

S.A. Anarchists Go Global...

Bikisha Media Collective & Zabalaza Books

August 2002

Several South African anarchist projects – Bikisha Media Collective (BMC), Zabalaza Books (ZB) and the Zabalaza Action Group (ZAG, formerly the Anarchist Union) – have signed up as members of the new anarchist network International Libertarian Solidarity (ILS) of which the following organisations are also a part: Al Abdil al Taharouri (AAT, Lebanon), Alternative Libertaire (AL, France & Belgium), Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT, Spain), Organisation Communiste Libertaire (OCL, France), Réseau No Pasaran (France), Consejo Indígena Popular de Oaxaca – “Ricardo Flores Magon” (CIP-RFM, Mexico), Confédération Nationale du Travail – “Vignoles” (CNT-V, France), Federação Anarquista Gaúcha (FAG, Brazil), Federación Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU, Uruguay), Marmitag (Greece), Organizace Revolucních Anarchistu – Solidarita (ORA-S, Czech Republic), Organización Socialista Libertaria (OSL, Argentina), Organisation Socialiste Libertaire (OSL, Switzerland), Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (SAC, Sweden), and the Workers’ Solidarity Movement (WSM, Ireland).

Other groups that support the ISL are the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, international), Anacho-Sindico (India), the North-Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC, Canada & the USA), Sibirskaya Konfederatsia Truda (SKT, Russia) and Unione Sindacale Italiana – “Roma” (USI-R, Italy).

This makes the ISL one of the most important players on the international anarchist stage today, alongside the International Workers Association (IWA) – established in Berlin in 1922 as the anarchist unionist alternative to the communist Red International of Trade Unions – and the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA), founded in Italy in 1968, to unite anarchist political organisations. But the ISL is not another international. It is rather an international anarchist network, other anarchist international networks include the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, started in London in 1967 to assist anarchist and class war prisoners, and the Insurreccional Anarchist International (IAI), founded in Italy in 2000, to co-ordinate anarchist resistance in the Mediterranean.

Our participation in the ISL dates back to the BMC delegation sent to Paris for the “Other Future” international anarchist congress organised in 2000 by the CNT-V which saw 6,000 anarchists take to the streets with a forest of red-and-black flags for May Day. There, delegates of 15 participating organisations agreed to form a new network to: a) connect the growing anarchist unions, anarcho-communist, platformist and anarcho-synthesist groups that fell outside the IWA; b) co-ordinate international anarchist engagement with the emerging anti-capitalist

movement; and c) for established Northern organisations to assist emergent anarchist organisations in the global South. Last year, at “LibWeek” in Madrid, the decision was realised when the international movement set up the ISL, which has expanded significantly since then. Bikisha Media and Zabalaza Books sent a message of support to Madrid to endorse the establishment of the network of which we are now a part.

The ISL is by no means a paper tiger: so far, the network has helped the FAG-Brazil with finances in setting up a printing works and a community centre. There are also ISL-sponsored projects under way in Uruguay and another planned in Siberia. We should take this opportunity to thank ISL member organisation the SAC-Sweden for their kind donation of funds – under an agreement separate to the ISL – to our anarchist printing project.

Our original message to the founding congress of the ISL read: We as South African anarchists are encouraged by this important initiative – the establishment of an international co-ordinating network to aid anarchist organisations in their engagement with the anti-globalisation movement. Such a network is vital if we are to survive the attacks on our organisations and our class – and if we are to succeed in our fight against neo-liberalism. We would also like to add the names of our two organisations to those endorsing the “Anarchist Declaration for the 21st Century”.

Since the 1970s, our enemies, capital and its siamese twin, the state, have been suffering from one of their inevitable periods of crisis as markets hit natural consumption ceilings and the rate of profit continues to fall. Even the opening of the former Soviet and East Bloc workforce to foreign exploitation, with robber barons breaking down vital industries to steal handfuls of cash, has been unable to stop the slide.

But like hungry bears, our enemies are even more dangerous despite their weaknesses. On the one hand, their claws are sharper: they have developed warfare, terrorism and propaganda to technological and psychological levels never achieved before. On the other hand, we, their prey, are weak: the international working class revolutionary movement, both anarchist and otherwise, has been dispersed and destroyed by decades of fascism. After the Berlin Wall fell, our enemies announced the end of history, claiming that they had achieved the perfect social balance, a balance built historically on millions of dead, and today maintained by millions of lives cheapened by poor working conditions, corrupted by a fouled environment, marginalised by casualisation, raped by patriarchy, excluded by so-called democracy and, if necessary, eliminated by death-squads.

But the bears miscalculated. History is not over. The anti-globalisation movement is the most significant international social movement since the 1960s. There are dangers: professional networks of paid middle-class activists have attempted to turn it into their own club, a collection of narrow sectarian interests. Also, totalitarian and right-wing organisations, whether fascist, religious fundamentalist or authoritarian socialist, are trying to control grassroots actions against the IMF/World Bank, the “free” trade agreements and the multinational corporations. But this is a global movement of the oppressed. Its instinctive nature is anti-authoritarian, workerist and militant. This is the true home of all anarchist revolutionaries today and we fully support all efforts by anarchists to position themselves at the forefront of the struggle and to put their ideas at the centre of the global debates on how to beat the ravages of turbo capitalism.

The anti-globalisation movement must be dominated by anarchist forces and arguments. We as anarchist revolutionaries must throw ourselves wholeheartedly into this struggle. But we must remember our key strategic strength: the united forces of the proletariat, whether industrial or commercial. This means that while community struggles are essential, they can be no substitute

for revolutionary organisation in the workplace, at the point of extraction of profit. The traditional working class may have changed, but workers' status as wage-slaves has not, regardless of how the capitalists have tried to divide their common interests. And it is only the workers who have the technical power and class incentive to stop the engines of capitalism. Only a revolution in the relations of production by organised labour and a seizure of the means of production by the producers can end the terrorism of capital and the state. Assisted by the peasantry and the poor, the workers can and will defeat neo-liberalism, however it disguises itself: racism, housing evictions, neo-colonialism, electricity cut-offs, sweatshops, criminalisation of protest, or other masks.

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