

# **Position Papers and Constitution of the WSF**

**(South Africa)**

Workers' Solidarity Federation

May 1997

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# PREFACE

The Position Papers and Constitution of the WSF were developed by mandated activists in the Workers Solidarity Federation in the period between early 1995 and late 1996. These documents were adopted as official policy by the WSF in December 1996.

These documents represent a systematic effort to apply anarchist theory to the specific conditions of South Africa in the current period. Although anarchism has a proud history as a fighting tradition amongst workers and peasants across the world, it has not had an organised presence in South Africa (as far as we know) since the 1910s and early 1920s.

We hope, now, to lay the basis for a new movement. Marxism, nationalism, liberalism- the history of these ideologies is a history of broken promises and failed hopes. We believe that only anarchism – stateless socialism – provides the basis for the liberation of the world’s working class and peasantry from the crises and oppression that beset uncountable billions of toiling and poor people. We believe that freedom for the Black working class and poor majority of South Africa can only come through mass class struggle and revolution against capitalism, the State and all oppression. The programme of that struggle can only be anarchism.

These documents are a contribution to the process of building a mass anarchist movement in South Africa, and anywhere else that people suffer and are oppressed.

Overall, the development of these documents was underlain by a recognition that an effective anarchist political organisation can only be built on the basis of theoretical and tactical agreement. In other words, we need a clear analysis and clear guidelines as an organisation if we are to succeed in our aims. In addition, if we do not provide explanations and strategies for the various questions facing working and poor people, some opposing force will step into the space we leave, and seek to entrap the masses in this or that false ideology or programme. We must provide a comprehensive alternative to the tricks and illusions of other political groups, a theory that “ordinary” people can use as a weapon in the fight for freedom and equality .

At all points in the material that follows, we have sought to remain true to the general premises, theories, and classical writings of classical class-struggle Anarchism/Syndicalism as a starting point in developing our positions. Although these documents are often highly detailed, such detail was unavoidable for the sake of clarity and completeness.

Despite a number of delays in printing and proof-reading, we are pleased to invite you to read on.

Yours, WSF-National Secretariat May 1997

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We dedicate these documents to the millions of Anarcho-syndicalists, past and present, who have struggled for a better world based on grassroots democracy and human fraternity. Phambili basabenzi!

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# 1. DEFINING THE WSF, ANARCHISM AND SYNDICALISM

*Liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality.*

**Mikhail Bakunin, cited in S. Dolgoff (ed.), (1989), Bakunin on Anarchism. Black Rose.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION: WHERE WE STAND

### **Preamble to the WSF Constitution**

The Workers Solidarity Federation (WSF) is a left-wing worker-student organisation.

We oppose capitalism and the State (judiciary, government bureaucracy, police force, parliament etc.). These are structures of oppression that help a small ruling class of capitalists, generals, professional politicians and top officials to exploit and rule the majority of the population: the working class and poor (workers of all grades, their families, rank and file soldiers, the unemployed, the rural poor).

We are anti-authoritarian: the only limit on individual freedom should be that it does not infringe on the freedom of others.

We oppose all forms of oppression and discrimination like racism. Capitalism and the State are the primary cause of oppression like racism. Racism was developed to justify slavery, colonialism, and apartheid capitalism. It was a way to super-exploit Black workers and divide the working class to keep the bosses in power.

This authoritarian, racist, capitalist society can only be overthrown by an internationalist working class revolution. Only the workers and the poor can create a free society because only they are productive classes that do not have a vested interest in the system.

Racism is the product of capitalism and the State, and can therefore only be defeated by class struggle. At the same time, the class struggle can only succeed if it is anti-racist- the working class can only be united and mobilised on the basis of a consistent opposition to all forms of oppression.

The revolution cannot come through oppressive structures like the State. The economic disaster and political tyranny of the Marxist-led Soviet Union shows this clearly.

It must come through mass workers organisations like the trade unions that will take over the land and the factories and put them under direct workers control and a democratically planned economy for the benefit of all. This future society- stateless socialism- will be defended by a workers army. We want a society without bosses, rulers and oppressors of any description.

The role of the WSF is not to "lead" or rule the masses or stand in elections, but to educate and organise the toiling masses to make the revolution by and for themselves.



Tomorrow is built today. We support all struggles against oppression. We support the progressive student movement. We work inside existing trade unions to increase union democracy, spread revolutionary ideas, and unite all unions into “One Big Union”. We aim to encourage the self-activity and political consciousness of the mass of the people — the workers and the poor — so that they can make the revolution for themselves.

We are not Marxists. We proudly stand in the mass tradition of Anarchism/ Syndicalism. Our movement has historically attracted millions world wide, because it serves the needs of the workers, working peasants and the poor, not the power-seekers and exploiters. Today it is growing like wildfire on all the continents. If you agree with our aims, you should join us.

## **AIMS AND PRINCIPLES OF WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION**

1. Opposition to capitalism and all states as structures of domination and exploitation by the ruling class of capitalists and rulers.
2. Opposition to all forms of oppression: racism, sexism, homophobia, imperialism, environmental destruction etc. The State and capitalism are the primary causes of these special oppressions.
3. Opposition to coercive authority. Support for individual freedom so long as this does not limit the freedom of others.
4. Mass action and revolution by the workers and the poor is the way to defeat capitalism and the state and all forms of oppression.
5. Only the working class, the working peasants and the poor can create a free society because only they have the necessary organisational ability , numbers, class interest and productive role in society to do so.
6. The trade unions and democratic working class civics will be the vehicle of the revolution. The unions must seize and democratically manage the factories, land, mines, and offices.
7. The aim of the revolution will be to create an international stateless socialist society run by worker and community councils, defended by a democratic workers’ militia.
8. The role of the WSF is not to “lead” or rule the masses but to educate and organise the toiling masses to make the revolution by and for themselves. We work within existing trade unions.
9. We support all forms of progressive struggles that improve our lives. We proudly stand in the mass tradition of Anarchism/ Syndicalism. We are not Marxists. Our movement has historically attracted millions world-wide, because it serves the needs of the workers and poor, not the power- seekers and exploiters. If you agree with our aims, join us.

## 2. WHAT IS THE WSF?

1. The Workers Solidarity Federation is an Anarchist/Syndicalist (anarcho-syndicalist) organisation.
2. We are proud to stand in the tradition of class struggle Anarchism/Syndicalism that emerged in the First International Workers Association in the 1860s.
  1. We draw our inspiration from the struggles and theories of the class struggle Anarchist/ Syndicalist mass movements of the 1860s-1940s. We base our understanding of society firmly in the writings of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Berkman, Reclus, Goldman, Malatesta, Makhno, Archinov, Rocker, Durruti and other classical Anarchists and Syndicalists.
  2. We do not need to “revise” Anarchism, “bring it up to date” or “go beyond” it- instead we need to study the theory and history of our tradition in order to find the answers and approaches needed to rebuild the revolutionary movement and apply a revolutionary analysis to the conditions that exist in modern society.
  3. We do not accept “individualism”, “egoism”, counter-culture or other petty bourgeois philosophies as valid parts of the Anarchist tradition. Anarchism is a philosophy of class struggle, of revolutionary action by the exploited workers and peasants and poor- not a haven for the off-casts of the bourgeois world or a set of “life-style” choices for middle class drop-outs and poseurs.
3. More specifically, we stand within the broad “Platformist” tradition in Anarchism (as opposed to “individualism”, “synthesism” etc.). That is to say, we take as a founding document the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian (Anarchist) Communists written by Nestor Makhno, Peter Archinov, Ida Mett and others (1926). The key principles of the Platform include
  1. recognition of the centrality of the class struggle.
  2. recognition of the necessity of a worker-peasant revolution to establish a stateless socialist society based on worker/ peasant structures of self-management and worker-peasant army/militia.
  3. recognition of the need for a specific Anarchist political organisation with theoretical and tactical unity, federalist structures (with a national committee), and collective responsibility to fights for the “leadership” of the Anarchist idea amongst the working and poor masses as a precondition for a successful social revolution.
4. We also endorse the Syndicalist tactic for making the Anarchist revolution, that is to say, revolutionising the trade unions so that they can be not only the defenders of working class interests in the here and now, but the battering ram that destroys capitalism and the

State in a revolutionary general strike in which the means of production are seized and placed under workers self-management. This tactic is compatible with the prescriptions of the Platform.

5. We call ourselves “anarcho-syndicalists” because this expresses clearly the core of our politics, because we are proud to stand in this tradition, and because we affirm the historical link between Anarchism and Syndicalism.

### **3. WHAT IS ANARCHISM?**

6. By Anarchism we mean:

“a definite intellectual current ... whose adherents advocate the abolition of economic monopolies and of all political and social coercive institutions within society.

In place of the present capitalistic economic order Anarchists would have a free association of all productive forces based upon co-operative labour, which would have as its sole purpose the satisfying of the necessary requirements of every member of society, and would no longer have in view the special interest of privileged minorities within the social union.

In place of the present state-organisations with their lifeless machinery of political and bureaucratic institutions Anarchists desire a federation of free communities which shall be bound to one another by their common economic and social interests and shall arrange their affairs by mutual agreement and free contract ...

In modern Anarchism we have the confluence of ... two great currents during and since the French Revolution: Socialism and Liberalism ... Anarchism has in common with Liberalism the idea that the happiness and prosperity of the individual must be the standard in all social matters...

Within the Socialist movement itself the Anarchists represent the viewpoint that the war against capitalism must be at the same time a war against all institutions of political power, for in history economic exploitation has always gone hand in hand with political and social oppression.”

Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-syndicalism*, 1938, (reprinted 1989 by Pluto Press)

### **4. WHAT ARE THE PRECONDITIONS OF REVOLUTION?**

7. Capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression must be fought at every occasion. In the long run, there must be a revolution by the working and poor people to establish a free, stateless socialist (anarchist) society.
8. Revolution requires
  1. a widespread revolutionary consciousness in the working class, poor, working peasantry (including a rejection of capitalism, the State, all oppression; a desire and a vision of a new better way to organise society in the interests of the workers and the

poor; and a recognition that only the working class and the poor can create a free society).

2. there is industrial organisation (the workers must have enough organisation and solidarity to be able to physically take over and self- manage the means of production and distribution and destroy all remnants of the State; in practical terms this means that the workers must be organised into revolutionary trade unions (Anarchist Syndicalism) and that the workers and the poor must be able to defend their conquest by means of a democratic workers militia).
9. In order for these conditions to be met it is necessary that we build an Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation based on tactical and theoretical unity (i.e. agreement on tactics and ideas). This organisation will aim to win the most widespread possible understanding of Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas and methods in the working and poor. It will also aim to reconstruct the trade unions on the basis of Anarchist ideas. The WSF aims to build such an organisation.
10. Such an organisation must develop a coherent, revolutionary analysis of society, and immerse itself in the struggles of the masses to maximise revolutionary consciousness and self-organisation.

## **5. THE POSITION PAPERS**

11. These Position Papers serve as a guide to our analysis, activities and interventions. They provide a necessary first step towards the achievement of our goals, and should be studied and understood by all WSF members.

## 2. CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE

*Have you realised that there is, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, an irreconcilable antagonism which results inevitably from their respective stations in life? ... That as a result, war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is unavoidable, and that the only outcome can be the destruction of the latter?*

**Mikhail Bakunin, 1869, “The Policy of the International”, in R. M. Cutler, 1985, Mikhail Bakunin: From Out of the Dustbin- Bakunin’s Basic Writings, 1869–71. Ardis. Ann Arbor. p97.**

*In the social domain all human history represents an uninterrupted chain of struggles waged by the working masses for their rights, liberty, and a better life ...*

*The class struggle created by the enslavement of the workers and their aspirations to liberty gave birth, in the oppression, to the idea of anarchism...*

**Nestor Makhno, Peter Archinov, Ida Mett et al, The Organisational Platform of the Anarchist Communists, 1926 (published by the WSF (SA)).**

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Workers Solidarity Federation is an Anarchist/Syndicalist organisation. We believe in a revolution by the workers and the poor to establish Stateless Socialism.
2. We believe that the working masses- the working class and working peasants- produce all social wealth. Intellectual and manual labour forms the basis of all societies.<sup>1</sup>
  1. However, the products of this work are controlled and owned by a small and non-working minority: capitalists, politicians, top military and State officials, and other supervisory strata. These parasitic classes are buttressed in their privileged position by the structures of authority and oppression: the State, the wage system, racism, imperialism, sexism, etc.
  2. The opposite side of this exploitative and domineering rule of the bosses is the impoverishment and subjugation of the labourers. The majority of people suffer various

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<sup>1</sup> see, among others, Makhno, Archinov et al, [1926], The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, reprinted by Workers Solidarity Movement. Ireland. p14,16; R. Rocker, (1948), “Anarchism and Anarcho-syndicalism,” in F. Gross (ed.) European Ideologies: a survey of twentieth century political ideas. Philosophical Library. New York. pp. 370–371; A. Berkman, (1989), What is Communist Anarchism? Phoenix Press. London. pp. 3,5–6,72–4; A. Berkman, (1964), ABC of Anarchism. Freedom Press. London. p50.

degrees of deprivation while the small minority enjoy all the good things of this world, and more.

3. South Africa is characterised by extremely high levels of inequality, following both race and class lines.
  1. A recent survey found that in 1991, Africans earned only 28% of total income even though they constituted 75% of the population; whilst Whites, only 13% of the population, earned 61% of total income.
  2. At the same time it found that “[a]lmost three quarters of total inequality can be ascribed to inequality awithin population groups”. For example, the richest 20% of African households (many of whom are entrepreneurs, managers etc.) increased their real incomes by almost 40% over the period 1975- 1991, while the poorest 40% of African households’ incomes decreased by nearly 40% over the same period. A similar decline in real income was reported for the poorest 40% of Whites.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. DIFFERENT FORMS OF CLASS SOCIETY

3. Historically class exploitation has been organised in a number of different ways.
  1. Prior to capitalism’s emergence these included the feudal mode of production as existed in parts of Europe, Africa and Asia (based on the exploitation of unfree farmers by a class of warrior- landlords/ knights) and the tributary mode of production, in Africa and elsewhere (based on the conquest and exploitation of farming communities by a ruling class controlling access to land, cattle, trade, and military force).<sup>3</sup>
  - 2 In every class society there has been an oppressed class whose labour has created the wealth of that society and ruling class who has controlled that wealth. At every stage the oppressed have fought back (e.g.). slave revolts in Rome and Greece, peasant risings in Europe and Asia, and working class struggle today.
  3. All class systems are supported by the State, which can be understood as a hierarchically structured coercive authority governing a particular territory. The main organs of the State are the police, army, judiciary and the civil service. The functions of the State are to defend and legitimise the unjust class system.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> figures from Whiteford, A., (March 11–17 1994), “The Poor Get Even Poorer,” in *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, p.8. See also Pearce, J., (March 17–23 1995), “Still a land of Inequality,” in *Weekly Mail and Guardian*. pp. 8–9

<sup>3</sup> The precolonial Swazi and Zulu states were examples of the tributary mode of production. See (e.g.). Wright, J, and C Hamilton, (1989), “Traditions and Transformations,” in Duminy, A, and B Guest (eds.), *Natal and Zululand from Earliest Times to 1910*. University of Natal. See also Hall, M., (1987), “Archaeology and Modes of Production in Pre-Colonial Southern Africa”, in *Journal of Southern African Studies* vol. 14, no. 1

<sup>4</sup> “see Makhno et al, [1926], pp. 17–18; Rocker, 1948, pp. 349–353; Berkman, 1989, chapter 3, 8, 10, 13; Berkman, 1964, Ch. 2. Also see “After the Collapse of Socialism: anarchism today” in *Workers Solidarity: a revolutionary Anarchist magazine*, no 1, May/June 1995. Johannesburg. pp. 8–12. Also see Sam Dolgoff (ed.), (1973) *Bakunin on Anarchy: selected works of the activist founder of world anarchism* (Allen and Unwin); and P.A. Kropotkin, (1970), *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution* (M.Miller (ed.). MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London, England))

## 2. CAPITALISM AND CLASSES UNDER CAPITALISM

4. The modern class system is capitalism, which emerged in Europe from the 1500s. This is based on the pursuit of profit, and on competition between firms to sell their commodities on the market.<sup>5</sup>
5. Capitalism exists at two levels. Firstly, capitalism exists as a mode of production made up of a combination of historically specific forces and relations of production.
  1. The forces of production ((i.e.). productive technologies) associated with capitalism refer mainly to industrial machinery.
  2. The relations of production ((i.e.). class system) associated with the capitalist mode are as follows.<sup>6</sup>
    - i. Firstly, there is a ruling class that owns and controls the predominant part of the means of production, as well as controls the labour power of others. It also exercises control over the State apparatus. This class is also called the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, or, the “bosses and rulers.” Examples: big business, corporate executives, top politicians of all parties, civil servants, generals and majors. Role in society: maintaining and extending their domination and exploitation of society Size of South African ruling class (as calculated from the census): 2,5% of population.
    - ii. Secondly, there is the working class. The working class neither owns nor controls the means of production. As a result it is forced to work for the ruling class for wages, and without real control over the work process (or society). We also include in the working class the poor who are marginalised by the capitalist system, such as the unemployed, the alienated youth, and many of the self- employed (these groups are sometimes called the “lumpen- proletariat”). Other terms for the working class: the proletariat or the “workers and the poor”.Examples: blue collar workers like builders, white collar workers like clerks, service workers like waitresses, farmworkers, the unemployed, the poor and destitute, soldiers up to NCO (non commissioned officer) level.Role in society: to be exploited by the bosses and rulers through the wage system and through taxes; to be ordered around by the state, the bosses and the police; to provide the recruits for the army and the police. Size of South African working class (as calculated from the census): about 81% of the population (this includes the majority of Africans and other Black people, as well as two thirds of Whites).
    - iii. Thirdly, there is a middle class. The middle class is made up of three elements: small employers; middle- level managers and foremen; and professionals. Small employers have control and ownership of the means of production, but they only have a limited control over the labour power of others because they employ few people. The middle- level managers exercise a limited level of control over investment and similar decisions, over the means of production, and over the labour of others but they

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<sup>5</sup> Berkman 1989, chapter 2

<sup>6</sup> This definition draws heavily on Class War, (1992), Unfinished Business: the Politics of Class War. AK Press and CWF. chapter 3. This is essentially the same as that given in E.O. Wright, (1978), Class, Crisis, and the State, New Left Books. London.

do not own the means of production. The professionals work for a wage, but unlike the workers they have a significant degree of control over how they do their work. Other terms: “petty bourgeoisie”. Examples: small employers, supervisors, foremen, lawyers, journalists, doctors, academics. Role in society: to provide the middle management of capitalism and the State; to provide technical skills and “expertise” to the bosses and rulers; to manufacture “culture” like music, TV, fashion etc. Size of South African middle class (as calculated from the census): 12,5% of population.

6. Secondly, capitalism also exists as an economic system or social formation. This refers to a set of articulated (linked) modes of production, in which the capitalist mode of production dominates non- capitalist modes of production, and extracts value from them through trade and labour supply.<sup>7</sup>
  1. Capitalism is an inherently expansive system that has spread right across the planet in its search for new markets and cheap labour and raw materials. This expansion has been aided by the State in the form of Imperialism (SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING IMPERIALISM).
  2. However, as capitalism expanded outwards it did not always simply dissolve pre- existing modes of production in favour of the wages system. Instead it often preserved, restructured and/ or created new modes of production in these areas. These modes of production had non- capitalist relations of production but they were still dominated by the capitalist mode which extracted value from them through trade and labour extraction. Examples: slavery in the American South for the purpose of producing cotton for the British textile industry; the migrant labour system in which the worker leaves her or his rural home for a limited period in which wages are earned to pay taxes etc.; the restructuring of agricultural communities in Africa to produce cash crops.
  3. The modern peasantry is a product of the restructuring of pre- capitalist farming communities to provide cash crops. A working definition for a peasant is “a rural cultivator enjoying access to a specific portion of land, the fruits of which he can dispose of as if he owned the land; and who, by the use of family labour, seeks to satisfy the consumption needs of his family and to meet the demands arising from his involvement in a wider economic system”.<sup>8</sup>
  4. There are a number of problems with this definition. One is that it hides stratification among the peasantry. We should therefore further subdivide the peasantry into (i) upper peasants (who have managed to accumulate wealth and who employ the labour of others) (ii) middle peasants (who get by on their family labour alone); and (iii) poor peasants (who work their own land but cannot make ends meet without engaging in wage labour)

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<sup>7</sup> see Wright, (1978); Laclau, E., (1971), “Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America,” in *New Left Review*, no. 67.

<sup>8</sup> This section on the peasantry draws on Bundy, C., (1972), “The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry,” in *African Affairs*, no. 71 esp. p371; and H. Johnson, (1988), “Survival and Change on the Land,” in B. Crow, M. Thorpe et al, *Survival and Change in the Third World*. Cambridge. Polity Press



5. The Workers Solidarity Federation considers the rich peasants to be exploiters and therefore directs its attention to the middle and poor peasants, who can be lumped together as the working peasantry.

### 3. WHY DO WE OPPOSE CAPITALISM?

#### 7. We oppose capitalism because

1. Capitalism is an inherently exploitative system. The bosses own the factories, banks, mines, shops, etc. Workers don't. Workers are compelled to sell their labour to the boss for a wage. Peasants are forced to grow cash crops to make ends meet. The boss is interested in squeezing as much work out of the worker for as little wages as possible so that he/she can maintain high profits. Thus the more wages workers get the less profits the bosses make. The lower prices the bosses and state marketing boards can pay the peasant for the crops, the more profits they make. Capitalism is based on paying workers and peasants less than the full value of their labour ("exploitation" in the technical sense of the word) and using the surplus for the purpose of enriching the bosses and making more profits. Overall, we would argue that the workers and working peasants produce all wealth. The only exception to this general rule are some sections of the middle class who do useful productive work (e.g. doctors, teachers). All other classes are parasitic and depend for their existence on exploitation. Clearly, the interests of the ruling class, on the one hand, and the working class and working peasantry, on the other, are in total opposition to each other: capitalism systematically produces, and is based on, inequalities in wealth, power and opportunity. It is almost impossible for an ordinary person to make enough money to set up in business.
2. Capitalism is authoritarian. At both the level of the workplace and at the level of society as a whole capitalism is an authoritarian system. At the workplace level, capitalist enterprises are run by managers and owners who make all key decisions. The vast majority of people in a workplace — the workers — have no real say at all. Decision-making revolve around the maximisation of profits; any company which worries about human costs unrepresented in costs and revenues will not be able to compete effectively in the capitalist system. Similarly, concern about long-term issues like the environmental crisis is undermined by competition in capitalism, which makes it irrational to do anything other than devote oneself to short-term goals. At the social level, the inequalities associated with class systematically exclude most people from active and equal involvement in political activity e.g. lack time, education. In addition, the very existence of these inequalities gives rise to the State which perpetuates the system where the few rule over the many. This is reinforced by the tendency of capitalism to move to a monopoly situation where a few giant companies dominate the entire economy. In other words, capitalism embodies unfair power relations.
3. Capitalism prioritises profit-making over human needs. Production under capitalism is not based on the needs of ordinary people. Production is for profit. Therefore

although there is enough food in the world to feed everyone, people starve because profits come first. Food is not given out on the basis of hunger, but on the basis of ready cash. Useless goods are promoted because they are profitable, not because they are needed. Poverty, bad working conditions etc. all take a back seat to the goal of making money.

4. Capitalism is inefficient. Market systems are inherently wasteful, because supply is only matched to demand after the fact of production. There may be more goods produced than people can buy; in this case goods go to waste (they are not used at all as this is better from the point of view of the capitalists than giving them to those who need them). There is no correlation between what is produced and what is actually needed inside society. Instead, different companies produce a number of almost identical products resulting in unnecessary waste. The profit motive means that markets systematically fail to meet basic needs in favour of the needs of those with the money i.e. the ruling and middle classes. Contrary to the ideology that capitalism is to the benefit of all, there is a constant contradiction between the private interests of capitalists and the general needs of the majority of people.
5. Capitalism undermines social solidarity. The market forces people to compete for jobs, wages etc. It also promotes greed and similar negative social values. In this way markets undermine positive values like solidarity etc.
6. As we discuss elsewhere in these papers, the capitalist system along with the State is also a primary cause of oppressions like racism, sexism, imperialism etc. SEE POSITION PAPERS ON FIGHTING RACISM, ANTI-IMPERIALISM, WOMEN'S FREEDOM, GAY RIGHTS etc.

#### **4. WHY DO WE OPPOSE THE STATE?**

8. The term State refers to a set of administrative, hierarchical, bureaucratic, coercive and legal structures-the legislature (Parliament), the civil service, the judiciary, the army and police- co-ordinated by an executive (e.g.) the cabinet. These mechanisms of domination and control have an exclusive legal monopoly on the use of force and a territorial basis.<sup>9</sup>
  1. The State emerges with the division of society into classes and is designed to protect the ruling and exploiting minority ruling class from the oppressed classes.<sup>10</sup> Economic exploitation, and the coercive institutions of political power have always gone hand in hand.
  2. When we say that the State upholds the ruling class we mean the whole ruling class- and not just the capitalists or bosses in the economy, but also the generals, the politicians and the top civil servants. The State is not simply the tool of economic interests, but a structure of domination in its own right and with its own dynamics. History provides many examples of the way in which the State's drive to power has gone

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<sup>9</sup> Yudelman, D. (1983), *The Emergence Of Modern South Africa: State, Capital And The Incorporation Of Organised Labour On The South African Gold Fields 1902-39*. p17; Posel, D, (1991), *The Making Of Apartheid 1948-61: Conflict And Compromise*. Clarendon Press. Cambridge. pp. 21-2

<sup>10</sup> Makhno et al, [1926], pp. 17-18; Rocker, 1948, p349

against the optimal development of the capitalist economy.<sup>11</sup> Overall, the State and capitalism are like two inseparable Siamese twins- each requires the other.

3. The State will always defend the ruling class. This is because the State is funded by taxes and loans generated in the process of exploitation, because the top personnel of the State are mainly drawn (like the bosses of the companies) from the few who own all the wealth (thus sharing common values and interests), and because the State was created specifically in order to defend the ruling class. In addition, those controlling the State develop a vested interest in the power and wealth that they derive from their position, thus turning them into zealous defenders of the class system.
4. The State cannot be used to secure the liberation of the working class (and working peasantry).<sup>12</sup>
  1. through parliament: real power does not lie in parliament, it lies in the military, in the upper levels of the State bureaucracy, and in the company boardrooms. The State is a huge machine containing many powerful non- elected officials. All elected parties are thus, no matter their intentions, fundamentally constrained in their ability to change society by the nature of the State. If the ruling class was genuinely threatened by an elected government, it would remove it by an authoritarian solution such as a military coup, or by intrigues. In this way, all elected parties are forced to confine themselves to reforms that do not challenge the fundamental fact of class rule.
  2. through the so- called workers State: the State is an hierarchical structure that is built to allow a minority to rule over the rest of society. Any attempt to use a State structure, “red” or otherwise, as a means to liberate the masses can only result in the rule of yet another small minority, which will rapidly assume all the features of a ruling class. In this way, the hoped for revolution is strangled by a new group of exploiters.
  3. The working class can only secure its freedom by mass struggle against the State and capitalism, and only take power through its own democratic mass organisations such as the unions.
5. The State is driven by two main imperatives.<sup>13</sup>
  1. Firstly, the State wants to ensure that the processes of accumulation in the capitalist economy continue to occur, because it derives its revenue from taxation and from finance from capital markets. The State does this by trying to keep society “stable”, by enforcing the laws of private property and contract, by providing infrastructure, such as roads, teaching people the to have a pro- capitalist outlook, and, in some cases, social services to alleviate the worst excesses of the capitalist system.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rocker, 1948, p349

<sup>12</sup> Makhno et al, [1926], pp. 17–18; Rocker, 1948, 349–50; Class War, 1992, pp. 45–7.

<sup>13</sup> Posel, 1991, pp. 20–1; Yudelman, 1983, pp. 37–42.

<sup>14</sup> see also Class War, 1992, pp. 43–5; J. Natrass, (1988), *The South African Economy: Its Growth And Change*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town. pp. 226–231 on these points.

2. Secondly, the State wishes to preserve its domination over society. The State generally thus tries to legitimise its rule amongst (at least some of) its subjects (hence the claims of the State that it “represents the people”, maintains “law and order” etc.). This is of course backed up by the State’s military power.
3. The way in which the State acts in a given situation will generally be in line with these imperatives. However, this does not mean that the State has everything its own way. Popular unrest and resistance can force the State to concede basic civil and social rights and to drop or modify unpopular policies.

## **5. WHY DO WE STAND FOR CLASS STRUGGLE AND CLASS REVOLUTION?**

### **Why does the class struggle arise and what does it imply?**

9. As stated above, capitalism and the State are based on the exploitation of the majority of humanity. This class exploitation generates a class struggle between the exploiters and the exploited. This takes place both at work and in the community, and may be under the banner of a wide variety of ideologies: nationalist, feminist, religious etc. Most of these differ from Anarchism substantially.
10. In order to end this class system, Anarchist/Syndicalists believe that revolution by the working class (and / or working peasantry) is necessary. Only in this way can the masses take control of their lives and enjoy the fruits of their labour.
  1. Only a productive class can build a free society, because only a productive class does not need to exploit.<sup>15</sup> This means the workers and working peasants (and maybe some sections of the middle class like doctors, teachers). Any revolution made by a ruling class, be it progressive or reactionary, White or Black, will only perpetuate the class system under a new guise.
  2. We do not support the idea that society should be changed from above. It can be, but it won’t be much better for the masses.
  3. The revolution will destroy capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression, and build a new self- managed society based on worker councils (which will develop from the trade unions) and community councils (which will develop from the civic associations) and distribution according to need. All forms of coercive authority, oppression and exploitation will be abolished.

