loudly called out thrice wither there is not somebody wanting to share the food. All that a respectable citizen has to do now is to pay tax and to let the starving starve” (Kropotkin 2006 [1902]: 188). In times of crises this is fatal.

In many townsships we see a few people growing community vegetable gardens and sharing other things. The above mentioned examples are a sign of mutual aid alive and growing because people start to realise that the solution to many of our problems is working together to help one another. Kropotkin has made it clear how we in today’s society and especially in the cities can learn from age-old practices and from what is still alive in rural parts of the world. Mutual aid is one way of taking back some of our independence from the state or charity organisations. It is an aspect on which we have to build a better world and on which a better world has to be based.

Notes:
1. Darwinism (theory of evolution) applied to humans, the theory of the “survival of the fittest”;
2. When I talk about human nature, I am referring to the debate whether humans are essentially good or bad.
3. discrimination of women
4. discrimination of homosexuals
5. discrimination of disabled people
6. the study of social and cultural aspects of humanity
8. societies that do not know any form of conflict, e.g. the Bushmen in the Kalahari
9. not limited to one particular religion as many practise charity
10. whom he also called “Hottentot”, a common term at the time he lived but now rightly considered to be inappropriate. We use the term Bushmen because it is how the people describe themselves.
11. the term primitive was not used as a derogative term by Kropotkin
12. I am writing in the past because a great amount of Bushmen culture has been destroyed by colonialism and capitalism
13. Anarchist societies have been discussed by various authors, see e.g. Barclay, Harold (1996): People Without Government. An Anthropology of Anarchy. London: Kahn & Averill
The tragedy which has beset the people of Zimbabwe, itself an indictment against the praxis of armed struggle controlled by external politics, is well-known. Zimbabweans waged a courageous guerilla war against colonialism only for the leader of that liberation movement, who has jealously guarded his presidency since Zimbabwe’s 1980 independence, to have turned out to be a despot equal to, or rivalling the hated colonial ruler, Ian Smith, who the people of Zimbabwe (then southern Rhodesia) fought so hard to rid themselves of. The Matabeleland massacres of the 1980s to root-out predominantly Ndebele opposition to Robert Mugabe’s ruling Zimbabwe African National Union (now Zanu-Patriotic Front) - the manual repressors of which included lesser, and high-ranking military officials close to him to this day to clench so strongly to power, for fear of being charged with crimes against humanity; the systematic abduction, torture and murder of political dissidents; the rigged elections and consequent campaigns of harassment and intimidation of opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters in the wake of Mugabe’s first electoral defeat in 28 years; the shattered economy, with the world’s highest inflation-rate and the recent outbreak of cholera - which Mugabe blames on biological warfare being waged against Zimbabwe by the Western imperialist powers - are no secret, and need not be discussed in any detail here. That Zimbabwe is in a social-economic-political crisis, and has been dragged there by the ‘paranoid mismanagement’ of the Mugabe regime is widely acknowledged - outside of a small circle of so-called experts, often, ironically, in the Western world, particularly the US, who see in Mugabe the same illusions of a hero who stood up to Western imperialism, of which they see Zimbabwe as the victim, as many see in Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez and the now deprect - if not secretly buried - Fidel Castro. Indeed, as noted by African scholar Horace Campbell, the Mugabe regime has been sure to capitalise on its victimhood status, and ‘The Zimbabwe government is very aware of the anti-imperialist and anti-racist sentiments among oppressed peoples and thus has deployed a range of propagandists inside and outside of the country in a bid to link every problem in Zimbabwe to international sanctions by the EU and USA. Anti-imperialists in the USA cite the Zimbabwe Reconstruction and Development Act (Zidera) - passed by the US Congress in 2001 - as being a source of economic woe for poor Zimbabweans.’

That Mugabe can count amongst his few supporters, then, some of those who naively swallow his pseudo-anti-imperialist rhetoric as they and others do that of Chávez and Castro is not surprising. What is also not surprising, albeit perhaps a bit contradictory on the surface, is that these people blindly accept Mugabe’s anti-imperialist rhetoric while he, at the same time as denouncing Western imperialism, happily accepts the support of other imperialist powers, namely that of Russia and China [1]. While it is true that both Russia and China (who shipped weapons to the Mugabe regime during the electoral crisis, when people were being abducted, tortured and killed at an alarming rate) vetoed the proposal put forward by the US and UK in the United Nations Security Council to impose multilateral arms, travel and financial sanctions on Zimbabwe - sanctions which would have helped raise the poverty level and which would hit the poorest, not the high cabinet officials supposed to be targeted - this must not be mistaken for an act of international solidarity or even humanitarianism.

China supplied weapons to the Mugabe regime at a time when it was violently cracking down on its opposition, the people of Zimbabwe, and it is clear to us that Mugabe would have used those weapons against them had their arrival not been delayed by the real working class solidarity of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (Satawu), members of which refused to offload the weapons destined for the Butcher of Harare at Durban harbour [2]. China currently has the fastest growing economy in the world, estimated to have recently overtaken that of Germany, and it is a fast-growing imperialist power with interests across Africa. It must be clear then that imperialism, not humanitarianism, is its mission in Zimbabwe. To keep growing the Chinese economy needs cheap raw materials, and it is for this reason that China is extending its presence and influence across Africa, including Zimbabwe.

MDC - From Class Struggle to Neo-Liberalism

The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), main opposition to Zanu-PF, emerged out of the trade union movement and the popular struggles of the 1990s as the political arm of the labour movement and an alternative to the ruling party. Its leader, Morgan Tsvangirai’s credentials thus lie, understandably, in his fairly heroic role as a trade union militant, and it is largely for this reason that he commands the support he does. Since the end of the last decade the MDC’s primary sphere of political engagement, however, has been in contesting elections, and it has but forgotten its heritage in the tradition of working class militancy. Since turning its focus to elections the MDC has avoided or been unwilling to call for or support strikes and other mass actions, thus wasting important struggles, and failed to mobilise people on the streets in response to Zanu-PF election-rigging and consequent campaigns of terror. Despite having its roots in struggle, its leader himself coming from a struggle background, the MDC has consistently moved further and further away from the empowering tradition of mass struggles in its pursuit of power.

That the MDC won the March 29 elections, and has the support of the majority of the population - even if they were intimidated into either not voting, or voting for Zanu-PF - is not contested by anyone other than Mugabe and some other lunatics close to him. It is also not contested that Hamas was democratically elected in Gaza in 2005, but that does not mean that Hamas represents, or has at heart the best interests of the working class and poor Gazan majority. The number of ordinary Gazans who have been executed by Hamas for refusing to collaborate with them testifies to this. Neither does it mean that, because the ANC won an overwhelming electoral victory in 1994, it has the best interests of the South African popular classes in mind. In fact its policies since coming to power in 1994 have consistently shown that, far from caring for the masses and wishing to deliver to them, the ANC has sought only to enrich its own elite, the upper levels of its hierarchy, while at the same time making the ‘better life for all’ it promised, and which saw it to electoral victory, more and more inaccessible to the poor and working poor of South Africa and the region.

As is the case with Hamas, which wants power to control of Palestine and to deliver the people from occupation, opening up channels for aid, development and the freedom of movement for Palestinians to seek jobs and opportunities elsewhere, but to impose its own fundamentalist ideology on the region; so too does the MDC seek political control of Zimbabwe in order to impose its neo-liberal, free-market fundamentalist ideology on the people of Zimbabwe, thus enriching its political elite, and businessmen and -women sympathetic to it, as has done the ANC. This is because the MDC’s neo-liberal ideology says that, if Zimbabwe can be made attractive to foreign investment - even if it means suppressing workers’ struggles for better wages - and the economy orientated towards competing on the global market - as opposed to meeting people’s needs - money will flow into the country at the top, to the corporate CEOs, land- and mine-owners etc., and, the more wealth is accumulated at the top, will eventually trickle down the class pyramid to those, wretchedly poor, at the bottom. This is the same ideology as adopted by the ANC and we can see that, despite a
few blacks having become extremely rich and a new black elite having been created, the wealth gap in South Africa is in fact widening; the money accumulated at the top simply does not trickle down, or does so in such tiny trickles as to have no impact. This mistaken belief, held by the MDC, has led it to abandon its real supporters - the organised working class, and the tradition of struggle - and into all sorts of unholy alliances; such as that with the former colonial power, thus allowing Mugabe to play his MDC-sponsored-by-imperialism card. It is the weakness of the MDC that has led it away from its power-base and the tradition of mass struggles and worker militancy into the spectacle of party-political negotiations and unholy alliances, which have allowed Mugabe to play the only card that continues to win him support; in doing so, sowing its own demise.

Of course, it has been said by the West - prior to the global economic downturn - that unprecedented sums of money would be opened up for aid and development in light of an opposition-led government in Zimbabwe, but this is secondary and by no means the driving motive behind MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai’s ambitions for presidency. If it were then he shouldn’t have a problem with cozying up to China, which also provides assistance to Zimbabwe - however dubious from the point of view of Zimbabwe’s indebtedness to that country (although the same applies concerning indebtedness to the West) - in the forms of grants, loans and humanitarian aid, such as cholera vaccines to the value of $500,000 after the outbreak late in 2008 [3]. The difference is that China refuses to join the chorus of other coming to Mugabe to stand down, threatening a withholding or reduction of aid to Zimbabwe if he does not. If both the West, particularly the UK, and China are both seemingly interested in developing the Zimbabwean economy and providing humanitarian assistance then why is it that Tsvangirai finds support in the West and Mugabe in the East?

The MDC has found support in the Western imperialist powers not because Tsvangirai too wants to open up channels for emergency aid and development packages to enter the country, although it is not suggested here that he doesn’t; but because he is willing to implement the neo-liberal ideology of the West. Thus opening up new markets and giving the West access to largely untapped natural resources and a labour force that is probably willing to work for next-to-nothing if it means being able to withdraw that measly amount from an ATM and using it to buy bread without having to queue for hours only to find, on reaching the front of the queue, that inflation has devalued the amount you withdrew to the point that you can no longer afford the bread for which it was withdrawn. Before the global financial crisis the West, particularly the former colonial power, was very willing to send aid into Zimbabwe, and to lend it money to develop its economy. But once again this is not about helping poor Zimbabweans, it is about developing the Zimbabwean economy so that it can once again become profitable, and the aid packages would have strings attached by the World Bank, IMF and perhaps to a lesser extent the African Development Bank. In the wake of the global economic crisis, an economically viable Zimbabwe could be helpful in alleviating the profit-pinch the capitalist class are feeling, but few countries would now have the money available for the long-term investments in infrastructure, health and education necessary for this.

The possibility of investment in Zimbabwe, credit loans and development packages, not to mention a cheap labour force, the movement of which has been all but crushed under Mugabe, and the natural resources Zimbabwe has to offer are very attractive to global investors. Anglo-American, for example, has, despite external pressure from the British government, indicated a willingness to “invest an additional US$400 million to continue its control of platinum mines in Zimbabwe” [4]. Despite its anti-imperialist rhetoric the Zimbabwean government has been very accommodating of foreign capitalists, and has severely weakened workers’ rights and struggles in the mining and other sectors in order to attract their investment. This has proven attractive to Chinese capitalists too as, amongst other things, being a large producer and exporter of motor cars, the Chinese economy needs access to cheap platinum, which is used as a catalytic converter in car engines. In 2008 the Chinese government said it was keen to invest in Zimbabwe’s gold and platinum mining sectors [5].

China, in turn, supports Mugabe and Zanu-PF not because it is ‘anti-imperialist’ and does not want the West to have access to the hidden treasures of Zimbabwe, as well as to those of other African countries to which Zimbabwe could provide a gateway, nor because of a common Maoist background, but because China, itself, is imperialist in its own right and already has access to some of these minerals and markets - for example that of weapons - and, rather than lose or share this access, wants to expand it. Trade between Africa and China increased 35% between the years 2004 and 2005, for example, and China is heavily dependent on oil and other natural resource supplies from Africa. The Congo, for example, is one of China’s top suppliers of copper and coltan, and the links that Robert Mugabe and his cronies have maintained in the Congo since Zimbabwe’s military involvement there in 1998 - when DRC President Kabila and Mugabe signed mining contracts, worth millions of US dollars, for cooperations and other minerals - and his family - make it possible to believe that there is another reason why China is cozying up to Mugabe; because it wants to have strategic access to the mineral-rich DRC. Another such link is arms dealer John Breidenkamp, British Aerospace’s (BAE) Southern African agent who ‘has had a controversial career, ranging from supplying goods to the Zimbabwe military regime to mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo’ [6]. Incidentally, it is also these links, between the ANC, Zanu-PF and the South African Labour Force in Zimbabwe ruling class and arms dealers like Breidenkamp and Fana Hlongwane, alleged former advisor to late defence minister Joe Modise, and their links to the controversial arms deal in South Africa, that kept former President Thabo Mbeki from speaking out against Mugabe during his years of ‘quiet diplomacy’ as SADC-appointed mediator between Tsvangirai and Mugabe.

Power-Sharing or Power Hungry?

Stop-start power-sharing talks between Mugabe and Tsvangirai, mediated by Thabo Mbeki, were to begin on 24 July 2008, and on 15 September an agreement on forming a national unity government comprising of Mugabe, Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, leader of the MDC breakaway faction, was signed. The agreement was to allow for the sharing out of executive powers between Mugabe and Tsvangirai, but soon reached deadlock once again, this time over who would hold executive power and control of key ministries such as those of defence, police and so-called correctional services. It fast became clear that Mugabe and his cronies are not willing to accept a genuine power sharing deal, nor was Morgan Tsvangirai and the MDC willing to accept a junior position in a Zanu-PF controlled administration in which they would be unable to unlock the corridors to much-needed aid, economic and social reforms and investment, consequently opening the country up to the neo-liberal world economy by accepting World Bank and IMF loans to rebuild the economy that would, ultimately, plunge Zimbabwe into being a heavily indebted country.

Although we anarchists would argue that no solution negotiated between bourgeois politicians could ever truly
benefit the poor of Zimbabwe in the long run, there is a claim, put forward by the International Crisis Group, that there ‘is a possible negotiated way forward that could avoid Zimbabwe’s complete collapse’ but that it would require ‘a radical shift in negotiating objectives by the country’s leaders and regional states’. The ‘core idea’ being, it says, ‘to establish a transitional administration, run by non-partisan experts, in which neither Mugabe nor Tsvangirai would have any position. It would be mandated to implement fundamental political and economic reforms to stabilise the economy and prepare new presidential elections in eighteen months’ [7].

Clearly a power-sharing deal in which Mugabe retains the presidency and Tsvangirai occupies the seat of prime minister is incapable of producing an outcome favourable to the Zimbabwean people, and any alternative that could get rid of Mugabe and save Zimbabwe from complete collapse is favourable. As has been demonstrated, however, both sides party to the negotiations are more concerned with how the outcome will effect themselves and, in the case of both MDCs, their political careers than they are with how they could influence the negotiations to the benefit of the people, and this is why they have resisted proposals such as that put forward by the Crisis Group. Mugabe and his allies in the upper echelons of state and, particularly military power, are concerned with what will be their fate should they be dethroned; whether they will be called to answer for the crimes against humanity of which they are guilty. Tsvangirai is concerned with how he can take power, implement some needed reforms and unlock the West’s aid on which the economy depends. A military intervention, are concerned with what will be their fate should they be dethroned; whether they will be called to answer for the crimes against humanity of which they are guilty. Tsvangirai is concerned with how he can take power, implement some needed reforms and unlock the West’s aid on which the economy depends. A military intervention, armed humanitarian intervention earmarked for a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, thus further establishing himself as the good guy who saved Zimbabwe while, at the same time, making sure that the poor and working poor of Zimbabwe do not become in any way empowered by the transition from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy to the extent that they may begin to make demands of him and his administration that are not within the spectrum of his plans for neo-liberalising the Zimbabwean economy.

Nowhere is this more evident than the manner in which both factions of the MDC consistently side-lined or ignored Zimbabwean civil society in the negotiations towards a power-sharing deal and the drafting of a new Constitution. Mugabe obviously is not interested in democracy and popular participation, so it should come as no surprise that he and Zanu-PF would not consult trade unions and civil society on the process of power-sharing. But Tsvangirai, on the other hand, makes all the pretenses towards caring about the popular will and democracy, but has done little to nothing to involve civil society and the trade unions in the negotiations. This is because he does not want them to get a taste of what it is like to control one’s own destiny, to have a say in the way that society is run because, were this to happen, civil society and the trade unions would undoubtedly want to be increasingly involved in the policy-making and running of a post-Mugabe Zimbabwe, and this is clearly unacceptable to someone with an anti-worker, anti-poor neo-liberal agenda. It is better that they remain accustomed to sitting back helplessly while the government sets policy and makes decisions as to the future of the country. Such concerns were raised by the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions [8] that, ‘there has not been openness and wider consultation on the drafting of the MoU [Memorandum of Unity]. On behalf of labour, the MoU has not been availed to us for scrutiny or comment. The only time we have had a feel of the MoU, has been through the media, where we are told that MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai had at one time refused to sign it. Nothing more has been said about the document.

The process seems to have been left to the three antagonizing parties, that is, the MDC – T, the MDC – M and Zanu-PF’. Similarly, as was noted in a SADC Civil Society Statement on Zimbabwe on the Memorandum of Unity, ‘the process lacks inclusivity, [is] insensitive to gender equity and balance, [is] undermined by continued militarisation of the country, lacks transparency and accountability processes’.

