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Algeria, the other war

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This is an article written by algerian anarcho-syndicalists about the actual situation in Algeria. It is taken from Le Combat Syndicalist (Syndicalist struggle), paper of CNT AIT, french section of IWA (anarchosyndicalist international)

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Algeria has been at war for seven years. State totalitarianism against religious totalitarianism. The number of deaths given by official undertakers is 500,000.

Seven years of power struggles between clans! 200 deaths a day, and that will not stop until the appropriation of the goods, of all the goods, by one clique or the other is realized. After that, the war may end, unless a social upheaval takes place, so great is the dilapidation of the living conditions of the people. Behind this war, which dresses in democracy or Islamism, hides a cynical decoupage of Algeria. And that, the media take care never to speak about it. So, back from Algiers and some southern cities, I want to denounce the other side of this war, that of money, profit, exploitation, looting.

Thanks to this war, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) is setting up a restructuring plan completely unopposed, which consists in liberalizing the market, privatizing companies, dismissing workers (70,000 redundancies in four years). Under Boumediene et al, thanks to the country's energy resources (gas, oil), the people, if they were not entitled to the opulence of the clan in power, did not starve. The state subsidized all imports of first necessity, the school was actually

free, as well as health. The caliph Boumediene and his cohort of soldiers reigned as fathers and masters, without political instability, without social upheavals. At the time of globalization, this power struggle was certainly welcome. Nothing is as inhibiting as fear. "Terror makes people dumb," many dictators will tell you. Thanks to this war, oil concessions were sold to American, German, Canadian, French and Italian capitalists. In these sites, there is not an attack, not a false dam, not a butcher, not a carnage. Oil and gas flow freely. The surveillance is infallible. The Americans brought their own watchdogs into their luggage. No civilian can enter without a safe conduct. "A country in the country." Gold deposits have been discovered in the central Sahara. An operating company has already been set up in partnership with South Africans. During the winter of 1998-99, a team of Americans, Canadians and Australians was invited by the Algerian authorities to visit other sites and to negotiate future concessions. It seems that they are more greedy and do not want traditional 49% of the shares of the company, but 50%.

Thanks to this war, military and state officials have taken over all the big markets (pharmaceuticals, real estate, coffee, sugar, bananas), and the national drug production company (ENPHARM), after being run by this clique, was put on the stock market in February 1999, the big shareholders being always the same soldiers and politicards.

Thanks to this war, the multinationals, Coca-Cola, Daewoo, have finally established themselves in Algeria.

Thanks to this war, and with the help of the IMF, inflation has reached unbearable proportions for most people. And it's not over, it's just the beginning. Misery has settled everywhere. There is no longer a middle class. There are the rich, the very rich, there are the moderately poor and there are the totally deprived. The pit between rich and poor is growing at a dizzying pace.

Indeed how can we get by when the salary of a smicard is 5000 dinars, that of an average cadre of 15,000 dinars, while the baguette costs 9 dinars, the liter of milk 22, the kilo of semolina 40, the kilo of rice 60, the pasta 70, the dried vegetables between 50 and 80, the kilo of meat 500, the shrimps between 500 and 1000, the chicken 150, the sardine (the fish poor in the 70-80) 70, and the egg 6 dinars? How can one be treated when a banal medical prescription (care for an influenza or angina) is at least 1,000 dinars and social security reimburses only 20 to 40%? A doctor friend told me that people were only buying the most "necessary" drugs. For the rest, "take your trouble!" As the state withdraws more and more from all public services (health, education, housing, employment, etc.), there is also the dramatic problem of housing which has only worsened since the war. With the privatization and the liberalization of the market, the prices of rents have flown away! For an F2 in the poor suburbs of Algiers, one pays between 8,000 and 13,000 dinars a month. Some agencies make one-year contracts renewable and require the price of one year's rent in advance.

To escape, there is still the family network, when the children are old enough to work, and if they manage to get a job. Otherwise there is the D system. In all Algiers, there are young people selling retail cigarettes because people can no longer afford to buy a whole package. There is the sale on the go of anything and everything (of course import items). There are these old women and little children who sell, around the Closel and Messonier markets, bread, couscous, and odds and ends. There is begging, which in four years has spread throughout Algiers. Children between 8 and 12 years old, old women, old women who roam the streets all day long, who go into the shops, restaurants, travel agencies and to whom we do not yet have the courage to say to go begging outside. There are also those who have been fired, the "crazy", more and more numerous, who roam while talking while holding political speeches that are not so incoherent as one might think.

And all this is only the beginning, the worst is not yet happening. He is still in power to grab the land. Land privatization laws are fictitious. But who will be the beneficiaries?

The fellahs, who worked these lands during the period of the agrarian revolution with the slogan "the land is to the one who works it"? The former owners of the pre-independence war (since at that time the social system was "tribal" and communal lands belonged to the tribes)? Or the big fortunes tied to power (military and other mafias)? It may be necessary to emphasize here that the famous "triangle of death", as the Western press calls it, is nothing other than the great plain of Mitidja: the most fertile lands of Algeria. Is it a tactic of economic warfare that consists of the terror and massacres of entire families to empty these lands of its occupants to facilitate their appropriation by those who are sharing the country?

What lies behind this war, as behind all the others, besides (the Gulf War, Kosovo, Rwanda, occupied Palestine), are economic interests and geostrategic issues. A new sharing of the world is being done, with a fierce fight between Americans and Europeans. People can die, bombs, saber blows or hunger (30 million people die each year of hunger This is the largest of the genocides of our century, but it does not matter to them. What interests them is to establish their new police and economic order, with the complicity of the local rulers, be they Fachos, integristas or totalitarians, and the active collaboration of the media, who consciously keep quiet about it.

I would like to finish with a sentence that a friend from Algiers told me. "More than anything, it is the social fabric, the solidarity, the conviviality, the warmth, the sense of hospitality that we are destroying." And when it's totally done, they'll be successful. Everyone will think only of his skin to get out of the galley. We will become individualists. And individualism is one of the fundamental bases of capitalism.