### **A Note on the Middle Class**

4. The middle class is stuck in the middle of the working class/ ruling class struggle. As such, it will probably split before and during the revolution between those supporting the bosses and those supporting the working class (just like some working class people will probably

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<sup>15</sup> “Any class may be revolutionary in its day and time; only a productive class may be libertarian in nature, because it does not need to exploit” (A. Meltzer, *Anarchism, Arguments For And Against*, pp. 14–15).

join the bosses against the revolution). Nonetheless, it is important to stress that those middle class people who join the workers movement should come as comrades putting their abilities at the service of the masses, rather than as experts and leaders who give the orders.<sup>16</sup>

**The Class Struggle And Its Relationship To Other Forms Of Oppression SEE SECTIONS ON FIGHTING RACISM AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION FOR MORE ON THE FOLLOWING POINTS.**

11. In addition to class exploitation, capitalism and the modern State generate a number of other oppressive relationships. These include racism, imperialism, sexism, homophobia and environmental degradation.
  1. Generally speaking these oppressions allow capitalism to super-exploit socially weaker sections of the working class (like Blacks and women) and to divide the working masses through ideological manipulation and the provision of unequal rights.
  2. As Anarchists we give our full support to struggles against these forms of oppression, seeing this as a central part of the class struggle. Class struggle does not ignore sexism, racism etc.: insofar as the majority of people who are affected by these oppressions (and who are also affected the worst by these oppressions) are working class, insofar as these oppressions are rooted in the capitalist system, and insofar as the working class can only be united and mobilised on the basis of opposing all oppression, these issues are all class issues. It is impossible to mobilise the working class without dealing with all the issues that affect the working class. That is to say, the class struggle can only succeed if it is anti-racist, anti-sexist etc. We stand for the destruction of all special oppressions that divide the working class.. SEE POSITION PAPERS ON FIGHTING RACISM, ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND WOMEN'S FREEDOM ETC.
  3. We also stand for united, integrated, internationalist class struggle politics. No one section of the working class can win freedom on its own, the struggle must be united (this is where a strength lies, and because we have common interests) and internationalist (because no revolution can succeed in one country alone). ON INTERNATIONALISM, SEE ALSO POSITION PAPER ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM. On the issue of whether specially oppressed sections of the working class should organise separately, SEE POSITION PAPERS ON SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT
  4. The fight against racism etc. must be at the same time a class struggle.
  5. Capitalism and the State are the primary cause of all special oppressions. It follows that the fight against racism etc. must be a fight against capitalism and the State.

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<sup>16</sup> Class War, (1992), Unfinished Business: The Politics Of Class War. AK Press and CWF. p83; Kropotkin, An Appeal to the Young, various editions.

Since these structures can only be beaten through class struggle, it follows that only a united working class can defeat racism etc..<sup>17</sup>

6. Racism, sexism, homophobia and imperialism affect people in all classes. However, the class position and relative privilege of Blacks, women, homosexuals, and colonised people in the exploiting classes not only gives these individuals a vested interest in capitalist exploitation, but modifies their experience of oppression.
7. We do not believe that these individuals can, in general, play a useful or liberating role in destroying the main basis of all oppression: capitalism and the State. Instead these individuals, unless they genuinely adopt a class struggle Anarchist/ Syndicalist position, will tend to either divert the struggle, or hijack it for their own benefit.

### **The Power Of The Working Class**

12. The working masses are not powerless. They carry society on their shoulders through their labour. It is precisely because of this fact that the working class has real power, the power to halt and defeat the class enemy. By action at the point of production, such as strikes, they can injure the boss class.<sup>18</sup>
  1. Important concessions can be won from the ruling class in the pre- revolutionary period by mass action, particularly in the workplace. We therefore support action in the workplace, and also argue that progressive struggles should be linked to the power of the workers.
  2. The revolution must involve the direct seizure of the land, factories, mines etc. from the bosses and the placing of these means of production under workers control. It is therefore essential that Anarchists make revolutionary propaganda and help to build democratic workers organisations in the workplaces. SEE POSITION PAPER ON UNIONS FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT.
13. It is true that the concentration of workers in large factories in a co-operative/ interdependent labour process aids the class struggle by making organising easier, and class consciousness stronger.
  1. But we are opposed to the idea that this gives the urban industrial workers a “leading” role in the revolution in comparison with other elements of the working masses.
  2. Peasants are as capable of mass struggle and revolutionary action as workers and it is nonsense to see them as a disunited “sack of potatoes” or as the inevitably reactionary

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<sup>17</sup> Our analysis of the question of separate organisation draws heavily on the ideas of the Mujeres Libres (Anarchist women's group in Spain): see M.A. Ackelsberg, (1993), “Models of Revolution: rural women and Anarchist collectivisation in Spain,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20 (3); P. Carpena, (1986), “Spain 1936: Free Women- a Feminist, Proletarian And Anarchist Movement,” in M. Gadant (ed.), *Women of the Mediterranean*. Zed Books. London and New Jersey; V. Ortiz, (1979), “Mujeres Libres: Anarchist Women In The Spanish Civil War,” In *Antipode: A Radical Journal Of Geography* 10 (3) & 11 (1).

<sup>18</sup> see Berkman (1989), chapter 12; Rocker (1948), pp. 370–1.

defenders of private property. These points are clearly shown by the leading role of peasants in the Spanish Revolution (1936–7).<sup>19</sup>

## 6. ON ELECTIONS

14. Elections are not a form of class struggle.

1. We unconditionally support and defend the right to vote, and the other civil and political rights that go alongside it in a bourgeois/ capitalist democracy.
2. But we need to recognise that these rights were only won and can only be defended by working class struggle. The State is not some neutral tool at the disposal of the majority, but a weapon of the bosses: real power does not lie in parliament but in the company boardrooms, the State bureaucracy and the military. We are not saying that the different political parties will not implement different policies to each other but we are saying that all the parties will conform to the constraints imposed by the nature of the State.
3. In addition, we are opposed to the idea that 400 people in parliament have the right to make decisions for the 40 million people outside it. All power must be exercised by the working class as a whole through grassroots worker and community councils. The unions and the civic associations will provide the basis for these councils.

## 7. IN DEFENCE OF CLASS POLITICS

15. The bourgeoisie and others claim that the class struggle is irrelevant. We disagree.

16. The argument that claims that the working class is somehow “disappearing” is totally wrong.<sup>20</sup>

1. On a global scale the blue collar or industrial working class is growing (e.g. in the Newly Industrialising Countries of the Third World such as Brazil, Korea, South Africa). The “Third World” includes Africa, Asia, South America, and, arguably, parts of the ex- Eastern bloc.
2. While it is true that service sector and white- collar jobs have expanded considerably in the First World , these jobs are by nature working class as they involve neither ownership or economic control of the means of production. In other words they are based on exploitation through the wages system. By the “First World” we mean the advanced industrial capitalist countries of West Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and Japan.

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<sup>19</sup> see E. Conlon, (1993), *The Spanish Civil War: Anarchism In Action*. Workers Solidarity Movement. Dublin; D. Geurin, (1971), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. pp. 114–143; anon. *Anarchism in Action: the Spanish Revolution*. Aldgate Press. London.

<sup>20</sup> G. Purchase, (1993), “Rethinking the Fall of State- Communism,” in *Rebel Worker: Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation*. 12 (9). Australia. pp. 15–6.

3 It is theoretically flawed to identify the working class purely with blue collar industrial workers. If we define a class in terms of the technology it uses (e.g.. industry and machines) rather than in terms of its position in society (e.g.. exploitation through the wage system) we end up with an absurd situation where every technological breakthrough is seen to herald the end of the working class. It needs to be remembered that while capitalism is a dynamic system that constantly changes its technology, it never changes its nature: a class system.

4. No class system (e.g.. capitalism) can exist without the exploitation of a working class majority and therefore the working class cannot “disappear” until stateless socialism is established.<sup>21</sup>

17. It is wrong to argue that the working class has “sold out” to capitalism, particularly in the First World.

1. One version of this argument claims that the factory situation somehow inevitably teaches the workers to accept capitalism, the bosses, greed etc. This view is deterministic and simplistic. History is a complex process that does not have any inevitable outcomes. What happens depends on the interaction of a lot of different factors. Whether or not workers accept their bosses and exploitation depends on such factors as the strength of revolutionary influences, political traditions, levels of poverty etc.
2. Another version of this argument is that the working class has “sold out” to consumerism and has become moderate because of its “improving living standards”. In fact, poverty and inequality in the First World have always remained high, and have in fact been steadily increasing since the end of the post- World War Two capitalist boom. The capitalist system is unable to deliver to the needs of the masses in order to “buy them out”.
3. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) at the start of the 1980s, the top 10% of the population received 23.9% of total income while the bottom 10% received only 2.5%. The top 10% of the population also owned four fifths of all personal wealth, and 98% of all privately held company shares and stocks. The top 1% itself owned 80% of all stocks and shares. Meanwhile the bottom 80% of the population owned just 10% of the personal wealth, mostly in the form of owning the house they live in. These economic inequalities correspond to material deprivation and hardship. A study published in 1979 found that about 32% of the population of the UK (15–17.5 million out of a population of 55.5 million) was living in or near poverty. A 1990 United Nations survey of child health in the UK showed that 25% of children were malnourished to the extent that their growth was stunted.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> see Class War, (1992), *Unfinished Business: The Politics Of Class War*. AK Press and CWF. p. 83; Mark McGuire, (1993), “Book Review Corner,” *Rebel Worker: Paper Of The Anarcho- Syndicalist Federation*. 12 (6). Australia.

<sup>22</sup> Figures for the UK from Robert Lekachman and Borin van Loon, (1981), *Capitalism for Beginners*. Pantheon Books. New York, esp. 44–5, 67, 70. and Class War (1992), *Unfinished Business: The Politics Of Class War*. AK Press and CWF, p. 77. For the USA see Lind, Micheal, *The Next American Nation*, cited in “Stringing up the Yuppies”, (24 September 1995), *Sunday Times*, p14; *Business Week* which estimated in 1991 36 million Americans (15% of the total population) were living in poverty; and *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1992.



4. For a refutation of the claim that First World workers share in the profits of imperialism or racism and are therefore non-revolutionary, SEE POSITION PAPERS ON FIGHTING RACISM AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM.
18. The argument that class struggle politics ignores non- class forms of oppression such as racism and sexism and must therefore be replaced by the so- called “new social movements” based on single issues such as women’s rights, anti- racism and gay rights is also wrong.
    1. We support, defend, and work within the “new social movements.” But this should not blind us to their very real limits as agents of revolutionary change.
    2. We need to recognise that these movements generally contain, and are dominated by, middle and upper class elements (and ideas) bent on hi- jacking them to win a better place at the top of the capitalist heap as “politically correct” bosses. Such elements have a vested interest in capitalism and the State that makes them unable to attack these forms of oppression at their roots.
    3. In addition, the “new social movements” are often built around small minorities: gays, racial minorities in the First World and so on. It is difficult to see how such small groups can overturn capitalism and the State. The working class (and peasants) by contrast make up the majority of every society on this planet. In addition, these classes include the majority of the people who make up the “new social movements”.
    4. As noted above, class struggle does not ignore racism, sexism etc. These are part of the class struggle. Therefore multi-calls movements of specially oppressed groups can not defeat those special oppressions, however good their intentions.
    5. What we need to do is to work in or with the “new social movements” to develop class politics in these organisations (with the obvious exception of political parties), to expel the opportunist mis- leaders and to link these struggles and organisations to the trade union movement and other workers struggles (e.g. around rent boycotts).
  19. It is wrong to pretend that Anarchism is not an ideology of class struggle. Anarchism emerged in its modern form in the federalist wing of the First International Workers Association and in the twentieth century developed in the direction of Anarcho- syndicalism (or Anarchist/ revolutionary trade unionism). All the classic Anarchists (Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus, Malatesta, Goldman, Berkman, Makhno, Archinov, Maximov, Rocker, Durruti etc. etc.) believed in the centrality for class struggle even where they dealt with issues such as decolonisation (e.g.. Bakunin)<sup>23</sup> and women’s rights (e.g.. He Zhen, Emma Goldman, the Mujeres Libres Anarchist women’s group in Spain).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> see D. Geurin, (1971), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. pp. 67–9

<sup>24</sup> see the references for Mujeres Libres given above; for Emma Goldman see P. Marshall (1993), *Demanding The Impossible: A History Of Anarchism*. Fontana. London. pp. 403–9; ), p279.; also P. Zarrow, 1988, “He Zhen and Anarcho- Feminism in China,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (4); also see M. Molyneux, 1986, “No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism In Nineteenth Century Argentine,” in *Latin American Perspectives*, 13 (1)

## TO SUM UP

1. class is a form of exploitation and domination that affects the vast majority of people in the world today.
2. only the working class (and working peasantry) produce social wealth.
3. only a productive class can destroy capitalism and the state and create a free society because only a productive class does not need to exploit or benefit from the current system.
4. in addition, the fact that the working class produces all value gives the class enormous power to fight its oppressors by means of workplace action. Working class organisation is facilitated by the concentration of workers in large workplaces
5. class is not the only form of oppression but all forms of oppression are rooted in the capitalist/ State system and can therefore only be permanently destroyed by a working class revolution. At the same time, the class struggle can only win if it consistently opposes all forms of oppression. In addition, class position modifies the experience of other forms of oppression, thus underlining the need for a class perspective. It follows that the fight against special oppression can only succeed on the basis of class struggle, whilst the class struggle can only succeed if it opposes all special oppressions.
6. Only the working and poor people can destroy the root cause of all oppression because only they do not have an interest in preserving the system. The class struggle can only win on the basis of opposing all forms of oppression.
7. Only class struggle and revolution can genuinely change society

### 3. THE TRADE UNIONS

*It is necessary to never forget that if trade unionism does not find in anarchist theory a support in opportune times it will turn, whether we like it or not, to the ideology of a political statist party.*

**Nestor Makhno, Peter Archinov, Ida Mett et al, The Organisational Platform of the Anarchist Communists, 1926 (published by the WSF (SA)).**

*... according to the Syndicalist view, the trade union, the syndicate, is the unified organisation of labour and has for its purpose the defence of the interests of the producers in the existing society and the preparing for and the practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life after the pattern of [libertarian] Socialism. It has, therefore, a double purpose ...*

**Rudolph Rocker, Anarcho-syndicalism, 1938 (republished 1989, Pluto Press),p86**

#### 1. THE WORKPLACE STRUGGLE

1. The working class (and/ or the working peasantry) create all wealth under capitalism.<sup>1</sup>
  1. Because of their position in society these classes, as the producers of all wealth, are the only social groups that are capable of destroying the class system and other forms of oppression and creating a free, stateless, classless society based on direct democracy, and distribution according to need.<sup>2</sup>
  2. As the producers of wealth, these classes, through workplace action are a force capable of powerful mass actions against the present set- up even in the pre- revolutionary period.<sup>3</sup>
  3. So why don't we use our numbers and power and recreate society in our own interests? The main reason is that we are told that we are not capable of doing so, by the schools, media etc. These teach us that the workers can only follow orders and that this is the natural order of things.

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<sup>1</sup> see, among others, Makhno, Archinov et al, [1926], The Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, reprinted by Workers Solidarity Movement. Ireland. p14,16; R. Rocker, (1948), "Anarchism and Anarcho- syndicalism," in F. Gross (ed) European Ideologies: A Survey Of Twentieth Century Political Ideas. Philosophical Library. New York. pp370-371; A. Berkman, (1989), What is Communist Anarchism? Phoenix Press. London. pp3,5-6,72-4; A. Berkman, (1964), ABC of Anarchism. Freedom Press. London. p50.

<sup>2</sup> "Any class may be revolutionary in its day and time; only a productive class may be libertarian in nature, because it does not need to exploit" (A. Meltzer, Anarchism, Arguments For And Against, pp14-15).

<sup>3</sup> see A. Berkman, (1989), What is Communist Anarchism? Phoenix Press. London. chapter 12; R. Rocker, (1948), "Anarchism and Anarcho- syndicalism," in F. Gross (ed) European Ideologies: A Survey Of Twentieth Century Political Ideas. Philosophical Library. New York. pp370-1.

4. However, this pro- capitalist propaganda that teaches us to feel powerless and that hides the truth of class rule is challenged by the experiences of the masses when they struggle to force the capitalist system to meet their needs for education, housing, jobs, wages, freedom from racism etc. In particular, workplace action, the use of our collective power that runs the factories, offices, mines, schools etc. to stop them gives us a glimpse of our potential power.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

2. Trade unions are one of the most important mass movements of the working class and one of the main focuses of our activity as the Workers Solidarity Federation. We take this position for a number of reasons.
  1. The trade unions are organisations based on the specific class interests of the workers. There is no other way to explain the formation of trade union movements except by the need of workers to organise on class lines to defend and advance their own particular interests in opposition to those of the bosses.<sup>5</sup> No amount of bureaucracy, reformism or backwardness in the unions can remove this essential fact.
  2. Because of this fundamental feature of the trade union movement, it forms an organisational stronghold of a specific class consciousness that to some extent cuts across race, gender, religion etc.
  3. The trade unions are based at the point of production and hence wield the strongest weapon of the workers under capitalism: the withdrawal of their labour. They therefore allow the workers to injure the bosses and they give the workers an idea of their potential power and ability to run their own lives.
  4. We stand in solidarity with the mass organisations and progressive struggles of the working class. We must take up Anarchist arguments throughout the working class and its structures. We oppose all oppression, we stand in solidarity with our class. We believe that mass struggle is the best strategy for social change, gives the class confidence in its own abilities, and provides the best forum to win Anarchist ideas. Therefore we engage in grassroots union work.
3. We reject the argument that all unions inevitably end up “selling out” the working class.
  1. Workers would not support the unions if the unions did not to some extent defend and advance their class interests. Even the most bureaucratic and deformed union must ultimately respond to the needs of the rank-and-file membership if it is to retain their support.
  2. Not all reformist demands can be won in the framework of capitalism. Therefore even the most bureaucratic union will in some circumstances clash with the imperatives of capital and the State. In other words the unions can never be totally “integrated” into capitalism.

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<sup>4</sup> Rocker makes a similar point when he says: “Only as a producer and creator of social wealth does the worker become aware of his strength” (1948: 371).

<sup>5</sup> Berkman, (1989), pp63-4.

3. All unions depend in the final analysis on their ability to mobilise their members in direct action against the bosses. It is the threat of a withdrawal of labour power that gets the bosses to recognise the demands of the workers and not some sort of devious plot to co-opt the working class. Therefore we say that unions are mass combat organisations of the working class.
4. The bosses do not set up or support the unions as a means of fooling the workers. The bosses will attack and if possible destroy even the most moderate unions if they have the opportunity (e.g. the recent attacks on Trades Union Congress (TUC) in Britain; on AFL-CIO in the USA.<sup>6</sup>). It is nonsense to say that capitalism “needs” the unions for stability, social peace or somesuch. The bosses will only grant some sort of recognition to unions if there is mass struggle. The bosses cannot always give in to workers demands to “buy off” struggle.
5. The existence of a union bureaucracy is not inevitable. The Spanish Anarcho-sindicalist union the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) had more than a million members in the early 1930s but at no point had more than two paid officials. Union work was done as much as possible by activists during work hours, and leadership posts were regularly rotated.<sup>7</sup>
6. It is not true that a bureaucracy always develops in the unions because the bosses will only deal with “respectable” leaders who can be relied on to get the membership to accept and abide by the deals negotiated after mass actions. The bosses negotiate because they are forced to, not because they “like” or “approve” of the union leadership. In addition, if the union is democratic, the negotiators represent the interests of the membership, and are not prefects or policemen for management.

### 3. THE TRADE UNION BUREAUCRACY AND REFORMISM

4. Unions have taken different ideological and organisational approaches in different times and places. They have varied from revolutionary Anarcho-sindicalist unions aiming at destroying capitalism, to sweetheart bureaucratic unions.
5. At present most unions in South Africa are characterised by the dominance of reformist ideas. These hold that the bosses and the workers must co-operate to “save the economy”, “reconstruct and develop the country” etc. It is generally held that capitalism can be made

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<sup>6</sup> see H. Pelling, (1992), *A History of British Trade Unionism*. Penguin Books. chapter 15, for a discussion of the bosses assault on the British unions in the 1980s; see M. Davis, (1986), *Prisoners Of The American Dream: Politics And Economy In The History Of The US Working Class*. Verso. London. for the American unions.

<sup>7</sup> M. M. Breitbart, (1979), “Spanish Anarchism: an introductory essay,” in *Antipode: A Radical Journal Of Geography*. 10 (3) & 11 (1). p65. This is a good article but is very seriously marred by the author’s totally inaccurate assumption that “Spain is the only country in the twentieth century where Anarcho- communism and Anarcho- syndicalism were adopted extensively as revolutionary theories and practices” (p60). Anarchism has been the dominant influence on the revolutionary left and union movements of many countries in the twentieth century (eg). Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Argentine, France, Mexico, Uruguay, China. It formed a powerful Left and union current in others (eg). Italy, Britain, the United States, Japan, Germany, Bulgaria, Australia.

into something more humane. It is believed that unions must reach some sort of accommodation with capitalism, rather than overthrow it.<sup>8</sup>

6. The actions of the unions are increasingly dominated by a bureaucracy of full-time, often unelected, officials. At the same time, the unions, particularly COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions), have strong tradition of grassroots democracy and accountability e.g.. the shopsteward system. This leads to serious contradictions, as when the leadership condemns the strike actions and ignores the concerns of the union membership (e.g..) the truckers strike of 1994, and the nurses strike of 1995.<sup>9</sup>
  1. The union bureaucracy is not responsible to the membership in any real sense except in the most formal way. They have far too much power and influence. On top of this they earn much more than the rank- and- file, they are able to avoid overtime and are also protected from short- time and retrenchments in a way that ordinary workers are not. In addition, they may sit on company boards, government commissions, high-level negotiating structures such as NEDLAC (National Economic, Development and Labour Council), and may enjoy a variety of perks.
  2. The privileges of the bureaucracy may even be set to increase in the larger unions, as concern grows with preventing leaders from being lost to the bosses and the government, both of whom are willing and able to offer very attractive employment opportunities to skilled negotiators with some sort of working class background.<sup>10</sup>
  3. In short the union bureaucracy enjoys a way of life that is quite different from the people that they are supposed to be working for. Some of them have never even worked in an ordinary job.
7. As a result of its privileges and power the union bureaucracy develops a distinct set of interests.<sup>11</sup>. They generally put their own special interests before those of the workers as a whole.
  1. Because the bureaucrats privileges depend on their role as full- time negotiators and mediators who can help the bosses avoid industrial conflict they will rarely initiate or lead strikes. Instead they are ready to negotiate until the cows come home to reach a so- called “reasonable” solution. They prefer conciliation to class warfare. Their lack of accountability reinforces their tendency to negotiate rather than pull out all the stops to secure the maximum benefit for the union rank and file.

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<sup>8</sup> For a critical look at the shift to accommodation with capitalism by the Left in South Africa Harris, L., (1993), “South Africa’s Economic and Social Transformation: from ‘No Middle Road’ to ‘No Alternative’” in *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 57. For an example of the type of arguments that are being used to justify the collaboration of the unions with the bosses and the State see Joffe, A., Maller, J. and E. Webster, (1993), “South Africa’s Industrialization: the challenge facing labor,” *History Workshop and Sociology of Work Unit Symposium*. University of the Witwatersrand.

<sup>9</sup> The growing power of the union bureaucracy is discussed in D. Collins, (July 1994), “Worker Control,” in *South African Labour Bulletin*. 18 (3); D. Keet, (May/ June 1992), “Shopstewards and Worker Control,” *South African Labour Bulletin*. 16 (5); B. Marie, (May/ June 1992), “COSATU faces crisis,” *South African Labour Bulletin*. 16 (5).

<sup>10</sup> This problem is discussed in S. Buhlungu, (July 1994), “The Big Brain Drain,” *South African Labour Bulletin*, 18 (3).

<sup>11</sup> On the union bureaucracy see Berkman (1989). pp64-5.

2. The full- time officials do not usually lead strikes but they sometimes will, such as when employers are refusing to negotiate or when negotiating procedures are threatened. Generally however they will go to almost any length and accept almost any deal in place of industrial action. They will not hesitate to condemn unofficial and illegal strikes (strikes that are not approved of by themselves).
  3. It is important to remember that the bureaucracy behaves as it does because of its privileges and power, and not because its individual members are “sell- outs”, “bad people” etc. The bureaucracy is by its very nature authoritarian and opposed to workers self- activity on most occasions.
  4. The opposition of the bureaucracy to mass actions, except in extreme circumstances has many negative consequences. It dampens the fighting spirit of the membership and leads to demobilisation, and it reduces the extent of gains that could have been won if mass action was used.
8. However, as we pointed out above, the bureaucracy in the unions can never become totally unresponsive to the demands of the membership. This would result in the end of their power, privileges and careers as ordinary people would leave the unions. Within this constraint, however, the bureaucrats will still swing between the role of mediator and defender of the status quo.
  9. It is self- evident that the more power, initiative and control that lies with the full time officials, the less that lies with the rank- and- file membership on the shopfloor.

#### **4. CORPORATISM, TRIPARTISM AND “STRATEGIC UNIONISM”**

10. We are totally opposed to the current drift of the unions into collaboration with the bosses and the State (e.g.) forums such as NEDLAC which deals with macro- economic policy. We believe that tripartite and bipartite arrangements will not bring any real benefits to the workers and the poor. Instead they will serve to demobilise and weaken the unions.<sup>12</sup>
11. This trend towards collaboration with the bosses and the rulers is most noticeable in the growing involvement of the unions in a variety of policy negotiation forums.
  1. Involvement of the unions in “policy- making”: Basically this means that the unions draw up complex proposals as the basis for negotiations with the bosses and the State in order to formulate long-term policies binding on all parties. In practice these are drawn up by experts with no real worker input. Because of the domination of nationalist ideas in the unions, these proposals also tend to be reformist and aimed at creating a better capitalism.
  2. Sitting in policy forums: The unions try to get these policies accepted by the bosses and the State, and as a result participate in various forums, both at national level (NEDLAC- which deals with labour law and macro- economic policy- e.g.. tariffs,

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<sup>12</sup> A helpful summary of the problems that corporatist and tripartite arrangements create for the unions is provided in B. Vally, (1992), *A Social Contract: The Way Forward?*. Taj Printers. pp46-67.

training, taxation), and at sub- national forums (like “participatory management” schemes and “workplace forums”).

12. These forums are nothing but a trap for the working class, even though unions (like COSATU) may see these forums as a way of gradually winning control away from the boss and moving to socialism.
  1. These forums create a pretence of democracy that ignores the massive and systematic inequality between the bosses (who own everything and control the State) and the workers (who have nothing but their numbers, fighting spirit and ability to disrupt production). These forums do not challenge this class inequality because they are based on the idea the bosses and the workers are partners in development and economic growth and that both are legitimate interest groups. As a result they cannot fundamentally change the balance of power between bosses and workers that exists under capitalism.
  2. The forums are a threat to the unions because they take control out of the hands of ordinary members and place it in the hands of the full- time leaders and “experts” who sit in the forums and draft “policy”. By focussing on policy they shift the focus of union activity from grassroots action and workers self- activity against the bosses (the real source of workers power) to high- level negotiations, and elite bargaining.
  3. These various forums also promote the false idea that the bosses and the workers share the same interests as each other, and that the bosses are a good and necessary part of society. In this way the forums help to teach workers to accept capitalism in the name of “democracy”.
  4. While there is an appearance that the agenda for negotiation is open and democratic, in reality all that is discussed is how to make capitalism run more smoothly. Lower level forums like “participatory management” do not give the workers power over the bigger capitalist economy; at most they give a little bit of a say in hiring and firing, working conditions and improving the efficiency and competitiveness of the firm in the capitalist economy. Higher level forums like NEDLAC only deal with improving the broader framework in which capitalism operates. e.g.. protection on imports, worker training, improving productivity; because agreement must be reached in order for policy to be implemented (usually on the basis of consensus), anything that threatened the State and capital would be rejected out of hand by the representatives of these groups and will thus always be vetoed.
13. This is not to say that we are opposed to the struggle of workers to win economic improvements in their lives and more control over their work and the economy. The point is that these gains must be won through mass actions organised through a democratic, grassroots, militant and independent/ autonomous union movement, and not through collaborating with the enemy in the naive belief that we can be “partners in reconstruction and development”.