“Operation Zimbabwe Freedom”?

In light of this apparent impossibility for a negotiated way out of the crisis, where the only thing the antagonising parties can agree on is that the Zimbabwean people must not be empowered by the process, some people, including Zimbabweans, have called for military intervention tooust Mugabe. While it seems to many that there may be little alternative, the detrimental effects of military intervention were correctly noted by a group of African scholars, stating that:

‘Military interventions exacerbate political and socio-economic crises and internal differences with profoundly detrimental and destructive regional implications. We recognise that threats of military intervention come from imperialist powers, and also through their African proxies.’ [9]

Zimbabweans who are desperate for change might hope for Western or African Union military intervention, but we know that any invaders would not only attack Zanu-PF, but that many civilians would be caught-up in the crossfire, as has happened in Iraq and elsewhere, and that military intervention would be used only to establish a puppet regime sympathetic to Western capitalism, and not to liberate ordinary Zimbabweans and give them control of their lives. Anti-imperialists and anarchists should therefore oppose any military intervention by imperialist powers, but it is important that this not be confused with support for the crass anti-imperialism of the Robert Mugabe regime, and that they continue to staunchly oppose and criticise him and his allies.

As noted by Horace Campbell: ‘Instead of oversimplifying imperialist threats in Zimbabwe, those who want to see the demilitarisation of Africa must aggressively support the exposure of the arms deals that have linked Bredenkamp and Fana Hlongwane [...] across the politics of repression in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The British arms manufacturer British Aerospace (BAe) has been involved with Zanu-PF arms dealers John Bredenkamp and Hlongwane in Africa, along with corrupt elements in the Middle East. There have been calls for BAe to be prosecuted under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) of the USA.

Such an investigation would have potentially seismic consequences for military contractors and arms manufacturers and would provide another means of opposing Western militarism in Africa.’ He goes on to say that if activists and others were, ‘to expose the linkages between Zanu-PF arms dealers John Bredenkamp and Fana Hlongwane along with the wider linkages to international capital, then it would be clear that it is quite an oversimplification to argue that Zidera is at the centre of Zimbabwe’s problems. Bredenkamp had been schooled from the Smith era to blame everything on sanctions while beating the sanctions with the help of apartheid South Africa. In the present period Bredenkamp is an ally of the ANC, Zanu-PF and British imperialist arms manufacturers like BAe all at the same time.’
ZABALAZA

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The Struggle Aborted - Towards a Libertarian Communist Alternative

Disregarding the possibility of foreign military intervention, then, the problem with what the Crisis Group and SADC civil society argue for with the notion of the transitional authority, which they say should be an ‘imperialist party [...] headed by an individual who is not a member of Zanu-PF or MDC’ [10] is that it still promotes the idea of one-man political leadership, the worst manifestation of which, dictatorship, is exactly what Zimbabwe is trying to rid itself of. Although they do say that ‘a broad sector of Zimbabwean society should be incorporated into the transitional authority, including representatives from labour, women’s and children’s rights groups, churches, and other interest groups’ their conception of the transitional authority is still rooted in the hierarchial, top-down political structures of bourgeois democracy, and does little to nothing to ensure the maximum participation of working class and poor people and foster a real culture of direct democracy and participation. Rather than experimenting with new methods of collective self-governance, the transitional authority is to ‘govern the country until the newly elected government is installed’. What is needed in Zimbabwe is not a ‘civilian authority’ that can lead the country to free and fair elections - as much as that would be preferable to what exists now - but genuine and permanent people’s self-governance, through the federation of popular assemblies and workers’ councils.

The ruling class in South Africa and Zimbabwe, on both sides of the political divide, is keen to find a solution to the current impasse in order to stabilise the situation so that the exploitation of the Zimbabwean working people can continue unabated, no longer under the spotlight of world media and NGOs. The popular classes of Zimbabwe must take advantage of the current situation, where there is a focus on Zimbabwe in light of the cholera outbreak and the so-called breakthrough in the power-sharing negotiations, to immediately establish organs for popular participation in policy-making and the drafting of constitutional amendments such as neighbourhood or popular assemblies, workers’ councils and students’, women’s and youth organisations that can collectively discuss what they want for Zimbabwe and organise to put pressure on the Unity Government to have their demands met.

In the last analysis, the MDC has not taken office in the way in which the ANC, or for that matter Hamas did. Tsvangirai and company have been co-opted into an unchanged regime in the same way in which Joshua Nkomo’s Zimbabwe African People’s Union (Zapu) was co-opted by Zanu-PF before being swallowed whole. Tsvangirai’s entrance into a Mugabe-led administration is like Nelson Mandela accepting a post in PW Botha’s cabinet - a farce, foolish to the extreme and bound to end very badly indeed for Mandela. This is not the usually disappointing outcome of a pro-democracy movement - a victory over a very authoritarian regime, but a new ruling party unable or unwilling to make fundamental social and economic changes or to accommodate more democracy than the ballot - but an aborted pro-democracy struggle. The spin-off of this is that, as was the case in South Africa after Nelson Mandela rose to power in 1994, and as will probably be the case when Jacob Zuma assumes the presidency later this year, there will be a honeymoon period in Zimbabwe in the wake of the power-sharing deal. This period may well be characterised by a general decline in workers’ militancy and popular struggles as people, feeling that they now have a ‘comrade on the inside’, sit back and wait for change from above. After a few years, however, as it becomes increasingly clear to the people that Tsvangirai is unable to effect change from within a Mugabe-led administration, and the pro-capitalist policies of Tsvangirai’s MDC - or whomever assumes the reigns of capitalist rule after the Unity Government - are unable to deliver, new movements will emerge, as they did in South Africa, to put pressure on the new government to make good on its promises. The establishment of popular assemblies and workers’ councils now could provide the foundation for these new social movements, most likely centered around issues of service delivery and the immediate material needs of the popular classes, and could determine the character they take; the more people get accustomed to popular democracy and participation now, the more likely will the social movements of the future embody the libertarian and horizontal spirit vital for the successful overthrow of the capitalist system of which both the dictatorship of Mugabe and the bourgeois democracy of the MDC and ANC are a symptom.

The difference between South Africa and Zimbabwe, however, lies in the fact that there has not been a transition to democracy in the latter, that the struggle for democracy has been aborted by its leader, who has now been co-opted into the regime he fought against. The challenge for revolutionaries and the popular classes in Zimbabwe, then, is to keep the democratic struggle alive and to link it with the struggles for service delivery, development and the demilitarisation of society.

Notes:
1. See FdCA article on Chinese and Russian Imperialism, page 32
2. See ZACF statement on Chinese weapons shipment to Zimbabwe, http://www.anarkismo.net/article/8660
8. ZCTU press release, 21 July 2008, WT Chibebe, Secretary-General
The history of the broad anarchist tradition in North Africa has yet to be written, and must therefore be pieced together from a wide variety of sources. Modern, developed Egypt was – and still is – largely confined by its desert wastes to a narrow fertile funnel embracing the capital of Cairo on the Nile River and the Nile delta port cities of Alexandria and Port Said. Originally part of the Ottoman Empire, it became an autonomous Ottoman province under the dynasty of Mohammed Ali from 1805, but the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 proved too much of a temptation for imperialist Britain, which occupied the country in 1882. In “Egypt and Tunis,” Max Nettlau argues, “Italian Anarchist émigrés and revolutionaries were for many years the Italian spirit of libertarian activity,” but he adds little other material in either his Short History of Anarchism, or, indeed, the section on North Africa in his ten-volume study of anarchist history [1]. Spain often used its territories in the Sahara and the Canary Islands as penal colonies for its dissidents: it was here, for example, that both Durruti and Ascaso were imprisoned in 1932. A range of other materials have been drawn together by Van der Walt, whose notes are incorporated here [2].

An Italian anarchist journal, Il Lavoratore (The Labourer), began printing in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1877, and Alexandrian anarchists were represented at the 1877 Verviers Congress of the Saint-Imier International. Malatesta himself fled to Alexandria in September 1878, but was deported when Italian workers organised a demonstration outside the Italian consulate to applaud an assassination attempt against Italian King Umberto I by a republican. He represented an ‘Egyptian Federation’ at the 1881 International Social Revolutionary Congress of the anarchists, with a mandate from ‘bodies from Constantinople and Alexandria.’ Malatesta returned to Egypt in 1882, – the year the country was invaded by the British – where he appears to have been involved in the ‘Pasha revolt’ that broke out that year, and which was suppressed by British forces. In 1884, the paper La Question Sociale (The Social Question) appeared in Egypt. In 1877, the journal L’Opéra (The Worker), appeared in Tunis, followed in 1881 by the Italian anarchist journal Imola (Infiame), published by Andrea Costa, and another, La Prima Linea (Human Protest) was subsequently published in the city before relocating to Italy in 1896.

The Egyptian newspaper al-Hilal (The Crescent) reported on 18 March 1894 that a Greek worker was arrested in Alexandria for distributing ‘anarchist leaflets’ calling on workers to celebrate the anniversary of the 1871 Paris Commune. In 1901, an anarchist paper entitled La Tribune Libre (The Free Tribune) was also being published in Alexandria. In Alexandria, an Italian-language anarchist weekly, l’Operaio (The Worker) began publishing in 1902 and ran until the following year. In 1904, the Arabic-language radical journal al-Nur (The Light) was established in Alexandria by Daud Muja’is, the Syrian-Lebanese editor of al-Hurriyya (Freedom) of Beirut (1909-1910). According to Khuri-Makdissi [3], al-Nur had a correspondent in Cairo, was published until 1908, increasingly took an anarchist line and had subscribers among the Syrian-Lebanese Diaspora as far afield as Haiti and Brazil – one of the best examples of the extent of North African anarchist influence.

The Italian-language Cronaca Sovversiva (Subversive Chronicles), published in Vermont, United States from 1903 onwards by Luigi Galleani, reached “far beyond the confines of the United States” including North Africa and Egypt. Italian radicals continued to publish and support the labour movement in Egypt; forming a People’s Free University in Alexandria in 1901, and activists associated with the University and Le Tribune Libre appear to have been amongst those involved in founding ‘international’ unions in early 20th Century Egypt. Most notable was the International League of Cigarette Workers and Millers of Cairo in 1908, ‘open to workers of all nationalities, Egyptians as well as foreigners,’ and apparently including ‘production workers other than the skilled rollers.’ Other examples of integrated labour solidarity existed. A meeting in 1901 in support of striking garment workers (including Egyptians) in a Cairo café included a speech by the president of the cigarette rollers’ craft union, and a reading of the workers’ demands in Arabic as well as Greek, Italian, Hebrew and German. This was followed by a march of 3,000 chanting workers through Cairo. What is interesting is that European cigarette workers living in Egypt were radicalised by the likes of the Egyptian syndicalists and returned to Europe to spread anarchist ideas there. Two notable examples of this are the anarcho-syndicalist Konstantinos “Kostas” Speras (1893-1943) and the anarchist-communist Stavros Koutsosoglous (1878-1949). Both were radicalised in Egypt and returned to Greece to become the leading lights in the revolutionary trade union movement there. Speras was fluent in Arabic and Koutsosoglous was involved in numerous worker demonstrations in Alexandria and Istanbul. They both helped establish anarchist-syndicalist trade unions in Greece including the syndicalist minority within the General Workers’ Confederation of Greece (GESE) in 1918 [4].

Although these cases are not necessarily representative, they do indicate that anarchists were involved in founding racially integrated unions in colonial Egypt. The evidence for anarchist activity for subsequent years is less clear. Bearing in mind the possible mistranslation of ‘syndicalist,’ in academic studies, and the misapplication of the term ‘anarchist’ in official records, it is possible to find mentions of subsequent activity. Investigations into the assassination of the Egyptian Prime Minister, Butrus Ghali in February 1910, for example, revealed the existence of a number of secret societies, including one splinter group, founded in 1908, based on both Sufism – a mystical form of Islam – and ‘Syndicalism.’ In 1919, Viscount Allenby of the British administration in Egypt issued a directive that ‘while the nationalist movement had lost some of its strength the syndicalist movement was growing, with secret support from Italian journalists. A curiosity in this period was the production in 1921 of a French-Egyptian silent film called Aziz Bey, l’Anarchiste, the existence of which is noted in the list of anarchist-themed films compiled in 2004 by the International Centre for Research into Anarchism (CIRA) in Switzerland [5]. The mere creation of a film about an Egyptian anarchist, fictional or not, suggests the presence and influence of anarchist ideas in Egyptian society at that stage. While the Egyptian socialist movement seems to have been eclipsed by nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s, it revived in the 1940s. The years 1942–5 saw the establishment of various socialist groups in Egypt, including one ‘under the syndicalist leader Mudarak.’

Algeria, under French rule from 1830, was also a site of anarchist activity. A range of anarchist journals were published in Algiers at the end of the 19th Century, including L’Action Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Action) (1887), Le Tocsin (The Alarm) (1890), Le Libertaire (The Libertarian) (1892) and La Marmite Sociale (The Social Caldron) (1893). According to Anderson, by 1894, Jean Grave’s influential anarchist-communist La Révolte (Revolte) had subscribers as far afield as Algeria and Egypt, while Emile Pouget’s anarcho-insurrectionist Le Père Peinard (The Toiling Father)
had subscribers in Algeria and Tunisia, the latter a former Ottoman province that became a French protectorate in 1881 [6]. Fernand Pelloutier’s 1895 *Anarchism and the Workers Unions …* mentions that anarchists had become increasingly active in “many trade unions” including those in Algiers. The anarchist Victor Barroucand published a daily called *Les Nouvelles (The New)* in Algiers in the first decade of the 20th Century: its most famous correspondent was Isabelle Eberhardt (1877-1904), the Swiss-Ukrainian dockworker/adventurer/ writer whose father had been a friend of Bakunin. The syndicalist successor of the French General Confederation of Labour (CGT), the CGT - Revolutionary Syndicalist (CGT-SR) apparently operated a section in Algeria. Like the other French anarchist organisations, the CGT-SR opposed French colonialism. Thus, a joint statement by the Anarchist Union, the CGT-SR, and the Association of Anarchist Federations denounced the centenary of the French occupation of Algeria in 1930, arguing ‘Civilisation? Progress? We say: murder!’.

A prominent militant in the CGT-SR’s Algerian section, as well as in the Anarchist Union was Saïl Mohamed (1894-1953), an Algerian anarchist active in the anarchist movement from the 1910s until his death in 1953 [7]. Although resident in Paris and Aulnay-sous-bois for much of his life, Mohamed was a founder of organisations such as the Association for the Rights of the Indigenous Algerians and the Anarchist Group of the Indigenous Algerians with Sliman Khouane in 1923, organised meetings on the colonial exploitation of North Africans in both French and Arabic, and was the secretary of the anarchist ‘Algerian Defence Committee Against the Provocations of the Centenary’ in 1929. Saïl Mohamed was also editor of the North African edition of the anarchist periodical *Terre Libre (Free Earth)*, all copies of which have, sadly, been lost. Jailed on numerous occasions, Saïl Mohamed was also a contributor to anarchist journals such as *L’Eveil Social*, and *La Voix Liberteaire (The Libertarian Voice)*, often on the Algerian question, and fought as a volunteer in the international section of the Durruti Column … in the Spanish Revolution. The international group of the Durruti Column included ‘400 Frenchmen, Germans, Italians, Britishers, Moroccans and Americans’.

Another key Algerian anarchist was Albert Guigui-Theral (1903-?), who was born in Algeria, but raised in Paris, returning to Algeria in 1918 where he worked as a mechanic, but became involved in a series of metalworkers’ strikes and was jailed for distributing anarchist propaganda [8]. In 1922, after a failed attempt to establish a phalanstery in Algeria, Guigui-Theral moved back to Paris where he lost a series of jobs because of his anarchist activities, but became active in the CGT’s Metal Federation where he fought against the growing Stalinist influence. From 1928, he began contributing to *Le Libertaire*, and briefly travelled to the USA, returning to France in 1932 where he worked in the Paris region of the CGT assisting the Spanish syndicalists. He was arrested for his activities in June 1940, as France succumbed to Nazi rule, but was released and escaped to the “free zones”, although not regularly, because we do not have sufficient funds.’ This was ‘distributed inside Portugal, as well as in the Azores, Africa and Oceania.’ Although the Spanish state used territories in North Africa for penal purposes, North Africa was also a haven for anarchist militants and refugees. Julio Sáez de Oraez draws attention to the role played by Tangiers in Morocco, which was an international protectorate in the early 20th Century … After the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, and with the outbreak of the Second World War, Tangiers, which had formerly been an international city, came under the control of the dictator Franco, and there was a massive crackdown on the left and labour in that city. Many fled to Casablanca in Algeria… Exiled Italian anarchists, like Celso Persici, were involved in the anti-Nazi resistance in Morocco during the Second World War, notes: ”According to José Peirats, Roque Santamaria Cortiguera represented exile organisations from North Africa at a 1947 intercontinental congress of the exile Spanish anarchist movement in Toulouse, France [9].