## 5. THE REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL OF TRADE UNIONS

14. We stand within that tendency within class struggle Anarchism that believes that the unions can perform a double role of firstly, mobilising workers for mass action on day-to-day issues; and, secondly, providing the organisational structure through which workers can collectively seize and self-manage the means of production. Work in the union movement is not only important as a means of winning workers to Anarchism, but also as a means of laying the organisational basis for the new society in the shell of the old.<sup>13</sup>
  1. This tendency (Anarchist- Syndicalism or Anarcho- Syndicalism) is rooted in the work of Bakunin, and the Anarchist- aligned Spanish, Swiss and other sections of the First International Workers Association (in the 1860s and 1870s), and the International Working Peoples Association in the USA in the 1880s.<sup>14</sup>
  2. Anarcho- syndicalism underwent a massive revival from the late nineteenth century. Not only did it come to dominate the revolutionary left, but in a number of countries, it became the dominant influence on the union movement (e.g.). Spain, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, France, Mexico, Uruguay. In others it formed a substantial minority current (e.g.). Italy, Britain, the United States, Japan, Germany, Bulgaria, Australia.
15. We reject the idea that trade unions can only become revolutionary in “revolutionary conditions”. This is a one- sided and deterministic view. Revolutionary conditions are not just something that happens to workers. They are also the result of the actions of the workers themselves, and in turn these actions are influenced by the strength of revolutionary ideology and the level of self- activity that the workers engage in. Therefore we say that revolutionary trade unions can themselves directly contribute to the creation of revolutionary conditions.
16. We reject the claim that unions only exist to improve the conditions under which workers are exploited, rather than put an end to the system of exploitation itself. In other words, we are opposed to the idea that the unions always and everywhere cannot go beyond “partial struggles” within capitalism and must always compromise with the bosses at “the end of the day”.
  1. This view is totally ahistorical. Just because the balance of forces under capitalism generally favours the bosses and the rulers, with the effect that many struggles (by unions as well as other progressive formations) are only “partial” does not mean that the unions will always be forced to compromise with capitalism. It is necessary to

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<sup>13</sup> Basic statements of this idea are R. Rocker, (1948), “Anarchism and Anarcho- syndicalism,” in F. Gross (ed), *European Ideologies: A Survey Of Twentieth Century Political Ideas*. Philosophical Library. New York. pp362-386; A. Berkman, (1964), *ABC of Anarchism*. Freedom Press. London. chapter 10-14.

<sup>14</sup> For overviews of the history of Anarcho- syndicalism, see Rocker, (1948), pp363-70, 381-6; W. Thorpe, (1989), *The Workers Themselves: Revolutionary Syndicalism And International Labour 1913-23*. Kulwer Academic Pubs (Dordrecht, Boston, London) & International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam); M. van der Linden and W. Thorpe (eds), (1990), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective*. Scolar Press (England). These histories are marred by their incomplete focus, and by their occasional failure to draw a sharp enough distinction between Anarcho- syndicalism in the true sense of the word, and reformist/ revisionist forms of syndicalism (sometimes called “pure” syndicalism). An excellent history of the International Working People’s Association is P. Avrich, 1984, *The Haymarket Tragedy*. Priceton University.

examine both the objective and subjective factors in existence at a particular time (e.g.). strength of revolutionary ideology amongst the workers, existence of a crisis in ruling circles etc. The logic of the “partial struggle” position is that any fighting organisation that is unable to overthrow capitalism whenever it feels like it is inherently reformist.

2. This view is inaccurate. In response to an attempted fascist coup in Spain in 1936, the Anarcho- Syndicalist union the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) successfully spearheaded the formation of workers militias that halted the fascist coup, and led the movement by up to nine million workers and peasants to seize and self- administer the land and factories. The rank- and- file of the CNT literally tore down the capitalist system.<sup>15</sup>
  3. It is wrong to see the outcome of every day workers struggle as a “compromise”. Many such struggles are an unconditional victory for the working masses in that they forced totally obstinate bosses to give in against their will and lose a bit of their power and wealth. Such struggles may be limited in their effect but they are a direct and successful attack on the rule of the bosses.
  4. Finally, a compromise cannot always be reached. In a number of circumstances, such as economic downturn, the bosses may be unable to concede on the workers demands. In these cases even a “partial struggle” brings the workers into conflict with the very fabric of the capitalist system and moves their demands from “partial” ones to objectively revolutionary ones. It is not, however, inevitable that such situations will have a revolutionary outcome.
17. The existence of a union bureaucracy is not inevitable. The Spanish Anarcho- syndicalist union the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) had more than a million members in the early 1930s but at no point had more than two paid officials. Union work was done as much as possible by activists during work hours, and leadership posts were regularly rotated.

## **6. BASIC IDEAS OF ANARCHO- SYNDICALISM ON THE UNIONS**

18. As Anarcho- syndicalists we believe that the unions can not only defend the workers in the existing capitalist society, but prepare them for, and practically carry out the reconstruction of society in the direction of Stateless Socialism.<sup>16</sup>
1. In practical terms, this means that the role of the unions must be expanded from that of simply defending and advancing the interests of the workers in the daily struggle, to preparing the workers to take control of the economy by informing them about the technical management of production and distribution, and by spreading among them the revolutionary ideas needed to create a free, stateless, socialist society (anarchism).

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<sup>15</sup> see E. Conlon, (1993), *The Spanish Civil War: Anarchism In Action*. Workers Solidarity Movement. Dublin; D. Geurin, (1971), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. pp114-143; anon. *Anarchism in Action: the Spanish Revolution*. Aldgate Press. London. Also see Breitbart (1979).

<sup>16</sup> This section is based on Rocker (1948), pp370-81. See also Berkman, (1964), esp. chapter 10; G.P. Maximoff, (1985), *The Program of Anarcho- syndicalism*. Monty Miller Press. Australia.

2. The unions are more suited to accomplishing these tasks than political parties. They organise the workers to use their economic power to fight injustice and help to make the workers aware of their strength. They help to create a spirit of solidarity and combativeness. They can give the workers the ideological and organisational preparation needed to reconstruct society.
  3. In accordance with this outlook we emphasise mass/ direct actions by the workers as a means of defending and advancing their political and economic rights. Examples of these immediate methods of struggle are boycotts, go- slows, strikes, and work- to- rule.
  4. It is not true that Anarcho- syndicalists believe that all that is necessary to make a revolution is a General Strike lasting for a few days. The General Strike is the strongest weapon of the workers and is used in a variety of situations. In some circumstances, it may be the prelude to the revolutionary uprising of the working class.
19. The tasks of the Anarcho- syndicalists are thus two- fold.
1. On the one hand, they devote themselves to the Socialist education of the masses: that is, revolutionary propaganda work that links a criticism of capitalist society to a vision of how society can be reorganised in the interests of the masses. Such work is of course aided by the experience of struggle at the workplace.
  2. On the other hand, as opponents of centralisation and supporters of the maximum self- activity of the masses, they are opposed to the existence of bureaucratic and undemocratic structures in the union movement. The unions should be structured as follows. The basic unit of the union is the workplace section (made up of a general assembly of all workers in a particular part of a workplace); these sections each elect a mandated delegate, together making up the factory committee.
  3. The different plants are then federated with each other in two directions. Firstly, with all equivalent organisations in the same industry and related trades (to form industrial and agricultural alliances e.g.. in transport). These industrial unions are in turn federated into a Federation of Industrial Alliances. Secondly, with all such union structures in a given district or town (to form a Local Chamber of Labour). These are joined in a Federation of Labour Chambers. Taken together, these federation constitute the General Confederation of Labour. All these structures are linked by mandated delegates and not by a bureaucracy.
  4. The point of this union structure is to unify the workers in a structure that makes possible common action, keep initiative with the rank and file, and lay the basis for the future economic order. In addition, the Labour Chambers also act as centres for local propaganda and education.
20. We reject the “a-political” version of Anarcho-syndicalism that argues that State and other institutions of the ruling class will automatically collapse after the unions seize the means of production.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For example, the Spanish CNT is reported to have argued that the seizure of the means of production would automatically lead to the “liquidation of the bourgeois State, which would die of asphyxiation” (in D. Geurin, (1971), p128).

1. The State will not simply disappear following the revolutionary seizure of the means of production. It will actively organise counter-revolutionary activity in order to repress the gains of the workers. The working class must take power in its own name, and smash the State from day one of the revolution.
2. The State must be smashed and power based on rank and file committees, in the unions, the militias and the communities. There must be no power centres in society other than the mass organisations of the working class. The mass organisations must be integrated and co-ordinated in a “social power” or revolutionary committee at the national and international level in a revolutionary situation.

## **7. THE WAY FORWARD IN THE UNIONS**

### **The Need For a Specific Anarchist Political Organisation**

21. The question naturally arises at this point as to how we set about “anarchising” the union movement, that is to say, imbuing it with a revolutionary spirit and building in it a decentralised structure.
22. In our view the precondition for such work is the creation of an Anarchist political organisation on the lines suggested by the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists by Makhno and others. The Workers Solidarity Federation is an example of this type of political organisation.
  1. The Platform argues that Anarchism needs to become the “theoretical driving force” of the revolution of the working class (and/ or working peasantry). In other words the masses must make the revolution by and for themselves, on the basis of a clear criticism of this society and a clear idea on what sort of society should replace it.
  2. In order for this to occur it is necessary to build a large and effective Anarchist political organisation that will spread Anarchist ideas through the working class and its organisations. This organisation must be based on shared ideological and tactical positions and be organised on a federal basis.
  3. The Platform explicitly endorses Anarcho-syndicalism, writing that “the ways and means of Anarchists’ attitudes vis a vis trade unionism” are “groups of Anarchists in companies, factories and workshops, preoccupied in creating Anarchist unions, leading the struggle in revolutionary unions for the domination of libertarian ideas in unionism, groups organized in their action by a general Anarchist organization” (p25).
  4. Endorsement for Anarcho-syndicalism is implicit in the arguments of the Platform. If Anarchist propaganda work wins over the majority of union members, the unions will necessarily have been restructured on Anarchist principles. What can this mean but a union movement organized in a democratic and anti- bureaucratic manner and filled with revolutionary purpose (ie). Anarcho- syndicalism?
  5. We agree with the Platform that Anarchist activists in the unions need to be united with each other in, and coordinated with each other by the Anarchist political or-

ganization, that the Anarchist political organization must retain its organizational independence from the union, and that the Anarchists do not restrict their activities to the unions (pp24-5).

23. To sum up, the first step towards creating Anarcho- syndicalist unions is to build an Anarchist political organization that aims to spread Anarchist ideas as far and wide as possible in the working class and its structures. Such an organization will obviously also take up the battle against the power and privilege of the union bureaucracy.

### **Why We Need To “Bore-From-Within” Existing Trade Unions**

24. We believe that the Anarchist political organization should aim to “anarchise” the existing union movement. We are totally opposed to the idea of “dual unionism”: either in the form of breaking away from the existing unions and setting up new unions, or in the form of setting up new unions on purely revolutionary principles to compete with the established unions.<sup>18</sup> We take this position for the following reasons.
  1. A basic problem of breaking away to form new radical unions is that has the effect of taking the minority of combatitive and radical workers out of the old union, thus leaving it at the mercy of the bureaucracy and reformist orientation that provoked the split in the first place. We urge the militants to stay in the union and fight to win over the membership.
  2. In addition, the effect of a radical breakaway is often to create a small sectarian break-away that is isolated from the masses. The masses, knowing the merit of a large and powerful organization, generally prefer to gravitate to the large established unions rather than the small dual unions and breakaways.
  3. The working masses often lack a revolutionary political consciousness and are thus not readily attracted to the radical slogans of dual unions. In fact they may even be alienated by the rhetoric of these unions. The workers also trust and look to the established unions. It is important that we organize wherever workers are organized, and that we relate workers everyday concerns to the goal of Anarchism. For these reasons, also, we work in the existing unions.
  4. The existing unions also tend to attract a lower degree of hostility and attacks from the bosses and the State than radical dual unions. It is therefore easier to establish a basis for the initial revolutionary work by action in the existing unions than by setting up small dual unions.
  5. Most importantly, the history of the union movement shows that small groups of revolutionaries can achieve impressive results by working in and building up the existing unions (eg) the Haymarket/ Chicago Anarchists/ International Working Peoples Association were able to help launch the great 8 hour day movement in 1886 on this

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<sup>18</sup> The tactical issue of how Anarcho- syndicalists should relate to the existing unions has historically been a point of contention. See P.S. Foner, (1965), “The Debate over ‘Boring-from-Within’” in his *The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905–17* (International Pubs. New York. chapter 18) and William Z. Foster, (1936), *From Bryan to Stalin* (Lawrence and Wishart. London. chapters ) for an example of how this issue split the US Anarcho- syndicalists. Foster, the author of the second book, later became a Marxist and the reader of his book is advised to keep this in mind.

basis; the victory of the Anarchists in the Argentinean Regional Workers Federation (FORA) in 1904; the victory in the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) in France by 1906; the rise of the Spanish Anarcho- syndicalists to preeminence in Solidaridad Obrera, the predecessor of the CNT, in the 1910s.<sup>19</sup>

25. While we oppose attempts to set up dual unions, we ultimately defend the right of the workers themselves to make this decision. Where dual unions are created, we will attempt to set up WSF sections in both unions. The Anarchist political organization will organize wherever workers are organized.

## **Rank-and-File Movements**

26. It is important to emphasize that work in the existing unions, based on a militant fight for daily demands, does not mean taking over the unions with an unchanged structure. The privileges and undue power of the union leaders must be removed, the unions must be decentralized and restructured in accordance with Anarcho- syndicalist ideas, and different unions in the same sector should be amalgamated together where possible.
27. We are more than willing to work alongside other rank and file members to build a rank- and- file movement of militant workers who are prepared to fight independently of the bureaucracy, and against it where necessary.
  1. This type of movement arises when workers go into struggle and are attacked not only by the bosses but by their own union officials. A program or set of demands for such a movement should be broad enough to attract workers who are militant but would not see themselves as having a particular political outlook. A general guide could be (i) for union democracy (ii) for womens' rights in the workplace and the union (iii) against wage restraint (iv) for jobs (v) support for strikes (vi) fighting racial discrimination.
  2. While we will fight for our politics in this movement, we want the movement (if it arises) to be independent of any one political organization. We want to win as many workers as possible to our position but we will not do so in an opportunist manner at the expense of the growth of the movement. The role of a rank- and- file movement is to provide a focus for workers moving to the left and wanting to fight; it should never become a front for the revolutionary organization.
  3. In the same way as the specific Anarchist political organisation is vital to the victory of revolutionary ideas in the unions, so too is the rank-and-file movement a key force in the battle against the union bureacracy and for full union democracy.
28. What should we do if we prove unable to remove the entrenched union bureacracy? Two scenarios present themselves.

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<sup>19</sup> For the Haymarket/ Chicago Anarchists, see P. Avrich, (1984), *The Haymarket Tragedy*. Princeton. esp. pp72-3 and John R. Commons et al. (1918), *The History of Labor in the United States*, vol 2. New York. pp290-300. On the FORA see R. Munck et al. (1987), *Argentina: from Anarchism to Peronism*. Zed Books. London and New Jersey. chapters 4–6. On the CGT see Thorpe, (1989), chapter 1 and Foner, (1965), p417. On Solidaridad Obrera, see Thorpe, (1989), chapter 1, and M. Bookchin, (1977), *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868–1936*. Harper Colophon Books. New York. Hagerstown. San Francisco. London. chapters 7&8.

1. If it proves impossible to dislodge the bureaucracy in a pre-revolutionary situation despite consistent and sincere efforts by the rank-and-file movement, despite the actions of the Anarchist political organisation, and despite the support of the ordinary union members themselves, the call for a massive majority split-off by the rank and file movement that basically brings out almost all union members (excluding the bureaucracy) into a new union federation may be acceptable. This is a very serious decision and must not be taken lightly. The rank- and- file movement and existing grassroots union structures would in this case provide the nucleus of a new union federation.
2. If in a revolutionary situation the bureaucracy is still in place, then the rank-and-file movement and existing grassroots union structures will themselves undertake the task of the revolutionary general strike in defiance of the union bureaucracy to take over the means of production and institute workers self-management.
3. These are tactical issues that will have to be dealt with when they arise; they are not and should not be interpreted as, a principled adoption of “dual unionism”, which is a strategy that we argue cannot work (see elsewhere in this paper).

### **Organising the Unorganised**

29. If the existing unions do not organise sectors of the workforce, then we should match our work within existing unions with organising drives amongst the unorganised. These drives should whenever possible get support from existing unions.
  1. If possible, the newly organised workers should be incorporated into the existing unions. Otherwise, separate unions will have to be established. In such cases, however, there must be a consistent promotion of united front action (cooperation on specific issues) between the established unions and the new unions. This unity in action can serve as a basis for the unification of the old and new unions. Such unity must be a principled basis that opposes racism , sexism etc. We should always hold the “unification” of all unions into “One Big Union” as an end goal, a goal as important as the work of “education” (ideas) and “organisation” (restructuring the unions).
  2. This organizing work must be done on conjunction with revolutionary propaganda work in the new unions with the aim of genuinely winning the membership over to an Anarchist perspective. Unless this is done, we can end up with a membership that disagrees with Anarchism but joins the union anyway because it has no real alternative if it wants to organize.
  3. Attempts to establish a full-time bureaucracy in new unions must be opposed.

## **8. ORGANISING BEYOND THE WORKPLACE**

30. It is not enough to organise revolutionary unions in the workplace. We need to organise throughout the working class, poor and working peasantry. Anarcho-syndicalists have almost always recognised the need to organise both within and outside the workplace.

1. It is necessary to organize throughout the whole working class (including women, youth etc.) and to build an Anarchist political organization that will fight for the leadership of the Anarchist ideas throughout the working class (and peasants etc.). We need to be active in community-based campaigns such as rent strikes, always bearing in mind the need for class struggle and for vigilance against middle class opportunists posing as “community leaders”; we do not hide, but highlight, the class differences in residential areas, addressing ourselves to the exploited and the poor (the working class community) rather than to shopkeepers, priests, businessmen, politicians. We support struggles in the education sector. We need to work out ways of organising amongst the poor in the “informal sector” (the self-employed who do not employ others).<sup>20</sup> We need to organise amongst the peasantry, although the union form of organisation can often be applied to this sector with ease.
2. However, we always seek to bring the power of the unions to the aid of other progressive struggles. The workplace is a repository of great power, and it is invaluable in aiding other struggles. We must link the workplace struggle of trade unions to the rural struggle of the exploited masses (peasants, sharecroppers etc.).
3. The future Anarchist society will not be based purely on union structures (syndicates). There will, in addition, be community committees, which together with the syndicates will make up the free self- governing city (commune). The communes and syndicates will be federated together, along industrial, bio- regional and national lines. There will also be a democratic workers army to defend the revolutionary society.<sup>21</sup>

## 9. IN DEFENSE OF ANARCHIST TRADE UNIONISM

31. We reject the argument that Anarcho- syndicalism is flawed because it can supposedly only organize in the workplace. The Spanish Anarcho- syndicalists organized rent strike committees, the Libertarian Youth, the women’s organization, Mujeres Libres, as well as community schools and centers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Some interesting initiatives in this area have been taking place in west Africa, where the unions have begun to help organise the informal sector. See P. Horn, February 1997, “The Informal sector: Wesr African Women Organise”, in South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 21, no.1.

<sup>21</sup> On the theory of the syndicates, communes and regions as developed by classical Anarchism, see Guerin, Daniel, (1970), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. New York and London. Chapter 2, esp. pp56-60. See also G.P. Maximoff, (1985), *The Program of Anarcho- syndicalism*. Monty Miller Press. Australia. pp. 42-8. The addition of the bio- regional dimension is found in Purchase, Graham, (1991) *Anarchist Organisation: Suggestions And Possibilities*. Black Rose. and Purchase, Graham, (1990), *Anarchist Society and its Practical Realization*. San Francisco. See Sharp Press. On the defense of the revolution, see Makhno et al, (1927), pp. 29-31; Berkman, (1964), chapter 14; Maximoff, (1985), pp. 49-55.

<sup>22</sup> On Anarcho- syndicalist community organizing, see N. Rider, (1989), “The Practice of Direct Action: the Barcelona rent strike of 1931,” in D. Goodway (ed), *For Anarchism: History, Theory And Practice*. Routledge. London and New York. On Mujeres Libres (Anarchist womens’ group in Spain) see M.A. Ackelsberg, (1993), “Models of Revolution: Rural Women And Anarchist Collectivisation In Spain,” *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20 (3); P. Carpena, (1986), “Spain 1936: Free Women- A Feminist, Proletarian And Anarchist Movement,” in M. Gadant (ed), *Women of the Mediterranean*. Zed Books. London and New Jersey; V. Ortiz, (1979), “Mujeres Libres: Anarchist women in the Spanish Civil War,” in *Antipode: A Radical Journal Of Geography* 10 (3) & 11 (1). On storefront schools and cultural



32. We reject the argument that Anarcho- syndicalism believes that workers are tied to capitalism solely by bureaucratic union structures that remove all initiative from the rank-and-file, and that all that is needed to change this is to restructure the unions. Anarcho-syndicalists do not neglect the role of ideas in revolutionary change.
1. Anarcho-syndicalism is correct in pointing to the importance of a democratic, non-bureaucratic and decentralized union structure in preparing workers for revolution. Democratic participation in struggle is an essential part of changing people's consciousness of their capabilities.<sup>23</sup> The call to return power to the union rank-and-file is also an implicit critique of the capitalist- Statist ideology of leaders, centralization, control from the top down.
  2. However, Anarcho- syndicalists also take up the battle of ideas, making revolutionary propaganda that links a criticism of this society to a vision of how a future society could be organized. This propaganda has been spread in a variety of ways (eg). propaganda leagues inside the existing unions (such as the Syndicalist League of North America); the Labor Chambers and workers schools associated with Anarcho- syndicalist unions (for example in the Spanish case); the press of Anarcho-syndicalist unions (eg. the CNT controlled thirty- six daily papers, including Solidaridad Obrera, the largest of any paper in Spain, and published millions of books and pamphlets).<sup>24</sup> In other words, the Anarcho- syndicalist union once established can aid the Anarchist political organization in its propaganda work.
33. We reject the argument that Anarcho-syndicalist unions, when established, are always compromised by their method of organizing (ie). as unions they must organize all workers regardless of ideological affiliation because this is necessary to be effective in the workplace.
1. We do not deny that this opens the door to reformist currents. Such currents, sometimes calling themselves "pure syndicalists", emerged in Anarcho- syndicalist unions in Italy, France and Spain.
  2. This situation, however, only points to the need to keep up the battle of ideas in the union. These reformist groups can be stopped. The Anarchist political organization will clearly play a central role here. We are opposed the merger of Anarchist political groups into Anarcho-syndicalist unions once the latter have been established because it is necessary to have an organized force to battle reformist tendencies. This has a

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centers, see M.A. Acklesberg, (1985), "Revolution and Community: mobilization, de- politicisation and perceptions of change in Civil War Spain," in S.C. Bourque et al. (eds), *Women Living Change*. Temple University Press. Philadelphia.

<sup>23</sup> For a defense of the idea that participation and self- activity in struggle and social change (such as is made possible by decentralized and anti- bureaucratic union structures) is an essential part of preparation for the revolution, see M.A. Acklesberg, (1985), "Revolution and Community: mobilization, de- politicisation and perceptions of change in Civil War Spain," in S.C. Bourque et al. (eds), *Women Living Change*. Temple University Press. Philadelphia.

<sup>24</sup> For example, Foner, (1965), pp147-157 for an extensive discussion of the propaganda work of the US Anarcho-syndicalist organization, the Industrial Workers of the World; see Foster, (1936), chapter 6 for a discussion of the propaganda work of the Syndicalist League of North America; on workers education centers in Spain, see Acklesberg (1985); the figures for the Spanish Anarchist press come from Rocker (1948), p384.

precedent: the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), set up in 1927 with the aim of safeguarding the Spanish CNT's commitment to Anarchist principles.<sup>25</sup>

3. We do not expect Anarcho- syndicalist unions to attract large numbers of reformist elements, no matter how militant and effective they are, as these unions usually bear the brunt of State and boss repression as compared to moderate unions (eg). repeated banning of CNT in Spain. Committed reformist workers will find a more comfortable, safer environment in moderate unions.
34. We reject the argument that the rank-and-file of historically existing Anarcho- syndicalist unions were not Anarchists. If internal democracy existed, then a union that is openly Anarcho- syndicalist in policies and structure could only be one where most members do agree with Anarchist ideas; if reformist tendencies in the union involved more than a minority this would be reflected in the union's activities, statements and structure. (eg) the French CGT, once the most famous Anarcho- syndicalist union, was taken over by Marxist and Social Democrat elements soon after World War 1.
35. We reject the argument that Anarcho-syndicalism is inherently "a-political". Organizations such as the Anarcho- syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA) explicitly recognizes "violence as a means of defense against the violent methods of the ruling classes in the struggle for the possession of the factories and the fields by the revolutionary people ... the defense of the revolution [must] be entrusted to the masses themselves and their economic organizations".<sup>26</sup>

## 10. WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION ACTIVITY IN THE UNIONS

### General perspectives

36. The major obstacles to the unions playing a revolutionary role have already been indicated above: the dominance of reformist ideas and the trade union bureaucracy. In order to "anarchise" the trade unions we will work to build a section of the Workers Solidarity Federation within the existing unions.
  1. A crucial activity of this group will be the struggle to win as many workers as possible to an Anarchist position. This will include the following: aiming to unify different sectional struggles into an awareness of the overall struggle between classes; to explain the lessons of past struggles; to take on the politics of Marxism and reformism in the movement; and to spread the Anarchist idea, including the view that the unions can become the battering ram that destroys capitalism, and that the unions need to be restructured in a decentralized and anti- bureaucratic manner.
  2. A second crucial activity will be to fight for union democracy. By this we do not mean that we want to elect new individuals to the same bureaucratic posts. We want more

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<sup>25</sup> Bookchin, (1977), p213.

<sup>26</sup> The quote is from the Declaration of the Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism, adopted by the founding congress of the IWA. See Thorpe, (1989), Appendix D.

accountability, mandating, elections, information for members etc. Our long term goal is the restructuring of the unions on Anarcho- syndicalist lines. SEE BELOW.

37. In general, we aim to encourage the workers themselves to take up the fight against the State, bosses, and union bureaucrats. Our focus of activity is the shopfloor.
38. We are in favor of 100% union membership and all WSF members must belong to their appropriate union.
39. No member of the WSF will accept an unelected post in the unions that gives power over the membership.
  1. Members elected as shop stewards are to consider their position as that of a delegate accountable to and mandated by the members rather than a “representative” who can act over the heads of the membership.
  2. When going forward for elective positions we make it clear that we are not accepting the union structure as it now exists. We will fight for more accountability, mandating, information for members etc.

### **Guidelines for day-to-day activities**

40. The following points serve as guidelines for our day-to-day activity and link it to our goal of Anarchism, because of the method that lies behind them.

## **PARTY POLITICS**

41. In South Africa, like in other countries, there are formal links between political parties and the unions (ie) the Tripartite Alliance between COSATU , the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party.
  1. We are opposed to this, firstly, because it places the workers in a formal alliance with capitalist and State interests (eg. in the ANC) which compromises their ability to fight. We must be independent from the class enemy, particularly in our key class organisations.
- 41.2 Secondly, it has the effect of encouraging workers to look to politicians (“our comrades in government”) to solve their political issues, rather than relying on their own power.
3. Thirdly, it ties workers into the elections for parliaments, which is a futile strategy given the nature of the State. We unconditionally support and defend the right to vote, and the other civil and political rights that go alongside it in a bourgeois/ capitalist democracy. Rights and gains are not won by participation in Parliament, they are forced on Parliament by mass actions. But the State is not some neutral tool at the disposal of the majority, but a weapon of the bosses and rulers.
42. We are opposed to the call for the unions to establish a Mass Workers Party. This is partly because of the futility of parliamentary politics. It is also because history has shown that

participation in Parliament turns worker leaders into a conservative, privileged and elitist stratum with its own sectional interests, and because any socialist politics that workers parties have is generally toned down so that the party can attract the majority of the electorate.

## **STATE INTERFERENCE**

43. We are opposed to all laws that restrict the right to strike, and all laws that aim to interfere in the internal affairs of the union. We are opposed to “union bashing” by the State and bosses.
44. We are opposed to all schemes for “workers directors” and “workers participation”. We call for the withdrawal of the unions from all macro- economic policy forums such as NEDLAC. These schemes are a confidence trick that hides the rule of the bosses and the fact that the workers and the bosses have absolutely different interests. We are against participation in all bodies that try to destroy the independence of the unions by involving them in “social partnership.” We are opposed to the unions buying stock in any company, no matter how this is justified.
45. Where possible, we encourage the workers not to use the Industrial Court and other supposedly “impartial” institutions. Instead we call for solidarity action.

## **POLICE UNIONS**

46. The police and prison warders are part of the repressive apparatus of the State, exist to protect the ruling class from the workers and the poor. We stand in opposition to this “army of the rich” and will therefore not in any way support or do solidarity work with the police unions. We are opposed to the presence of the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union in COSATU.

## **WAGES, JOBS AND THE UNEMPLOYED**

47. We are for a national minimum wage.
48. We are opposed to the idea that the unemployed should be thankful for any job that they are offered. Instead we call for decent jobs (ie) ones that are well paid and socially useful.
49. We oppose all job losses and believe that these must be fought through workplace occupations and strike action backed up by the maximum possible solidarity action throughout the union movement. All closures should be met with the demand for continued employment with no reduction in pay, or worsening of conditions and union rights. We are not concerned whether this is done by nationalization or by bringing in a new owner.
50. We point out that nationalization is not a cure- all, and that State ownership does not bring us one step nearer to socialism (given the nature of the State, and our conception

of a grassroots socialism from below). We are, however, totally opposed to the job losses associated with the privatisation and “restructuring” of State assets.