A handful of Ethiopians fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Revolution, while Saïl Mohamed and other North Africans fought in the Durruti Column anarchist militia. Many Spanish anarchists fled from the defeat of the Revolution into exile in Algeria, where they established an exile community in the city of Oran. From 1939 onwards, however, Spanish Morocco and Western Sahara remained under the control of the new Spanish regime, while fascist Portugal controlled the Azores, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Principe in West Africa from 1927 until 1974. Ethiopia, Libya and Somalia remained under Italian Fascist rule from 1935 until roughly 1942, while Nazi-linked Vichy France controlled Algeria and much of west and equatorial Africa until it progressively lost these territories as the Second World War wore on. Saïl Mohamed became an identity document forger for the underground anti-fascist resistance in Vichy France. During the Second World War, in the war, many Spanish republicans, including anarchists, served in the Long Range Desert Group and other special forces in North Africa. Republicans who had joined the French Foreign Legion in exchange from being

Saïl Mohammed, in the centre of the front row, with other North African ‘Durruti Column’ militiamen.
released from the detention camps in southern France. Many of them were stationed in North Africa, Cameroon and Chad when the war broke out. The 9th Armoured Company – known as El Nueve – had been founded in Chad as part of the Regiments of March of Chad.

The 9th Armoured Company drove tanks and armoured half-tracks flying the Spanish Republican flag and with names redolent of the Spanish Revolution painted on their sides: “Durruti”, “Acsaso”, “Casas Viejas”, “Teruel”, “Madrid”, “Belchite”, “Guadalajara” and “Guernica”. It included libertarian fighters like Abenza Jesus, who had fought on the Madrid front, but had been trapped and unable to cross into France until 1941. Imprisoned in the Argelian concentration camp, then deported to Algeria, Jesus volunteered with the French Africa Corps, fought in Tunisia, then joined what became the Chad Marching Division that fought Rommel’s Afrika Korps before being sent to England to train for the Normandy invasion. Jesus and El Nueve hit the beaches at Normandy on the night of July 31/August 1, 1944, as one of two armoured divisions in the US 3rd Army that defeated three SS Panzer divisions and linked up with the Canadian forces at Falais – at the same time as some 30,000 Maquis took up arms in Brittany before pushing on to Paris where the anarchists became the first “Allied troops” to liberate the city on 24 August 1944 [10].

The Italian conquest of Libya, and the Nazi victory over half of France had been followed by the suppression of the left in North Africa. By 1939, it seems clear that the anarchist tradition had largely withered away in Egypt, but remained extant in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, with its links to the CGT-SR and the work of activists like Sali Mohamed, and the existence of communities of foreign anarchists such as the Spanish exiles in the city of Oran. Among these exiles was Roque Santamaria Cortiguera (?-1968), a CNT-FIYL (National Confederation of Labour-Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth) barber who had sat on the Council of Valencia during the Revolution, and who fled to Oran after the Francoist victory in 1939. He is described by Stuart Christie as “a militant of great merit, with particular strengths as a public speaker and the releasor and well versed in matters organisational” [11]. The ascension of Vichy France saw Santamaria (and no doubt many other Oran anarchists) incarcerated in the concentration camps of Cerchel and Morand, where Santamaria co-ordinated National Confederation of Labour (CNT) activism, being released in November 1942 after the Allied forces took Oran. Another key Spanish anarchist who spent time in North Africa was the legendary Cipriano Mera Sanz (1897-1975), a bricklayer illiterate until the age of 20 who had acted as the secretary of the CNT’s North African branch until he travelled to Toulouse, France, in 1946 to represent North Africa at the MLE’s Intercontinental Congress the following year. He stayed on in Toulouse, however, becoming the city’s FAL secretary in 1948-1950, helping to reunite the revolutionary and reformist CNT factions in 1960/1, helping re-establish the CNT in Spain after Franco’s death.

In May 1948, at a pan-European anarchist conference in Paris, the Anarchist International Relations Commission (CRIA) was established by, among others, Parisian anarchist bookstore owner, former Friends of Durruti supporter and editor of Le Libertaire, André Prudhommeaux (1902-1968), Ildefonso Gonzalez, Renée Lambert of the International Workers Association, Clément Fournier, Jules Pulidori and René Cavanaugh, with the aim of maintaining ties between the dispersed and rather battered, but still vibrant post-war anarchist movement [12]. CRIA established a sister organisation in Latin America, the Montevideo-based Continental Commission of Anarchist Relations (CCRA). The CRIA saw itself as continuing the work of the 1907 MLT and later also become a FAF affiliate after correspondence with Georges Fontenis. The MLT apparently initially shied away from affiliation to the Algerian Section because of the differences in the colonial administrations under which each suffered. The Moroccan Section is not mentioned in the CRIA correspondence but presumably was based in the French-colonised Atlantic Ocean ports of Casablanca and Rabat and not in the Francoist-occupied Mediterranean ports of Ceuta and Melilla. In Christmastide, December, secretary of the MLAN’s Algerian Section, announced that the principles of the MLAN’s Algerian Section were: “For economic and racial equality and the establishment of libertarian communism,” a “harmonious society based on solidarity, mutual aid, co-
operation and federalism,” and opposed itself to “patrimonial feudal colonialism,” racism, war and imperialism. It appears to be a carbon-copy of the FAF’s positions. That was a tall order, for an undated CRIA document on the paradoxical circumstances in which the MLAN found itself noted that the Algerian Section consisted of only “three comrades in Algiers, and several comrades dispersed and isolated in the bled (the small-town countryside).” Nevertheless, the Algerian Section embarked on a definition of its principles and tactics, a possible sign of the hands of Fontenis and Pradines. This is shaping the North African movement.

In 1950, Doukhan wrote to the CRIA Secretariat in Paris from the MLAN office at No.6 Rue du Rousillon, Algiers, saying that the Algerian Section had been legalised by the authorities on 31 March. As a result, the MLAN in Algeria was demanding its right to autonomy from the FAF and on its right to register in its own name as an affiliate of “the Anarchist Organisations” – presumably the CRIA [14]. In April 1951, a letter was written to the MLAN in Algiers from “R. Cavan” of the CRIA in Paris. Cavan was in fact René CavanÈie who also sat on the FAF’s national committee and he asked about activities on “the Spanish coast,” indicated concern that the group in Oran had not been heard of in some time, but supposed the MLAN was still working together with “the Tunis group”. Revealed in this letter is the intriguing suggestion, apparently raised by exiled “Spanish comrades” of the FAI, that the MLAN fuse with the FAI forces in North Africa. The CRIA archives retain no further letters between the MLAN and the CRIA, suggesting that this merger did, in fact, take place and that the MLAN thus became part of the FAI and so of the broader libertarian exile resistance movement. The FAI was re-established inibia after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal in 1974 (provoked by the liberation wars in Portugal’s African colonies and precipitating Portuguese decolonisation) and the death of Franco in Spain in 1975 and continues to this day. In 1953, the year that Mohamed died and Fontenis gave the oration at his funeral, Fontenis’ platformist faction within the FAF, the Thought Battle Organisation (OPB), took over the FAF, renamed it the Libertarian Communist Federation (FCL) and adopted a pro-Algerian liberation line. The synthesist remnant reconstituted the FAF. Morocco and Tunisia gained independence in 1956 and some anarchists of European origin may well have stayed. But the situation in Algeria quickly spiralled out of control into all-out warfare. What became of the anarchists in Oran, Algiers and the bled is unknown to us, but it is likely that many were either killed or fled to France, especially after France’s loss of Algeria as a colony in 1962 following the Oran Massacre of that year. We will examine the anarchist responses to decolonisation in Africa and SouthEast Asia – especially the very different attitudes of the FCL and the FAF - in a future edition of Zabala.

NOTES:
2. This piece and Lucien’s notes are an edited extract from Global Fire: 150 Fighting Years of International Anarchism & Syndicalism (Counter-power Vol.2), Michael Schmidt & Lucien van der Walt, AK Press, USA, [in process, but possibly to be published in 2010]. For brief introductions to the history of anarchism in parts of North Africa, look at Stiobhard’s work at:
   a) Algeria: http://stioibhard.tripod.com/east/algeria.html
   b) Tunisia: http://stioibhard.tripod.com/east/tunisia.html
   c) Egypt: http://stioibhaid.tripod.com/east/egypt.html
7. Mohamed, Sall (1894-1953), Organise! #98, Anarchist Federation, UK online at: http://libcom.org/history/mohamed-sall-1894-1953
   A collection of Mohamed’s writings from the 1920s-1950s is available in Appels aux Travailleurs Algériens, Sall Mohamed, Groupe Frenses-
8. Albert Guigi-Theral (1903-?), anonymous, online at: http://www.libcom.org/history/articles/1903-19/index.php
10. For various accounts of the actions of El Nueve in the liberation of Paris, look at:
   a) The Spaniards who Liberated Paris, Denis Fernandez Recatala, Le Monde
   +El+Nueve+liberation+Paris&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=0
   b) 2nd Armoured Division, John Beresford Welsh, Washington DC, USA, 2000, online at:
   c) 1943-1944: CNT Militants and the Liberation of Paris, anonymous, but including the
   reminiscences of 9th Tank Corps veterans Abenza Jesus and Manuel Lozano, online at:
   http://www.libcom.org/history/articles/cnt-militants-lib-paris/index.php
11. Granny Made Me an Anarchist: General Franco, the Angry Brigade and Me, Stuart Christie, Scribner, UK, 2004. Also, discussions in 2008
   between Michael Schmidt and Christie.
13. CRIA-MLAN correspondence 1947-1951, very kindly provided to the ZACF by Fréderic Deshusses, archivist, CRIA International Centre for
   Research into Anarchism, 2008.
   date du 31 Mars 1950 seus le No. 4.189 et de sa constitution et autonomie par rapport au le F.A.F. a laquelle nous appartemiens en tant que
   laquelle nous correspond afin de collaborer a meme titre que les Organisations Anarchistes adherentes.”

George Fontenis, first secretary of the French Federation Anarchiste
The arrest of Rwandan Rose Kabuye, the collapse of Bruguière’s case and Hubert Védrine’s court action against the «Genocide in France» collective... is the truth finally coming out?

Fourteen years after the events, the French State has been unable to shake off the ghost of the Rwandan genocide and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. 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The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably. The current and its laborious attempts to clear its name are failing miserably.
The 30th Confederal Congress of the National Confederation of Labour (Confédération Nationale du Travail - CNT) took place on the 19th, 20th and 21st of September 2008 in the Northern French town of Lille.

This Congress was important to the CNT, as it finds itself in a situation where social movements are demoralised and incapable of responding in a co-ordinated fashion to the arrogance of Capital. Moreover the CNT is facing frontal attacks against Union rights, in the front line against the reform of Union representation laws.

This Congress needed to determine our organisational ability to respond to the policies of the Sarkozy government and to adapt our strategy to face the new threat to union representation.

No fewer than 67 CNT locals, from all regions of France, were represented at Congress.

We were also able to welcome delegations from organisations with which we collaborate on an international basis: CGT (Spain), FAU (Germany), USI (Italy) and the ASI (Spain).

Other organisations, unable to send delegates, send greetings to the congress: CGT (Burkina Faso), SISSA (Italy), ASOINCA (Colombia), Solidaridad Obrera (Spain), ODT (Morocco), Workers’ Initiative (Poland), CNTG (Guinea), IWW (Great Britain), SAC (Sweden) and ESE (Greece).

For our responses to the Reforms on Union representation please see the Synthesis about the CNT syndical strategy (http://www.cnt.org/spip.php?article693).

The Confederation will launch a campaign against bosses and the state in the months to come.

In terms of our International Strategy the congress in Lille voted by a large majority in favour of “Reinforcing International Solidarity”. This motion was historic, as for the first time since our expulsion from theAIT in 1996 the CNT has decided to mandate its International Secretariat to aim, in the medium and long term, towards the creation of a new International. The International Secretariat and the CNT will be launching, in the next few months, an appeal to all of their international contacts.

The International Secretariat of the CNT, composed of fifteen members is from now on co-ordinated by three mandated members: Jérémie Berthuin, Fred Simeon and David Duslam.

Long live anarcho-syndicalism !

Long live international solidarity !

Long live libertarian communism !

- International Committee of CNT, France

Hamas’ recent “clampdown” on Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade in Gaza, rather than its ongoing brutal repression against leftist dissents, including that of feminist voices, dominated Western coverage of life in the occupied territories.

The hostilities between Hamas and Fatah is a US and Israeli dream come true. It has also been manufactured to a large extent, as it is more cost effective to divide and rule a society than to condemn unpopular massacres such as we witnessed during the Second Intifada. Fatah on the other hand, lacking the rank and file structure of Hamas had already lost the chance to unite with secular dissent in Palestine and are too busy squandering what was left of Western aid before Hamas came into power.

The shifting of authority from the corrupt US-Israel backed PLO to fundamentalist rulers of the working class and peasants does not change the fact that Hamas is authoritarian, nationalist and racist. It is trying to impose a de-facto Sharia regime in Palestine. It has, to a vast extent, exploited the desperation and powerlessness of a majority of the working class and peasants who had no hope; but to turn to the first hand which handed the urgent basic needs for their survival; food, health care, social services and a short lived law and order in Gaza.

Receiving aid from same US friendly Saudi financiers who backed US in the invasion of Afghanistan, Hamas is not trying to make its Sharia policies a secret either. The only respect for women Hamas has is for mothers, daughters and wives of suicide bombers.

Very little is heard from the radical left and feminists since they came to power last year; they are able to deploy enough violence to Hamas to silence any opposition. Hamas’ financial supporters, from regions of the Muslim world where fundamentalism is rising, are still giving them millions.

It will continue to oppose any form of demand for participatory democracy as it has since its early days of establishment. Hamas’ support stems from its resistance to the brutal and completely illegitimate Israeli occupation as well as widespread disgust at the corruption and compliance of Fatah. But no amount of anti-imperialist rhetoric can disguise its fundamentalist, religious nature and the consequences that flow from it. Ultimately, while being anti-imperialist is necessary, it is not enough. Replacing the Israeli jackboot with their own would be an empty kind of liberation for Palestinian women and workers.

An unwillingness to criticize nationalist resistance movements has resulted in the left forgetting that it must not only support the liberation of peoples of Palestine from occupation but also from religious repression, racism and sexism. Our anarchist policies of solidarity with the people of Palestine are based on coherent principles of equality and justice for all who live in that land, Muslim and Christian, Jewish and atheist, men and women, and straight and gay.

From Workers Solidarity 105
Shalif is a veteran Israeli anarchist. This interview was conducted in January 2009 while the war on Gaza was still going on.

ZACF: Can you please briefly tell us about Anarchists Against The Wall (AAtW)?

Ilan Shalif: The AATW initiative started with the joint Israeli-Palestinian camp against the separation fence near the Palestinian village Mas’ha in 2003. It was an initiative of the Israeli “One Struggle” anarchist collective to which radical people joined who liked the idea.

After a few months the first physical actions against the fence in Zabuba and Masha began – in which an Israeli participant was shot at with live ammunition. This caused a huge scandal in the media and the AATW got a lot of publicity. The camp was destroyed when the works on the fence advanced but AATW became an address for activists in the Palestinian villages and invitations for joint struggles increased during the years. Activists with AATW participated in hundreds of joint demonstrations, coordination meetings, physical direct actions too. As we have experts in photography, video, and journalism, we succeeded in invading a very significant space in the media - including at times prime time TV news.

During the years and as a result of the impotence of the Israeli Communist Party, AATW became the leading organiser in the struggle of Israeli radicals against the separation fence and the coalition of the involved, sometimes mobilising a few hundred participants to a specific joint Friday demonstration.

How do Anarchists Against the Wall see the recent developments in Gaza and how do they react to it?

As AATW is not monolithic there is no common opinion on anything. However, I am sure that all the involved see it as part of the Israeli efforts to extract as many concessions as possible from the Palestinians and to delay as long as possible the need to give back part of the occupied territories of the 1967 war.

During the last weeks we increased the activities – both with the four villages we are in regular joint struggle with, and with other Israeli groups and coalitions. We also had few initiatives of our own like a dedicated critical mass, the die-in [1] at the entrance to the military airport of Tel Aviv and distributing huge amounts of photographs.

What do you think is the best solution: 2-State, 1-State or No-State solution? And why?

The best solution has been regarded for tens of years as the only possible one: Socialist revolution in the whole region and the world.

In the last years, as capitalist globalisation has gained momentum, it seems that there is an option for capitalist peace... but only if the settler-colonial section of the Israeli capitalists will be overpowered by the section interested in exploiting the Palestinians.

How accurate is the comparison to apartheid South Africa, and what do you think of the fact that everyone in South Africa struggled for a 1 State solution while in Palestine people seem to prefer to have their own state?

The settler-colonial project in South Africa was based on exploiting the indigenous people. In the Zionist settler-colonial project the national socialists were the leading power and they wanted the land without its indigenous people.

Practically, the two states solution is the only one that can be materialised without defeating Israel militarily. The more pragmatic and secular Palestinians, who understand that, adopted it as their ideal. The less pragmatic ones adhere to the old PLO one state solution. The extreme nationalists and fundamentalists adhere to the one Muslim Palestinian state. Curiously no one demands that the version of the Palestinian state they suggest will include the East side of the Jordan - the Jordanian state where 70% of the population are Palestinians.

As anarchists we cannot call for any state solution - only for the end of the occupation of 1967. (The majority of the Palestinians who are citizens of Israel - of the 1948 conquests - prefer to remain part of Israel.)

Do you think that the conflict is maintained by the elites on both sides of the border to win popular support for their actions? Do the nationalist and fundamentalist elites benefit from the conflict and if so, how?

The conflict is mainly the direct result of the efforts of the Israeli settler-colonialists who are dominant in the capitalist elite to advance their conquests. There are some elements of compradorian interests of the Palestinian ruling elite, both nationalist and fundamentalist, but it is marginal.

In spite of the bribes of the Oslo pact that enabled the return of the PLO leadership to Palestine, and the tolerance for the development of the fundamentalists, Israel never gave them enough concessions that will make them tame. They are forced to give some resistance to Israel.

What do you think about boycotting Israeli products or economic sanctions against Israel and what can people outside of Israel do?

The call for boycotting Israeli products of the occupied territories is 30 years old - and was issued by the anti-authoritarian anti-capitalist socialist organisation in Israel, Matzpen [meaning Compsa, founded in 1962] (http://matzpen.org). As the Second Intifada and the suppression of it took momentum, members of Matzpen abroad issued an internet petition to BDS Israel.

Note:
1. A theatre of people dressed in white with blood stains all over lying down in front of the entrance to the airport at which 21 activists from AATW were jailed for the weekend.
Weeks of violent riots, clashes between ordinary people and the police, the burning of police cars and attacks on police stations, the looting of expensive shops, a burning Xmas tree amidst anti-consumerist slogans, street fights every day and night, calls for revolution, occupations of thousands of universities, schools, town halls etc. This past December was a hot winter month in Greece and an event that needs to be understood in more detail than was reported by the mainstream media. It is an unprecedented event in recent history in Europe, a new 1968, a new highlight in the struggle against neo-liberalism, cutbacks in the education system and police violence.

There were important differences between these demonstrations and earlier ones in Greece. The crowds were much larger and the protests were not just in Athens but in many towns across the whole of Greece and they went on for weeks. The police as representatives of the state, in itself a violent institution, responded in the usual way, with violence. But the people on the streets resisted and stood united. Attempts to rupture the convergence of the oppressed by attempting to utilise existing divisions such as by praising peaceful Greek protests as compared with the foreign looters failed in the face of the emergence of practical solidarity and internationalism forged through common struggle. All the barriers that usually keep the working class divided, between for example blue or white collar workers, young and old, citizens and immigrants, disappeared when everyone was marching alongside each other. Among the broader working class many took to the streets (what we prefer to call) popular uprising, not riot, which gradually gave way to less violent, more imaginative and more political acts.

**Greece: A Chronology**

This is a lengthy chronology of what happened in Greece during December and January, but it serves to show that social revolutions can become true and gives us ideas of what to do (and what not to do) when we get into the same situation. It shows the importance of solidarity between workers, students and immigrants and the need for direct action and occupations of radio and TV stations as well as municipal buildings.

**Saturday, 6th of December**

In the evening a police special guard shoots dead a 15-year-old boy named Alexis-Andreas Grigoropoulos near Exarhia Square, an alternative district in Athens. Demonstrations start immediately after the event and will continue to take place every day for the next weeks, attacking especially police stations and police themselves.

Shortly after the shooting mainly anarchists gather in the area where the killing took place to express their rage against police brutality. Spontaneously, people start to attack the police in the streets around the square. In less than two hours, more than 10,000 people take to the nearby streets.

Some anarchist groups occupy the historical building of the National Technical University, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics to use them as centres of struggle.

The news of the murder of the young boy immediately spread to several cities throughout the country where attacks against banks and police stations take place.

**Monday, 8th of December**

More than 20,000 people, mainly young people, participate in a demonstration at a central Square of Athens. Riots and looting covered approximately half of the city centre. The city’s Xmas tree was flared up by Molotov cocktails as a sign against capitalism and consumerism.

**Tuesday, 9th of December**

Teachers of primary and secondary education go on strike against police brutality.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) denounced the rioters and looters as secret agents of ‘foreign dark forces’.

**Reasons for the Uprising**

There were many reasons for the Greek uprising: decades of police brutality culminating in hundreds of activists and ordinary people being killed by the police [1] (which immediately sparked the uprising as an unarmed 15 year old boy was killed by a policeman); the onslaught of neo-liberalism and privatisations that led to thousands of people being fired or outsourced, worsening in the last months due to the international economic crisis; and cutbacks in and the failure of the education system, just as in the May 1968 uprising in Paris. Additional reasons for the riots are government corruption, the overexploitation of immigrants and the fact that this society is torn apart by deepening class divisions. There is a general feeling of hostility towards cops in the Greek population because of high levels of police brutality and there are widespread anti-state and anti-authoritarian feelings. Especially young people, one quarter of which already are unemployed, are facing unemployment. For the first time since the end of the Greek “Colonels’ Dictatorship” of 1967-1974, young people have no hope for a better life than their parents [2]. An important part of this society knows that it has nothing to lose apart from the illusion that things might get better.

In Greece, as elsewhere, reformist trade unions, socialist and communist parties produce paralysing apathy by promoting the illusion that the national economy constitutes the common property of all and that economic growth will lead to increasing levels of shared well being. These proponents of the welfare state recognise that capitalist society is divided into classes but view the state as embodying the general national interest. The class struggle is thus constrained by workers’ and employers’ organisations without endangering the supposed guarantor of gradual progress: economic expansion. The logic on which the power of the ruling class is based and for which the lives of the working class are sacrificed in endless toil, the generating of money with more money, becomes in this upside down ideology the universal good to be defended by the state.

The most important aspect of the uprising in Greece in December 2008 is that sections of the working class broke out of the social-democratic strait jacket constraining the modes and aims of struggle of this class. They showed that there is another way, not of class collaboration within corporatist institutions but one of direct action to confront the existing system. The current...
economic crisis together with decades of neo-liberal policies has in Greece, as elsewhere, undermined the illusion that capitalist growth will lead to increasing prosperity for all, through wealth trickling down from the rich to the poor, a classic liberal argument so dominant in South Africa. The uprising constitutes a concrete rejection of this myth and illustrates that the prospect of a social revolution, which would simultaneously abolish capital and the state, is a possibility and not a distant utopian dream. It can be achieved by ordinary people, breaking free from party politics and repudiating the lie currently spouted by politicians that we need to cut back now so that the future will be better. The so-called “rioters” also rejected the lie that politicians are the ones who decide about what is going on in world politics because they are the experts. The uprising has shown how we can take back the power that politicians have stolen from us and how we can take things into our own hands.

The sacrifice of the objectives of the class for decent lives on the altar of the national economy is often focused upon particular vulnerable strata of the class which are effectively excluded even from the social-democratic compact, such as migrants or the youth. Since these strata cannot be lulled into a stupor through integration they must be forced into passivity through outright repression. Rather than succumbing to the terror of the authorities those marginalised in Greek society today took to the streets and attacked the centres of the murderous violence of the Greek state – police stations. All those condemned to rot ‘in the national interest’ constituted a combative community of struggle united not around the lowest common denominator achieved by mediating the particular interests of different groups through representation but by fighting for class objectives through direct action.

After the first five days of rioting, the Town Hall of Agios Dimitrios (a suburb of Athens) was occupied, organised by local anarchist groups and some of the workers who work there. The occupants organised meetings with local people, calling them “assemblies”, trying to broaden the revolt organising local actions, always connected to the revolt.

At a later stage in the uprising, the National Opera building was occupied by dancers renaming the historic Athens building “Insurgent People’s Opera”. Since then the Opera has been functioning as a free space for revolutionary workshops and fora in solidarity with Konstantina Kouneva (see below) and everyone arrested in December, as well as against the police state.

All occupations served as bases of the movement from which subversive actions were organised and where rebels could seek refuge, if necessary. In all these activities, the common new characteristic was an attempt to ‘open up’ the rebellion towards the neighbourhoods.[3]

The dominant and reformist trade unions were partially successful in constraining the process of the convergence of the class by preventing manual wage workers engaged in a ritualistic one day national strike from joining the insurgents. This isolation of the manual workers from the stream of struggle which limited the potential for the intensification of the uprising was unfortunately only transcended in rare instances. The base union of workers participating in the assembly occupying Agios Dimitrios town hall decided to perform municipal services for free, bypassing the municipal authorities which employed them. Unfortunately this decision was not put into effect due to intimidation by the city bosses. The role of union bureaucrats of constraining

The Uprising in Practice: Occupations, the Role of Workers

The recognition of a shared experience of repression led to the occupation of universities and public buildings such as city halls or libraries which were transformed into sites of mobilisation against the state and areas in which counter information to fan the flames of the uprising could be spread.

The National Technical University, which is the nearest one to Exarchia square (where the killing happened) was one of the first occupations and the main place for organising clashes with the police. Its occupants were young workers (including immigrants), students and others – and many of them anarchists. The Faculty of Economics was occupied mostly by anarchist groups and antiauthoritarians who wanted to use the building for counter-information purposes. A lot of emphasis was put on the organisation of everyday activities. They took over the restaurant of the university and workshops were formed in order to run the occupation and to organise actions outside.

Once again, they are trying to save the state and restore public order.

At 3pm the funeral, attended by more than 5,000 people, of the dead boy takes place.

Wednesday, 10th of December

A general strike takes place which aim had been predetermined over a month ago: it is mainly “against the state budget 2009”. The riots spread to many other places Greece. The pattern is always the same: mainly students and young people attack police stations, banks, big stores and state buildings. A big part of the rioters are immigrants. The media talk of ‘Greek protesters’ and ‘foreign looters’, in an effort to flare up xenophobia and divide the protesters.

Thursday, 11th of December

High school students abandon their schools and gather (with their parents) outside of police stations, blocking 35 of them. Libertarians occupy a Town Hall in a suburb south of Athens (by municipal authorities’ request). In several universities assemblies take place and university occupations spread. Militants from the student organisation of the Communist Party (PKS) try to block assemblies in order to prevent the occupations.

Friday, 12th of December

By this day already 700 high schools and 100 universities are occupied. A big student demo takes place in Athens. By Dec. 12 police had fired 4,600 tear gas canisters, exhausting their supply. They had to order more tear gas from Israel.

Sunday, 14th of December

A deserted café in Athens, called “Galaxy”, is occupied at noon in order to be used as a counter-information and action coordination centre. It was renamed “Free Galaxy”. On the same day, four radio stations get occupied and are used for broadcasting statements and communiqués.

Monday, 15th of December

In Agios Demetrios the popular assembly of the occupation try to cooperate with the municipal clerical workers in order to restart some municipal services without the mediation of the municipal authorities. The plan is to satisfy only urgent social needs, such as issuing green cards for the immigrants as well as paying wages and extra allowances.
struggles through mediation was rejected in two instances through the occupation of the offices of union federations.

The occupation of the building of the General Confederation of Labour of Greece (GSEE) was initially started by members of the base union of couriers, an independent union - many of whom are anarchists and other anti-authoritarians. The problem was that the other base unions didn’t join the occupation, something that if it had occurred would have given an enormous power to this project.

If there was a real potential to further this struggle it was in the occupations of municipal buildings (such as town halls, municipal buildings, cultural centres etc) which were managed by direct assemblies by locals discussing their common issues and taking decisions in a directly democratic manner. And in those occupations local anarchists participated [4].

Repression and Solidarity

More than 270 people have been arrested in connection to actions, since the beginning of the insurrection in 15 cities. 67 of them have been detained, while 50 immigrants that were arrested during the first 3 days were rapidly condemned to 18 months of imprisonment and are being deported. 19 arrestees in Larissa face charges under the anti-terrorist law.

Konstantina Kuneva, a militant union organiser, is one among the hundreds of female immigrant workers who have been working for years as cleaners of female, immigrant, war in Gaza (read more about this on Page 24). Besides demonstrations against the war, Greek activists also called for the boycott of a US arms shipment to Israel which on its way there was supposed to dock in the port of Astakos. The shipment contained three hundred and twenty-five 20-foot containers, over 3,000 tons, of ammunition. It was an emergency shipment of arms to aid the occupation in its ongoing war crimes against the Palestinian people in Gaza, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine claimed in a statement to the Greek workers. The next day, the Greek Anti-Authoritarian Movement (AK), issued a call for protesters to flood the port on Jan. 15.[5] The US had to route the arms shipment because the Greek government feared even more protests. This was an important form of international solidarity and can be compared to the ones in South Africa where Durban dock workers first refused to offload a Chinese arms shipment for the dictatorship in Zimbabwe and recently an Israeli arms and goods shipment in Durban harbour.

Within Greece, two months after her kiosk was torched in local riots in November (and therefore not connected to the uprising) 74-year-old Halia Ananidou, Thirassaloniki. received a cash gift from a small group of anarchists calling itself Anarchist Initiative, critical of violent aspects in the uprising, to rebuild her life. “As anarchists, we felt we should support a fellow human victimised by blind violence,” the organisation said in a statement. The reason for this was that other shop owners were helped by the government, but only the ones attacked in December received such help.

The Role of Anarchism in the Uprising

The Greek anarchist movement is among the largest in the world in proportion to its country’s population. Anarchists and anti-authoritarians played a central role in the uprising. It was anarchists who started the riots and who proved that we are not as far away from a revolution as we think we are, and that revolutions can take place even within the European Union. Anarchist flags were hung from the many occupied buildings in Greece and even from occupied embassies and consulates around the world, including Berlin, in global solidarity with the uprising.

Since the “Battle of Seattle” in 1999

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**Tuesday, 16th of December**

A group of 50 people manage to enter the studios of NET, the national, state-run television channel and interrupt the news bulletin at 3 pm.

**Wednesday, 17th of December**

The central offices of the General Confederation of Labour of Greece (GSEE) is occupied by a group of about 70 workers in order to criticise the trade unionist bureaucracy and promote the idea of a politically independent union.

University students hang two giant banners on the Acropolis rock with slogans calling for mass demonstrations the next day across Europe and resistance.

**Thursday, 18th of December**

A big demonstration of about 20,000 people takes place, including lots of workers who are on strike. The demonstrators try to attack the new Xmas tree which gets protected by the police, a ridiculous picture of the state force protecting capitalist-religious symbols.

After a similar demo in the city of Patra the local Workers’ Centre gets occupied following the example of the occupation of the GSEE. An anarchist demo with a few hundred people takes place organised by immigrant and anti racist organisations.

**Friday, 19th of December**

Around 100 people interrupt the premiere of the National Theatre in Athens. The text distributed to the audience and actors reads, among other things: ‘now that you’ve deactivated your mobile phones, it’s about time you activated your consciousness’.

**Saturday, 20th of December**

During the day 3 radio stations are occupied.

**Monday, 22nd of December**

The Town Hall of Peristeri is occupied by about 100 people. A mafia type gang attacks a migrant cleaner, Konstantina Kuneva, 44, the secretary of the cleaners’ union, as she is returning home from work late in the evening.

**Saturday, 27th of December**

At noon, 300 people occupy the headquarters building of ISAP, which hires Kuneva’s cleaning company, as a first response to the brutal attack on her.
anarchism has been central to the global movement against capitalism, pushing for a social revolution in which there is a need not only to get rid of global capitalism but also the state. Instead of the sectarianism of the authoritarian left, over who gets to rule once a “working class” is established, the anarchists worked on the ground together with workers, students and non-political people and saw themselves not as the vanguard but as among the many authoritarians worked on the ground movement against capitalism, pushing anarchism has been central to the global movement against capitalism, pushing for a social revolution in which there is a need not only to get rid of global capitalism but also the state. Instead of the sectarianism of the authoritarian left, over who gets to rule once a “working class” is established, the anarchists worked on the ground together with workers, students and non-political people and saw themselves not as the vanguard but as among the many authoritarians worked on the ground movement against capitalism, pushing anarchism has been central to the global movement against capitalism, pushing.

Many acts in the Greek uprising are reminiscent of 1968 in Paris, blending humour and mischief. Many activists focused only on the spectacle of various events, like interrupting TV shows with banners reading that people should rather turn off the TV and start rioting, or theatre performances with banners that were funny but don’t necessarily lead to the overthrow of capitalism and/or the state. The problem is that they see the uprising as well as such spectacles as an end in itself.

The riot, in general, was not felt in any significant way in the workplaces, in the sense that no strikes were called to support it. The only exceptions were the teachers’ strike on the day of Alexis’ funeral and the big participation in the strike against the state budget on the 10th of December. Apart from these, the rebellion left workplaces untouched. [7] Any revolution, however, has to link workers with other oppressed people, to be successful. The general strike, brought about only by workers, is still one of the most important elements to bring about a social revolution. The people involved in the uprising should have made links with workers to spread the insurrection and take over the factories.

Although this uprising has not brought about a Greek revolution, it has brought tens of thousands into the anti-authoritarian movement and taught them how to fight in the streets, created thousands of popular assemblies as well as strengthened existing groups, and shown both the insurrectionary populace and the government and capitalists that the power truly does lie with the people. [8]

Lessons from the Uprising

In the light of the global economic crisis, events like those in Greece will happen all around the world. It is important for us to organise so that we can take over the factories and the land and not only show our finger in demonstrations. A new world can only be created by ourselves, but it cannot be created by protests alone. The Greek uprising also shows the importance of international solidarity.

It is only a matter of time until the economic crisis will hit South Africa hard and will add to the already existing unbearable conditions for the majority of the population. Will the revolutionary left be prepared to take this further than demonstrations or left sectarianism? Will we see that no political party can lead the people but that the people have to make the revolution themselves? Will we try to push for everything in a situation that threatens us with nothing?

The Greek anarchists are known for their insurrectionary and anti-organisational tendencies. It is because of this that anarchists are often seen as chaotic looters with no concrete goal. We have seen that this can lead to an important uprising, but after a while it will die down. This situation brings anarchists in Greece in front of a new reality, to sit down and examine ways of forming a serious, militant and coherent organisation, an anarchist organisation of the class struggle – linked to rank-and-file workers – and not only engage in spontaneous actions, so that the uprising and occupations can spread.