51. We are opposed to all productivity deals that bring job losses.
52. We are opposed to forced early retirement, attacks on women’s right to work outside the home, and the “natural wastage” of jobs.
53. We are for full membership rights in the unions for the unemployed, and for unemployed sections within branches. Where possible organizations for the unemployed should be set up. These should keep in close contact with those still in work by helping on picket lines and building links with unions. The unemployed organizations should also build closer links with genuine civic and tenants organizations. We call for trade union support for the unemployed (eg) providing facilities, refusing to cut off services like water etc.
54. We are for putting pressure on the State to inject money into industry that is both labor-intensive and socially useful. We call for a crash program of house building that uses direct labor employed by the local authorities.

## **WOMENS’ RIGHTS**

55. We are for the positive encouragement of women to participate in the unions, and to take elected office. We oppose the idea of “reserved places” on union committees for women. It is undemocratic and tokenistic and it fails to address the real issue: getting the unions to take up women’s issues seriously.
56. We are for equal rights and benefits for all members of the unions, regardless of sex, age, or whether they are full- time or part- time workers.
57. We are for six months paid maternity/ paternity leave. We are opposed to the use of maternity leave by the bosses to disentitle workers to pay- related benefits.
58. In order to enable women to attend union meetings, we call for the unions to provide child care provision at their own expense.
59. To defend women’s right to work outside the home we call for child care provision at the expense of the bosses, and under the supervision of the workers using it.
60. We support “flexitime” arrangements where workers with children desire it.
61. We aim to commit the unions to support a women’s right to control her own fertility, including the right to access to contraception and abortion, and to give moral and material support to campaigns seeking to achieve this aim.
62. We call on the unions to support the rights of gay and lesbian people to live their personal lives as they see fit, free from discrimination or harassment by workers or the employers.

## **UNION DEMOCRACY**

63. We fight to change the role of the full- time officials, and not just the people sitting in these posts. Their decision- making powers have to be removed and returned to the rank- and- file. The number of full- time officials should be reduced the absolute minimum possible. The officials should earn no more than an ordinary salary and should, after a fixed period, step down and return to ordinary work. All positions need to be made elected and genuinely accountable to (and mandated by) the rank and file membership. Our ultimate aim is the restructuring of the unions on Anarcho- syndicalist lines.
64. We are for regular branch and workplace meetings, in working hours where this is possible.
65. We are for direct elections to all committees, conference delegations and national offices, subject to mandating and recall.
66. All strikes should automatically be made official so long as they do not contradict trade union principles. There must be support for all disputes, official or unofficial, in pursuit of higher wages, better conditions, trade union rights, or any other issue in the interest of the working class.
67. We call for the publication of the minutes of all union meetings.
68. Where revolutionaries can gain enough support to win election to a national office in a large union, or even a small one, they should not use this support just to win an election. Instead they should use it fundamentally change the structure of the union in such a way that will return power to the rank and file and turn the officers in administrators and resource persons rather than decision makers.

## **SOLIDARITY WORK BY WSF**

69. Because we recognize the need for solidarity, the WSF will, within the bounds of its resources, offer aid to workers involved in a dispute. But we will do this solidarity work WITH the workers, not FOR them. We are not aiming to “provide a service” but to encourage self- activity among the strikers. We push them to pressure the union for material help, and only when this fails will we provide leaflets etc. We will help with fundraising, collections, publicity and contacts for solidarity actions.
70. Our immediate aim in any strike is to win a victory. But this is not our only aim. We are also political militants and we argue our politics. We aim to spread our ideas and to win members for our organization.

## **TO SUM UP**

1. We defend, support and work within, the unions. We are for a revolutionary class struggle approach to trade unionism.

2. We are opposed to the existence of a union bureaucracy and reformist ideas that hamper the ability of the unions to defend and advance the conditions of their membership.
3. We call for the withdrawal of the unions from participation in schemes for “social partnership” between the unions, the bosses and the State as these structures hide the rule of the bosses and undermine the unions.
4. We call on the unions to become wholly independent of all parliamentary parties.
5. The unions have the potential to overthrow capitalism and to lay the basis for an Anarchist society, but in order for this to take place we must secure maximum union democracy, and the leadership of the Anarchist idea amongst the rank- and- file of the existing unions.
6. The precondition for “anarchising” the unions is the construction of an Anarchist political organization with ideological and tactical unity that will fight to popularize the Anarchist idea.
7. We do not restrict our activities to the unions but organize throughout the entire working class. We do not just focus on those workers already In unions, but strive to organise the entire working class into one big union.

## 4. FIGHTING RACISM

*What do we mean by respect for humanity? We mean the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, of whatever race [or] colour ...*

**Mikhail Bakunin, 1867, Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism, reprinted in S. Dolgoff (ed) Bakunin on Anarchism, 1971, Allen and Unwin, p147**

*... 5. Equal rights for all without distinction of sex or race ...*

**From the Pittsburg Manifesto, 1883, founding charter of the International Working Peoples Association, historic mass U.S. anarcho-syndicalist organisation. quoted in P. Avrich, 1984, The Haymarket Tragedy. Princeton University Press. Princeton, N.J. p. 75.**

*Your revolutionary duty is to stifle all nationalist persecution by dealing ruthlessly with the instigators of anti-Semitic pogroms [racist attacks]...*

**Makhnovist Army and Nabat Anarchist Group, “ Workers, Peasants and Insurgents. For the Oppressed, Against the Oppressors- Always!”, proclamation issued in 1919 during course of Anarchist-led Ukrainian revolution, 1918–21. Reproduced in Peter Archinov, History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1818–21. 1987 Freedom Press edition.**

### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. By racism we refer to either of the following features:
  1. Attitudes, belief and ideas that denigrate other people on the basis of their supposed physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour); and
  2. Systematic social, economic and political discrimination against people on the basis of their supposed physical characteristics (e.g. skin colour).
2. We will use the term “Black” to refer to all people discriminated against on the basis of their supposed racial characteristics. This obviously includes Africans, Coloureds and Indians. We will use the words “African”, “Coloured”, “Indian” etc. when referring to a specific Black group.
3. South Africa is characterised by extremely high levels of racial inequality. This racial inequality is intertwined with high levels of class (and gender) inequality.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Figures in this section are from A. Whiteford, (March 11–17 1994), “The Poor Get Even Poorer” in The Weekly Mail and Guardian, p.8; L. Schlemmer, (1996), “The Nemesis of Race: a Case for Redoubled Concern”, in Frontiers of



1. Race: the following figures released in 1995 give some idea of the racial inequalities in South Africa: whites, who make up 13% of the population, earn 61% of total income, whilst all Black groups (Africans, Coloureds and Indians), who make up 87% of the population, earn only 39% of total income. Africans make up 75% of the population but they receive only 28% of total income. Other indicators of racial inequality are: only 2 out of every 10 African schoolchildren reach metric whilst 8 out of 10 white children do so; 28,3% of African children suffer malnutrition to the extent that their growth is stunted, whilst the figure for Whites is 4,9%; the life expectancy of Africans is 9 years lower than that of Whites . The World Bank/Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit survey of 1993 showed that 47% of African households were living at or below the relevant Household Subsistence Level, compared with 19% of Coloured households, 6% of Indian households and 2% of White households. Before the 1990s, racial inequality was also expressed in terms of civil and political rights: Black people were voteless, subject to the pass system, denied the right of union organisation, and the main Black political organisations were also banned.
2. Class: however, it is a mistake to say that all inequality in South Africa follows purely racial lines. There are also high levels of inequality on the basis of class and gender (sex). A recent study confirmed the high levels of racial inequality, but found that at the same time “[a]most three quarters of total inequality can be ascribed to inequality within population groups”. For example, the richest 20% of African households (many of whom are entrepreneurs, professionals and managers etc.) increased their real incomes by almost 40% over the period 1975- 1991, while the poorest 40% of African households’ incomes decreased by nearly 40% over the same period. A similar decline in real income was reported for the poorest 40% of Whites. The study concluded that “The 1960s saw a huge gap developing between the incomes of whites and blacks; the 1980s has seen a similar gap emerging within the black population group.”<sup>2</sup> This is borne out by another estimate, according to which the wealthiest 10% of African households have incomes over 60 times those of the poorest 10%, compared to ratios of roughly 30 times amongst Whites, Coloureds and Indians. Overall, the means of production have historically been concentrated amongst a minority of the population. About 80% of the country’s wealth is owned by 5% of the population, whilst four large corporations own 81% of share capital . SEE POSITION PAPER ON WOMEN’S FREEDOM FOR DISCUSSION OF INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN.
4. As Anarchists we fight for the creation of a free and equal society, based on grassroots democracy and socio- economic equality. We are for the destruction of all forms of exploitation and domination. We are opposed to coercive authority and hold that the only limit on an individuals’ freedom should be that she or he does not infringe on the freedom of anybody else. We believe that only a revolution by the productive, exploited classes

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Freedom. South African Institute of Race Relations. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter; B. Turok, (1993), “South Africa’s Skyscraper Economy: Growth or Development?”, in D. Hallows (ed.), *Hidden Faces: Environment, Development, Justice: South Africa and the Global Context*. Earthlife Africa. South Africa; J. Pearce, (March 17–23, 1995), “Still a Land of Inequality”, in *Weekly Mail and Guardian*.

<sup>2</sup> These quotes are from A. Whiteford , (March 11–17 1994), “The Poor Get Even Poorer” in *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, p.8

of society (the working class and the poor, and the working peasantry) can create a free world, and we recognise that these classes can only be mobilised and united on the basis of opposing all forms of oppression. For all of these reasons, we Anarchists/Syndicalists are the avowed opponents of racism and racists. An “Anarchism” which does not directly tackle racism is nothing short of a disgraceful fraud.

5. Anarchism has a vigorous history of fighting racism.<sup>3</sup>

1. From the condemnations and criticisms of racism by the main Anarchist theorists (e.g. Bakunin, Reclus, Makhno, Rocker), to mass organising drives and struggles against racism, capitalism and the State (e.g. the struggles of the International Working Peoples Association in the U.S. in the 1880s; the efforts of the Anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World in the USA in the 1910s among Black and immigrant workers; the centrality of the battle against anti-Semitism to the Anarchist revolution in the Ukraine of 1918–21), to the struggles against fascism and racism today, Anarchists have consistently combated racism. We are proud to stand in this revolutionary tradition.
2. Anarchism/Syndicalism has historically attracted millions of people of colour and racially oppressed minorities. Many, perhaps most, Anarchist/Syndicalist movements were based in the Third World, and thus took up issues of anti-imperialism, anti-racism etc. From China, to Cuba, to Nicaragua, to Herzegovina, our influence has been huge. Even within the Western countries, our movement consistently combatted racism and won to its side people of colour and racially oppressed minorities; many of these became prominent Anarchist/Syndicalist activists, such as Lucy Parsons (an African-American), Frank Little (of Native American and white descent), Ricardo Flores Magon (of Mexican and Native American descent), Alexander Berkman (of Jewish descent), Nestor Makhno (from the Ukraine, a Russian dominion), and James Connolly (from the immigrant Irish community in Edinburgh during the time that Ireland was still a British colony). It did this because it was fundamentally opposed to all oppression, and championed class struggle. It took

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<sup>3</sup> see, for example, M. Bakunin (1867), “Federalism, socialism and anti-theologism”, in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), (1973) *Bakunin On Anarchy: Selected Works Of The Activist Founder Of World Anarchism* (Allen and Unwin) p146; P.A. Kropotkin, (1887), “Anarchist Communism: its basis and principles,” in P.A. Kropotkin, (1987), *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism* (N. Walter (ed.), Freedom Press. London). p39; P.A. Kropotkin, (1882), “Expropriation”, in P.A. Kropotkin, (1970), *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*. (M. Miller (ed.). MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass. and London, England), p194; P. Marshall (1993), *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism*, chapter 20 (on Elisee Reclus). Fontana: London; also on Reclus: M. Fleming, 1979, *The Anarchist way to Socialism: Elisee Reclus and Nineteenth-Century European Anarchism*. Croom Helm, London. Rowan and Kittlefield, New Jersey, especially chapters 2 and 12; Rudolph Rocker, (1978) “The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories”, from his book *Nationalism and Culture*, Croixside Press, Stillwater, Minnesota; J. Casanovas, (1995), “Slavery, the Labour Movement and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1890”, in *International Review of Social History*, no. 40; P. Avrich, 1984, *The Haymarket Tragedy*. Princeton University Press. Princeton, N.J. [on the IWPA]; Philip S. Foner, (1974), *Organised Labour and the Black Worker 1619–1973* (United States), International Pubs, New York; Piotr Arshinov, (1987), “The Meaning of the National Question in the Makhnovshchina. The Jewish Question”, from his book *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918–21*, 1987. Freedom Press, London; M. Malet (1982), *Nestor Makhno in the Russian Civil War* (Macmillan Press: London); also see Anarchist Communist Federation, “From Panther to Anarchist”, *Organise! for Class Struggle Anarchism*, Magazine of the Anarchist Communist Federation. London. no. 28, October-December 1992.

note of both class exploitation and special forms of oppression, welding all workers together in an internationalist, anti-racist fight against capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression. It is therefore obvious that Anarchism/ Syndicalism was not “Eurocentric”, either in the composition of its adherents or in terms of the content of its theories and activities. Nor did it fail to deal either theoretically or practically with racism. Nor was it the property of any one nationality, it was the creation of the toiling masses of the whole world.

## 2. THERE IS ONLY ONE RACE: THE HUMAN RACE.<sup>4</sup>

6. We reject the argument that humanity can be biologically or scientifically divided into a number of distinct, and unalterable “races” (e.g.) Africans, Asians, Europeans etc.). The idea that humankind can be divided into distinct “races” on the basis of physical characteristics like skin colour, hair type, nose and eye shape etc. seems like common sense, but is nonetheless wrong. There is only one “race”: the human race.
  1. It is true that people differ by skin colour etc. but it has proven scientifically impossible to rigidly and clearly define people into clear cut “races” because there is no known single physical feature or group of physical features that clearly mark off one race from another . For example, Whites are said to have straight hair: but so do Asians, and some Africans; and many Whites in fact have woolly hair. Similarly, not all Africans have dark skins, while not all Whites have light skins; some Africans are fairly pale, and some Whites are dark. The point if all this is that no hard and fast divisions can be established amongst the different races, who blur into one another in a number of ways.
  2. This is not a coincidence. The fact of the matter is that there is no “race” gene. Only 6% of genetic variations among human groups can be accounted for by “race” differences such as exist between (e.g.). Asians and Africans. An expert in the field, remarks that “If the holocaust comes and a small tribe deep in the New Guinea forests are the only survivors, almost all the genetic variation now expressed among the innumerable groups of our four billion people will be preserved”. The genetic or biological variation between people of any given “race” is as great as the genetic variation between that race and any other given “race”.
  3. In practical terms this means that Eugene Terre’Blanche may be genetically closer to a Australian Aboriginal or an American Indian than he is to Paul Kruger. It also means that it is impossible for different “races” to be biologically “inferior” or “superior” to each other. And it means that history cannot be understood in terms of a “race struggle” between so- called “inferior” and “superior” races. Instead, many of the physical differences between people (like skin colour and eye colour) reflect environmental conditions.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the focus of Rudolph Rocker, (1978) “The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories”, from his book Nationalism and Culture. Croixside Press, StillWater, Minnesota. Recent social scientific arguments that make the same point are Barrett, M., and M. McIntosh, (1985), “Ethnocentrism and Socialist- Feminist Theory,” in Feminist Review No. 20; Fried, M.H., (1975), “A Four Letter Word that Hurts,” in H.Bernard (ed.), The Human Way: Readings in Anthropology, New York. pp. 38–45; C. Lewonthin and others, (1984), Not in our Genes (Pantheon Publishers).

4. This is why what people see as a “race” differs between different times and places (e.g.). books that spoke about “race conflict” in South Africa in the 1920s referred to conflict between white Afrikaners and English- speakers. What “race” you are refers to your own self- definition and the definitions of other people and social forces. “Race” does not have a scientific basis but it is a reality in society.

### 3. THE ROOTS OF RACISM

7. So why has “race” and racism become so central to our society (and many others)? We need to understand the roots of racism if we are to fight this oppression and its effects.
8. Racism is not the inevitable result of different people coming into contact with one another, “white culture”, or Calvinism. Racism is the product of a society based on exploiting and exploited classes. Racism is a means of organising and justifying the oppression of large masses of people.<sup>5</sup>
9. Racism may have been present in pre-capitalist forms of class society. For example, in feudal Europe, the aristocracy (lords/ knights) apparently justified their rule over the mass of unfree peasants (serfs) on the basis of their allegedly superior “blue blood”.<sup>6</sup> However, anti-Black racism was not a feature of these societies.
10. Racism has been an integral part of modern capitalist/ State society since it emerged in Europe in the 1500s. Racism was generated by capitalism and the State at every stage of their development.<sup>7</sup> SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING IMPERIALISM FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE PERIODS,
  1. Merchant capitalism and slavery: This early stage of capitalism dates from the early 1500s to the late 1700s, and was characterised by the accumulation of capital through trade and plunder. This was the period when capitalism began to forcefully expand itself into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Slave plantations were set up in the Americas and elsewhere, and supplied by an enormous slave trade. Slavery generated racism- racism did not generate slavery. The merchants and the planters initially tried to use White and Native American slaves, but from the second half of the 1600s, slaves from

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<sup>5</sup> Rocker hits the nail on the head when he argues that the real point of racist ideas is to justify the rule of the bosses and to justify counter- revolutionary attacks on the masses of the people, such as Nazism and fascism. Rocker writes that racist ideas are “rooted in the very foundations of all spiritual, political, and social reaction: in the attitudes of masters towards their slaves. Every class that has thus far attained to power has felt the need of stamping their rulership with the mark of the unalterable and the predestined ... They regard themselves as the chosen ones and think that they recognise in themselves externally the marks of the men of privilege ... All advocates of the race doctrine [i.e. racism] have been and are the associates of and defenders of every social and political reaction, advocates of the power principle in its most brutal form ... One comprehends how this doctrine has found such ready acceptance in the ranks of the great industrialists” (Rudolph Rocker, (1978) “The Nation in the Light of Modern Race Theories”, from his book Nationalism and Culture).

<sup>6</sup> B. Magubane, (1979) *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (Monthly Review Press)

<sup>7</sup> Some key works which discuss these points V.L. Allen, (1992), “The Genesis of Racism on the Mines”, in his *The History of Black Mineworkers in South Africa*. The Moor Press. See also “The Origins Of Racism” in L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People’s History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. Chapter 17.

Africa (and Asia) began to provide the labour force of the plantations. These black slaves were substantially cheaper, as well as available in larger numbers, and easier to identify (and thus help police) than the White slaves. The enslavement and sale of human beings was “justified” on the grounds that the slaves were from a sub-normal and savage people, unfit for freedom. This kind of argument was especially necessary with the rise of radical ideas of equality in the English, American and later the French Revolutions.

2. Colonial conquest: From the 1500s until the 1900s, capitalism and its State were involved in the conquest and colonisation of Africa, the Americas and Asia. This was motivated mainly by the need to obtain cheap (often forced) labour and raw materials (like crops and minerals), and by the need to find new markets. Again, however, racist ideas found fertile ground. It was said that the success of European imperialism reflected the innate superiority of the “White race”. In addition, the colonisers argued that they were helping the darker skinned “natives” by bringing “civilisation” to them- teaching them Christianity, the wearing of European clothes and the “dignity of labour”. Such ideas obviously aided the exploitation of the indigenous peasants and workers- these groups were paid very low wages or crop prices on the basis that their “uncivilised lifestyle” required less income; they were prevented from building up unions and similar bodies, on the grounds that they were “too immature” to “properly” use such structures; they were subject to harsh and racist forms of labour control on the basis that they were “muscular machines”, unable to manage their own work without “White” brains and supervision. (We will discuss these forms of Black working class and peasant exploitation in more detail below).
3. Genocide: In a number of colonised territories, particularly in the 1800s, there was no pretence of trying to “civilise the natives.” Instead, there were widespread and indiscriminate massacres of indigenous people, in what amounted to a campaign of extermination (genocide). Attempts were made to exterminate the Australian Aborigines, the Native Americans, the New Zealand Maoris, as well as the southern African Khoisan. In addition to the killings, the indigenous people were also affected by new diseases such as small pox, and social problems like alcoholism.
4. Dividing the working class
  1. Racism is also promoted by the bosses and rulers because it helps to divide the working class, particularly in the First World. In particular, it splits the White working class and poor from immigrant and Black working class people. Where the working class is racially divided, it lacks the solidarity necessary to fight and defeat the bosses and rulers. The bosses promote the division of the working class by means of the mass media (which they control), by making racial divisions correspond with job divisions, and by discriminating against Black workers. Racism is great stuff for the bosses: Black workers without political rights, job security or decent wages provide an “excellent” and flexible super-exploitable labour force to be hired and fired for the worst jobs whenever necessary; it provides a ready source of strike-breakers to be used against as a threat against White strikers; and it allows them to shift the anger that the White workers feel

at unemployment and low wages to Blacks and immigrants who are said to be “taking our jobs”.

2. So why do many White working class people in these countries accept and support these racist ideas and practices? The first reason has been given above- the media. Secondly, there is economic competition among the workers, who may be desperately fighting over a limited number of jobs. Or the bosses may be trying to replace skilled workers with cheaper and less skilled workers. The workers may, in some (but by no means all) cases, respond to this competition in racial terms, and develop racial antagonisms. Thirdly, the White working class and the poor may get a “public and psychological wage” in that they can be (slightly) better treated than Black and immigrant people, and so can consider themselves part of a “superior race” (no matter how oppressive their lives are).
3. DO WHITE WORKERS BENEFIT FROM RACISM? SEE SECTION BELOW

#### **4. APARTHEID AND RACIAL CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA<sup>8</sup>**

11.

1. Racism in South Africa is rooted in a combination of all of the processes mentioned above. It is the child of capitalism and the State. These factors, and not “white culture”, Calvinism or Afrikaner nationalism, have been the main driving force behind the various forms of racism in South Africa, up to and including Apartheid.
2. The South African ruling class did not comprise all the Whites. As in all countries the ruling class was made up of those who held political and economic power: capitalists, top State officials, generals, and professional politicians. Most Whites were and are middle and working class. And clearly the ruling class thus included those Blacks who held important positions, such as many of the chiefs as well as all of the homeland leaders and the upper staff of the homeland states. Nonetheless, the ruling class was fundamentally White-dominated as its leading members were of European descent and were, indeed, often the direct beneficiaries of colonial and apartheid policies (see below). Overall, there were very few large Black capitalists. In addition to these Black allies, the White bosses and rulers also sought to draw in allies from other White groups such as the middle class and working

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<sup>8</sup> The key works which help one to understand these arguments include B. Magubane, (1979) *The Political Economy of Race and Class in South Africa* (Monthly Review Press); L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People’s History Of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. Chapter 17; M. Legassick (1974), “South Africa: capital accumulation and violence”, in *Economy and Society* vol. 3 no 3; M. Legassick (1977), “Gold, Agriculture and Secondary Industry in South Africa, 1885–1970” in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (ed.) *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*; M. Lacey (1981) *Working for Boroko: the Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa*. Ravan.. But see also D. Posel, (1983), “Rethinking the ‘Race- Class’ Debate in South African Historiography,” in *Social Dynamics* vol. 9, no. 1. pp50-66 for a useful critique of the reductionist and functionalist tendencies in much of this literature. An implicit critique of the same points is provided by D. Yudelman , (1983), *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital and the Incorporation of Organised Labour on the South African Gold fields 1902–39*. On the same point, also see C. Saunders (1988), “Historians and Apartheid”, in J. Lonsdale (ed.), *South Africa in Question*. African Studies Centre, University of Cambridge, in association with James Currey (London) and Heinemann (Portsmouth).

class (see below) . This alliance was made possible through the material benefits provided to Whites by racial capitalism, by deliberate government policies and by the strength of racism in the society. Some have referred to this alliance of all White classes and a section of the Black elite as an oligarchy or power bloc.

12. Racism in South Africa before the 1870s:<sup>9</sup>

1. The Cape Colony and slavery: The establishment of a colony at the Cape by the Dutch East India Company in the 1600s should be seen as part of the general expansion of merchant capitalism in this period. The Colony was initially set up to provide a stop-off point for the trade with Asia, but it was not long before slave plantations were established. The slaves were imported from both Africa and Asia. At the same time, the pastoralist and hunter-gatherer Khoisan people were dispossessed of their lands, cattle and water holes, and subjected to various legal disabilities ((e.g. pass laws, various forms of indenture) that reduced them to a condition of unfreedom very close to the slaves. Slavery in the Cape Colony was particularly widespread (at least two thirds of farmers owned at least one slave in 1800). It was also particularly brutal, even in comparison to other slave colonies, and defined on strict racial lines (unlike some slave colonies, racially “mixed” marriages were very rare, and neither racially “mixed” children nor their Black parent obtained “White” privileges). In addition to the White farmers and slaveowners, there was also a substantial “poor white” population.<sup>10</sup>
2. Colonial conquest and dispossession: By the 1870s, the various White- ruled colonies that were later united as the Republic of South Africa in 1910 (the Cape Colony, the Orange “Free” State, Natal, and the Transvaal) had been established. All of these colonies were based on the conquest of land from African people, although not all whites were landowners- some of them were poor peasants (bywoners), or landless workers. In all of the colonies White farmers made a number of attempts to extract labour from African communities, by such means as hut taxes, and demands that amounted to forced labour. Some Africans were able to resist these demands by becoming peasants farming for the market (some, mainly chiefs and headmen, growing rich enough to employ workers); others had no choice but to become workers for at least part of the year. As had happened elsewhere, these colonial processes received a racist justification. For example, in 1835 a leading settler and State official in the Cape Colony wrote of Queen Adelaide Province on the eastern frontier as follows: “the appearance of the country is very fine. It will make excellent sheep farms ... far

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<sup>9</sup> In addition to the works cited above, on the pre-1870s period see also Bundy, C., (1972), “The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry,” in *African Affairs* no. 7 (should be read in conjunction with Lewis, J., (1984), “The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: a critique and reassessment”, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1); Ross, R., (1986), “The Origins of Capitalist Agriculture in the Cape Colony: A Survey”, in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting A Plough To The Ground: Accumulation And Dispossession In Rural South Africa, 1850–1930*. Ravan. Johannesburg; P. Delius and S. Trapido, “Inboeksellings and Oorlams: the Creation and Transformation of a Servile Class”, in B. Bozzoli (ed.), 1983), *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal*. Ravan. Johannesburg.

<sup>10</sup> see C. Bundy, “Vagabond Hollanders and Runaway Englishmen” in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930*. Ravan. Johannesburg.

too good for such a race of runaways as the K\*\*\*\*\*s".<sup>11</sup> This type of idea -that Black people were lazy incompetents who could not farm properly and needed to be taught the "dignity of labour" (by Whites)- was a standard feature of colonial ideology. SEE ALSO POSITION PAPER ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM FOR MORE DETAILS.