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**Notes:**

* This article uses data and analyses of our comrades abroad, all of whom would be too many to name – except those that are explicitly quoted – and includes first hand accounts of the events in Greece. It should be noted, however, that much of this analysis and especially the chronology are based on articles by the left communists Blaumachen and TGTP. The article is also based on many discussions with our comrade Kornnias Poriazis, who wrote parts of this article and whom I wish to thank. Special thanks also go to our comrade Dimitri who read and commented on this article before publishing.

1. The Greek police has a long history of killing ordinary youth, about 100 have been killed in recent decades. Not a single policeman was ever convicted. Nikos Raptis (2008) Greek Teenagers: http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/19930
4. Correspondence with our comrade Dimitri, a Greek anarchist
5. Ibid
7. Blaumachen (2009) Like a winter...

### Sunday, 28th of December

People participate in actions against the opening of shops and block entrances. In Greece shops are normally closed on Sundays but the government decided to open them “exceptionally” in the centre of Athens in order to compensate the damage the “shop-owners” suffered in previous weeks. Another example of the state protecting capitalism.

### Wednesday, 31st of December

There are 4 new occupations in Greece. A gathering against the bombing of the Israeli army in Gaza and the occupation in Palestine takes place.

Half an hour before midnight and New Year, a crowd of approximately 1,000 people gather outside the prison of Athens to show their solidarity to the prisoners who have been arrested in the riots in previous weeks.

### Friday, 9th of January

After a few days of break new clashes between protesters and police take place in Athens during an educational protest-match.
The MLC - not to be confused with an “MLC” established by “right-libertarian” Cuban businessmen in Miami in 1984 - was established in New York in 1961 by exiled anarchist and syndicalist militants of the Libertarian Association of Cuba (ALC, founded in 1939, but whose roots lay in the national anarchist federation established in 1924). Today the MLC has branches in Mexico, France, Spain and apparently Venezuela. The powerful Cuban anarchist movement remains one of the most neglected by students of revolutionary history. Deeply involved with the liberation struggles against both Spanish then American imperialism, and notably progressive in its anti-racism in this former slave colony and in its education of girls alongside boys, the movement dominated the Cuban labour movement for 55 years until the formation of the 200,000-strong anarcho-syndicalist Cuban National Confederation of Labour (CNOC) in 1925, the same year a tiny 100-strong Cuban Communist Party (PCC) was founded.

Innovatory in the overthrow of vicious US-backed dictator Gerardo Machado in 1933, the Cuban syndicalist movement was driven underground by dictator Fulgencio Batista - who tried to supplant it with a yellow, state-run union federation headed by PCC stooges in 1938. Batista even took two Communist Party members into his cabinet in 1940, and it took his ousting by Ramón Grau in 1944 to end Cuban communism’s flirtation with Batista. In fact it took the counter-revolution of 1959-1963 in which populist demagogue lawyer Fidel Castro (a former leader of the bourgeois-nationalist Orthodox Party) used his ill-gotten control of the Cuban armed forces to suppress the true anti-Batista revolutionary forces of the syndicalists, syndicalists and others who had taken Havana (1) and to rehabilitate Batista’s hated old allies, the PCC.

Thus the CACF considers Castroist Cuba to be ruled by a militarized right-populist dictatorship. Castro’s first cabinet contained not one single working class member; it rapidly crushed the trade union movement; it became Francoist Spain’s biggest trading partner from 1967; and when Nazi-supporting right-populist Juan Perón of Argentina died in 1974, Castro declared three days of national mourning. Today Cuba is rotten to the core, one of the world’s few remaining museums to decayed militarist arrogance and the egomania of a dying “Maximum Leader”. And yet the Cuban anarchist movement is starting to rebuild: In Cuba in the early 1980s, according to a report by ABC Latinoamerica that was reprinted in Black Flag No 195 (November-December 1989), “the Zapata Group, an agrarian anarchist-syndicalist group ... first emerged ... to challenge the Stalinist practices of the Cuban dictatorship. The group saw itself as following in the traditions of the great Mexican revolutionaries Emilio Zapata and Flores Magon: they took part in industrial agitation and unionisation. Free syndicates were not tolerated and members of the group were forced to operate clandestinely. In 1982 several large-scale strikes took place. The authorities decided to clamp down and rid themselves of the strike militants. The police moved in swiftly and rounded up 20 members of the Zapata Group. They were accused of trying to form an independent union and of industrial sabotage. Five of the 20 were sentenced to death. One of them, Carida Paron, died in prison – she was tortured to death in the Villa Marista interrogation centre. Anarchist exiles began immediately a campaign to save the five. Communiqués about their fate were sent out to groups around the world. Many of these communiqués did not reach their destination, information about the campaign was suppressed, in some cases there was even disbelief that this sort of thing could happen in Cuba underlining the general ignorance of many outside Cuba about the true picture of what was happening in that country. In consequence international support was largely confined to exiles in Central America and the USA. As a result of the international support the death sentences were commuted, the five instead being given long-term jail sentences. Only the fate of one, Donato (Angel Donato Martinez), is known for all, the others four may still be inside, or they may be dead. Donato is believed to be inside the Combinado del Este prison, near Havana. Information as to his precise conditions is unknown. His supporters in exile believe his situation will improve if interest in him increases internationally. The treatment of anarchists and agrarian-syndicalists in Cuba - who demand liberty, land and collectivisation - over the years by the Cuban authorities has been that of continuous persecution, imprisonment and - more often than not - death. Many activists rarely find their way to prison but are later taken by the death squads and killed. Since 1982 we know of several militants who have had their lives ended in this fashion. Ramon Toledo Lugo and Armando Hernandez were both killed by the death squads. Others have been given 30 year prison sentences - people like the brothers David, Carlos and Jorge Cardo, Jesus Varda, Israel Lopez Toledo, and Timoteo Toledo Lugo. Certain of their wives were also imprisoned on conspiracy charges.” The report ends by saying: “The above represent only a tiny fraction of the anarchist and syndicalist struggle inside Cuba. The struggle has been isolated, but it continues. It is long-time that it was widened and internationalised.”

On July 19, 2003, a group of 30 anarchist militants, old and young, celebrated the anniversary of the Spanish Revolution in the suburb of La Víbora, Havana. A Swedish Workers’ Central Organisation (SAC) fact-finding visit to Cuba in the mid-2000s found a syndicalist movement operating underground [2]. The Cuban anarchist movement lives on and will survive Castro’s hoary old state-capitalist regime. In 2005, Celia Hart Santamaria, a member of the Cuban Communist Party and member of a ruling class family who decried the “inertia” of the party and the existence of “certain mechanisms of capitalist restoration” in Cuba, appealed to the anarchists and other true revolutionaries to build a Cuban leftist alternative - while claiming that “to the left of Fidel is only the chasm”. In response, the MLC said that this chasm was “the absence of liberty, equality and solidarity” [3]. The MLC called for a minimum programme to build a true Cuban leftist alternative platform that would have three planks: the demilitarisation of the Cuban state and society; the direct self-management of the economy by the workers; and the reclamation “with force and determination” of the right of the Cuban people to freely associate and organise their own independent formations. The MLC statement ended with the telling words that... to the left of Fidel there isn’t any chasm, any cliff, any deep hole. What opens up, not to the right of Fidel but to his left, Celia, is nothing more nor less than the wide course of liberty.

Introduction by ZACF

MLC: With respect to the situation in Cuba these past few weeks [May 2008], the Cuban Libertarian Movement – MLC (affinity group of Cuban anarchists in exile) speaks up to answer the unknowns and the challenges facing Cuban society. Ours is the voice of uncompromising commitment to freedom, equality and solidarity that has always been the sound
of the Cuban anarchists.

Indeed, something begins to smell different in Cuba; perhaps in tune with the flavor of the post-Fidel era. For starters, that verbosity that filled all spaces until the 26th of July of 2006 is no longer there, where it was heard for almost half a century. Since then, the problem has been known, but having to write, but we all know that the written word doesn’t have the same spell as the spoken word and even less when it is elusive, erratic and lacking in interest to anybody who thinks outside of the personality cult. Maybe that is why so many, more than was foreseen, in the streets, in clandestine films, in household blogs, show a desire to liberate the people’s voice from the ties that bind it.

Even the first violins in the governmental orchestra, surely egged on by the same old confidential and carefully whispered comments growing louder by the day, but not yet to receive what would have been unthinkable years ago. Vice-president Carlos Lage, for example, recently proclaimed at the VII congress of the UNEAC (National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists): “The dual morality, the prohibitions, a press that doesn’t write of our reality as we would like to, the unwelcome inequalities, our dilapidated infrastructure, are wounds of war, but of a war we have won.” (4). It’s transition language, no doubt, since they can’t even keep alive much longer those moribund triumphal bellissimo airs after admitting that the wounds are too many and too severe for a political regime self-conceived and presented to the world as “revolutionary” and “socialist”, even admitting that the military victory only means keeping the elite in power.

Even more direct and piercing than Lage’s was the language used by Alfredo Guevara in the aforementioned comments of the nullification, charging against undeniable stalwarts of “revolutionary” pride such as educational achievements. About them, Guevara asked himself: “Can the primary, secondary and pre-university schools, such as they have become, managed by absurd criteria and ignorant of elementary pedagogic and psychological principles, violating family rights, be the forming mold for children and adolescents, and hence of the future?” He answers that “it can never be solidly built out of dogma, stubbornness, ignorance of reality or by dismissing whistleblowers and the citizenship”. This is a clear show of discomfort and even sorrow that Guevara quickly extended to the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television – under the direct supervision of the Ideological Department of the Communist Party – whose offices he called “neo-colonial media with its stupid programming dominated by such enormous ignorance that they don’t even know they are allies of capitalism in their obscene manifestation” (5).

Such discourses, however, in spite of their virulence and their bitter complaints, don’t quite criticize in depth the whole power scheme nor disturb its survival.

Old Perfume in New Bottles?
The web of power doesn’t seem to have changed too much besides the loss of its charismatic component. There will be no longer a Moses to guide the people through the Red Sea nor to angrily smash the tablets, and everybody knows there is no marketing campaign capable of rendering Raúl Castro a seducer. Therefore, the state’s discourse, suddenly deprived of its most inspiring flights of fancy, doesn’t have any other recourse than minimal sincerity and appeals to efficiency.

Today everybody knows – and now by word of the highest hierarchy of the State or its press – that Cuba can’t produce enough food for its population, that agriculture is in a ruinous situation without immediate solution, that the transportation system is ancient, that a good portion of the population of Havana able to work doesn’t even bother to obtain employment because it’s just not worth the trouble! (6). There continues to be a deficit in water transport, etc. Everybody also knows about the “excess of prohibitions and measures that hurt more than they help” because, a few months before Lage, the then-acting and later elected, President Raúl Castro said it that way in person during his year-end speech at the National Assembly of Popular Power (7).

Nobody doubts that this all has to change and there are very few remaining that have not yet become aware that credit is for a finite time and patience runs thin. For the great majority of the people the changes have to be now – hic et nunc, they would say in Latin – or they will never happen.

But of course, those changes are in the hands of the people who should take responsibility for the situation and that’s why you can’t expect much from intelligences and attitudes that up to now they haven’t been able to demonstrate. For this reason the “changes” that have been proposed are trivial: permits for the sale of certain medicines in the neighborhood pharmacies, or cell phones which until yesterday were only available from a friend visiting from abroad, permits for farmers to buy agricultural tools, seeds and fertilizer! And also for the permanent use of unproductive state land, permits for computer access, DVDs and car alarms for those with convertible currency, and also allowing Cubans to stay at the hotels that up top now were reserved exclusively for foreign tourists. What is surprising is not the fact that such prohibitions have been lifted but that such mundane things have been prohibited at all! Meanwhile, there’s a fundamental permit among so many others we still don’t have: Cubans will have to wait a while longer so that a trip abroad will not constitute a via crucis [a path of sorrow].

The old “commander” stirs in anger or anguish in his convalescent bed and in a letter to the UNEAC congress he expresses the annoyance that an eventual flood of appliances promised take in him: “Can we even guarantee mental and physical health with the unknown effects of so many electromagnetic waves for which neither the human body nor the human mind have evolved? The UNEAC congress can not fail to address these thorny issues”, (8).

His apocalyptic roaring is significant; mostly because he himself has been during all these years the Cuban most exposed to such “electromagnetic waves”. On the other hand there is a certain enigmatic tone in his exhortation to a congress of intellectuals and artists (8) where he asks: “Beyond these comings and goings, it’s time to get used to the idea that the coming avalanche of “liberties” is not general and even less constitutes an abandonment of the harsh punitive measures or of the classic and absurd prohibitions: not paying your bus fare, with its attendant disturbance may be considered an “act of vandalism” that will land its perpetrators in jail (9), while those who want to have their own blog will be blocked under the assumption that, by its circulation and use of certain programs, they may endanger “national security” (10). Some prohibitions, considered “excessive”, begin to fall on their own weight, but none of that for the time being enables the institutionalized promotion of essential freedoms; amply demonstrated by the harassment of counter-cultural youth initiatives. We can show as evidence the citations and “inconveniences” suffered by the rock band Porno para Ricardo and in particular the harassment of its lead singer Gorki Aguilera.

Self-Management: An Aroma of Freedom and Equality in Solidarity

Something smells different in Cuba, yes; but not enough to harbor too many illusions about the strategy for change that seems to guide the steps of the fossilized “vanguard”. In our view, the current flexibility is due to certain basic political and economic reasons. Among the political reasons, it’s worthwhile to note in the first place the need to make it understood that a change of orientation

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is taking place and that such change is the telltale sign of the transition from one Castro to another; and second, it’s urgent to encourage minimal expectations in a population that has begun to show with increasing clarity its growing discontent. Among the economic reasons these measures are geared to obtaining additional resources to realize the socialist state coffers that are in no condition to finance the importation of basic needs and for which the large Venezuelan subsidy is not enough; a contribution of foreign currency not everybody can afford. Betting midterm the most frantic search surely consists of finding a way for the nation to recover lost productivity levels and food self-sufficiency before the situation really gets unbearable. Along this road, and not as the result of a coherent project, it is a matter of adopting the “Chinese model” in combination with other initiatives along the “Vietnamese model”, as has been recognized by Omar Everly professor and high level director of the Center for the Study of Cuban Economy (11). Meanwhile, Raúl Castro was more eloquent in his year-end speech and together with his wishes for a happy 2008, he said goodbye with the vanguard “materialist” equivalent of governmental hocus pocus: “Let’s work hard!” (12).

The political regime wants to show a more flexible face, but that doesn’t seem to be anything other than a self-preservation tactic; something that the stubbornness and pride of the “commander in chief” had not allowed up to now. The extensive network of State repression and control is intact but, even so, we must celebrate that in Cuba there is a healthy tendency to broadcast a discourse different from the official one: one with a different content, different shades, and different rhythm, via other media that are not those still managed economy also wants to be plenary, seeking expression on levels that are not purely economical but include people’s whole lives. Self-management is not a decoration but a principle, is not a model for the occasion but a liberating and revolutionary project by which people can re-invent Cuban society.

Thus, many of us fear that the seditious “self-management” proposals circulating around the country are no further than the search for a renewed identification of the workers with the state’s enterprises aimed at increasing productivity, something the government may concede with a dropper to small agricultural cooperatives connected with the food industry. That is why it is not generalized and genuine self-management but another turn of the governmental screw that allows the elite the power to extend its time frame and to renew its capacity to control the workers.

Self-management, as we anarchists understand it, can’t even be thought of if it isn’t based on widespread people’s freedom and autonomy for grassroots organizations. To put it clearly: those seditious “self-managers” manifesting in Cuba today will only appreciate one part of the problem as long as they’re not capable of seeing that self-management is not possible in a repressive milieu with an exuberant military and police apparatus, with a monopoly by the only party over all the mechanisms of expression and decision-making and with a perpetual disciplinary alignment of “mass” organizations with the power elite. As long as this doesn’t change, it is true that something begins to smell different in Cuba but it is also true that the government continues to act as the most efficient deodorant. Once again we’ll have to opt not for faith in the worn-out machinery of domination but in trusting people’s capacity for conquering and expanding their own spaces of freedom. To remember these things on such an emblematic occasion as May Day is for the Cuban Libertarian Movement another signature of its dedication to anarchism and socialism; it is our emotional evocation of our far-away roots and above all a committed reaffirmation of a horizon of freedom in unmistakable brother/sisterhood with all the people worldwide who struggle for their freedom.

Notes:
1. For more detail on the Cuban anarchist and syndicalist movement, email the ML at movimentoliberariatricubano@gmail.com / movimentoliberariatricubano@yahoo.com.mx or read the following books:
2. Interviews conducted by Michael Schmidt (ZACF) in 2004 with Acracia Fernandez (MLC Mexico) and S. of the Sveriges Abetare
   Centralorganisation (Sweden).
An inter-imperialist clash is taking place in the Caucasus in which the Georgian dwarf is acting on behalf of the United States. The perfectly predictable and immediate Russian response - awarding Putin the first round - has only highlighted what an imbecile Georgia’s president is.

As a good nationalist, he (once again) makes the choice in favour of an armed diversion, counting on US assistance which, though, was never going to be in the form of military intervention, when he should instead have been thinking about his country’s disastrous state. By way of aside, it was another fine example of how dangerous it can be to be an ally of Washington.