### 13. Racial Capitalism in South Africa after the 1870s:<sup>12</sup>

1. The impact of the diamond and gold discoveries: By the 1870s, what was to become South Africa was a mainly agricultural area. The colonies were all involved in farming for local and overseas markets, but the extent of commercialisation varied greatly, from the highly profit- oriented farms of the Cape to the much weaker links to the market of the Transvaal White farmers (and African peasants). The discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1860s and 1880s at Kimberly and the Witwatersrand drastically changed the situation. The new mining industry led to a rapid development of capitalism because it attracted large amounts of foreign investments, increased the taxation available to the State, promoted the building of roads and railways, and led to the emergence of large cities. These developments helped create a small manufacturing and financial sector, and they greatly accelerated the commercialisation of agriculture.
2. Super- exploitation of Black labour: Both the White farmers and the mining bosses now needed a large workforce. Some labour was provided by immigrant White workers and poor Afrikaners, but this was often expensive and in any case in short supply. The farmers and miners set out to smash the African peasantry and independent African areas to create a mass labour force. This aim was supported all the way by the various colonial states, who passed and enforced a long list of laws for this purpose (e.g.) hut taxes, land reservations, banning sharecropping. The bosses did not just want a large labour force but an ultra- cheap one as well. This was particularly important for the mines, which not only had a very low grade of ore but faced a fixed international gold price- the only way to cut costs and become profitable was to minimise labour costs. The bosses also wanted to get rid of competition in the market on the part of Black farmers, peasants, traders and independent diggers (e.g. on the diamond fields).
3. Once a large Black labour force was created, several methods were used to ensure that it remained ultra- cheap. First, African workers were subjected to a host of coercive controls that undermined their bargaining power ((e.g.) bans on unionisation; pass

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<sup>11</sup> quoted in R. Ross, (1986), "The Origins Of Capitalist Agriculture In The Cape Colony: A Survey", in W. Beinart, P. Delius and S. Trapido (eds.), *Putting a Plough to the Ground: Accumulation and Dispossession in Rural South Africa, 1850–1930*. Ravan. Johannesburg, pp74-5.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to the references given in note 8, see Bundy, C., (1972), "The Emergence and Decline of a South African Peasantry," in *African Affairs* no. 7 (should be read in conjunction with Lewis, J., (1984), "The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry: A Critique And Reassessment", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1); Keegan, T., (1983), "The Sharecropping Economy. African Class Formation, and the 1913 Natives' Land Act in the Highveld Maize Belt," in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.), *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa*. London.; R. Turrell, *Capital and Labour on the Kimberly Diamond Fields*, esp. chapter 2.; L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People's History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg; L. Callinicos, (1993), *A Place in the City: the Rand on the Eve of Apartheid*, volume three of *A People's History of South Africa*. Ravan. Maskew Miller. Longman.



laws; housing in compounds). Secondly, African workers were often employed as migrants who came to the cities, mines and commercial farms on contract for limited periods, whilst their families remained rural areas. This allowed the bosses to pay very low wages on the grounds that the workers families could supposedly support themselves on their own land, and would assume the responsibility of caring for retired or crippled workers. Finally, on some farms the bosses made use of labour tenants: these workers were only allowed to live on the farms and have a small garden of their own in return for providing virtually free labour

4. Super- exploitation was “justified” by racist arguments: Some examples: in 1892 the editor of the bosses’ magazine *The South African Mining Journal* justified repressive controls and the compound system on the grounds that “The position of k\*\*\*\*\*s is like children”, needing “special control and supervision when exposed to temptations”.<sup>13</sup> One mine- owner warned that “We should not over- pamper the native and thus ruin his naturally strong constitution”, whilst another insisted that “the natives far prefer those compounds which are not too well- ventilated or airy”.<sup>14</sup> According to one farmer in 1947, “All the wages and housing schemes will not change the native. He will remain dirty, lazy and thoroughly dishonest... If we want the natives to be law-abiding, let us speak to them in they language they understand: the language of the sjambok, administered frequently and with vigour”.<sup>15</sup>
5. The divided working class: The bosses were also able to use racism to divide the working class: White working class from Black; and the various Black groups from each other. Particular attention was paid to trying to get the White working class to support the racial capitalist system by giving it a privileged and protected position. According to a government report in the early part of this century, “the European minority, occupying ... the position of the dominant race, cannot allow a considerable number of its members to sink into [poverty] and to fall below the level of the non-European workers”.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it was illegal for Africans and Whites to be members of the same union. In general these policies were successful, particularly from the 1920s-1980s, although there were a few instances of integrated worker struggles, and a number of socialists and democrats still emerged from the White working class.
  1. On the mines: The White miners were divided from the Black workers from the start by their skilled work, political rights, freedom from most labour- coercive laws, and permanent residence in the towns. But although they thus benefited from racial capitalism, this system also made them economically insecure as the bosses constantly tried to replace expensive White labour with cheap Black labour. This contributed to militant mass strikes (most famously in 1922). Instead of opposing the system of Black super- exploitation that caused

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<sup>13</sup> quoted in L. Callinicos, (1980), *Gold and Workers 1886–1924*, Volume one of *A People’s History Of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. p.102.

<sup>14</sup> same reference as for note 13

<sup>15</sup> cited in F. Wilson, “Farming 1886–1966”, in *Oxford History of South Africa*. p. 162.

<sup>16</sup> cited in L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People’s History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. p127.

their insecurity in the first place, most White miners demanded job reservations for Whites. The State and the capitalists eventually accepted this demand in the 1920s, partly because of the militance of the strikes, because the bosses were afraid that the Africans would get ideas, and because it was too destabilising for the racist State to keep shooting White workers. By agreeing to job reservation, the recognition of White trade unions, and the exclusion from registered unions of “pass-bearing Natives”, the State ensured the continued racial division of the workers.

2. The “poor whites”: Many White workers were not in the privileged position of the White miners- even before the Great Depression began in the early 1930s, there were at least 300,000 Whites living in dire poverty, often in the same slums as poor Blacks. These unskilled Whites were permanently under- employed, not because they refused to do “native work for native pay” but because the bosses preferred to hire rightless and ultra- exploitable Black workers for low- grade work. While these conditions did create tensions between poor Whites and poor Blacks, they also had the politically explosive potential of creating a united working class. Such conditions challenged the racist social order that the bosses were trying to build. Thus the State, starting mainly in the 1920s: segregated slum areas, promoted White education and training and gave Whites preferential employment in the State sector (the “civilised labour” policy). The “civilised labour” policy had the additional advantage for the ruling class of allowing the bosses to attack the conditions of skilled Whites in sectors like the railways. Aided by the recovery of the economy, these policies largely succeeded in ending the “Poor White Problem”.<sup>17</sup>

14. WHY THE STATE SUPPORTED RACIAL CAPITALISM: As noted above, the State played a central role in building the system of racial capitalism. This was for a number of reasons.

1. Firstly, the State always defends and supports the ruling class, which in South Africa drew its wealth and power directly from racism. The various colonial states of South Africa since 1652 were racist dictatorships built to exploit and dominate Black workers, peasants and slaves, and to divide these classes from poor Whites. At times they used Black collaborators to aid these purposes (e.g. rich “amakholwa” peasants before 1913; homeland leaders and chiefs from the 1950s), at other times not. The leading personnel of the State were drawn from the ranks of the White bourgeoisie, and the State was funded mainly from the taxes and loans derived from Black super-exploitation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> An excellent analysis of this issue is provided by M. Lacey (1981) *Working for Boroko: the Origins of a Coercive Labour System in South Africa*. Ravan. See also L. Callinicos, (1987), *Working Life: Factories, Townships and Popular Culture on the Rand 1886–1940*, volume two of *A People’s History of South Africa*, Ravan Press, Johannesburg. The book, R. Morrel (ed.), (1991), *White But Poor: Essays on the History of Poor Whites in Southern Africa, 1880–1940*, UNISA, Pretoria. contains interesting material on this issue. See especially the chapters by Freund and Parnell.

<sup>18</sup> D. Yudelman , (1983), *The Emergence of Modern South Africa: State, Capital and the Incorporation of Organised Labour on the South African Gold Fields 1902–39* argues, correctly, that while the State cannot simply be reduced to the instrument of capital, its dependence on the capitalist system for funding ensures that capitalism and the State function in a symbiotic relationship.

2. The second reason why the State supported racial capitalism was that it aided social control. The migrant labour system made it difficult for stable Black working class communities to develop around the “White” cities and the labour-repressive laws and the compound system made it very difficult to organise resistance. The dangers to the bosses and rulers were recognised by the State- according to the Board of Trade and Industries (1945), “The detribalisation of large numbers of Natives congregated in amorphous masses in large industrial centres is a matter which no government can view with equanimity. Unless handled with great foresight and skill these masses of detribalised Natives can very easily develop into a menace rather than a constructive factor in industry”.<sup>19</sup>
15. To sum up: racism served the following functions for the White-dominated ruling class in South Africa
1. It justified and strengthened the power and wealth of the bosses and rulers (allegedly members of a “superior” race, representing “European civilisation”).
  2. It allowed the ruling class to deeply divide the working class.
  3. It made possible the super-exploitation of the majority of the South African working class

**On the mines:** after the institutionalisation of the compound system and migrant labour on the gold mines, African labour costs actually fell between 1911 and 1931, and then, once they had risen back up to the 1911 level, remained constant right up to 1969 despite a doubling of African employment levels over this period. African miners real wages remained virtually unchanged over the whole period 1915–70.<sup>20</sup>

**On the farms:** Although figures are much less complete for this sector, it seems clear that between 1860s-1960s that the very poor living conditions and amenities for Black workers remained unchanged; cash incomes remained largely static in monetary terms, while incomes in cash and kind may actually have declined in real terms over this period.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. THE CRISIS OF RACIAL CAPITALISM AND THE MOVE TO A CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

16. By the mid-twentieth century, these various processes had resulted in a country with the following type of social structure: a mainly White ruling class, aided by Black collaborators like homeland leaders and chiefs; a middle class drawn from all races, but disproportionately so from Whites, who also held the most prestigious positions here; a White labour aristocracy; and a desperately impoverished and rightless Black working class made up of Indian, Coloured and African people, with the Africans concentrated in the lower grade jobs and receiving the least social benefits.

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<sup>19</sup> quoted in M. Legassick (1974), “South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence”, in *Economy and Society* vol. 3 no 3, p275.

<sup>20</sup> cited in J.Natras, 1988, *The South African Economy: Its Growth and Change*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town. Second edition. pp. 139–40.

<sup>21</sup> cited in F. Wilson, “Farming 1886–1966”, in *Oxford History of South Africa*. pp. 158–163.

17. The system of racial capitalism entered a crisis in the 1970s due to a combination of factors. Together these factors laid the basis for the move towards some sort of bourgeois democracy in South Africa.
18. Economic factors that led to the crisis: All sections of capital (farms, mines, manufacturing, services) have clearly showed their overall compatibility with Apartheid policies and institutions. However, the racial capitalist system also carried an increasing number of costs for large manufacturing concerns, as well as parts of the service sector. These costs were increased in importance by the fact that South Africa followed the world capitalist economy into an economic slump from the early 1970s.<sup>22</sup>
  1. Firstly, the migrant labour system and the job colour bar (not to mention the “Bantu Education” system) all resulted in low worker productivity and skills shortages. These shortages were evident from the 1950s, and by 1971 had reached a figure of 95,655.<sup>23</sup>
  2. Secondly, very low Black wages led to a very small domestic consumer market, with only 1 out of 6 people having any disposable income. Obviously, the bosses could have dealt with this issue by exporting consumer goods, but they failed to do so because of their own short-sighted policies and because of the international sanctions campaign. As a leading spokesperson for the bosses, Raymond Parsons, executive director of the Associated Chambers of Commerce (ASSOCOM), put it in 1979, “[i]ncreasing Black purchasing power is the only real answer to growth”.<sup>24</sup>
19. Political factors that led to the crisis (mass struggle): More important than economic problems in plunging the racial capitalist system into crisis was mass Black struggle. This kind of resistance was inevitable given the brutality and injustice of racial capitalism. In all of these struggles the Black working class and poor played an absolutely central role.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> On the economic contradictions that underlay the crisis of racial-capitalism, see Morris, M. and V. Padayachee, (1988), “State Reform Policy in South Africa”, in *Transformation* v7; J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition); T.C. Moll, (1989), “‘Probably the Best Laager in the World’: The Record and Prospects of the South African Economy,” in J.D. Brewer (ed.), *Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight*. Southern Book Publishers. South Africa; T.C. Moll, (1991), “Did the Apartheid Economy ‘Fail’?”, in *Journal of Southern African Studies*. vol. 17. no. 4; T. Kemp, (1991), “South Africa: Gold, Industrialisation and White Supremacy”, in his *Historical Patterns of Industrialisation*. Longmans.

<sup>23</sup> cited in J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition) p. 72, also see 84.

<sup>24</sup> cited in J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition) p. 80.

<sup>25</sup> For an excellent discussion of the political resistance of the 1980s see Lodge, T., (1991), “Rebellion: the Turning of the Tide,” in Lodge, T. and B. Nasson. *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*. South Africa Update Series. Ford Foundation. Foreign Policy Association. Good accounts of trade union history in this period are provided by J. Baskin, (1991), *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Ravan Press. Johannesburg, and S. Friedman., (1987), *Building Tomorrow Today: African Workers in Trade Unions, 1970–84*. Ravan. Johannesburg. Also see J. Hyslop (1988), “School Student Movements and State Education Policy: 1972–87,” in R. Cohen and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles in South Africa*. Regency House. James Currey. Africa World Press; R. Lambert and E. Webster, (1988), “The Re-emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa?” in R. Cohen and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ...*; J. Seekings, (1988), “The Origins of Popular Mobilisation in the PWV Townships, 1980–4,” in Cohen, R. and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ...*; Swilling, M., (1988), “The United Democratic Front and Township Revolt,” in Cohen, R. and W. Cobbett (eds.), (1988), *Popular Struggles ...*; K. Jochelson (1990), “Reform, Repression and Resistance in South Africa: A Case Study of Alexandra Township, 1979–89,” in *Journal of Southern African Studies*. vol. 16. no. 1; T. Lodge, (1981), *Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945*. Ravan Press.

1. There was a large- scale Defiance Campaign in the 1950s, but this was brought to an end in the early 1960s by the Sharpeville Massacre of anti- pass law protesters, and the subsequent banning of legal Black political organisations and unofficial trade unions. (Socialist organisations had already been effectively banned since 1950 by the Suppression of Communism Act).
2. The false calm created by the repression was ended in 1973, when a massive wave of wildcat strikes gave birth to the modern Black trade union movement. Three years later, in 1976, the June 16 shooting of African schoolchildren protesting the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools sparked off months of rioting and insurrectionary activity. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the consolidation of the Black trade union movement, with the formation of bodies such as FOSATU (Federation of South African Trade unions) and CUSA (Council of Unions of SA). It also saw the emergence of the first civic associations (the Soweto Civic Association was launched in 1979, the Port Elizabeth Black Civics Organisation was launched in 1980). Resistance escalated following the State's attempt in 1983 to set up segregated Indian and Coloured "parliaments", and to drastically raise township rent and service charges as part of its program of local government restructuring. The United Democratic Front (a massive coalition of unions, civics, youth and women organisations, churches and other bodies) was launched in 1983; a smaller, more radical National Forum grouping was established at round about the same time. In 1985, the main Black trade unions and federations came together to form COSATU (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), which was the biggest union federation in South Africa's history. A second federation, NACTU (National Council of Trade Unions) was formed in 1987 .

20. The response of the State to the crisis:

1. Because of the mass resistance, the State was forced to concede a number of reforms (e.g.). the removal of restrictions of African trade unions in 1979, the abolition of job reservation in 1979, the abolition of petty apartheid (such as racial segregation of public facilities), limited informal desegregation of the cities (i.e. turning a blind eye to "grey areas"), and the abolition of the pass laws in 1987. These reforms were unconditional victories for the mass struggles of the workers and the poor.
2. But at the same time, the State launched a two- pronged strategy to secure its continued rule and to try to save the system of racial capitalism:<sup>26</sup>
  1. On the one hand, it made token reforms such as the tri- cameral parliament, replacing White township administrators with pseudo- democratic Black Local

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Johannesburg; T. Lodge , (1989), "The United Democratic Front: Leadership and Ideology," in J.D. Brewer (ed.), *Can South Africa Survive? Five Minutes to Midnight*. Southern Book Publishers. South Africa; T. Lodge, (1989), "People's War or Negotiation? African National Congress Strategies in the 1980s," in G. Moss and I. Obery (eds.), *South African Review* 5. Ravan Press and SARS; D. Macshane, Plaut M. and D. Ward, (1984), *Power! Black Workers, their Unions and the Struggle for Freedom in South Africa*. South End Press. Boston;

<sup>26</sup> The background to, and content of, these reforms is outlined in Morris, M. and V. Padayachee, (1988), "State Reform Policy in South Africa", in *Transformation* v7; J.S. Saul and S. Gelb, (1986), *The Crisis in South Africa*. Zed. London. (revised edition); P. Frankel , (1984), *Pretoria's Praetorians* . Cambridge University Press; D. O'Meara, (1983), "Muldergate and the Politics of Afrikaner Nationalism," in *Work in Progress* no. 22

Authorities, military- administered model township development projects, and removal of the restrictions on Black traders in the city centres . These had a clear aim of trying to secure collaborators in the Black middle class.

2. On the other hand, it engaged in a strategy of repression and destabilisation against mass organisations. Funds and other forms of assistance were channelled to reactionary Black organisations such as the “Witdoeke” who destroyed four squatter camps at Crossroads in 1986, Ama- Afrika in the Eastern Cape, and various vigilante groups that targeted activists. Inkatha, the reactionary and authoritarian Zulu nationalist organisation, also benefited from this kind of help ((e.g.). military training of 125 Inkatha activists in the Caprivi strip in 1986; funding for Inkatha rallies). Death squads also operated (e.g.). the murder of Matthew Goniwe and other leaders of the Cradock civic in the Eastern Cape in 1985. This repression took an open form with the States of emergency of 1985 and 1987, characterised by mass arrests (26,000 by June 1987),and the crushing of activist groups like youth congresses.

21. The revolutionary potential of the 1980s:

1. Mass resistance had a reached a potentially revolutionary level in the mid- 1980s. In this period, a number of townships were made “ungovernable” to the State, by means of mass rent and service charge boycotts, mass pressure resulting in the collapse of many local authorities, and the creation of large no- go areas for forces of the State like police. In some areas, there was a move from “ungovernability” to “people’s power”, as local civic and other relatively democratic community structures began to self- administer the townships. One of the best known cases of “people’s power” was the 1986 Alexandra uprising. At the same time, there were was a massive and militant strike wave (e.g.. the huge general strike (stayaway) of 1984 which attracted 4 million people; the 1986 mineworkers strike- the biggest strike in South African history).
2. This resistance had the potential of smashing racial capitalism and the State and building a free society. But in order for this potential to become reality, it was vital that the masses were won to, and acted to implement for themselves, the Anarchist idea (i.e.). working class revolution against the State, capitalism and all forms of oppression, and the creation of a free federation of worker and community councils defended by a democratic workers militia.
3. However, the dominant political current of the 1970s was left- wing Black nationalism. This called for on Black working class and poor people, to form a class alliance with the “progressive” Black middle class and capitalists in order to replace the Apartheid regime with some sort of “peoples government” or ‘national democracy”. In some versions of nationalism, it was claim that this “national democratic revolution” was a necessary first “stage” of change that had to be completed before socialism could (inevitably) follow. Despite its sometimes militant rhetoric, this political stance could not, and in fact never set out to, consistently battle in a revolutionary manner the deep roots of racism- that is, capitalism and the State. The ANC and the other nationalist organisations have always been pro-capitalist , even of they did sometimes use

socialist-sounding slogans or talk of socialism in the long run their immediate aim was a capitalist society and a “people’s government”. As Nelson Mandela stated in the late 1950s in reply to “Africanist” criticisms that the Freedom Charter was a socialist document and this foreign to African nationalism, the document is not “a blue-print for a socialist State” but instead a programme that would “open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class” who would “have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mills and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before”.<sup>27</sup> Steve Biko himself suggested in his book *I Write What I Like* that “We should think along such lines as the ‘buy black’ campaign once suggested in Johannesburg and establish our own banks for the benefit of the community”. See below for a longer discussion of these issues.

4. There were also various socialist, class-conscious and libertarian tendencies in the struggle. For example, there was a powerful socialist “workerist” current in the trade unions, large segments of which developed in a quasi-syndicalist direction.<sup>28</sup> The civic movement in some townships developed in a distinctly anarchistic dimension: for example the Alexandra and Cradock civics were grassroots structures based on yard, block, street and zone committees.<sup>29</sup> Overall, however, the politics of nationalism remained dominant although the contest was often very close (e.g. in the unions).

## **6. 1994 ELECTIONS: A MASSIVE VICTORY FOR THE STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

25. By means of repression, the State was able to regain some control over the situation. However, it could not stop the tide of mass struggle. This continued in the latter part of the 1980s, with the rebuilding of the United Democratic Front, the continued rise of the Black unions, student protests etc. By the end of the 1980s, the State had been fought to a standstill (although not defeated- there was more of a stalemate). The ruling class was forced to enter negotiations to replace the racially exclusive “herrenvolk” democracy with a full bourgeois democracy. In April 1994, the first non-racial elections in South Africa’s history were held.
26. As Anarchists we recognise that the holding of these elections, and the constitutional changes which they represent, are a massive victory for the Black working class and the

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<sup>27</sup> N. Mandela, “In our Lifetime” in *Liberator*, reproduced in T. Karis and G. Carter (eds.) *From Protest To Challenge: A Documentary History Of African Politics In South Africa*, vol. 3, also quoted in P. Hudson, (1986), “The Freedom Charter And The Theory of the National Democratic Revolution” in *Transformation* no.1. pp8-9. At the Rivonia trial in 1964, Mandela said the same thing: “The ANC has never at any period of its history advocated revolutionary change in the economic structure of country, nor has it, to the best of my recollection, ever condemned capitalist society”.

<sup>28</sup> see J. Baskin, (1991), “Workerists and Populists” in his *Striking Back: A History of COSATU*. Ravan Press. Johannesburg .

<sup>29</sup> see T. Lodge, (1991), “Rebellion: the Turning of the Tide,” in Lodge, T. and B. Nasson. *All, Here, and Now: Black Politics in South Africa in the 1980s*. South Africa Update Series. Ford Foundation. Foreign Policy Association.

poor. For the first time in 350 years, Black South Africans are not ruled by a racist dictatorship but by a parliamentary system. Along with this capitalist democracy come a whole series of rights which we never had before. We have guaranteed freedom of speech and association. We have the right to strike and to protest. We have some protection from racist and sexist practices. These new political rights did not come from the benevolent hand of the racist National Party. They were won from struggle. If they come under attack from whatever quarter, we must use mass action to defend them.<sup>30</sup>

## **7. STATE, CAPITALISM, RACISM: ONE ENEMY, ONE FIGHT — THE WAY FORWARD**

### **WHY THE STATE WILL NEVER DELIVER FREEDOM.**

27. Although we recognise the 1994 elections represent an important advance in the struggle in South Africa, and while we defend people's political rights (e.g. the vote), this does not mean that we think that elections are the way forward to the liberation of the Black working class and poor. We don't. The State will always serve the bosses, will always place "stability", capitalism and its own power ahead of the needs of the masses. This is why the new government continues to attack struggles, arrest strikers, evict squatters, and says that strikers "harm the economy". It will not willingly address the needs of the Black working class majority, instead it will defend the powerful and rich. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON THE STATE.
28. The State is not some neutral tool at the disposal of voters. The State is an organ of coercion that exists to defend the power and the wealth the ruling class. This was why the State was built. Besides this, the State is funded by taxes and loan capital from business, and business by definition raises these resources by exploiting the working class and the poor. The State will not challenge the processes of capitalist accumulation which are so necessary for its very funding.
29. In addition, most of the top positions in the State apparatus ((e.g.). top civil servants, top military officials) are staffed by people drawn from the ranks of the ruling class. In South Africa, this has historically meant individuals from the ranks of big business or the leadership of the Afrikaner nationalist establishment. However, we do not think that it will make all that much difference if these people are replaced by progressive Black professionals and politicians. Firstly, the State is a large organisation, made up of many officials and built to defend the ruling class. Changing a few faces at the top will not do much to alter the way that the State operates in practice. Secondly, as is well known, top State officials get huge salaries, and most of them soon get a taste for the power and privilege that their position brings them. This "gravy train" gives them a vested interest in not "rocking the boat" too much.

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<sup>30</sup> As Rocker points out, all political rights are wrested from the ruling class through popular struggle. See Rocker, R., (1948), "Anarchism and Anarcho- Syndicalism," in F. Gross (ed.), *European Ideologies: a Survey of Twentieth Century Political Ideas*. Philosophical Library. New York.



30. Elections will not make the State accountable to the majority, or give it a mandate to act in their interests. Real power does not lie with the 400 people who get elected to parliament. It lies in the large (and unelected government bureaucracy/ civil service), it lies in the military, and it lies in the boardrooms of the companies. If an elected government were genuinely a threat to the bosses and the rulers, they would sabotage and undermine it through the civil service and through their control of the media and the economy. If necessary, they would remove it by means of the army. In all these actions, they are often supported by other ruling classes and capitalist structures, because these also support the power of the bosses and rulers.
31. The State is a hierarchical top- down structure, specifically designed to concentrate power in the hands of a small exploiting minority. It is built to be controlled by a small group, and because of its structure involve the majority of people in decision- making. The State can therefore never liberate the masses; at most it can only create a help to create a new elite ruling over everybody else (e.g.). as happened in the Russian Revolution.
32. As Anarchists, we also disagree with parliamentary democracy and elections because we disagree with idea that 400 people, elected or otherwise, have the right to make decisions on behalf of another 40 million. We want a society where people control their everyday lives through grassroots worker and community councils, and not only every five years by putting a piece of paper in a ballot box.
33. Because of the nature of the State as an organisation that concentrates decision- making in the hands of an extremely well paid minority, and because the new State has promised to help promote Black business, it is clear that one of the main effects of the new political set-up will be to create a new Black middle and upper class. This Black elite (drawn mainly from political leaders, educated professionals and Black business) will because of its position of wealth and power act to defend and manage capitalism, and will in real, objective terms be the ally of the old White ruling class. This is not to say that conflicts will not arise between the Black and White bosses and rulers, as they obviously will (e.g.). because of the continued racism of many White capitalists, because of the reluctance of White capital to appoint more Black people to management and executive positions. However, these conflicts will be about how to run capitalism and the State, not over whether or not to destroy these structures of oppression.

### **Nationalisation does not equal socialism.**

1. All that nationalisation means is that a company is transferred from the hands of the small elite that run the economy to the hands of the small elite that run the State. It has got nothing to do with real workers control of industry. In addition, the bosses (because they control the State and the economy) are generally able to block the nationalisation of any company that they wish to keep private. Generally speaking, States only nationalise crisis-ridden companies, or those that they can buy by paying compensation. Finally, any nationalised company still has to operate inside the larger capitalist economy and will thus be forced to operate in a similar way to private companies. The only State assets which form a partial exception to this rule are social services (e.g.. education), and “strategic”

industries (e.g. the military), which the State feels are vital, but which cannot be provided on a commercial basis or by the market because they are not profitable enough.

2. However, while we recognise that nationalisation does not equal socialism, we are opposed to schemes for the privatisation of State assets in the current period. This is because we are opposed to the massive job losses that privatisation of State companies almost always entails, and because we are opposed to any attempt to run essential social services (e.g. hospitals) on a fully commercial basis as this will put them outside of the reach of the poor who cannot afford to pay the price set by the market. We reject the idea that privatisation is a route to “Black economic empowerment” because only a small elite of rich Blacks will be able to buy up these assets, and because that elite will obviously use their property to make profits. For us, Black economic empowerment means the freedom of the Black working class from poverty and from bosses of any kind.
34. We are not suggesting that there is no difference between the aims, policies etc. of the different political parties that try to get into Parliament. Obviously there are. Our point is that all political parties, no matter what their aims etc. are, are forced to behave in broadly similar ways by the nature of the State organisation.
35. For all of the reasons above, we will never participate in elections (even to “make propaganda”) because this a totally futile strategy that teaches people to identify with the State and to rely on so- called “leaders” to liberate them from above. For the same reasons, we will not work inside any parliamentary political party. It is clear that socialism can never come through Parliament. In fact, all socialist parties that get involved in Parliament inevitably develop in a reformist direction. This is because their leaders who get elected to parliament develop a vested interest in working within the system (because of their salaries etc.), because these elected leaders tend to get into the habit of viewing things from the perspective of the other politicians, top civil servants etc. and because, in the rush to win a majority in the elections, these parties make their programmes as moderate as possible in order not to alienate possible voters (i.e. they dump their radical programmes rather than educate the people in socialism).
36. We also reject the argument that we must vote for progressive parties in order to defend the gains of the transition. Our rights do not originate in parliament. They were forced on parliament through struggle and sacrifice and they will be defended in the same way. Only mass struggle against the capitalists and against the State will win gains.
37. We reject the argument that what is wrong with the South African State in the current period is that its constitution places too many constraints on Black political parties. (The Interim Constitution says that any party with more than 5% of the vote must be included in a governing coalition with majority party (this is what is meant by “Government of National Unity”). It also protects private property). While we recognise that many unnecessary compromises were made to the racist National Party at the CODESA negotiations, we insist that the nature of the State will not change just because one official document, the Constitution, is worded differently.

## **WHY CAPITALISM MUST BE DESTROYED IN ORDER TO END RACISM**

38. Racism cannot be decisively defeated whilst the capitalist system continues to exist.

1. As we pointed out above, racism has been central to capitalism and the State in all phases of their development since their emergence in the 1500s. This system is inherently racist and will always generate racism in one form or another. Although legal Apartheid has been defeated in South Africa, we can already see the outlines of a new racism emerging in the form of attacks on so-called “illegal immigrants” from other African countries. The immigrants have been blamed for everything from unemployment to housing shortages to the crime rate. They lack the most basic legal and democratic rights, they face arbitrary brutality, detention, and deportation at the hands of the police, they are super-exploited by bosses who like nothing better than a labour force without basic worker and union rights, and they face violent assaults by reactionary vigilantes looking for a vulnerable target on whom to blame their own poverty and powerlessness. We defend the immigrants, and fight for the abolition of all the racist anti-immigrant laws. We know that it is the greedy bosses who are responsible for the problems of unemployment, crime and poverty and not our fellow-workers from Africa.
2. Although legal Apartheid is dead, Black working class and poor people still suffer its legacy: poverty, rotten schools, landlessness, unemployment etc. These problems will not be solved by capitalism (“the market”) or by the State, because these forces are based on the exploitation and domination of the masses by the ruling class. They will always prioritise the profits and the power of the bosses and rulers over the needs of the masses of workers and poor. Dealing with these problems will require a massive redistribution of resources from the ruling class to the masses. It will also need a massive reorganisation of the economy. The means of production (mines, factories etc.) must be controlled by the working class and the poor and used to produce for people’s needs rather than for profit. Production must be planned from below by worker and community councils, and goods distributed in the basis of need, rather than ability to pay. This is Anarchism or Stateless Socialism. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON CAPITALISM.