Having said that, let’s have a look at the question of imperialism in the age of globalization. As we know well, imperialism first began to be talked around at the end of the 19th century and early 20th, during a particular phase of development of the capitalist system. The best-known study at the time, published in 1902, was by John Hobson. But the first serious economic study of the question goes back to Charles A. Conant in 1898 and his “Economic Basis of Imperialism”, published in the North American Review. “Classical” imperialism is seen as a sort of historical expansionism, driven both by an excess of capitalist accumulation and thus needing to be “exported” (and despite low consumption levels in the imperialist countries’ internal markets) and the need to acquire new sources of cheap raw materials and new markets. Imperialism has therefore generally been defined as the imposition by a single State of its economic and political dominance over foreign territories and/or States, to the benefit of the imperialist’s national capital. This phenomenon may also make use of colonialism in the strict sense, that is to say the formal, direct appropriation of territories (and populations) in order to exploit them; nonetheless, it is not the same thing as colonialism as such.

Imperialism, then, is a form of monopolistic appropriation or control of raw materials, energy sources and the export of capital; on the ideological front it has to some extent become mixed up with the European nationalism that flowered in the 19th century with its sentiments (at times masked by humanitarianism) of racial superiority - something that was by no means introduced by German Nazism (how many recall, for example, Winston Churchill’s revolting racism?).

The interpretation of the imperialist phenomenon provided by Lenin is now a classic one. It is an interpretation that has gone to the economic roots, establishing the high level of development in the concentration of production and capital which gives rise to monopolies; the formation (through the fusion of industrial capital and bank capital) of a strong financial capital and, therefore, a financial oligarchy; the growing importance (not just qualitative) of the export of capital in relationship with the export of goods; the division of world markets between the great powers. Looking at this analysis, and thus sharing the point of view of economic phenomenology, today’s globalization may be considered to be a further derivation, in today’s age of high information technology, of the situation as studied by Lenin.

It has been said in modern times that we have passed into a neo-imperialist phase characterized by a merely informal (moral and media) form of domination, and that the role which took the place of fear of war and which took the place of fermentation for labor is the possibility to share the opinion that the essential objective is simply to maintain the unequal exchange system of value-labour. As far as I can see, our perspective must be overturned: it is energy resources that now have a vital, primary character. Indeed, we should be asking ourselves if the unequal exchange is nothing more than a means to enable domination, not the object of domination itself.

US imperialism outside the American continent has developed over various phases. After World War II it was associated with the intention of undermining the surviving European colonial system in order to create a series of client States for Washington, formally independent. This phase has generally been defined as a neo-colonialist phase, with local governments at the service of US multinationals and US political and military interests. The area of domination was formed whose basis was provided thanks to military intervention, intelligence operations and above all the work of financial institutions, both international (e.g. the IMF) and US - not to mention the armed forces of the client States. With the collapse of the USSR’s satellite system followed by the USSR itself, the possibility was created for the United States to greatly extend its position of world dominion, thanks also to the spread of the neo-liberal ideology of globalization and the feeling of total impunity which took the place of fear of the enemy behind the Iron Curtain. Since
the rise to power of George W. Bush, the oil lobby has becoming a determinant of imperialist policies (though still as part of a military-industrial complex), and Clinton’s conservative line gave way to the ultra-right line [sic.] of the current US presidency, which supports permanent war and military occupations, as well as theorizing the right of the United States not to feel bound by any international treaty if it is not in its national interests to do so.

The United States’ enemies today - apart from Islamic fundamentalism, which the US itself fostered through its infancy - are China and Russia, irrespective of the formal nature of diplomatic relations, be they friendly or less so. China, still the world’s most heavily-populated country, today seems to be the only State that is capable of challenging the USA in about fifteen or twenty years’ time. The enormous financial liquidity which China enjoys allows China to act as an investor on a worldwide scale, and to support industrial projects from South Africa to Venezuela, Sudan to Indochina, creating agreements which manage corridors of raw materials from the Caspian to oil to its industrial areas in the South-East, areas where it it one of the big competitors along with Russia, the USA and local powers such as Iran and India, as well as the Shanghai Pact’s anti-Islamic gendarme. China’s gigantic financial surplus is also the fruit of the decades of accumulation resulting from the second path of “parallel development” (profits from agriculture invested in industrialization) that was followed by China from the late 1960s to the early 70s, which consisted in the exploitation of Chinese workers and the determination, appropriation and management of surpluses by the Chinese State, which did not (and still does not) disdain from using open repression.

In reality, there never was a transition to communism in China, no technocratic bureaucracy ever took power, what we have seen over the past 60 years is State capitalist management by a rigid bureaucratic centralism that is today carrying out a transition to capitalism in its most savage form, but without troubling itself with going through the phase of Western-style political democracy. We should bear in mind that China’s “economic miracle”, apart from being based on the fierce exploitation of the working class and peasants, has made great use of a policy of exports directed at a world economy which is already vastly indebted, and which continues to aim well beyond its boundaries.

China’s real rate of development is around 10% per annum (if not more): back in 1998 it already produced 11.5% of the world’s GDP and it is calculated that by 2015, its internal market will have reached enormous levels. Nevertheless, China is largely dependent on oil supplies, due to its own low production. It is believed that by 2015 it will need to import at least 4 million barrels a day, half the current output of Saudi Arabia. The United States sees China’s policies as a seriously disturbing factor on the strategic, economic and political scene in Asia, Africa and Latin America, beginning locally to take control of natural resources. China tends to treat far-Eastern seas as if the Romans did their “Mare Nostrum”, the Mediterranean, containing Japan and keeping an eye on the US military presence. Myanmar is in it and it is seeking to extend its influence towards the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. In Asia, China - together with Russia - has also recently extended its influence to the ex-Soviet republics where US influence has weakened, such as Uzbekistan. There are rumours of the Taliban being supplied by the Chinese as a sort of anti-US measure, but at the current state of affairs it is impossible to say more.

In southern China, 1,850 km of roads are being built and the natural defensive barriers of the Himalayan foothills are being strengthened. “Road No.3” which directly links the Chinese city of Kunning with Bangkok also crosses the scarcely-populated regions of northern Vietnam and Laos, giving the idea of a precise geo-strategic Chinese expansion. China provides technical and military aid to Pakistan, including nuclear technology. And there is no shortage of news agency sources claiming that the Chinese secret services are not unaware of the transfer of nuclear technology from Pakistan to Iran, North Korea and Libya. Moreover, the construction of a large port complex at the Gwadar naval base on the Arabian Sea gives China strategic access to the Persian Gulf and an outpost on the Indian Ocean. Finally, Tibet is being subjected to a policy of Chinese colonialization.

It is well known that there has been an increase in political and economic ties between Beijing and the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, as well as those countries who have been on the US blacklist for some time, like Iran, Sudan and Venezuela. Sudan and Iran are among China’s top ten oil suppliers, but so too are Angola, Congo and Equatorial Guinea. China has also started to export capital, irking Washington into forming anti-China alliances. Above all in Africa, at present, this is an important factor, given that trade between China and Africa had already reached something like $40 billion in 2005, an increase of 35% compared to the previous year. African oil reserves have turned out to be extremely interesting, so much so that in the 90s, China invested $8 billion in Sudan and $9 billion in Nigeria in 2005, and also provided Angola with a $2.5 billion loan (at very attractive rates) in 2004 with which to rebuild the country, shattered after 27 years of civil war. This was an initiative with serious political effects, as it allowed the Angolan government to reject an offer from the IMF, with its consequent, devastating, neoliberal policies.

Neither should we ignore the fact that the US trade deficit with China - $202 billion in 2005 - has certainly not been getting smaller. China has become a sort of banker to the United States as it continues to buy US Treasury Bonds and has amassed huge currency reserves in dollars (these currency reserves and Treasury Bonds were calculated in 2004 as amounting to $600 billion). It is thus evident that, while on the one hand China is helping to support the dollar by affecting interest rates, on the other hand it is equally in a position to impose conditions. And this is an extremely dangerous situation, because if one day the financial and economic difficulties of the United States worsen to the point that it can no longer face up to its various foreign debts, who will guarantee that US leaders do not resort to wiping their slate clean by means of a nice war? It would be a classic. At the moment, however, the United States is being forced to maintain an “elastic” attitude towards Beijing, as it needs China to go on financing its debt and buying its Treasury Bonds.

Some commentators have been convinced that, if things continue along these lines, then China will be the world leader in trade by 2020. We shall see. The possibility of China becoming a reasonable autonomous economic giant can be seen in the non-correspondence between levels of
foreign capital investment in China and the volume of Western sales on Chinese markets. The marked imbalance between Chinese exports and imports, which lies at the root of the economic boom in the old “Middle Empire”, still results in the West still dreaming about making China a huge market for “first world” produce. As the Indian Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen underlined, the Maoist age bequeathed China a “Middle Empire”, still results in the economic boom in the West; thus, the country also enjoys the precious resource of a mass of good-quality university graduates, amongst whom numerous engineers with a variety of specializations, to the extent that for some time now, American industry has realized that China is able to produce excellent electrical components at a lower price. The increased Chinese consumption has undoubtedly contributed to the increase in oil prices, causing a crisis for US consumers, who are starting to realize how uneconomical their gas-guzzlers have become. But the best has yet to come, given that we are talking about a country of 1.3 billion inhabitants, compared with the measly 300 million in the United States.

On a military level, too, China is no joke. China’s military spending is second only to the US and Pentagon experts - who are studying the possible scenarios of a future war with China - believe that this country has the best military potential in order to compete with the USA, and the destructive military technology that would enable it to counterbalance the United States’ traditional advantage. It is an accident that (according to news published at the time of the recent Olympics) that most Chinese missiles are aimed at the USA.

Then there is post-Yeltsin Russia, which Putin has more or less put back on its feet and returned it to the level of a great power, if only to a more local level. For over five years now, the Russian economy has been growing rapidly (at least 7% a year), thanks in part to the quick-fire increases in energy prices. Two thirds of income, and about half of the Russian balance, derive from the sales of oil and gas, and the growth from this has allowed Russia to accumulate hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars in gold and foreign currency, to pay off slices of its foreign debt to the International Monetary Fund, and to carry out an impressive programme of macroeconomic and financial stabilization. However, Russia cannot describe itself as a healthy country, economically speaking, given that its pro-capita income is still very low, around 35% of the EU and 25% of the USA. In wider terms, the Russian global economy is dangerously fragile due to its great dependency on trade in oil and gas, to which must be added its low level of economic diversification in recent years and the terrible state of its manufacturing industry, which is at best weak and in certain sectors actually declining further. It must be said, however, that any future fall in energy prices could in theory be compensated for by using the huge resources it has accumulated thus far and by means of foreign public spending increases, in particular investments. There is of course also the unknown factor of inflation.

Of course, it is US obstuseness that has laid the premise for such an agreement with Russia no longer the Cinderella it once was. In other words, it is well known that the war in Iraq caused an increase in the price of crude oil even excluding the increase in Chinese consumption; and its effects could not exclude the hydrocarbons sector, with the consequence that in the end the rise was so great that even the US economic system could not handle it, all to the advantage of Russia and Gazprom. As we have said, this situation has allowed Russia to make huge cuts in its foreign debt, from 80% of GDP to around 25-20%; it is a situation that has permitted an upturn in the Russian economy to such an extent. Russia is not only carrying on a re-composition of its military strength, it is also, most importantly, seeking an economic reconstruction of what remains of the Commonwealth of Independent States. With Ukraine’s Naftogaz now out of the running, wallowing in debt, Russia can get that pipeline (at a cost of $5 billion) a gas pipeline as far as the Baltic Sea to supply Germany and the UK, cutting out both Turkey and Poland and Ukraine, in such a way as to bring Central Asian gas reserves under its control. Because of the EU’s energy dependency on Russia, we cannot exclude the possibility that the trouble will strengthen against the euro; in any event, Russia’s new currency reserves will allow Moscow to take on a growing role and hegemony in the Euro-Asiatic states of the ex- USSR; they have also permitted Russia to improve its economic relations with India (to whom it has become the biggest arms supplier) and Japan.

Although China is currently ahead of Russia as far as exports are concerned - in particular in telecommunications, large infrastructure and public works - Russia is making huge progress in the IT sector, where it has seen a growth of at least 50%. It is calculated that by 2010 Russia will be in a position to earn around $15 billion in the export of information technology, thereby becoming the world leader in this sector; 10 years before that, it was earning no more than $200 million. Not many people know today about one third of all Microsoft software is produced by Russian workers (both at home and abroad) and that Russia is currently the third biggest exporter in this sector, after China and India.

Let us now examine the events in Georgia and Ossetia. I do not think there can be any doubt that they are part of an inter-imperialist clash between Russia and the United States, even though certain aspects appear to indicate the contrary. After the disastrous period that followed the implosion of the Soviet Union, Russia never really completed its internal restructuring, and it does not seem to be in a position to engage in an imperialist competition with the United States, particularly outside its own geographic area. Its new energy for international economic and political relations is part of a phase of expansion, that much is true; but as things stand at present, it is more defensive than offensive. It is defensive with regard to the perfectly obvious encirclement manoeuvre by the United States, which has already installed itself militarily in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan: in other words in the same Central Asia where, up to 2002, Russia was in a position of check. The checkmate, however, never materialized. The Baltic states, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine currently have pro-US governments; there is the question of US missile installations in Poland; and there is the strength of the pressure from Ukraine and Georgia to join NATO. Indeed, there is no shortage of justifications for Russia’s reaction to the Georgian attack on separatist Ossetia, a country which the West denies the right of political self-determination that it was so happy to impose on behalf of Kosovo against Serbia with massive bombardments (the first against a European State since World War II). It is of course true that Russia’s stout defence of Ossetian self-determination is seasoned with a good dose of hypocrisy, since it denies Chechnya the same thing it demands for Ossetia. But that’s the way it is. Realpolitik is one thing, consistency is quite another. If anything, it is sad to see the populations involved in these recurring nationalist disputes (and the underlying economic interests which are entirely unconnected) not developing any sort of movement in demand of their real social interests.

But for Russia there is one prime area of interest that is susceptible to imperialist development: the energy question. Apart from its connection with Russian defence needs, the Ossetia-Georgia problem is directly linked to the BTC oil pipeline that
is being built (from Baku in Azerbaijan to Ceyhan in Turkey, via Tbilisi in Georgia), which runs alongside the border of the Russian Federation. Azerbaijan and Georgia are effectively US protectorates, linked by military cooperation to Israel, which in turn has an interest in the Azeri oilfields that provide about 20% of its oil needs. Russia is therefore part of the world energy competition, independently of the fact that it does not need to import oil or natural gas. Nonetheless, it does need to control the transport of energy, particularly towards Europe. It is by no means absurd to think that a strengthening of this control can strengthen Russia’s position and allow Moscow to restructure itself as a great power, to the detriment of US influence in the region. We are in a phase when the world’s reserves of oil, natural gas, uranium and (for industrial needs) copper and silver are diminishing, and control over them has become vital for the large economies.

There is no doubt that if the United States were able to get its hands on Iranian oil too (as well as Iraqi oil; let us not forget that Iraq has the second-largest proven oil reserves in the world) and reduce the Asiatic-Caucasian States, home to the new oil pipelines, to the rank of docile US vassals, then it everything would be in place for the Yankee establishment’s dream come true of making the 21st century a more American century than the previous one. As far as today’s global situation is concerned, the name of the next inhabitant of the White House is not particularly important because, while it is true that this objective is a driving force behind the current administration, linked as it is to the Texan oil lobby, it is equally true that every President in the near future will have to deal with what is a specific economic and strategic need for the USA (a country, and an economy, which is today going through a serious crisis, with a frightening level of foreign debt, much of which it owes to China). If the project were realized, the resulting choking of China and Russia would have obvious consequences. The great danger of such a situation does not only depend on US military strength but also on the fact that the absolute prevalence of specific US macroeconomic and military interests and its blindness towards any limitations are actually official doctrine in Washington. A sort of globalized Monroe Doctrine which could even lead to the local use of nuclear weapons.

Today, the United States not only has to deal with foreign affairs, it must also see to its own economic system, which makes one think (and hope) that the historical constant of decline following a phase of domination is true for the US, too. Things are going very badly for the US economy and people. The reign of easy living that followed World War II is seriously under threat. The US contribution to the world’s production is at around 23%; the USA is the country with the biggest foreign debt and financial fluxes from Europe, Japan and China are vital in financing America’s deficit. US economic growth is based on a behavioural pattern of American families which reminds one of the fable of “The Cricket and the Ant”, that is to say, consumption way above production levels, resulting in an average indebtedness of US citizens of over 110% of their annual income, which entails increases in the percentage level for the interest on this debt as part of the average spending. The series of exploding financial speculation bubbles has certainly not eased matters and recession is at the door. The United States is an economic and financial power on which all depends and its leaders know only too well that time is against them. This only increases the risk of adventurist policies that would have tragic consequences.

Note:
1. The United States supplies around one third of the world’s oil production, but for some time now has been an importer - and thus dependent.
The following article on Barack Obama’s victory was written by our affiliated organisation in the US, the North-Eastern Federation of Anarchist-Communists (Nefac). We applaud Nefac’s positive attitude towards rechanneling the energy that was spent on the personality cult surrounding Obama into non-partisan community organising. But we feel that several key aspects of the very nature of the US presidency have been ignored by Nefac – aspects of America’s imperialist power that perhaps are clearer to us, located as we are in the “global south”. US Presidents may claim to be self-made men, but in fact they owe their position to powerful sponsors who may see fit to pull strings once they are in the Oval Office. In Obama’s case this may be ameliorated somewhat by the fact that his campaign drummed up an unprecedented amount of money from “ordinary citizens,” a diffuse group who do not exercise power in the same way as corporate sponsors do. The US Presidency is indeed one of the most powerful executive jobs in the world – but let us not forget that it is clearly an imperialist seat, thus whoever occupies it cannot help but advance the imperialist cause. But beyond Obama’s considerable presidential powers, including those as commander-in-chief of all US armed forces, there exist several other somewhat less visible and mostly unaccountable and unelected centres of power in the US beyond the judiciary (US Supreme Court etc) and legislature (Senate and House of Representatives): firstly the “military-industrial complex” (ironically, former US President Lyndon B. Johnson’s phrase), the core of corporations based on the oil and defence which often drive US foreign policy in a protectionist and war-mongering fashion; and secondly the state bureaucracy itself, one of the world’s largest and most powerful (including its intelligence agencies, which drove the illegitimate war on Iraq), which has its own strategic foreign interests separate to those of the incumbent Presidency and which because it is unelected has longer tenure in office and thus longer-range objectives than incumbent parties; and lastly the plutocracy, the wealthy old-boys’ club of lobbyists from Washington and elsewhere who push their own private agenda, including the imperialist “Project for an American Century,” usually sweetening their temptation with offers of financial or political backing.

While changes of the hot-seat from Republican to Democrat have usually involved more progressive foreign policy initiatives, this is hardly always the case. For example, US support for Pinochet in Chile (who they had helped install by CIA-sponsored coup d’état in ’73) actually waned in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan despite Reagan’s obvious support for the far right (Iran-Contra scandal etc) because Washington felt that times were changing and its economic and strategic objectives could be better served in changing circumstances by loosening the iron grip of the Latin American dictatorships they had coddled for so long. Also, Democrat John F. Kennedy (and that Stalinist adventurer Cliché Guevara) took the world to the brink of nuclear war over the Cuban missile issue. The issues at stake today are American realpolitik, not the personal dreams of Obama. A Democrat in the White House will not necessarily act more democratically abroad. It is widely expected by even mainstream political commentators that for all of the above reasons Obama in office will be forced to move from a nominally progressive towards a centrist position in the American political landscape, and support the Washington Consensus (ie: US supremacy) abroad, bending the world to the will of the US. Yes, he is likely to have a slightly different timetable for the troop withdrawal from Iraq, but he is unlikely to ever challenge the oil oligarch’s control of Iraqi oil-fields because that stabilises the US’s oil-hungry economy – and he is likely to increase the troop presence in Afghanistan instead. Yes he is likely to send more aid to Africa, but then George W Bush sent more aid to Africa than Bill Clinton did (it’s part of their winning hearts and minds strategy for the “arc of instability” that stretches from Colombia and Venezuela through the Sahel and Sahara into Central Asia) – although the strings attached to Obama’s aid may prove less onerous for Africans. Having eschewed playing the race card in his campaign (although many of his supporters openly embraced a race-ascendancy argument), Obama is unlikely to embark on more than token welfarist protections for poor “people of colour” at home in the US as stabilising the banks becomes the route to “helping the people”. Yes, an Obama presidency has given many “people of colour” cause to celebrate around the world, but we’ll see what tune they hum after Obama invades his first “country of colour” – likely Afghanistan. How quickly they forget Colin Powell’s role in invading Iraq, or Condeleeza Rice’s role in advancing American imperialism in Africa.

We must utterly reject with contempt the racist conceit that a black person in a position of power is automatically a better person for the job because of some inherent virtue located in the colour of their skin. If whites made this argument about a white president, it would be greeted with howls of outrage, so we must be firmly consistent in our application of anarchism’s anti-racist ethic. We must equally reject the nonsense that a black man in the Oval Office or in Tnuhuyus will somehow – by virtue of coming from a disadvantaged background – automatically uplift all black and disadvantaged people. A rising tide does not, contra the capitalist slogan, lift all boats: it tends to sink the poor, leaky ones. Again, the argument is unequivocally racist and hierarchic and simply cannot stand up to anarchist scrutiny. We must see clearly that Obama’s or Zuma’s methods used to recruit for their cause – whether based on open, uplifting emotional appeals to hope or, driven by the cruder elements among their supporters, subtler, baser ones to black racism – are exactly that, methods... for the subjugation of the productive classes to their parasite friends.

- Michael Schmidt (ZACF)
of these were already obvious two years ago as the electoral season opened and the liberals and reformists began their campaign against these issues. However, glaringly missing from their attacks was why these problems existed in the first place.

It is our belief that economic inequality, war, racism, sexism and environmental destruction are inherent in any capitalist society. Consider for a moment the vast wealth that our society creates, everything from crops to advanced medicines. However, the access to this wealth is unequally divided, determined by supposedly free markets. It is assumed by the politicians and corporate media that these supposedly free markets are a natural part of life. Markets, however, are set up by people; they can also be modified or undone by people. As anarchists, we believe that the production and distribution of society’s wealth should be decided democratically, by people, and not by a market mechanism in which fact is controlled by a few.

**Democracy**

Anarchists are absolutely for democracy. The concept that people should come together and make decisions is the backbone of our ideology. However, we do not view the U.S. system of democracy as being representative of those ideals. The Republicans and Democrats exist as two rival factions battling over our consent to be ruled. Both promote rhetoric of common interest with ordinary people, but we feel this is an illusion. The politicians in this nation exist to provide a stable platform for the rule and exploitation of the majority of working people in America by the minority of capitalists; that is, the owners of the property on which we produce the wealth. We build, guard, clean and work in the offices and plants, we transport the goods, and we sell them, but the capitalists own them and pocket the profits. The interests of these two groups are not the same. The boss class wants to get as much from the workers as it can. They want to pay us as little as possible and sell us everything they own as dearly as they can. Unchecked these conditions have led to uprisings. Don’t believe it? Look at our own history! The abolition of slavery, 8-hour day, the right to form unions, overtime pay, child labor laws, the end to legal segregation, the right of women to vote and to choose, and the right of gay and transgender people to be themselves was won not at the ballot box, but by people organizing, striking, boycotting and taking to the streets. The liberals in elective office passed the laws in response to the movements and to head off what could become a revolutionary upsurge.

**Implications of the Election**

Without a doubt this election has been historic. We see two reasons. A Black man has been elected to the highest office in the U.S., a country founded on the mass kidnapping of Africans and the theft of land from the Indigenous people who already lived here. Second, Obama’s campaign was marked by some of the most widespread mass organizing in years.

The US is a nation deeply scarred by racism, and despite what some pundits might believe, it is clear to any working person that racism is nowhere near dead. Racial oppression is a complicated issue, and we do not mean to simplify it. However, a discussion of why racism and white supremacy have been so intractable in US society would have to consider how race has consistently been used as a wedge by the ruling class in its rhetoric and its policy decisions to keep the working class divided along racial lines, and so prevent the class from realizing its full potential as a force capable of self-organizing and overcoming its oppression. The election of a Black man to the presidency of the US represents a real shift in the attitudes of Americans, and we applaud this. However, racism is not just about attitudes. It is integral to the system of exploitation of working people. This systemic racism is what leverages the advantage of the ruling class, and with the increasingly evident magnitude of the economic collapse we are heading into, the ruling class will be aggressively seeking opportunities to defend its advantages. The way forward is for working-class people to organize in their own interests and to champion the aspirations of those who are oppressed by racism. We see social justice movements, neighborhood associations and cop-watch as examples. These sorts of bottom-up movements stand in complete contrast to what will be the top-down efforts of even an Obama administration to address social problems. Such efforts may alleviate some of the symptoms but they will leave the root causes of the problems untouched.

The other significant element of the election was the unprecedented grassroots mobilization that supported Obama’s campaign. Under a banner of change and social justice many thousands of people volunteered, donated money, and did the labor of making the campaign run. We view this trend with great excitement. Imagine what could be gained if that focus on grassroots organizing was taken into the communities we lived in, into direct action on our behalf instead of appeals to power.

We urge for this energy and creativity to go into movements independent of politicians. We encourage the support of unions, neighborhood democracy, resistance to police brutality, support for political prisoners, models for mass education, and also a movement with teeth. Above all, we must struggle for what we need, not what the system is willing to give us.

In addition, we must all be on the watch for expressions of racist hatred and organized fascist movements in the months and years following the election. The truth is that many white Americans are still openly racist, and there are groups that will exploit this, and real anger of social issues, to create violent movements. The news of a Black church burned in Springfield, Massachusetts just hours after the election was not surprising, and we must use all means necessary to stop such movements.

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US NEFAC

November 2008
On Organisational Dualism
What distinguishes our tradition - the tradition of the ZACF and the FdCA - is a commitment to what Anarchist-Communists: a Question of Class calls "organisational dualism", also known, following the Latin American anarchists, as "especifismo". We believe that two organisations are needed to build the revolution. One is the mass organisation of the popular classes, which, as the FdCA says, “aims to wring as much as possible out of the bosses in order to win greater wealth for the exploited classes they represent. They try to satisfy the needs of the workers who are being continually squeezed by their adversary, the bosses.”
This organisation can go on to overthrow the bosses, emancipate the workers and establish a free and equal society. Only the workers can free the workers.
But because the mass organisation is built to defend the immediate material needs of all workers, it cannot be ideologically unified. Very few members of unions and popular social movements today are committed to overthrowing capitalism or the state. Hence another organisation is needed: the political organisation, or specific organisation. This, the FdCA says, is “made up of the members of the mass organisation who share the same theory, the same strategy and similar ideas on tactics. The task of this organisation is, on the one hand, to be the depository for the class memory and, on the other hand, to elaborate a common strategy which can ensure the linking of all the struggles by the class and which can stimulate and guide.” Unlike Marxist-Leninist groups, an anarchist political organisation does not substitute itself for the working class or try to give them orders, and it certainly does not try to seize state power on their behalf. It has no authority within the mass organisation other than rational persuasion of the worth of its ideas by example; its role in it is to "produce analyses, strategies and credible proposals. Its members must gain the trust of the workers and distinguish themselves by the clarity of their ideas and their ability to promote convincing struggles which should, if conditions so permit, be victorious.” And it can warn of the dangers of other tendencies whose ideas and programmes are likely to lead to defeat.
Nestor Makhno and his comrades defended the principle of organisational dualism in the Platform. They emphasised several key features of the specific organisation, which have been adopted by the FdCA and the ZACF: notably theoretical unity, tactical unity and collective responsibility. Curiously, there have been anarchist political organisations that do not adhere to these principles - the "organisations of synthesis", which, in some cases, "accept members who declare themselves to be Anarchists, without any further specification". As the FdCA makes clear, this leads to an extraordinary mish-mash of ideas. How can the specific organisation "elaborate a common strategy" if its members are pulling in a range of different directions? Theoretical unity, the FdCA notes, “is never complete” - but there must be enough of it to assure a common strategy. Otherwise what is the point of having a specific organisation?
It is a strength of the FdCA’s paper that it traces organisational dualism back to Mikhail Bakunin, and to the clearly stated principles and practices of his specific organisation, the Alliance for Social Democracy, within the First International (1864-1877). The founding theorist of class struggle anarchism was also the founding theorist of our own tendency; and the FdCA paper begins with a brief discussion of his importance, proceeding to two other key theorists, Luigi Fabbri and Camillo Berneri (while recognising the importance of others, such as Makhno and Errico Malatesta, who belonged to or were close to our tradition).
On the Class Struggle
The paper goes on to give a brief account of three key events in the history of anarchist and working class movements, the Paris Commune of 1871, the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921 and the Spanish Revolution of 1936-1939. But the real theoretical meat of the paper begins in the third chapter, which deals with the principles of class struggle. It notes that, while our movement begins not with abstract ideas but with material struggles, a movement that seeks to change the world needs an analysis of its situation. Here we are introduced to the method of historical materialism, with a statement of its principles by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels:
"The first historical action is therefore the creation of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself, and this is precisely a historical action, a fundamental condition of any history, which still today, as millennia ago, must be accomplished every day and every hour simply to keep man [sic] alive [...]. In every conception of history therefore, the first point is that this fundamental fact be observed in all its facets and that its place be recognised.”
It is another strength of the paper that it is equally forthright in acknowledging Marx’s valuable contributions and in exposing his errors. The FdCA elaborates the point:
Historical materialism is therefore a methodology for the analysis of historical facts which can establish the primary cause for these in the evolution of the productive structure of society, in the development of relationships and forces of production; every event that history presents us with is therefore not the result of ideas but the clash between different conceptions of life, but the result of the economic interests at stake - direct and indirect manifestations of the relationships which establish themselves within human society in the production of those goods which are necessary for the satisfaction of our historically and socially determined material needs.
History is not the history of ideas. Ideas are backdrops created by real movements that can themselves, however, influence the movements. History is the history of the antagonisms created by the production relationships. It is the history of the struggle between the classes.

This gives the background for the introduction of the concept of class; but here I have a small quibble. The FdCA joins the Marxists and “the entire radical left” in defining classes as “the social groups that can be identified on the basis of their position in the cycle of production and the distribution of goods”. But what does this imply? Factory workers are engaged in production; railway workers and dock workers are engaged in transport; which is a part of distribution. These are different positions in the cycle. But I have never heard anyone say railway workers and dock workers are a different class from factory workers. Throughout the history of class struggle against capitalism, all these workers have stood side by side against the common enemy, without worrying about different positions in the cycle of production. This is a small quibble because the real issue becomes clear in the same paragraph. What is fundamental to class is who controls the cycle of production. The capitalists are in control; the workers “own only their ability to work, which they sell to the bosses”. The FdCA notes that anarchists recognise the importance of other classes, such as the peasants, who do not have to sell their labour but are nonetheless exploited and dominated; we believe, correctly, that the Marxists, that all such classes have a common interest in overthrowing capitalism and a part to play in the struggle. But power is fundamental. Not that power alone defines class: there are hierarchies that are not class structures, because they are not linked to the means of production and do not allow those at the top to systematically exploit those at the bottom for their material benefit. Classes are not defined by hierarchy alone, nor by “position in the cycle” alone, but by the combination of domination and exploitation. The FdCA clearly understands this; perhaps the problematic sentence merely reflects awkward phrasing or even a failure of translation from the Italian. In any event, the paper makes it clear that exploitation and domination render the dominant and subordinate classes irreconcilable; and in a capitalist system, there is plenty of scope for confrontation between them, which we believe the working class can ultimately win.

Differentiating Anarchist-Communism from Marxism

After some discussion of this confrontation, and of the objectives of the working class – a society of free equals, a communist society, based on the principle “from each according to ability, to each according to need” – the paper turns to a discussion of our differences with other working class movements, and, in particular, a critique of the Marxists. Many of these differences centre on the question of the state; and, as the FdCA points out, the difference reflects a serious failure of Marxist analysis. This point is illustrated with a historical irony:

In 1868, when the Bakuninist International Alliance of Socialist Democracy applied to join the International Workingmen’s Association [the First International], Marx ... requested a change in its statute: with heavy irony he pointed out that the phrase “equalisation of the classes” was ambiguous and that it would have to be corrected to read “abolition of the classes”. Bakunin agreed that the phrase was improper and agreed with the proposed change which better explained the goal of the revolution. But the error committed by Marx and Engels in 1848 [in The Communist Manifesto] was much greater ... What, in fact, can be meant by the proletariat constituting itself “as the dominant class”? First of all, if the proletariat has taken power, then the revolution or the change of hands with the bourgeoisie will already have taken place and as the aim of the revolution is, according to everyone, the abolition of classes ... the struggle of the proletariat becomes its own dissolution as a class together with all other classes, the bourgeoisie heading the list. In second place, class distinction is not a matter of ethics, somatics or ethnicity, but is based on the different positions which the individual members of a society have with regard to property relationships. At the moment in which individual property is abolished, to be substituted by the collective ownership of production, distribution and consumption, there is an effective end to all class-based social organisation.

Marx knew perfectly well that the revolution aimed at abolishing class. He knew that class was a matter of production relationships: thus, if the working class seizes the means of production, overturning existing production relationships to establish equality, class itself is thereby abolished. Talking of the proletariat becoming the dominant class is, as the FdCA says, a “non-sense”; but that is just what Marx did in the Manifesto, in one of the great statements of his theory and programme.

The FdCA points out that Marxists have defended the need for a workers’ state by pointing to the continuing threat of the enemies of the revolution, against which the workers must defend themselves; it was referring to the need to that this production, which Marxists identify with centralisation. But the paper replies to these points by examining the history of the Russian Revolution. It points out that contrary to Marxists views and practices, Makhno’s non-statist popular army was the most successful force in defending the revolution; and that centralised state control of production led to the return of oppression and exploitation, and to the alienation of workers from the revolution. Contrary to Marxist predictions, the “workers’ state” did not “wither away when it was no longer needed”. Instead, as was “foreseen by Bakunin, [Piotr] Kropotkin, [Errico] Malatesta, [Luigi] Fabbri and many other libertarian thinkers”, the FdCA points out that the state “reproduced the exploitation that it was referring to”. I might add that this was capitalist exploitation: production continued to be for monetary exchange rather than for need, and the Communist Party bureaucrats and bosses accumulated capital through profit, driving continuing expansion of production under their own control, through the exploitation of the workers.