## **CLASS STRUGGLE, NOT BLACK NATIONALISM**

39. If the State and capitalism have the key role in creating and sustaining racism, it follows that the fight against racism must be a fight against the State and capitalism. Business and government are not part of the solution, they are part of the problem.
40. We thus disagree with Black nationalism because its strategy is to take control of the State, because it believes that the State can represent and implement the “will of the people”. As we showed above, this is an incorrect idea.
41. The fact that the fight against racism must also be a fight against capitalism and the State means that the fight against racism must be a class struggle. Only the working class and the poor have the ability to defeat capitalism and the State and create a free Anarchist/

Syndicalist (stateless socialist) society (i.e.). a society based on individual freedom, worker and community councils, production and distribution according to need, defended by a democratic workers militia. Only in such a society will the legacy and reality of racism and apartheid be finally destroyed by the creation of a human community, by redistribution and development, and by the removal of the structural basis for racism in its all its various forms under the State and capitalism.

42. Why is only class struggle capable of fighting capitalism and the State and creating a free stateless socialist (anarcho-syndicalist) society? This issue is dealt with in more detail in the Position Paper on “Class Struggle, Capitalism and the State”), but briefly put:
  1. Only the workers and the poor have the power to fight the bosses and rulers because their position as the creators of all social wealth gives them immense power at the point of production.
  2. The bosses and rulers benefit from capitalism, the State and the exploitation of the labour of the working class, working peasantry and poor. This means, firstly, that these classes have a vested interest in the current system and will thus defend it against the struggle of the masses. Secondly, it means that these classes are incapable of creating an anti-authoritarian and socialist society as they are by definition exploiters. Only the working people can create a free society because only they do not exploit.
  3. This includes the Black elite- their privileges under this system mean that they will defend capitalism and the State even though by doing so they defend the roots of racism. The Black elite's privileged lifestyle shields them from the worst effects of racism (they live in the suburbs, go to fancy schools, have lawyers, money etc). It is rubbish to say that all Black people have a common experience that unites them. There is a world of difference between the life of Tokyo Sexwale and a Black farmworker: they do not share the same experience of life just because they are both Black. The aims of the Black elite in fighting racism are not to destroy its effects such as poverty, but just to improve their access to the spoils of capitalism by getting more economic and political power so that they can, in turn, exploit the mainly Black South African working class. In objective terms this makes the Black elite, no matter what their rhetoric, the objective allies of the old racist White ruling class in South Africa- when push comes to shove, they will join together against those of us at the bottom- the working class and the poor.
43. This is another point where we disagree with Black nationalism- it calls for an alliance of all Black classes as the basis for the struggle against White racism. But we recognise that the Black upper class is pro-capitalist and pro-State and cannot therefore consistently fight racism. In fact, it is part of the enemy- the ruling class that benefits from capitalism, the State and the super-exploitation of Black labour. In order to make an alliance possible between Black people of different classes, one would have to adopt a pro- capitalist, pro-State line in order to attract the Black elite. This gives these classes an effective veto on workers demands (because anything seen as too threatening will scare off the elite, meaning that workers demands will have to be sacrificed in the quest for “unity”). This means

that a alliance of all classes cannot fight racism at its roots or to create a society that will meet the needs of all its people. This capitalist dominance will be reinforced by the education and wealth of the elite, who will be in a position to dominate these alliances. These elite classes will hijack any class alliance to secure their own class agenda. In fact, this is the drive that lies behind nationalism- it is an attempt by frustrated Black elites under colonialism or apartheid to build allies with the lower classes in order to strengthen their own position and demands for a bigger slice of the capitalist cake; meanwhile the workers are stuck with the crumbs.

44. As Anarchists we oppose on principle every form of oppression (e.g. racism) wherever it exists, no matter which class is affected. That is why we will fight against racism in business or for that matter the State. But this does not mean that we work with capitalist, politicians or other ruling class enemies- they are part of the problem not the solution. We reject all class alliances other than unity between the oppressed peasants, poor and workers. We fight on a class struggle basis against capitalism, the State and all oppression.
45. Not only is the fight against racism only possible through class struggle, but the class struggle itself can only be successful if it is also a fight against racism. as a central part of the class struggle. Class struggle does not ignore sexism, racism etc: insofar as the majority of people who are affected by these oppressions (and who are also affected the worst by these oppressions) are working class, insofar as these oppressions are rooted in the capitalist system, and insofar as the working class can only be united and mobilized on the basis of opposing all oppression, these issues are all class issues. It is impossible to mobilize the working class without dealing with all the issues that affect the working class. That is to say, the class struggle can only succeed if it is anti-racist, anti-sexist etc. We therefore stand for the destruction of all special oppressions that divide the working class. SEE BELOW FOR DISCUSSION OF WHETHER WHITE WORKERS BENEFIT FROM RACISM.
46. We also stand for united, integrated, internationalist class struggle politics. No one section of the working class can win freedom on its own, the struggle must be united (this is where a strength lies, and because we have common interests) and internationalist (because no revolution can succeed in one country alone). SEE POSITION PAPER ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM FOR DISCUSSION OF INTERNATIONALISM. On the issue of whether specially oppressed sections of the working class should organise separately, SEE POSITION PAPERS ON SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT.
47. We always stand in solidarity with the struggles of the working class and the poor, even if they fight under the banner of nationalism. We support all progressive struggles for their own aims and for the confidence that campaigning gives to people. We recognise that in a struggle against racism Black nationalism is on the side of the progressive forces and we thus defend it from attack by reactionaries. We recognise that in the present period that this means that we often have to fight alongside various nationalist currents who represent class alliances. However, we not hide our politics. We will argue for class politics, direct action, anti- statism, anti- capitalism and the need for revolution. Where nationalists get into power, our role is not to defend, them but to organise against them on a class struggle

basis as they are now part of the system of oppression. Our role as Anarchists is to take up the battle of ideas and we know that this is most effectively done in struggle.

## **8. DO WHITE WORKERS BENEFIT FROM RACISM?**

48. The argument for integrated workers struggle and unity made above, of course assumes that workers have common interests. Black nationalists on the left, and white racists on the right deny this, arguing that White working class people benefit from Black oppression. This is a key issue, requiring a nuanced analysis. In answering this we need to distinguish between the situation in South African and in other countries where racism exists.

### **In South Africa**

49. For South Africa, the short answer for the Apartheid era must be “yes”. Apartheid guaranteed job security, high wages, a good pension etc. In South Africa, which was historically a colony of white settlement, the small White working class received massive and real gains from the racist system because of the bosses need to strengthen the racial capitalism.

50. These privileges were only possible as the White workers were a small part of the working class, and because the economy was booming. However, we recognise that White working class people were not the primary cause of racism and Apartheid. The main blame lies at the door of capitalism and the State. We also recognise that the high levels of racial privilege for White workers were made possible by the fact that they were a small minority of the working class who the bosses wanted to buy off.

51. Now that legal Apartheid is gone, White workers must realise that no real benefits will be derived from racism (except in unusual circumstances). Racial privileges in the form of job reservation etc. have gone, and are being replaced by affirmative action, laws against discrimination etc. Therefore, to tie their future to a racist politics that will deliver nothing but isolation from the majority of the South African working class is a useless recipe for failure. On the contrary, they must stand alongside their Black class brothers and sisters if they want to survive the capitalists' assault. With the fall of Apartheid, the rapid erosion of racist privileges opens up the possibility of sections of the White workers joining with Black in large numbers as reliable allies. This is not an abstract claim: we have already seen this when the mainly White 70,000 SASBO (SA Society of Bank Officials) union left FEDSAL (Federation of SA Labour) to join COSATU; and in the increased recruitment of White workers to NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), CWU (Communication Workers union), and SAHRWU (Harbours and Railways). None of this is inevitable, and the continuing racism of large sections of the White working class may well mean that many will never see beyond their prejudices in favour of their true interests, or that progressive White workers will be under strong pressure to disaffiliate from the non-racial unions like COSATU and its affiliates. Unity will have to be fought for, but we stress that this can only come on an anti-racist platform and that activist positions in the unions should remain broadly representative of the composition of the rank and file.

52. We reject the economically determinist Black Consciousness argument that White people's racial privileges make them unable to consistently fight racism. Even at the very height of Apartheid, a small number of communists and democrats emerged from the White working class (e.g. Joe Slovo; Solly Sachs; Bill Andrews). However, we do recognise that the racial privilege made it almost certain that this group would be a minority among Whites.
53. We reject the argument that the small number of White leaders present in the African National Congress are responsible for the reformist and pro- capitalist policies of that organisation. The moderate policies of the ANC reflect the fact that it is a class alliance of Black people (and must thus pander to the Black middle class and business class), as well as the fact that the ANC accepts and operates within the limits set by capitalism and the State. As for COSATU's reformist direction, this reflects the dominance of ANC ideology amongst the membership, as well as the interests of the union bureaucracy. SEE POSITION PAPER ON THE UNIONS FOR MORE ON THIS POINT.
54. We also reject the Black Consciousness argument that all Black people have the same material interests and conditions. This is patently untrue. The interest of the Black middle class and business strata are to take down the barriers to their own pursuit of power and profit. Even under Apartheid, the Black middle class and businesspeople enjoyed a better standard of living than working class and poor people, and these class divisions have been rapidly widening since the 1980s.

### **Europe and the United States**

55. In countries like Britain and Europe, where the white working class forms the majority of the population, the situation is more complex. However, we argue that these workers do not benefit from racism in their own countries, or from imperialist exploitation in other countries, contrary to petty bourgeois nationalists in both contexts.
56. While White workers in these countries may receive some benefits from racism, such as slightly lower rates of unemployment, these benefits are limited. At the same time, however, most White working class people in these countries also receive low wages, face unemployment, bad schools and so on. We should not make the mistake of assuming that they are as prosperous as White workers under Apartheid. Whites make up the majority of the poor and unemployed here.
57. These benefits are outweighed by the serious negative consequences of racism. Racism divides and weakens working class struggles. It thus worsens conditions for all workers. Racism is not therefore in the real interests of the White workers in these countries. It is no accident that the US working class, long divided and ruled by the bosses manipulation of "race", has the weakest traditions of worker solidarity and union organising, and the worst welfare system of any major western country.
58. We reject the argument that these White workers receive part of the surplus extracted by super- exploitation from Black minorities in these countries. This argument is absurd. Black people form a tiny minority in these countries and in addition, face high levels of unemployment, and thus do not generate enough surplus to "subsidise" the other 70% of

the population (the White working class). We argue that whatever benefits White workers receive from racism is insignificant in comparison with the gains that can be achieved through united class struggle (e.g.. unions, mass actions against welfare cuts, Anarchist revolution).

59. We reject the argument that the White working classes of the West benefit from imperialism. SEE POSITION PAPER ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM.
60. At the same time, workers unity is in the direct interest of the specially oppressed Black minorities in the West. As noted above, unity of all classes in “the Black community” is a recipe for futility in the fight against racism because of the compromises it requires. At the same time, these minorities, are, at the end of the day, too isolated and small to beat capitalism and racism on their own. They need allies from people who do share their same basic interests, and who have an objective interest in genuinely opposing racism- the White working class.
61. Therefore, we fight for workers unity on anti-racist basis as an immediate and necessary step towards the revolution in these countries. It is in the interests of all western workers – White and Black – that specially oppressed sections of the working class and poor are drawn into the unions and other working class bodies, and that the unions take up the fight against racism. The fight against racism must be a class struggle; and the class struggle must be a fight against racism. It is essential that the support of the working class as a whole is won to anti-racism. White workers are not inherently racist, as is shown by large-scale participation in anti-racist riots such as Los Angeles (1992) and Brixton, London (1995), and in demonstrations against the oppression of immigrants (France 1996).

## **9. BLACK WORKING CLASS: THE AGENT OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA**

ALSO SEE POSITION PAPER ON SEPARATE ORGANISATION

62. The Black working class and poor will make the South African revolution. The Black working class and poor forms by far the majority of the South African population. It also makes up the vast bulk of the country’s working class. As the victim of the super- exploitation on which the South African ruling class built its wealth and power, the Black working class and poor harbour the deepest grievances against the bosses and rulers, as well as being strategically located at the heart of South African capitalism. Finally, it is evident that, particularly since the 1920s, the Black working class and poor have been the most militant, combative and well- organised section of the working class. It is quite obvious that there is no large White working class or left-wing movement that is capable of marginalising Black concerns and demands. Instead, although there are growing prospects for White-Black worker unity, it is almost certain that the activist layers and most militant workers and poor people will be drawn from the Black working class. While there have been a number of working class fighters from the White working class committed to an anti-racist, anti-capitalist struggle (eg. Andrew Dunbar, the anarcho-syndicalist who helped form the



first militant Black trade union in South Africa, the Industrial Workers of Africa in 1917; Joe Slovo and Ray Alexander of the Communist Party), we know that the White working class remains on the whole conservative.

## 10. A ONE- STAGE REVOLUTION

63. We reject the argument that change in South Africa (and other quasi- colonial situations) must take place in two- stages. This argument is made by the South African Communist Party (SACP) as well as other groups such as the Zimbabwean African National Union (ZAPU- ruling party in Zimbabwe), and Sinn Fein/ Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Ireland. According to this theory, there must first be a “national- democratic revolution” which will do away with racism/ colonial oppression and set up a parliamentary democracy; only when this stage is complete can there be a “pure” class struggle (uncomplicated by issues of fighting racism and colonialism) towards a “socialist revolution”. ALSO SEE POSITION PAPER ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM FOR DISCUSSION OF THESE ISSUES.
64. This argument assumes that capitalism and the State can be deracialised in meaningful way. This is patently false: capitalism and the State are inherently racist institutions and will always generate new forms of racism and the legacy of racism (in the South African case) cannot be addressed under capitalism, or through the State.
65. Secondly, precisely because it incorporates exploiting classes, a class alliance necessarily implies an acceptance of capitalism and the State in the medium and long-term. How else can Black capitalists be kept in an alliance with Black workers other than to promise to preserve capitalism and the State? The price of an alliance is thus a renunciation of the principles of socialism; the small elites have an effective veto on the programme of the alliance despite their inability to provide much of value to the struggle. It is thus wrong to see a class alliance as the first step towards socialism- it is a step backwards. It is thus also incorrect to claim that the working class will “lead” the class alliance- the class alliance can only survive if workers real interests are sidelined.
66. Where movements making such arguments get into power (through a massive struggle, or even a compromise like in South Africa), there is a strong tendency for the beginning of the second stage to postponed forever. This is because the leadership of these movements get a vested interest in preserving the existing society, since, after all, it gives them high salaries and a lot of power. As a result excuses such as “the objective conditions are not right” are constantly found in order to say that socialism is not on the agenda.
67. We argue that your means and your ends must be consistent. You cannot get to socialism by means a long detour. We cannot build for a working class revolution against the State, capitalism and all forms of oppression to create stateless socialist society by first teaching the people to unite with the “national” or “progressive” middle class and capitalists, and to support the State and to aim to “humanise” capitalism etc. We need to build tomorrow today, by spreading revolutionary ideas in the here and now, by calling for mass actions and by restructuring the union movement in a revolutionary direction. Local elites are part of the problem, they are not part of the solution.

# 11. WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION ACTIVITY AGAINST RACISM

## General Perspectives

68. As Anarchists we are avowed opponents of racism. We believe that racism must be fought through mass action. We get involved in struggles against racism for their own aims, for the confidence that campaigning gives people, and because we stand in solidarity with our class. We recognise that it is in struggle that people are won to revolutionary ideas. We always try to link daily struggles against racism to our vision of a free society, and we argue that only a working class revolution can finally uproot and defeat racism.

## Guidelines for day-to-day activities

ALSO SEE PAPERS ON TRADE UNIONS AND ON IMPERIALISM

69. Struggle for land redistribution. Argue against the notion that land should be redistributed through the market. Oppose compensation payments for land that was seized under colonialism and Apartheid. Call for land to be redistributed to working class and poor people, as opposed to rich Black peasants, small commercial farmers, businessmen or chiefs. Argue for land to be self- managed by collectives of working class and poor people, including non- racist White workers.
70. Call for the upgrading of Black schools and an improved teacher: pupil ratio. Argue for democratic teaching methods and school administration. Oppose policies that exclude pupils who cannot pay from education or exams. Support the struggle to correct the historic racial imbalances that exist in tertiary education. Support equal access of all people to higher education. Call for dismissal of old "Apartheid" management boards of universities, but argue that we need to work out ways of genuinely empowering workers, faculty and students rather than just change a few faces at the top. Argue for use of intellectual resources of universities to aid Black working class as opposed to training managers and technocrats. SEE PAPER ON STUDENT MOVEMENT FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION.
71. Defend affirmative action. Recognise need to deracialise the skilled trades and professions. Fight for end to wage disparities between White and Black workers in the same occupation. Oppose large wage gaps between artisans and semi- skilled and unskilled workers. Equal wages for white collar and blue collar workers. Support skills upgrading of Black workers. However, oppose attempts to use affirmative action to build networks of political patronage or to break strikes or bash unions.
72. Call for programme of township development. Argue that development can only proceed if undertaken in meaningful consultation with democratic community organisations. Argue for leading role of local communities in determining development priorities. Call for large-scale programme of housebuilding, electrification and roadbuilding. Link this to question of fighting unemployment. Call for upgrading of squatter camps.

73. While recognising the limits of the penal system, defend call for prosecution of Apartheid generals and politicians. Oppose amnesty schemes and “golden handshake” deals for these people. But also link issue of Apartheid and its crimes to capitalism and the bosses (rather than just political figures).
74. Oppose all attacks on immigrants and attempts to set up tensions between immigrant and South African people. Point out that it is the bosses and rulers who are responsible for unemployment, housing shortages and the crime rate. Oppose attempts to justify attacks on immigrants on the grounds that “their” governments supported Apartheid. Oppose deportations, detentions and police and vigilante attacks on immigrants. Call for full legal, civil, and union rights for immigrants. Call on unions to defend immigrant workers.

## 5. THE ENVIRONMENT

*Anarchism ... has always fostered an intense interest in the proper ecological management of the Earth, and its history, theory and practice contains valuable clues and suggestions as to how we might overcome the ecological crisis that presently confronts the human species.*

**Graham Purchase, *Anarchism and Ecology: the Historical Relationship of Anarchism to Ecological Thought*, Black Swan, 1992.**

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### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The Earth is facing an environmental crisis on a scale unprecedented in human history. This environmental crisis is already responsible for high levels of human suffering. If the crisis continues to develop at its current rate, the ultimate result will be the extinction of human life on the planet.
2. We call for action to end the environmental crisis because of the threat it poses to humankind, and because we recognize that nature and the environment have value in their own terms. Although we hold human life above all other life on the planet, we do not think that humans have the right to destroy animals, plants and eco- systems that do not threaten their survival.
3. The main environmental problems include:
  1. Air pollution: destroys the ozone layer that filters out dangerous rays from the sun; creates a general increase in planetary temperatures (the greenhouse effect) that will severely disrupt weather patterns; turns rain water into acid that destroys plant and animal life; causes respiratory and other diseases amongst humans.
  2. Solid waste: the sea and the land environments are poisoned by the dumping of dangerous industrial wastes (such as mercury and nuclear waste); the use of materials that nature cannot break down in packaging and in other products, particularly disposable products, have turned many parts of the world into large rubbish dumps as well as wasting resources; poisons and injures people.
  3. Soil erosion: this takes place in both the First and the Third World, and is the result of factors such as the (mis-)use of chemical fertilizers, dangerous pesticides etc, as well as inappropriate land use, land overuse, and the felling of trees. For these reasons,

soil is eroded at a rate faster than that at which it is being produced; contributes to rural poverty.<sup>1</sup>

4. Extinction: plants and animals are being made extinct at a faster rate than any time since the dinosaurs died out, 60 million years ago; results in the loss of many species, and undermines the ecosphere on which all life depends.

4. All of these environmental problems exist on a serious scale in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

1. For example, in 1990 coal burning power stations and factories in the Eastern Transvaal and Vaal Triangle pumped acid rain- producing chemicals into the atmosphere at levels twice those of (ex-) East Germany, which is the country with the world's most serious acid rain problem.<sup>3</sup>The area affected includes half of South Africa's agricultural land and forest resources, whilst the rivers that drain out of it provide a quarter of the country's surface water.

2. As for soil erosion, this takes place in South Africa at a very high rate: on average, at least 20 tons of topsoil are lost for every ton of grain produced. Rates are higher in many areas.

5.The environmental crisis has contributed strongly to the emergence of a large world- wide environmental movement. This movement first emerged in the nineteenth- century but has become especially prominent since the 1960s.

## 2. EXPLAINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

6. We reject the argument that economic development and economic growth always leads to the destruction of the environment. The implication of this type of argument is either that the environmental crisis is unavoidable and that we should just "grin and bear it", or that the world's economy must be drastically shrunk, and industry replaced with small- scale craft and agricultural production.

1. By "development" we mean a sustained structural shift in the economy from the primary sector (farming, mining) towards manufacturing and the service sector; by "economic growth" we mean the expansion of per capita output in a given economy..<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, Dave, (1991) "From Soil Erosion to Sustainability: land use in South Africa," in Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch (editors), (1991), *Going Green: People, Politics And The Environment In South Africa*. Cape Town. Oxford University Press. p177.

<sup>2</sup> Three books that provide a good overview of environmental issues in South Africa are Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch (editors), (1991), *Going Green*. Cape Town. Oxford University Press; Koch, Eddie, Cooper Dave and Henk Coetzee, (1990), *Waste, Water And Wildlife: The Politics Of Ecology In South Africa*. Penguin Forum Series; Ramphela, Mamphela (editor), (1991), *Restoring The Land: Environment And Change In Post- Apartheid South Africa*. London. Panos Institute.

<sup>3</sup> This figure and the next one come from Koch, Cooper and Coetzee, (1990), p5. and Cooper (1991), p177, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Basically the same definitions as those provided by Gould, J.D. (1972), *Economic Growth in History* pp1-2.

2. There is nothing inherently environmentally destructive about modern industrial technologies.<sup>5</sup> Many dangerous technologies and substances can be replaced. For example, petrochemical based plastics, which are not biodegradable, can be replaced by starch- based plastics (which safely disintegrate if left outside in a couple of weeks), palm- oil can be used to replace diesel etc.
  3. There is nothing wrong in and of itself with development and economic growth.<sup>6</sup> The point is that these processes can and must take place on environmentally- sensitive and sustainable lines. Dangerous technologies must be replaced with sustainable ones (eg). nuclear energy with solar energy. Wasteful practices must be ended (eg). the use of disposable containers as opposed to recyclable ones like glass bottles; the production of more of a good than can be used.
  4. There is still a need for (environmentally- sustainable) development and economic growth in order to deal with poverty and under- development (eg). need for a massive program of house- building.
  5. In addition, industrial technology holds a number of advantages over small- scale craft production.<sup>7</sup> Industry can produce many types of goods on a larger scale and at a faster rate than craft production, and can thus not only increase the level of economic growth, but also help shorten the working day, and free people from many unpleasant jobs.
7. We reject the argument that the First World is, as a whole, responsible for the environmental crisis.<sup>8</sup> By the “First World” we mean the advanced industrial capitalist countries of West Europe, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and Japan. According to this kind of argument living standards in the First World are excessively high, with the “average” person not only consuming resources at a much higher rate than people elsewhere, but also owning far more things than are remotely necessary for a comfortable existence. The implication of this argument is that there must be a drastic reduction in First World living standards, and that the rest of the world can never hope to raise their living standards to the levels supposedly enjoyed by the “rich” countries.
1. The majority of people in the First World- the working class- are not a rich elite living it up at the expense of the planet and the Third World (Africa, Asia, South America, and arguably, parts of the ex- Eastern bloc).<sup>9</sup> There are massive levels of inequality in wealth and power in the First World.
  2. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) (Britain and Northern Ireland) at the start of the 1980s, the top 10% of the population received 23.9% of total income while the

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<sup>5</sup> Purchase, Graham (1993), “Rethinking the Fall of State- Communism”, in *Rebel Worker*, volume 12, no 9 (108) pp15-16. The examples of environmentally- friendly technologies come from Purchase, (1993), pp15-6 and Graham Purchase, (1991), *Anarchist Organization: Suggestions and Possibilities*. Sydney. Black Swan. pp3-5, 21-3.

<sup>6</sup> The following two sections are based on McLoughlin, Conor, (1992), “Does ‘Saving The Planet’ Mean An End To Industry, Progress And Development?”, in *Workers Solidarity* no 36. Ireland.

<sup>7</sup> Graham Purchase, (1993), p17.

<sup>8</sup> For an example of this kind of argument, see Ted Trainer, (1991), “Third World Poverty”, in Andrew Dobson (ed) *The Green Reader*. Andre Deutsch. London.

<sup>9</sup> The argument presented in this section draws on Bill Meyers. “Ecology and Anarcho -syndicalism”, *Ideas and Action* no 13.

bottom 10% received only 2.5%. The top 10% of the population also owned four fifths of all personal wealth, and 98% of all privately held company shares and stocks. The top 1% itself owned 80% of all stocks and shares. Meanwhile the bottom 80% of the population owned just 10% of the personal wealth, mostly in the form of owning the house they live in. These economic inequalities correspond to material deprivation and hardship. A study published in 1979 found that about 32% of the population of the UK (15–17.5 million out of a population of 55.5 million) was living in or near poverty. A 1990 United Nations survey of child health in the UK showed that 25% of children were malnourished to the extent that their growth was stunted.<sup>10</sup>

3. From these figures it should be clear that the majority of the working class in the First World is not enjoying “very high per capita material living standards”. The high levels of consumption that exist in the First World can only be explained by reference to the excessively high living standards of the ruling classes as well as parts of the middle class. In the Third World, too, there is a small ruling elite whose jet- set lifestyle contributes directly to environmental degradation.
4. In fact, given that most industry (and hence pollution) is located in the First World, the working class of these countries is among the primary victims of environmental degradation.
5. Thus, the majority of people in the First World do not need “de- development” and a scaling down of living standards, but increased (egalitarian and environmentally-sensitive) growth to improve their living standards.

### **3. CAPITALISM AND THE STATE: AT THE ROOT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS**

8. The real blame for the environmental crisis must be laid at the door of capitalism and the State, and the society which these forces have created.
9. Capitalism is an enormously wasteful system of production, which is geared towards competition in the market, and to making profits. Under capitalism, the needs of the working class are not met, a false sort of “over- production” takes place, and pollution is endemic.<sup>11</sup> SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE FOR DISCUSSION OF CAPITALISM.
  1. Huge amounts of goods are built to break as soon as possible in order to keep sales up (built- in obsolescence).
  2. A large number of useless or inefficient goods are promoted and sold by means of high pressure advertising (eg private cars in place of large- scale public transport.

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<sup>10</sup> Figures for the UK from Robert Lekachman and Borin van Loon, (1981), *Capitalism for Beginners*. Pantheon Books. New York, esp. 44–5, 67, 70. and *Class War* (1992), *Unfinished Business: The Politics Of Class War*. AK Press and CWF, p. 77. For the USA see Lind, Micheal, *The Next American Nation*, cited in “Stringing up the Yuppies”, (24 September 1995), *Sunday Times*, p14; *Business Week* which estimated in 1991 36 million Americans (15% of the total population) were living in poverty; and *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1992

<sup>11</sup> This section is based on McLoughlin (1992); *Class War* (1992), pp30-1; and Lekachman and van Loon, (1981), pp62-4.

3. We must not make the mistake of assuming that all goods produced under capitalism are actually consumed by ordinary people. Often the bosses produce more of a given good than can be sold on the market, and this can lead to a price collapse and a recession. The bosses' solution is to destroy or stockpile the "extra" goods, rather than distribute them to those who need them (which would cut into profits) (eg). In 1991 there were 200 million tons of grain worldwide which were hoarded to preserve price levels. Three million tons could have eliminated famine in Africa that year.
  4. It also costs money and cuts into potential profits to install safety equipment and monitor the use of dangerous materials. It is more profitable for the capitalists to shift these costs (sometimes called "externalities") onto the consumer in the form of pollution.
  5. We noted above that there are many environmentally- friendly technologies that can replace environmentally destructive ones. Many of these have been bought up and suppressed by vested capitalist interests that do not want technological changes that will threaten their profits.<sup>12</sup>
10. The State, like capitalism, is a major cause of environmental degradation. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE FOR DISCUSSION OF THE STATE.
1. The State is a structure created to allow the minority of bosses and rulers to dominate and exploit the masses of the working class (and working peasants). The State will not willingly enforce strong environmental protection laws against the bosses because it does not want to cut into the profits of the bosses and into its own tax revenue.
  2. In addition, the rulers of the State are afraid that strong environmental laws will chase away investors (eg). in 1992, capitalists in Holland were able to block a proposed tax on carbon pollution by threatening to relocate in other countries.<sup>13</sup>
  3. The State directly contributes to the environmental crisis in its drive to strengthen its military power against the working class and against rival States. War and the mobilization of resources for war has devastating effects on the environment.<sup>14</sup>
  4. Massive amounts of resources that could be used to introduce environmentally-friendly technologies, promote soil conservation and the like are spent on military projects: worldwide military expenditure amounts to \$900 billion a year.
  5. Military technology such as atomic weapons are more than capable of destroying all life on the planet. Beyond this, many technologies developed in wars have been adapted to industry, resulting in very dangerous products (nuclear weapons -> nuclear reactors; nerve gases -> pesticides).
  6. Both war and environmental destruction are based on a disrespect for life and the values of domination, conquest and control (over people or nature).
  7. Another example of the links between the State's war against people and its war against the environment: evidence has emerged that the South African Defense Force

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<sup>12</sup> McLoughlin (1992); Purchase (1991), p4.