Differentiating Anarchist-Communism from Other Claimaints

Having taken care of the Marxists, the FdCA turns, in its final chapter, to distinctions within the anarchist movement. It identifies various tendencies: Individualists, Educationists, anti-organisationists (referred to as Anarchist-Communists), Insurrectionists, Anarcho-Syndicalists and our own tendency of Anarchist Communists. (There are also the “Libertarian Communists”, discussed in an appendix. The FdCA applies this term to a movement that has arisen since the 1960s and has been particularly important in Italy: a movement that is influenced by anarchism but also takes up “elements of Marxist analysis ... such as the inevitability of the fall of capitalism once it reached its highest stage of development, the
The toppressed classes, of great historical note that there is, after all, a movement of at the destruction of private property, democratically for this purpose, aiming organised federally, horizontally, directly-Makhno—which is also the approach of ideas and practices. A movement based on class struggle, on direct action, on the liberation of the workers by the workers, organised federally, horizontally, directly-democratically for this purpose, aiming at the destruction of private property, of capitalism and the state, and at the establishment of a society of free equals. It is this movement that historically gave currency to the name “anarchism”: words and ideas, after all, are shaped by history and by material circumstances. By looking at where tendencies stand in relation to the ideas and practices of this movement, we can find a way of saying who is an anarchist and who isn’t.

An important point about the working class anarchist movement is: our trade union ideal and trade unions of the First International, and has remained pretty consistent in its ideas and practices. A movement based on class struggle, on direct action, on the liberation of the workers by the workers, organised federally, horizontally, directly-democratically for this purpose, aiming at the destruction of private property, of capitalism and the state, and at the establishment of a society of free equals. It is this movement that historically gave currency to the name “anarchism”: words and ideas, after all, are shaped by history and by material circumstances. By looking at where tendencies stand in relation to the ideas and practices of this movement, we can find a way of saying who is an anarchist and who isn’t.

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Kropotkin grew to be disconnected from the mass anarchist movement, to the point that on the outbreak of World War I, he decidedly broke with anarchist principles by backing British and French imperialism against German aggression. But the FdCA makes no reference to any such changing views. It traces the ideas of “Anarcho-Communists” to Kropotkin and identifies him quite straightforwardly as their precursor and founder. Indeed, it is easy to see how teleological anti-organisationists could turn to Kropotkin for support for their views – but in so doing, they utterly fail to take note of the depth of his thought. And I am sorry to say that in relegating Kropotkin to the “Anarcho-Communist” ranks, the FdCA does the same.

As for the name “Anarcho-Communist”, no doubt there is a historical basis for it: I must suppose that this is the name by which holders of such views are known in Italy, and perhaps in some other countries. Words are shaped by history, and to some extent we need to respect this. But it is not a usage that I could recommend to the global movement, outside Italy. Certainly teleological – and other – anti-organisationist views can be found in many individuals associated with the anarchist movement. But such views, particularly when taken to the extreme of dismissing class struggle as the FdCA describes them, are clearly in conflict with the views and practices of the anarchist movement, as I and my ZACF comrades have analysed it. Individualists and Educationists may call themselves anarchists, and associate with the anarchist movement, but that does not make them anarchists, and it does not make their tendencies anarchist tendencies. (See box on page 42)

And the same goes for “Anarcho-Communists”. The fact that they trace their views to Kropotkin – or to their own distorted picture of Kropotkin – does not make them anarchists, and I won’t call them anarchists. But if everyone knows them by that name in Italy, perhaps there’s no avoiding it.

The FdCA notes a similarity between the “Kropotkinists” and the Insurrectionist Anarchists, a tendency that gained prominence towards the end of the 19th century. The paper explains:

“The hope was that the spread of violent acts directed at the pompous bourgeoisie of the period would provide an example which would rapidly be imitated thereby transforming the insurrectionary spark into an immense revolutionary blaze. This was the period of the bloody acts of the likes of François-Claudius Köhingstein (better known as Ravachol), Bonnot, Émile Henry and many others. France, in fact, though at the centre of the insurrectionalist wave was also the place where class-struggle Anarchist militants (Emile Pouget, Fernand Pelloutier, Pierre Monatte, and others) found a way out through the formation of the “Bourses du Travail” and the syndicates and thereby brought Anarchism back to its natural element, the proletariat, which led to a new and profound method of struggle and organisation. Despite this, there are still today those who as a result of a childish theoretical simplification, hold that gains made by the unions are ephemeral and who continue to preach the idea of propaganda by the deed. They are mistaken twice over. Firstly, when they think that syllogisms can cancel history – in other words they believe, with purely abstract reasoning, that as long as capitalism exists there can be no improvement in the living conditions of the masses even where there have been labour struggles. Secondly, they are under the illusion that some external example can be more attractive and convincing than long, tiring educational activity within the day-to-day struggles.

The similarity to “Anarcho-Communists” – as the FdCA defines them – lies in the dismissal of large-scale class struggle under capitalism, and in the substitution of abstract general historical organisation for the hard work of analysis and organisation. But there are differences. Insurrectionists, after all, do engage in acts of struggle against the bourgeoisie, and they do organise themselves –

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2) Kropotkin versus Russian purist “anarcho-communists” [From Black Flame]

3) Kropotkin on organisational dualism: [From Black Flame; for more, see etc. “Shall We Concern Ourselves with ...”, and Revolutionary Minorities]

4) Kropotkin on the class struggle: from Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles, 1887, http://www.fournilab.ch/etexts/www/kropotkin/ancom/. This text strongly illustrates Kropotkin’s teleological thinking, but at the same time shows his understanding of class and belief in class struggle. From An Appeal to the Young, http://www.dis.org/daver/anarchism/kropotkin/atty.html
even if we agree that organisation in small groups to carry out bloody acts of revenge is not, in fact, an effective way of building the revolutionary struggle. And historically, the insurrectionist tendency very clearly belongs to the broad anarchist movement. The FdCA reinforces the link between insurrectionism and “Anarcho-Communism” by pointing out that Kropotkin supported the strategy of propaganda by the deed – but this, again, is unfair to Kropotkin, since many other leading anarchists, not all of them followers of his views, were present at the congress that adopted this strategy in 1881. Insurrectionism enjoyed a great deal of support within the anarchist movement for some time; many leading anarchists moved towards it, only to see its failure and then move away from it. Indeed, Van der Walt and Schmidt identify insurrectionism as one distinct tendency within the anarchist movement, a minority tendency, in contrast to the majority tendency of “mass anarchism”, of broad-based class struggle movements, which is the approach favoured by the ZACF and the FdCA. (See box)

**Differentiating Anarchist-Communism from Anarcho-Syndicalism**

Within the mass anarchist movement, a divide is commonly drawn between “anarchist communism” and “anarcho-syndicalism” - but there seems to be little clarity on what divides them. I will not go into the subtleties, but note how the FdCA points to some genuine distinctions.

Anarcho-Syndicalists of various types and Revolutionary Syndicalists lay their trust in the spontaneous evolution of the proletarian masses and that accordingly if the labour unions are left alone, sooner or later they will arrive at the decisive clash with the boss class. Malatesta already opposed this idea, held by Monatte, in 1907 at the International Congress of Amsterdam. He clarified how the proletariat’s associations for resistance would inevitably slide into reformism, thus blurring sight of the goals ... The historically proven decline of all unions which were born revolutionary (starting with Monatte’s own CGT), has led some Anarcho-Syndicalists to seek the answer not in political organisation, but in the creation of unions which are based on a pre-determined revolutionary idea. In other words, to create unions which are exclusively composed of conscious, revolutionary elements. The result is a strange mix of mass organisation and political organisation which is basically an organisation of anarchists who set themselves up to do union work. In this way the obstacle has not been removed, but avoided, as the link which connects the masses to the revolutionary strategy is missing, unless of course it happens to be the resurrection of the idea of an external example which contaminates the masses by some process of osmosis.

It is certainly true that many who identify themselves as “anarcho-syndicalists” have fallen into one or the other of the above-mentioned errors; but although these ways of drawing the distinction are quite widespread, I am not at all sure if they are universal. I am not sure if everyone who calls themselves “anarcho-syndicalist” would reject the need for a specific political organisation. The ZACF tends to follow the usage of the Platform: “Whereas communism, i.e. the free society of equal workers, is the goal of the anarchist struggle, syndicalism, i.e. the revolutionary movement of industrial workers based on trades [we would rather say, on industries], is but one of the forms of the revolutionary class struggle.” But we recognise that there are a variety of views on the role of the unions in the struggle.

Identifying these different views with particular tendencies is a lot trickier. Let us look at our own tendency, the tendency of the ZACF and the FdCA, which our comrades identify as “Anarchist Communism”. Their paper rightly identifies Bakunin as the founder of this tendency; but also notes (in Chapter 3) that he was a collectivist rather than a communist! (Bakunin may have been uncomfortable with communism partly because in his day it was associated with Marxist authoritarianism; it was only later that a fully communist anarchist theory was developed. And as the FdCA notes, his writing is unsystematic and scattered because he spent most of his life on the barricades: it may not be easy to tell where exactly he stood on the organisation of production in a free society.) It seems odd to call your tendency “communist” when its founder appears not to have been a communist. Here again, there is some historical precedent: many in our tendency have, indeed, identified themselves as anarchist
communists; and many organisations of our tendency today use the term in their names – including the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists in the USA, as well as the FdCa, the Melbourne Anarchist Communist Group in Australia and the ZACF. But it still seems odd to use this name for our tendency, when (a) it includes militants who did not self-describe as communists, notably its founder; and (b) there are anarchists who are communists but do not belong to our tendency. Why not identify ourselves as organisational dualists, específistas, or, for the more old-fashioned among us, Platformists?

This is one example of the difficulty in drawing divisions within the mass anarchist movement. Can we come up with a really neat classification incorporating such questions as who is a communist and who isn’t; who doesn’t want to engage in workplace struggles, who does, and in what way; who rejects a specific organisation, who supports it, and of those who support it, who prefers a specific organisation of tendency and who (like Volin) opts for an organisation of synthesis? I doubt if this is truly possible, or if it would throw much light on the history and practice of anarchism, on how the mass movement has interacted with the system of production, and on how the militant minority has interacted with the working-class mass. Hence, Van der Walt and Schmidt stick with minority insurrectionism and majority mass anarchism as the main distinction and do not try to draw such messy and unfortunate lines as between, say, syndicalists and communists. That is not to say there are no distinctive threads within the tangle of the mass anarchist movement: clearly there are, and the thread that runs from Bakunin to (among others) the ZACF and the FdCA is one of them. (We like to think it is a particularly coherent and important one.)

Conclusion

I have devoted much attention to the flaws in the FdCa’s classification of anarchist tendencies; but the fact remains that the ideas that the paper refers to are ideas that really exist, and are generally in need of critique; and its criticisms are entirely on target. If the FdCa’s map of the terrain is less than perfect (and whose map could stand some improvement?), this does not stop our comrades from directing their fire with perfect accuracy at just the targets they need to hit. The only significant misfiring is in the case of Kropotkin.

Nor is the discussion of anarchist tendencies confined to shooting down confusionists: it includes important positive points. Among these, I note the need for anarchists to defend in the pre-revolutionary period certain roles of more “progressive” states: in particular the welfare state, which enables “a minimum redistribution of wealth in favour of the workers; as the result of decades of struggles they have allowed the conflict to be regulated for the protection of the weakest”. Not to say that the state should not be “abolished right from the first moment of the revolution”, but to be aware in daily struggles of the immediate needs of the working class and to naturally prefer more welfarist systems over more austere ones. This is an important point for many of the struggles in which the ZACF is engaged. As popular movements in South Africa today fight for free housing, water and electricity, we consistently call for the use of direct action in these struggles; but we hope to achieve these things within capitalism, and we know that it is only the state that can reasonably provide them – at this juncture, and until the means of life are socialised. Another important point – on which the ZACF has much to learn, notably from the FdCa – is the need for a programme, for definite short-term and medium-term objectives, based on a thorough analysis, including economic analysis, of the existing situation. In this connection, the FdCa notes the value of tactical and strategic alliances with militants of other tendencies, pointing out: “Anarchist Communists are so sure of their historical ends, of their strategy for obtaining them and of the steps they must take today, that they do not fear any impure contact contaminating them. On the contrary, they believe that they can contaminate others.”

This is just one part of our comrades’ very thorough and deep analysis. Much of this review has been devoted to weak points in their paper, and more could be said on these; but far more still could be said on its strong points. And on these, A Question of Class is best left to speak for itself.

Full version of this commentary soon to be available at www.anarkismo.net

“Other than the anarchist-insurrectionists, there remains only the “classless individualists” who, we of our tendency are all agreed, by denying the social nature of humanity and the necessity for class struggle for socialism-from-below, break with the foundations of anarchism and are thus non-anarchist, while the “philosophical educationists,” where they do not deny the class struggle, are simply poor anarchists in that they have withdrawn from social activism. Thus we say, “anarchist-communism” at base is simply a synonym for what today is often called “social anarchism” and mostly historically adheres to the mass line which includes syndicalist approaches.

“The only further distinction then becomes between “anarcho-syndicalism” that defines specifically as anarchist (such as our comrades of theCNT-France and others), which has the strength of recognising its anarchist roots, but the weakness of not being able to embrace all workers on economic commonality – because it is a mass organisation trying to be at the same time a specific organisation, and “revolutionary syndicalism” that does not define itself as anarchist (the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] and others), which has the disadvantage that it will attract reformists and state-socialists into its ranks, but the advantage that it can embrace all workers (although the IWW often also suffers from the conundrum of trying to be sufficient in itself without an affiliated specific anarchist organisation). Other than that, there are also specific organisations that do see syndicalism as inherently reformist and therefore a dead loss, but most are of our tendency which see organisational dualism as crucial. This is the crux of the argument between the International Workers’ Association (IWA) and those of our tendency: the IWA sees syndicalism alone as sufficiently revolutionary because their unions are specifically anarchist, while we believe syndicalism should be non-specific because of the class nature of trade unions, but as a result needs to be allied to specific organisations which provide anarchist content. One of the determining factors in which argument is correct is, crudely, the numbers: the IWA declines while the tendency today represented in the organisations of the anarchism project and the unaffiliated syndicalist unions, grows.”

James Pendlebury comments: “There is a bit more to say about the ‘educationists’. The FdCa defines this supposed tendency as those who hold ‘that education can suffice to change man’s nature, even before changing the material conditions of existence’. That is, they deny class struggle as a key factor in history. Schmidt allows for such a position, but also emphasises those who ‘do not deny the class struggle [but] are simply poor anarchists in that they have withdrawn from social activism’. No doubt both these approaches have their adherents - and there are probably those who sit somewhere in between. But the important point, from the perspective of Schmidt, Van der Walt and myself, is that neither approach can be legitimately regarded as a distinct anarchist tendency.”
WHERE WE STAND

We, the working class, produce the world’s wealth. We ought to enjoy the benefits.
We want to abolish the system of capitalism that places wealth and power in the hands of a few, and replace it with workers self-management and socialism. We do not mean the lie called ‘socialism’ practised in Russia, China, and other police states - the system in those countries was/is no more than another form of capitalism.
We stand for a new society where there will be no bosses or bureaucrats. A society that will be run in a truly democratic way by working people, through councils in the workplaces and communities.
We want to abolish authoritarian relationships and replace them with control from the bottom up - not the top down.
All the industries, all the means of production and distribution will be commonly owned, and placed under the management of those working in them. Production will be co-ordinated, organised and planned by the federation of elected and recallable workplace committees, not for profit but to meet our needs. The guiding principle will be “from each according to ability, to each according to need”.
We are opposed to all coercive authority, we believe that the only limit on the freedom of the individual is that their freedom does not encroach on the freedom of others.
We do not ask to be made rulers nor do we intend to seize power “on behalf of the working class”. Instead, we hold that socialism can only be created by the mass of ordinary people. Anything less is bound to lead to no more than replacing one set of bosses with another.
We are opposed to the state because it is not neutral, it cannot be made to serve our interests. The structures of the state are only necessary when a minority seeks to rule over the majority. We can create our own structures, which will be open and democratic, to ensure the efficient running of everyday life.
We are proud to be part of the tradition of libertarian socialism, of anarchism. The anarchist movement has taken root in the working class of many countries because it serves our interests - not the interests of the power seekers and professional politicians.
In short we fight for the immediate needs and interests of our class under the existing set up, while seeking to encourage the necessary understanding and activity to overthrow capitalism and its state, and lead to the birth of a free and equal (anarchist) society.

INTERNATIONAL MULTI-LINGUAL SITE FOR ANARCHIST COMMUNIST NEWS AND DISCUSSION

The ZACF is proud to announce that volume one of Counter-power, our dynamic new global work, Black Flame: the Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism, by Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, is now available from AK Press: http://www.akpress.org/
“This book fulfills a daunting task. Covering anarchism in all parts of the world and emphatically tying it to class struggle, the authors present a highly original and challenging account of the movement, its actions and ideas. This work is a must for everybody interested in nonauthoritarian social movements.” — Prof Bert Altena, Rotterdam University.
Black Flame will be launched soon in Joburg.

AFRIQUE SANS CHAINES

The website of the Confédération National du Travail’s (CNT’s) French paper Afrique sans chaînes (Africa Without Chains), the quarterly French-language African sister journal to Zabalaza, where you can download copies of the magazine in .pdf format.