<sup>13</sup> Weekly Mail (22-8 May 1992) p34 for this and other examples.

<sup>14</sup> This section is based on Cock, Jacklyn, (1991a), "Going Green at the Grassroots: The Environment As A Political Issue," in Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch (editors), 1991, Going Green. Cape Town. Oxford University Press. pp8-9.



(SADF) was involved in the smuggling of ivory and rhino horns to fund Unita and Renamo rightwing armed operations in Angola and Mozambique.<sup>15</sup> In this case, rare animals were slaughtered to prop up reactionary movements aligned to the Apartheid state.

11. Capitalism and the State also contribute to environmental degradation by generating massive inequality.
  1. One reason for the environmental crisis is clearly the excessively high consumption of the ruling classes of the First World and the Third World. Capitalism and the State always result in the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few.
  2. Poverty also leads directly to environmental destruction(eg). the homelands system in South Africa. The homelands only make up 13% of the country's surface territory but are home to more than 10 million people, thus creating severe pressure on the land: the land is overgrazed, scarred by dongas, and natural woodlands are denuded.<sup>16</sup>
  3. Poverty is the direct result of the system of capitalism and the State(eg). the capitalists supported the homelands system because they wanted farming in the homelands to subsidize cheap migrant labor by supporting the workers' families, and providing a retirement home for old and crippled workers. In addition, they wanted to prevent African peasants from competing with them in agriculture and the land market. The size of the homelands reflects the process of colonial dispossession that resulted in the White farmers owning most of the land. The State supported the homelands system because it promotes the interests of the capitalists and also because it wanted to prevent the development of a urbanized African working class. SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING RACISM FOR DISCUSSION OF RACIAL CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA
  
12. It is possible that the very idea that people should dominate and exploit nature only emerged after relationships of domination and exploitation developed within human society.<sup>17</sup> In classless societies, according this theory, people saw themselves as part of nature, but with the emergence of inequality a new worldview in which others (humans and the environment) were seen as things to be manipulated and controlled.

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<sup>15</sup> Koch, Cooper and Koetzee (1990), pp15-6, 25-27; Ann Eveleth, (September 1-7, 1995), "SADF used ivory to fund war in Angola", in Mail and Guardian, p6; Ann Eveleth, (Sept 8-14 1995) "New claims of SADF ivory smuggling", in Mail and Guardian, p8.

<sup>16</sup> On the environmental impact of the homelands system see Koch, Cooper and Coetzee (1990), pp6-9; also Cooper (1991) pp177-9). For an analysis of why the capitalists and the government promoted the homelands system and migrant labor, see Callinicos, Luli, (1981), Gold and Workers 1886-1924, volume 1 of A People's History of South Africa. Ravan Press. Braamfontein, especially Chapter 17; Lacey, M., (1981), Working For Boroko: The Origins Of A Coercive Labor System In South Africa. Ravan. Braamfontein.; Legassick, M, (1974), "South Africa: capital accumulation and violence," Economy and Society vol. 3, no. 3.; Saul, John S. and Stephen Gelb, (1986), The Crisis in South Africa, Zed Books. Revised edition; Posel, D., (1991), The Making Of Apartheid 1948-61: Conflict And Compromise. Clarendon Press. Oxford, esp Chapter 1.

<sup>17</sup> Green Anarchism: Its Origins And Influences, text of PNR's lecture during the Workers Education Association (Oxford Industrial Branch), Anarchism Course, (24 November 1992), pp21-2.

13. We reject the idea that the environment can be saved by means of the State, or by electing a Green Party. Not only does the State defend capitalism, but the State is itself one of the main causes of environmental destruction.

#### **4. WHY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES ARE DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO THE WORKING CLASS.**

14. At a general level, it is clear that the environmental crisis affects everybody, and threatens the survival of the human race as a whole.
15. However, even though the environmental crisis is a global threat, it is the working class (and working peasantry) that is most severely affected by the various environmental problems.<sup>18</sup>
  1. It is the working class which has to take the dangerous jobs that cause environmental degradation. At least three workers died of exposure to mercury waste at the Thor Chemicals plant in KwaZulu- Natal.<sup>19</sup> The company got off with a R13,500 fine in 1995. Farmers in South Africa (as well as the State) routinely make use of dangerous pesticides which are banned or restricted in their countries of manufacture.<sup>20</sup> The workers who do the actual spraying are often untrained, lack protective clothing, and are often not able to read the labels that explain appropriate safety procedures. As a result, at least 1600 South Africans die from the chronic effects of pesticides every year.
  2. Working class communities, particularly working class Black townships and squatter camps, also bear the brunt of environmental problems. Pollution levels in Soweto are two and a half times higher than anywhere else in the country, and children in Soweto suffer from more asthma and chest colds, and take longer to recover from respiratory diseases, than children elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>
  3. Because of the racial division of labour in South Africa (which confined Africans to low- paying unskilled and semi- skilled jobs), because of the design of the Apartheid

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<sup>18</sup> Crompton, Rod and Alec Erwin, (1991), "Reds And Greens: Labor And The Environment," in Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch, 1991, *Going Green*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town. p80; Chemical Workers Industrial Union (1991), "The Fight for Health and Safety", in Ramphele, Mamphela (editor), 1991, *Restoring the Land*. London. Panos Institute. p80; also Koch and Hartford cited in Cock (1991a) p14. For similar arguments for the USA, see J. Baugh, (1991), "African- Americans and the Environment: A Review Essay," in *Policy Studies Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, p194; Morrison, D.E. and R.E. Dunlap (1986), "Environmentalism And Elitism: A Conceptual And Empirical Analysis," in *Environmental Management*, vol. 10, no. 5, pp586; van Liere, K.D. and R.E. Dunlap, (1980), "The Social Bases of Environmental Concern: A Review Of Hypotheses, Explanations And Empirical Evidence," in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2. pp183-4, 189-90. Cf. to Lowe, P. and J. Goyder, (1983), *Environmental Groups in Politics*. George Allen and Unwin. London. pp14-5; McCloughlin (1992).

<sup>19</sup> Crompton and Erwin (1991) pp82-3; Mail and Guardian April 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Cooper (1991) p185.

<sup>21</sup> Cock (1991a) p. 4; for other examples see Koch (1991), "Rainbow Alliances: Community Struggles Around Environmental Problems," in Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch, 1991, *Going Green*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town. pp. 21-2; and Khan, Farieda, 1991, "Environmental Sanitation", in Ramphele, Mamphela (editor), 1991, *Restoring the Land*. London. Panos Institute. p. 132.

city (dirty industries and dumps were located near townships rather than White suburbs), and because of the homeland system, it is clear that the Black working class is the main victim of South Africa's environmental crisis.

4. Therefore, a safe environment is a basic need for the workers and the poor of South Africa. The environment is not just something "out there" such as the veld, sea etc. The environment also refers to where people live and work.<sup>22</sup>We can distinguish between "green" environmental issues (like wildlife, trees, ozone layer etc.), and "brown" environmental issues (like workplace safety and community development).<sup>23</sup>The two are obviously connected: brown ecological issues (like lack of sewerage facilities) directly affect green ecological issues (like marine life); tackling brown issues will generally improve green ecology.
  5. Unlike the working class, the bosses and the rulers, including the Black politicians and Black business, are protected from the effects of their greed and appetite for power by their air- conditioned offices and luxury suburban homes.
  6. While in the long- term a global environmental crisis would obviously affect everyone, it is not true that everybody shares an immediate interest in fighting against the environmental crisis: the bosses and the State benefit from the processes that harm the environment and the middle classes can at the very least avoid contact with many environmental hazards.<sup>24</sup> Only the workers and the poor have a direct interest right now in fighting for a clean environment.
16. There is clear evidence of environmental concern and awareness on the part of the Black working class (eg). the involvement of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union in the campaign against Thor Chemicals, linking opposition to the dangerous working conditions at the Thor plant to opposition to the company's practice of importing toxic waste.<sup>25</sup>
17. It is, however, undoubtedly true that the membership of most environmental organizations in South Africa (and in a number of other countries) is mainly White and middle- class.<sup>26</sup> As should be obvious from what we have said before, we reject the view that this membership profile can be explained in terms of the inherently "White" or "petty- bourgeois" nature of environmental issues.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Crompton and Erwin, (1991), p80; also David McDonald,(September 1994), "Black Worker, Brown Burden: municipal workers and the environment", South African Labor Bulletin, Vol 18, no 4. p73.

<sup>23</sup> McDonald (1994) p73.

<sup>24</sup> see also A. Dobson, (1990), Green Political Theory: An Introduction. Unwin Hyman. London. pp152-3.

<sup>25</sup> see Koch (1991), "Rainbow Alliances" for an overview of community and worker struggles around environmental issues since the late 1980s

<sup>26</sup> On South Africa, see Ulrich, N. and L. van der Walt, (1994), Green Politics In South Africa: The Ideological And Social Composition Of The South African Environmentalist Movement, With Special Reference To Earthlife Africa And The Wildlife Society Of Southern Africa. Sociology Dept. University of the Witwatersrand. For elsewhere, see (eg). see Baugh, J., (1991); Cotgrove, S. and A. Duff, (1980), "Environmentalism, Middle Class Radicalism, and Politics," in Sociological Review, Vol 32. pp334,340,342; Lowe, P. and J. Goyder, (1983); Morrison, D.E. and R.E. Dunlap (1986); Taylor, D.E., (1989), "Blacks and The Environment: Towards And Explanation Of The Concern And Action Gap Between Blacks And Whites," in Environment and Behavior, vol. 21, no. 2; van Liere, K.D. and R.E. Dunlap, (1980).

<sup>27</sup> For examples of this line of argument see Dobson (1993) p218; Koch, Cooper and Koetzee, (1990), p. iv; Lowe and Goyder (1980), p10; Lowe and Goyder (1983) pp25-6; van Liere and Dunlap (1980) p183.

1. A number of factors make it difficult for Black working class people to get involved in environmental organizations. These include: a lack of time, inability to pay high membership fees (the Wildlife Society charges R80 per year), a degree of ignorance around environmental problems, and, finally, a lack of confidence in getting involved in political activity.<sup>28</sup> This explanation is inadequate because the Black working class has, despite these sorts of obstacles, built large and powerful trade union and civic movements.
2. Part of the explanation lies with the fact that many working class people have been alienated by the actions of sections of the environmentalist movement. These sections focussed their attention on wilderness and wildlife conservation, and strongly supported the State's establishment of nature reserves. But many of these reserves were established by means of the forced removal of rural communities, who thus lost their land as well as access to natural resources such as fish and building materials. To add insult to injury, many of these nature reserves were (until the 1990s) reserved for "Whites only". These practices can only breed hatred for conservation among the rural poor.<sup>29</sup>
3. Related to this is the fact that few environmental organizations in South Africa address environmental issues of direct relevance to the working class.<sup>30</sup> To use the distinction we drew above, they focus on "green" environmental issues (wildlife, ozone layer etc.) as opposed to the "brown" environmental issues (health and safety, community development) that working class people tend to emphasize. For example, the Campaign to Save St. Lucia nature reserve that begun in 1989 generally failed to consult the people who lived in the area, many of whom had been forcibly removed when the reserve was set up.

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<sup>28</sup> McDonald, David, (September 1994), "Black Worker, Brown Burden: municipal workers and the environment", *South African Labor Bulletin*, Vol 18, no 4. p76; Ramphela, Mamphela, (1991), "New Day Rising': Environmental Issues And The Struggle For A New South Africa," in Ramphela, Mamphela (editor), 1991, *Restoring the Land*. London. Panos Institute p6; also Taylor (1989) pp199-200, also 190-2; Taylor, D., (1990), "Can the Environmental Movement Attract and Maintain the Support of Minorities?," in B. Bryant and P. Mohai (eds), *The Proceedings of the Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards*. pp38-40; footnote 3 (p 54); the converse argument (that middle class people are generally especially prominent in political and voluntary organizations) is found in Lowe and Goyder (1983) p11; Morrison and Dunlap (1986) p583; Taylor (1989) p184; van Liere and Dunlap (1980) p184.

<sup>29</sup> See Cock (1991a) pp1-2; Cock (1991b), "The Politics of Ecology: Moving Away From The Authoritarian Conservation And Towards Green Politics," Ramphela, Mamphela (editor), 1991, *Restoring the Land*. London. Panos Institute; also see AFRA (1991), "Animals versus People: the Tembe Elephant Park," in Cock, Jacklyn and Eddie Koch, 1991, *Going Green*. Oxford University Press. Cape Town; Ramphela (1991) p6; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee (1990) pp22-5.; for similar experiences in the USA see Taylor (1990) p42.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Taylor (1990) pp40-1; Baugh (1991) pp182-3; Cock (1991a) p2; Cock (1991b) pp13-14; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee (1990) p2; Ramphela (1991) p6; also Khan (1990) p36; Marais, H., (1991), "When Green Turns to White," in *Work in Progress*, no 89.; Koch, Cooper and Coetzee (1990) pp24-5; quoted in Koch, Cooper and Coetzee (1990) pp24-5; Ramphela, Mamphela, (1991), p7.

## 5. MASS ORGANIZING AND ANARCHO- SYNDICALISM: THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PLANET

18. Mass action and a working class revolution are the only real ways to deal with the environmental crisis.
  1. The environmental crisis was generated by capitalism and the State, and can only be dealt with by challenging the power of these forces. We believe that only mass organizing and mass actions, as opposed to elections and lobbying, are effective methods of struggle.
  2. Because of the manner in which capitalism and the State by their very nature generate environmental destruction it is necessary in the long term to overthrow these structures and create a society based on real freedom and production and distribution on the basis of need, not profit. This society can be called Anarchism or stateless socialism.
  3. The working class is the only force in society capable of accomplish these tasks. As the main victim of the environmental crisis, and as the victim of capitalism as a whole, the working class has a direct interest in dealing with the environmental crisis and in resisting and overturning the capitalist system as a whole. By contrast, the ruling class, and sections of the middle class, are dependent on the continued survival of capitalism and the State, and are also able to avoid the worst effects of the environmental crisis.
  4. In addition, the working class (and working peasantry) is the source of all social wealth and is thus able, by action at the point of production, to wield a powerful weapon against the bosses and the rulers. We believe that the power of the workers must be brought to bear in the struggle to halt the environmental crisis.
  4. Finally, because the working class (and working peasantry) produce all social wealth, only these classes can overthrow capitalism and the State and create a free society in their place, because only these classes do not need to exploit.
19. We believe that workplace organizing is the key to saving the environment, in both the short- term and the long- term.
  1. Because a large proportion of environmental damage takes place at the point of production (as the result of dangerous technologies, poor plant maintenance, hazardous operating procedures, the handling of dangerous substances, poor worker training), and because the workers and their communities are the main victims of this pollution , “trade union struggles for health and safety constitute the first line of defense for an embattled environment”<sup>31</sup>
  2. The working class, organized in trade unions, allied with communities struggling against environmental abuses can go a long way in stopping the State/ capitalist onslaught against the planet. As we argued above, dealing with brown ecological issues (safety, health etc.) will definitely benefit green ecological issues (wildlife, sea etc.).

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<sup>31</sup> Crompton and Erwin (1991) p80; also Chemical Workers Industrial Union (1991); McDonald (1994).

This sort of mass organizing by the productive working class will do far more to stop the bosses than the small- scale guerrilla and obstruction tactics favored by groups such as Earth First!, such as sabotaging bulldozers.<sup>32</sup>

3. In the long- term the unions can not only defend the environment but save it. Inspired by the revolutionary ideas of Anarchism, and structured in a non- bureaucratic, de- centralized and democratic manner, the unions can be the battering ram that smashes capitalism and the State, by seizing the factories, mines etc. and putting them under the control of the workers (in cooperation with community structures).
4. A working class revolution will help the environment in four ways. First, the capitalist/ State system that was the main cause of environmental problems, a system oriented to profit and power, will be replaced by a society based on need- satisfaction and grassroots democracy. Secondly, the excessive levels of consumption by the upper class and the middle class will be eliminated altogether, as will the idea that happiness can only be gained by buying more and more useless commodities.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, the introduction of social and economic equality will end the environmental degradation forced on the poor by means such as land shortages and the homelands system. And finally, the workers will be able to install (and further develop) the ecologically sustainable technologies that the bosses suppress.<sup>34</sup>

## **6. WHAT WILL A FUTURE ANARCHIST SOCIETY LOOK LIKE, AND HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE ENVIRONMENT?'**

20. The two fundamental structures of the Anarchist society will be the Syndicate (democratic workplace associations) and the Free City- Commune (the self- managed city or village, made up of syndicates and community committees in a given area).<sup>35</sup>
  1. Communes will be federated into regions and nations; they will also be linked by federations of Syndicates that provide services impossible to organize purely at the level of the individual Commune (eg. transcontinental railways, post).
  2. Each Commune must be located in a particular ecological region (Bio- region) and must learn to preserve, enhance and integrate itself into that region's natural dynamics.
  3. The trade unions and civic associations provide the nucleus of the future syndicates and communes.

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<sup>32</sup> Bill Meyers. "Ecology and Anarcho — syndicalism", *Ideas and Action*; see Anon. *You Can't Blow Up A Social Relationship: The Anarchist Case Against Terrorism* for a detailed examination of the case for mass organizing and actions instead of small — scale guerrilla and terrorist approaches.

<sup>33</sup> see Bill Meyers. "Ecology and Anarcho -syndicalism"

<sup>34</sup> Mark McGuire, (1993), "Book Review Corner", *Rebel Worker*, vol 12, no. 6 (108). p12.

<sup>35</sup> on the theory of the Communes and the Syndicates as developed by classical Anarchism, see Guerin, Daniel, (1970), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. New York and London. Chapter 2, esp. pp56-60. The addition of the Bio- regional dimension is found in Purchase (1993), Purchase (1991) and Purchase, Graham, (1990), *Anarchist Society and its Practical Realization*. San Francisco. See Sharp Press.

## **7. WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION ACTIVITY ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **General perspectives**

21. The role of Workers Solidarity Federation is first and foremost to spread the ideas of Anarchism as far and far as possible. We are also in favor of helping the working class organize itself and increase its confidence in its own decision- making capacity.
22. A crucial part of our work is to link a criticism of the present society with a vision of how society could be organized to benefit the masses. We support all progressive struggles, for their aims, for the confidence that campaigning gives people, and because it is in struggle that ideas are spread.
23. We always try to relate our ideas to the day to day needs and struggles of the working class. We are opposed to an abstract form of environmentalism that does not link itself to the class struggle.

### **Guidelines for day-to-day activities**

24. Call for workers in polluting factories to enforce safety rules and monitor pollution. Support actions by workers and the local community to stop/ reduce pollution. Where factories cannot be made safe we can demand that they be closed but that their workers get employed at the same pay levels and skill in the local area.
25. Call for the shutting down of all nuclear power stations under capitalism because the placing of profits before human needs means that these facilities will never be safe.
26. Link the fight for land redistribution to the issue of how the homelands system has generated severe environmental problems. Argue that the redistributed land should be farmed by means of sustainable agricultural practices.
27. Support wilderness preservation in the form of nature reserves, but, recognizing that such reserves have often been set up at the expense of local communities, and the resentment this creates, call for these communities to retain access to some grazing, dry wood, and other resources. Demand that local communities receive a cut from the gate takings. Unionize workers at these facilities.
28. Oppose all testing of atomic, biological and chemical weapons in all circumstances and support blacking of goods and services as well as other direct action to halt these tests.
29. Oppose the practice of vivisection not just for its cruelty but for its scientific flaws. Link this issue to the struggle for health and safety by pointing out how bogus “scientific” testing on animals results in the exposure of the working class to unsafe medicines.
30. Call for strike action against companies strip mining forests to force them to reforest and manage extraction. Support unionization of workers in these industries and their revolutionary education.

31. Call on unions to fund their own environmental monitoring section answerable to the workers and community affected. Call on unions to publicize and organize action against industries that expose workers and the community at large to toxic substances, pollution etc.
32. Within unions also demand industry use recycled products where possible and find alternatives for products or by-products that harm the environment. This should be backed by industrial action.

## **TO SUM UP**

1. The Earth is facing a serious environmental crisis with potentially catastrophic results.
2. The environmental crisis has been created by capitalism and the State.
3. The working class has a direct interest in fighting to halt the environmental crisis as it the main victim of this crisis. By contrast the ruling class profits from the crisis.
4. Mass action against the capitalists and the State is the only effective way to fight the environmental crisis in the short- term.
5. The only effective long- term solution to the crisis is the replacement of capitalism and the State by Anarchism or stateless socialism.
6. There will continue to be economic growth and industry in the Anarchist society, but this will take place only on an environmentally- sustainable basis.
7. Workplace organization will play a central role in fighting and winning the battle to end the environmental crisis, and its causes.



## 6. ANTI-IMPERIALISM

*[In this struggle] only the workers and the peasants will go all the way to the end ...*

**Augustino Sandino, the Anarcho-syndicalist leader of 1927–33 armed rising against the USA occupation of Nicaragua. Cited in A. Bendana (1995), Sandinista Commemoration of the Sandino Centennial. Speech given on the Anniversary of the Death of General Sandino, held in Managua’s Olaf Palme Convention Centre. Distributed by Centre for International Studies, Managua. Trans: F.S. Courneyuer**

### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. By imperialism we refer to a situation in which the ruling class of one country dominates the people and territory of another country. In other words, there is a situation of external domination by an outside power. This relationship assumes different forms in different contexts.
2. As Anarchists/Syndicalists we are opposed to imperialism because of the suffering and oppression that it brings. We do not accept the argument that imperialism is a progressive force, whether this argument proceeds from the idea that imperialism “advances the productive forces”, “intervenes to keep the peace”, “civilises” etc. Imperialism is responsible for genocide, national oppression, attacks on working class conditions, war, underdevelopment, starvation, and poverty. Imperialism is not, however, the only cause of these problems, and is itself the product of capitalism and the State (see below).
3. The key imperialist powers are the dominant First World states and their ruling classes: Western Europe, the United States of America, Japan etc. These are commonly called the First World, or the West, or the “core” or the metropolitan countries. In addition to these countries, the main Eastern bloc countries such as Russia and China have also acted as imperialist powers.
4. The other side of the coin are the countries and regions dominated by imperialism: Africa, East Europe, South Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Latin America . These countries are often called the Third World, the South or the “periphery”, the “satellite” countries or “colonial and semi-colonial regions”.
5. At the same time, the Third World is not an homogenous zone. Some countries are more regionally powerful and economically dominant than others. These countries often (but not always) act as the local enforcers and allies of the imperialist powers and are backed up by these powers. These range of countries are sometimes referred as the industrialised Third World, the Newly Industrialising countries (NICs), or the “semi-periphery”. Examples of

semi-peripheral countries that act as the local partners of imperialism are South Africa and Israel. Semi-peripheral countries which do not act overtly as the junior partners of imperialism include Poland, Brazil and South Korea.

6. Although Apartheid /racial capitalism in South Africa shared many of the features of an imperialist relationship (particularly of the settler-colonial type) insofar as a settler-derived oligarchy (ruling class-dominated alliance of different White classes) historically exercised political and economic domination in the country (Apartheid/racial capitalism), Apartheid / racial capitalism was not strictly speaking an imperialist relationship. This is because this system of domination was internally based. It was not governed from outside in the manner typical of a settler-colony such as Zambia or Kenya. Instead, the settler – dominated ruling class took local State power in 1910, took ownership over most of the economy in the subsequent decades and made the key political and economic decisions. This fact is not changed by the point that the local ruling class (and its African allies the chiefs and homeland bourgeoisies) were backed by the imperialist powers. Thus, there was not an external enemy to be expelled, but a localised situation of oppression to be confronted. This is not to say that South Africa was independent of the broader world imperialist system, as it acted as a semi – periphery / junior partner of imperialism dominating the southern part of Africa.<sup>1</sup> SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING RACISM FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON SOUTH AFRICA.
7. Anarchism and Syndicalism have an exceptionally proud record of anti-imperialist commitment.

1. This repudiation of the theory and practice of imperialism is logically implied by Anarchist- Syndicalism's rejection of coercive political structures and economically exploitative modes of production in favour of a freely constituted international federation of self- administrating communes and workers' associations based on stateless socialism.<sup>2</sup>
2. On the theoretical and practical level, theorist-activists such as Bakunin, Reclus and Berkman all condemned and fought against imperialism. In the colonial world, Anarchist- Syndicalists played an important role in anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles, including those in Cuba, Ireland, Korea, Macedonia, Mexico, Nicaragua and the Ukraine. For example, the national hero of Nicaragua, Augustino Sandino, who led a revolt against the American occupation in the 1920s and 1930s was an Anarchist-Syndicalist; in Mexico, the Anarchists and Syndicalists of the PLM, the IWW and the CGT consistently challenged American imperialism and anti-Mexican discrimination in Mexico, both before, during and after the Mexican Revolution; James Connolly, the famous martyr of the 1916 Easter rebellion in Ireland against British imperialism was an Anarchist/ Syndicalist union organiser in the United States and Ireland and was strongly influenced by Syndicalist ideas; in Korea the

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<sup>1</sup> South Africa as a semi-periphery is discussed in M. Legassick (1977), "Gold, Agriculture and Secondary Industry in South Africa, 1885–1970" in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (ed.) *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*.

<sup>2</sup> See Daniel Geurin, (1970), *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*. Monthly Review Press. (New York and London). pp. 56–69.

Anarchists were a key force in the struggle against the Japanese occupation that begun in 1910 and even managed to establish a massive self-governed liberated zone in Manchuria in the 1930s; in the Ukraine, the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of Nestor Makhno expelled the occupying Central Powers in 1918–9. In the imperialist countries, Anarchist- Syndicalists were also at the forefront of the fight against imperialism. For example, in Japan, the prominent Anarchist Kotoku Shushi was framed and executed in 1910 after his *Commoner's Newspaper* campaigned against Japanese expansionism; in 1909, the Spanish Anarchists organised a mass strike against intervention in Morocco (the “Tragic Week”); in Italy, the Anarchists consistently opposed Italian expansionism into Eritrea and Ethiopia in the 1880s and 1890s and organised a massive anti-war movement against the Italian invasion of Libya in 1911, and intervention in Albania in 1919.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. CAUSES OF IMPERIALISM

8. Imperialism existed before capitalism and the modern State.
9. However, imperialism has been a central feature of capitalism and the modern State since their emergence 500 years ago in Europe and their subsequent global expansion. Indeed, this period has been characterised by imperialism on a scale unprecedented in world history. In 1800 the Western empires claimed 55 per cent of the Earth's surface, although in practice they only held about 35 percent of it. By 1878, the proportion held was 67 per cent, and, by 1914, had come to hold 85 per cent of the Earth as colonies, protectorates, dominions and commonwealths . Of these powers, Britain and France were pre-eminent, holding between them Canada, Australia, New Zealand, colonies in North and South America and the Caribbean, most of Africa, the Middle East, the Far East as well as the Indian subcontinent in its entirety. Japan also embarked on colonial expansion in South East Asia, intervening in Korea, China and other countries. Since the relative decline of the European and Japanese imperialist powers in the post- World War Two period, the United States has risen to pre-eminence as dominant imperialist power..<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> On Bakunin, see Daniel Geurin , (1970), *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*. Monthly Review Press. (New York and London ). pp. 68–9; on Reclus, see P. Marshall (1993), *Demanding the Impossible: a History of Anarchism*, chapter 20 (on Elisee Reclus) (Fontana: London); see A. Berkman, “The Only Hope of Ireland”, *The Blast!* vol.1, no.13, page 2; May 15, 1916; on Macedonia, see “East: a Freedom Workshop”, January/ March 1991, in *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly*, no. 13, pp. 31–2; on Cuba, see F. Fernandez, (1986), *Cuba: the Anarchists and Liberty* (ASP. London.); on Nicaragua, see A. Bendana, (1995), *A Sandinista Commemoration of the Sandino Centennial*. Speech Given to the 61 Anniversary of the Death of General Sandino, held in Managua's Olaf Palme Convention Centre. Distributed by Centre for International Studies, Managua. Trans: F.S. Courneyuer; on Ukraine, see esp. P. Arshinov, (1987) *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918–21* (Freedom Press); on Korea and Japanese solidarity, see Ha Ki-Rak, (1986), *A History of Korean Anarchist Movement*. (Anarchist Publishing Committee. Korea) and Alan MacSimoin, “The Korean Anarchist Movement”, talk to the Workers' Solidarity Movement, Dublin Branch, Ireland, in September 1991; on Italy, see C. Levy, “Italian Anarchism 1870–1926”, in D. Goodway (ed.), 1989, *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice*. (Routledge. London and New York).

<sup>4</sup> Figures from E. Said, (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*. (Vintage. London). p. 6.

10. Imperialism in the modern period has been driven by two factors.<sup>5</sup>

1. Firstly, there is an economic dimension to imperialism: the system arises in part to benefit the imperialist ruling classes (or at least important factions within those classes) by, for example, providing extra- high levels of profit from cheap labour and cheap raw materials, and blocking the access of rival ruling classes to these resources.
2. The second factor is the international State system . In the same way that capitalist companies compete in the market, so too do States compete: for territory, for strategic advantage (e.g. sites for military bases), and for expansion. This provides a pressure for national conflicts, war , foreign conquest and attempts at forcible assimilation of conquered peoples as the smaller States are swallowed up and the “greater” ones strive to increase their power and reach.

### 3. IMPERIALISM IN THE PRE-1945 PERIOD.<sup>6</sup>

11. Imperialism has assumed different forms during the history of capitalism and the State.

1. Merchant Capitalism And Slave Labour. This early stage of capitalism dates from the early 1500s to the late 1700s, and was characterised by the accumulation of capital through trade , plunder and the exploitation of European workers and peasants. This was the period when capitalism began to forcefully expand itself into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Slave plantations were set up in the Americas and elsewhere, and supplied by an enormous slave trade. The roots of modern racism may be found in this period: slavery generated racism- racism did not generate slavery. A key feature of this period was the forcible articulation of non-capitalist modes of production as subordinate components of an emerging world capitalist system. The riches acquired through plunder and trade, in conjunction with the exploitation of European artisans and peasants, laid the basis for the industrial revolution. This period was associated with genocide in the Americas .
2. Colonial Conquest: From the 1500s until the 1900s, capitalism and its State were involved in the conquest and colonisation of Africa, the Americas and Asia. This period was associated with genocide in South Africa, Australia and elsewhere.
  1. A major aim of the imperialists in this period was creating a source of cheap (often forced) labour, cheap agricultural and mineral raw materials (for First World firms) and also markets for First World manufactured goods. This had a strategic dimension insofar as part of the point of colonial occupation was to deny

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<sup>5</sup> See, among others, M. Bakunin, 1990, *Marxism, Freedom and the State* (Freedom Press. London), pp29-30; P.A. Kropotkin, *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism: Two Essays*, 1987, ed. N. Walter. (Freedom Press. London), p. 39; G.P. Maximoff, 1985, *The Programme of Anarcho- Syndicalism*. (Monty Miller Press. Australia).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Joe Black, summer 1992, “1492–1992: Christopher Columbus, Slaver and Thief”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 35. Dublin, Ireland; *Endless Struggle*, spring/summer 1990, “Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. Vancouver; see also A. Webster, (1990), *Introduction to the Sociology of Development* . Macmillan. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, chapter 4; on Africa, B. Freund, 1984, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: the Decvelopment of African Society Since 1800*. (Indiana. Bloomington University Press).

rival imperialist ruling classes access to the markets and resources of one's own colonies. The pattern of trade established in this period was one in which Third World/colonial countries exported raw materials (mineral and agricultural) and imported finished products (machinery, tools etc.).

2. This is a negative situation . Firstly, Third World exports were typically based on the displacement of local economic activities such as growing food crops in favour of export -oriented activities such as growing cash crops. One result of this was growing food security on the part of Third World peasants, who were now growing crops for export rather than focussing on food to satisfy their needs. Secondly, a large number of Third World countries were producing fairly similar products for sale to a few huge monopoly corporations, who in turn manufactured the finished goods that were exported back to the First World. This unequal situation allowed the large monopolies to drive down the prices of raw materials whilst driving up the costs of the finished goods that the Third World economies needed to survive.<sup>7</sup>
11. 3. Africa was formally divided amongst the main European powers at the Conference of Berlin in 1884, and by the start of the 1900s partitioned and occupied (with the exception of Ethiopia, whose feudal ruling class was able to fight off the invasions). In many cases, the indigenous ruling classes and elites collaborated in the colonial enterprise as they felt that it would be to their advantage to do so. Again, not only were vast territories plundered, but local societies and economies were drastically and forcefully restructured into the world capitalist system by the imperialists. Again, colonialism provided racist ideas with fertile ground.<sup>8</sup>
4. In general, two main types of colonies were established in Africa: the so-called “peasant” colonies, in which a tiny foreign ruling force, in conjunction with local chiefs, governed the colony (e.g. Ghana) ; and colonies of white settlement in which a sizeable White settler population dominated political and economic life (e.g. Algeria, Zimbabwe). The ruling class in the settler colonies did not comprise all the Whites as many Whites were middle and working class and as the ruling class included those local people who held important positions in the State apparatus or economy (e.g. chiefs) . Nonetheless, the ruling classes were White-dominated with its leading members of European descent . The White ruling classes deliberately sought to draw in allies from other White groups such as the middle class and working class by providing material benefits such as job reservation, exclusive trading areas etc. We can refer to this alliance of all White classes and a section of the local elite as an oligarchy or power bloc

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<sup>7</sup> The issue of food insecurity is touched on in P. McCarthy, winter 1992/3, “Famine in Somalia- its not a natural disaster, its murder”, in *Workers Solidarity: the Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 37. (Dublin, Ireland ). Unequal exchange is discussed in R. Sandbrook, 1985, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*. (Cambridge University Press), chapter 2 and 3. At the same time, it is important not to focus all attention on external causes, as the first reference here tends to do- as we discuss below, the local elites are as culpable as the imperialist bourgeoisies.

<sup>8</sup> B. Freund, 1984, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: the Development of African Society Since 1800*. (Indiana, Bloomington University Press) provides a useful, class conscious analysis of the partition and the resistance it encountered.

## 4. IMPERIALISM IN THE POST-1945 PERIOD.

12. Imperialism entered a new phase after the Second World War. It is important to note that although this period saw the end of the formal colonial empires, key features of political and economic features of imperialism continued to exist despite the attainment of formal independence. These include continuities in colonially- established economic relationships of “unequal exchange”, the continued global political dominance of the First World countries, and military interventions in the Third World on the part of imperialist powers. This is why this period may be referred to as the “neo-colonial phase” of imperialism.

The key features of the neo-colonial period are: (1) the end of the formal colonial empires and their replacement by relations of neo- colonialism, (2) the rise to prominence of the USA as the central imperialist power, (3) the development of a “semi- periphery” of more developed Third World countries allied to imperialism (4) the emergence of the multinational corporations (MNCs) (5) the creation of international organisations to enforce the system, notably the IMF and World Bank. and (6) the emergence of a second set of imperialist powers in the East bloc.

### End of the formal colonial empires

13. END OF THE FORMAL COLONIAL EMPIRES.<sup>9</sup> The formal empires were dismantled for a number of reasons. Firstly, there was the economic exhaustion of the West European and Japanese powers. Secondly, there was the pressure from the USA which wanted access to the markets, material and labour of the old empires. Thirdly, there were massive anti-colonial struggles in the period from the 1940s to the 1970s. For example, uprisings and even insurrections took place in against Holland in Indonesia, against France in Indo-China and Algeria, and against Britain in Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus and India. These struggles paralleled an earlier wave of risings against colonial rule in the late 1700s and early 1800s that destroyed the formal colonial empires of Spain, Portugal, France and Britain in most of the Americas and the Caribbean.

1. Generally speaking, the imperial ruling classes took care to manage the process of decolonisation in order to reach a settlement that helped secure the preservation of their own interests . This typically meant: a long period of negotiation in which the masses became politically demobilised, negotiations with moderate nationalists, and the marginalisation, elimination or co-optation of hostile elements.
2. Although overall this strategy succeeded, and power was transferred in substantial measure to local ruling classes who would defend capitalism , the State and imperialism, there have been exceptions. In cases such as Mozambique and Nicaragua and Iran in 1979 radical nationalist movements won independence, often on the basis of armed insurrection In these cases resources and industries were typically nationalised and some social reforms (e.g. health) instituted. These struggles created not socialist societies but state capitalist regimes of various forms; however, by seizing

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<sup>9</sup> The process of decolonisation in Africa is surveyed in B. Freund, 1984, *The Making of Contemporary Africa: the Development of African Society Since 1800*. (Indiana. Bloomington University Press). See also Endless Struggle, spring/summer 1990, “Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. Vancouver

imperialist property and by demonstrating a development path independent of the West (although often dependent on the East, and certainly not independent of world imperialism as a whole) they posed a threat to imperialism which was ruthless in its response. Imperialism used blockades, sanctions, cutting foreign aid etc. and, in the last instance, force such as campaigns of destabilisation or even direct military invasion (e.g. the wars against Vietnam, Grenada, and Iraq).<sup>10</sup> The use of direct armed intervention by the USA, backed by Japan and Western Europe, seems set to increase with the collapse of the limited deterrent provided by the Soviet Union, an alternative imperialist power.<sup>11</sup> See below for more discussion on the nature of Third World ruling classes.

## Rise of USA Dominance

14. THE RISE OF US DOMINANCE.<sup>12</sup> The USA took the opportunity provided by the crisis of the old imperialist powers to become the dominant imperialist country. First it sought – through the Marshall Plan, which gave or lent to Western Europe and Japan \$17 billion between 1947 – 1955, and through other aid programmes, to make the competing imperialist nations dependent on US capital. Secondly it formed military blocs which it controlled such as NATO (1949) and SEATO (1954) to guard against the “spread of communism,” that is, to defend its spheres of influence from the Soviet and other East bloc capitalists. Thirdly, it set up a new world monetary order based on the supremacy of the dollar. The USA’s plans to create the “American Century” began to unravel from the 1970s with the end of the post war economic boom, the re-emergence of Western Europe and Japan as major capitalist centres, and the rise of radical liberation movements both in the USA and the “Third World”. Nonetheless, the USA remains the dominant imperialist power.

## Emergence of the Semi-Periphery

15. EMERGENCE OF THE SEMI-PERIPHERY.<sup>13</sup> As a whole, African and other Third World countries continued to rely on the export of agricultural and mineral products, and the import of manufactured goods. In other words, the colonially-derived patterns of trade typically continue in the post-colonial period. However, we must note the existence of what has been called the “semi- periphery” . Although still at least partly subject to imperialist

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<sup>10</sup> On the Gulf War, see D. MacCarron, spring 1992, “New World Order: Same Old Slaughter”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 34 (Dublin. Ireland). On US aggression more generally, see N. Chomsky, 1991, *Terrorising the Neighbourhood: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (AK Press. Pressure Drop Press). More on western interventionism in Africa can be found in R. Sandbrook, 1985, *The Politics of Africa’s Economic Stagnation*. (Cambridge University Press).

<sup>11</sup> On the role of the USA in the post-Cold War period, see N. Chomsky, 1991, *Terrorising the Neighbourhood: American Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era* (AK Press. Pressure Drop Press) and also A. Flood, summer 1992, “The Return of the ‘White Man’s Civilising Mission’ : Imperialism Is Not Just Another Buzz Word”, in *Workers Solidarity: the Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 35. (Dublin. Ireland).

<sup>12</sup> On the emergence of the USA -dominated imperialist period, see especially *Endless Struggle*, spring/summer 1990, “Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. Vancouver. Also see Teeple,G., (1995), *Globalisation and the Decline of Social Reform*. New Jersey Press.

<sup>13</sup> On the Newly Industrialising Countries, see A.G. Frank, 1983, “Global Crisis and Transformation”, *Development and Change*, no. 14.

domination, some Third World countries have developed a sizeable locally owned industrial base which allows them to be less dependant on the production of agricultural and mineral goods (however, they were still dependent on exporting local products to import the capital goods and machinery that powered the new factories) . Often this development has been at least partly promoted by the imperial powers. In some cases these countries, act as local enforcers for imperialist rule e.g. South Africa and Israel In other cases, they do not act as junior partners of imperialism, although their ties to the imperialist powers may be quite close e.g. South Korea, whose development was deliberately promoted by the USA in order to provide a buffer gagaingt the “spread of communism” (i.e. of Soviet and Chinese imperial influence) in South East Asia. The semi-peripheral countries may also have investments outside their own borders, and even their own MNCs (e.g. South Africa’s Anglo American Corporation has operations in Zambia, Bermuda, Peru, Ghana and the USA).<sup>14</sup>

### **Rise of the Multinational Corporation (MNC)**

16. RISE OF THE MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION. One of the key features of neo-colonialism is the rise of the multi – national corporation (MNCs). The MNCs can be defined as gigantic corporations (owned either by the state or private capitalists) who have operations in more than one country . These planet- spanning corporations are typically (but not necessarily) based in the imperialist countries.

1. Many of today’s MNCs grew out of the small family- owned and controlled businesses of nineteenth- century Europe and the USA, which first expanded their operations in their countries of origin before expanding abroad.<sup>15</sup> An important reason for expansion abroad was that within the First World countries the various nation- wide firms, together controlling the greater part of the economy, tended to collaborate with their competitors to keep prices up, wages at standard levels and the like. However, rich pickings were to be made by the corporation that could outwit its competitors by controlling markets, the supply of raw materials or developing new products that made the old obsolete. Result: some firms invested abroad in order to secure control over their raw material requirements, to control marketing outlets, and to forestall other corporations gaining control of raw material and markets . This was the origin of the MNCs. MNC s first moved into the Third World in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century, focussing in this stage on primary industry (raw material extraction and production) . In the 25 years after World War 2 (1939–45), there was an “unprecedented expansion” of MNC activity, initially led by US firms, but since the 1960s overtaken by European and Japanese firms. This has often involved activ-

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<sup>14</sup> On Anglo-American, see D. Innes, 1984, *Anglo: Anglo-American and the Rise of Modern South Africa*. (Ravan. Johannesburg)..

<sup>15</sup> The rise of the MNCs is discussed in D.Elson, 1988, “Dominance and Dependency in the World Economy”, in B. Crow, M. Thorpe et al, *Survival and Change in the Third World*. (Polity Press)..



ity in the manufacturing sector As a general pattern, MNCs tend to invest where the political and cultural influence of their home countries has been the greatest.<sup>16</sup>

2. The size of the MNCs is striking. For example, a large and growing proportion of world production is controlled by a few hundred MNCs and by the year 2000 about 400 MNCs will own two thirds of the fixed assets of the entire globe.<sup>17</sup> In terms of size, the largest MNCs have sales that exceed the Gross Domestic Product (total output) of most Third World countries (for example, in 1984, Exxon had sales of \$73,6 billion, which exceeded the total output of Nigeria (\$73,5 bn), Algeria (\$50,7 bn), Libya (\$30,6), Egypt (\$30,1), Morocco (\$13,3) etc.).<sup>18</sup> 500 MNCs control 80% of all direct foreign investment . MNCs also play a predominant role in trade. For example, MNCs account for 90% of all trade in which the USA is involved and also dominate the marketing of Third World exports.<sup>19</sup> MNCs also play a central role in developing and controlling new technology .There are also MNC banks which have historically loaned money to the Third World. With the onset of a world capitalist crisis in the 1970s, however, these banks have demanded faster repayment and charged higher interest rates.
3. Assorted bourgeois ideologists and economists like to argue that the activities of the MNCs are beneficial to the Third World because they promote development and social peace; MNCs are examples of harmonious co-operation between the First and the Third World. This view is pure fiction.<sup>20</sup>
  1. Firstly, when serious conflicts with Third World governments (not to mention popular forces) take place (e.g. attempts to nationalise foreign firms in order to put them under the control of the local bosses and rulers), the MNCs can rely on their home governments' ability to exert "pressure" to change the policy of Third World governments. We have seen above what such "pressure" can entail. In other words, the MNCs invoke the continuing power of the imperialist ruling classes to secure their interests.
  2. Secondly, MNCs are central players in the system whereby the Third World exports raw materials and provides a market for First World goods. As we noted earlier, this arrangement allows the systematic underpricing of Third World exports and the systematic overpricing of Third World imports.
  3. Thirdly, where MNCs are involved in the manufacturing or industrial sector, not only do these investments have few links to other parts of the economy (and so

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<sup>16</sup> See D.Elson, 1988, "Dominance and Dependency in the World Economy", in B. Crow, M. Thorpe et al, *Survival and Change in the Third World*. (Polity Press), and also, R. Jenkins, 1987, *Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development* (Metheun. London).

<sup>17</sup> See A. Webster, (1990), *Introduction to the Sociology of Development* . Macmillan. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, chapter 4.

<sup>18</sup> R. Jenkins, 1987, *Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development* (Metheun. London). pp 8-9.

<sup>19</sup> R. Jenkins, 1987, *Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development* (Metheun. London). p 8; also R. Sandbrook, 1985, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*. (Cambridge University Press).

<sup>20</sup> D.Elson, 1988, "Dominance and Dependency in the World Economy", in B. Crow, M. Thorpe et al, *Survival and Change in the Third World*. (Polity Press), and also, R. Jenkins, 1987, *Transnational Corporations and Uneven Development* (Metheun. London); A.G. Frank, 1983, "Global Crisis and Transformation" , *Development and Change*, no. 14.

do not have positive spin offs e.g. jobs) but they centre on the super- exploitation of a low paid, coercively controlled and rightless workforce . This allows the MNCs to reap higher than average (or “super”) profits, not to mention undercutting the wage and welfare gains won by First World workers. MNCs are notorious for their labour policies in the Third World .

4. Fourth, MNCs also block or retard Third World development by extracting surplus (i.e. production above that needed to satisfy basic needs- and thus suitable for use in building productive resources, infrastructure, services etc.) from the Third World. This is done by means of sending profits made back to the First World (for example, it is estimated that US MNCs sent 79% of their declared net profits out of Latin America between 1960- 1968), by manipulating prices charged in trade within the firm (“transfer pricing”) and by manipulating charges for patents, product and technology licenses, brand names, and management, marketing and technical services (Elson 1988). A similar process happens through the repayment of loans to MNC banks and to the IMF and World Bank: in the 1980s, it was shown that there was a net capital loss from Africa to the First World banks, the supposed benefits of bank loans notwithstanding (see below for more on the IMF and World Bank).
5. Finally, MNCs undermine local industries by “taste transfer”, that is, by promoting the replacement of locally produced goods (often labour-intensive, artisanally produced) with more expensive imported ones utilising far less labour but requiring far more investment and foreign currency.

## **Role of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank**

17. **ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND WORLD BANK IN IMPERIALISM.**<sup>21</sup> Institutions like IMF and World Bank are central to enforcing modern imperialism. Founded in 1946 at Bretton Woods in the USA, the IMF and World Bank initially focused on rebuilding Western Europe and Japan after World War 2. They were a key component of the USA’s attempts to create a dollar- centred international monetary system. Then, from around 1971, the focus of IMF and World bank shifted to the Third World, and especially to Africa. Despite IMF and World Bank’s rosy views of themselves as neutral, purely technical aid agencies their role in these regions has been objectively imperialistic. This is clear in both political and economic spheres.

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<sup>21</sup> On the IMF and World Bank, see *Endless Struggle*, spring/summer 1990, “Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. (Vancouver) and *Endless Struggle*, spring / summer 1990, “Development of the IMF”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12 (Vancouver) p.25; F. Cheru, (1989), *The Silent Revolution in Africa*. (Zed. London); F. Haffajee, (1993, August 20–26), “An African Alternative to the IMF’s Programmes [report on lecture by Bade Onimode]”, *Weekly Mail and Guardian*. (Johannesburg). p.38; L. Harris, (1989), “The Bretton Woods System and Africa”, in B.Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, the World Bank and the African Debt: the Economic Impact*. Zed and IFAA. (London and New Jersey); Makgetla, N., (1993, October 13), “Need SA Fear ‘Rule by IMF?’”, in *The Star*. (Johannesburg.); B. Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, The World Bank And The African Debt: The Social And Political Impact*. (Zed and IFAA. London and New Jersey); Onimode, B., (1989b), “IMF and World Bank Programmes in Africa”, in B. Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, the World Bank and the African Debt: the Economic Impact*. (Zed and IFAA. London and New Jersey); Teeple,G., (1995), *Globalisation and the Decline of Social Reform*. New Jersey Press.

1. Pro – imperialist structure of the IMF and World Bank. Although most States in the world are members of the IMF and World Bank, and pay into the central coffers of these institutions, their decision making processes are dominated by the imperialist countries of the First World. Rather than a “one country, one vote” system, as can be found in United Nations organisations, a percentage of votes is granted according to the economic size and contribution of a given country, a system which favours the First World states : the USA has 19.9% of the total vote; the United Kingdom 6.9%; and the USA, Western Europe, and Canada combined have 53% of the vote.<sup>22</sup>
2. Pro-imperialist political role.<sup>23</sup>The IMF and World Bank have always operated in the political interests of imperialism . Aid and funds have historically been readily given to Third World regimes favourable and friendly to the USA and other imperialist States – like South Africa (before the sanctions campaign got underway- e.g. massive loans after the crushing of the 1976 uprising), the death squad ARENA regime in El Salvador, and Daniel Arap Moi’s regime in Kenya. This takes place no matter how much the despicable and vicious crimes committed by these regimes are in stark contrast to the professed liberal, democratic and human rights concerns of the imperialists. But more radical Third World states who fail to toe the imperialist line, or introduce social reforms that are seen as destabilising are refused loan facilities. For example, the elected social democratic government of Salvador Allende in Chile was refused assistance in its reform attempts. (The USA’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the American MNC ITT subsequently assisted the military coup which overthrew Allende in 1973) . In this way the IMF and World Bank help ensure the perpetuation of capitalism, the State and imperialism.
3. Pro – imperialist economic role.<sup>24</sup> The IMF and World Bank act to perpetuate the colonially-derived world division of labour which relegates most Third World countries to producers of raw ,materials and importers of finished goods. They also act to further the interests of MNCs by promoting free market policies that facilitate the operations of the big companies by attacking worker rights, freeing capital movements and removing tariff barriers. Since their founding, the IMF and World Bank have been committed to the construction and regulation of an international capitalist system of free trade and capital movements. This aim is reinforced by the General Agreements on Trades and Tariffs (GATT) (now called the World Trade Organisation

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<sup>22</sup> See especially *Endless Struggle*, spring / summer 1990, “Development of the IMF”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12 (Vancouver) p.25; B. Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, The World Bank And The African Debt: The Social And Political Impact*. (Zed and IFAA. London and New Jersey); Onimode, B., (1989b), “IMF and World Bank Programmes in Africa”, in B. Onimode (ed.), *The IMF, the World Bank and the African Debt: the Economic Impact*. (Zed and IFAA. London and New Jersey).

<sup>23</sup> *Endless Struggle*, spring / summer 1990, “Development of the IMF”, in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12 (Vancouver) p.25

<sup>24</sup> References as for note 21. The rise of neo-liberal (free market) policies in Africa cannot, however, be explained solely by reference to the interventions of the IMF and the World Bank: it is also promoted by the general capitalist crisis, by the apparent colapse of state-centred forms of capitalism, and by the rise of internationally mobile capital.

(WTO)) which was established at the same time as the IMF and World Bank with essentially the same aims.<sup>25</sup>

1. One key way of attaining these objectives is to insisting that Third World ruling classes adopt the appropriate free-market policies as a precondition for financial assistance . Another method is to try to influence government policy thinking as a whole by promoting free market ideology. Consequently, the increasingly stringent conditionalities placed on loans made available by these institutions to African states as the economic crisis deepened emphasised policy reforms such as currency devaluation , trade liberalisation and reduction of the economic role of the State (in practice, this means cutbacks in public sector jobs, slashing welfare services, and removing wage and price controls). Conditionality also involves the seconding of IMF and World Bank staff to government ministries to monitor the implementation of these policies, a marked parallel to colonial administration. This package of policy prescriptions is called Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). These policy prescriptions are informed by the free market theory that the crisis of Third World States such as those in Africa economic crisis was rooted primarily in internal factors such as inappropriate State interventions in the economy and “bloated” civil service, all of which could be resolved by a growth path premised on neo-liberal prescriptions and emphasising reliance on Africa’s “comparative advantage” in the export of raw materials.
2. To these economic conditionalities were added political conditionalities encompassing improved “governance” (more accountable, honest, legitimate, open and consensus-based government), which IMF and World Bank technocrats came to see as vital to the effective implementation of the economic reform programme . This is not the same as even parliamentary democracy- the issue for the IMF and the World Bank is not the establishment of democratic States but of governments with an increased capacity and efficiency in implementing ESAP.<sup>26</sup> Overall, then, ESAP functions to facilitate the operations of MNCs and the continuation of the imperialist world division of labour.
4. ESAP is an attack on the Third World working class , working peasantry, and the poor. It’s effects on popular living standards are highly negative. For example, in Zimbabwe, ESAP led to price control relaxation resulted in dramatic rises in the inflation rate (running between 25% and 40%), a fall in consumer demand of up to 30%, a drop in average wages to the lowest levels since the early 1970s (due in part to wage restraint and high inflation), and at least 55,000 jobs losses up to 1995 ( particularly in the civil service where 22,000 employees have been retrenched.<sup>27</sup> These job losses have an especially severe impact in a country in which fewer than 20% of school-

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<sup>25</sup> On the GATT/WTO, see ECN, March 1994, “GATT and the New World Order”, in *Contra Flow*. European Counter Network); B. Webb, 1995, “Nothing to Lose But Our Gains”, *New Statesman and Society: Guide to Trade Unions* 1995; K. Watkins, 1992, “GATT and the Third World: Fixing the Rules”, in *Race and Class*. vol. 34. no. 1.

<sup>26</sup> S. Decalo, (1992), “The Process, Prospects and Constraints of Democratisation in Africa”, in *African Affairs*. vol. 91.

<sup>27</sup> On Zimbabwe, see Saunders, R., (1996, July), “ESAP’s Fables II”, in *Southern Africa Report*. vol. 1.. no. 4.

leavers each year are able to find employment in the formal economy: and more than 50% unemployment in the formal sector. ESAP also involved severe cuts in spending on social services . with health spending falling by 39% in 1994–5, expenditure on low-cost housing dropping by Z\$4,3 million, and spending in the primary education sector at its lowest levels since independence. In addition, the imposition of cost recovery principles requires that all but the poorest of the poor (those earning under Z\$400 a month) have to pay school and clinic fees. ( At the same time, however, President Mugabe awarded himself, his top officials, and members of parliament salary increases ranging from 116% to 134%! It might also be noted that, in general, the export – orientation of ESAP increases food insecurity as increasing amounts of land are given over to cash crop production.

5. The IMF and World Bank also promote ecologically destructive policies, by encouraging countries to cut down and export resources such as rain forests (as part of the drive to export raw materials), or to import toxic waste (in order to raise foreign currency). Laurence Summers, chief economist of the World Bank wrote in a confidential memo in December 1991 “ Just between you and me, shouldn’t the World bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs [Less Developed Countries]? ... I think the logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that ... I’ve always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly under- polluted ... The problem with the argument against all these proposals for more pollution in the LDCs (intrinsic rights, moral reasons, social concerns) ... is that they could be turned around and used against every bank proposal for liberalisation “. <sup>28</sup>
6. Given these negative effects of IMF/World Bank policies, how is that that many (perhaps most) Third World countries have adopted them? Several factors need to be taken into account.
  1. Economic Crisis: In the African context, at least, a key factor is the economic crisis that began in the 1980s. Africa is the poorest region of the world and the only one consistently getting poorer. It would be fair to say that living conditions have declined over the last 30 years. This situation reflects both “external” and “internal” factors. By external factors we mean the effects of imperialism; these have mostly been examined above and include things like worsening terms of trade for Third World exports, the loss of capital to MNCs and higher interest rates on foreign loans.<sup>29</sup> Internally, the main cause of the crisis has been the local ruling class . The local ruling class is firstly, allied with imperialism and is thus directly culpable for the continuing negative effects of imperialism (see below). Secondly, the ruling classes in Africa are strongly dependent on a State connection and / or position for the accumulation of wealth: through passing contracts onto friends and family, corruption (primitive accumulation

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<sup>28</sup> quoted in *Work in Progress*, (July/August 1992). (Johannesburg). p. 40. See also on the issue of the link between the IMF/World Bank and environmental destruction, R. Bruce, 1994, *Mortgaging the Earth: the World Bank, Environmental Impoverishment and the Crisis of Development* (Earthscan) and W. Bello and S. Cunningham, “The World Bank and the IMF: the Reagenites and the Resubordination of the Third World”, *Z Magazine* (July/August 1994).

<sup>29</sup> see the references in note 21.

directly from the State coffers), nationalising private property in order to put it in the hands of government rulers.<sup>30</sup> This has negative effects, both economically (declining infrastructure, endemic corruption and inefficiency, the implementation of ineffective state-led industrialisation and economic development schemes) and politically (the centrality of the State to accumulation means that competition for State power is especially intense and typically culminates in the establishment of military rule or a one-party State as one faction of the ruling class strives to monopolise access to the sources of power and wealth).

2. Class Inequality.<sup>31</sup> The crisis predisposes African governments to use the various loan facilities of the IMF and World Bank, which provide not only cash but also a “stamp of approval” that indicates to MNCs that a country is a safe investment. The point is that it is not the masses who turn to the IMF and World Bank, but the local rulers and bosses. Faced with a crisis situation Third World elites find ESAPs a comparatively attractive option . ESAPs allow the local ruling classes to install “adjustment” policies that (i) transfer the costs of the crisis onto the working people (e.g. cut backs on welfare spending, falling wages) and (ii) provide opportunities for retaining power as well as increasing profit through new links to MNCs, opportunities to buy up privatised State companies, lower corporate taxes etc. Indeed, in countries like Zimbabwe the economic crisis was not severe enough to force the ruling class to adopt an ESAP: in fact, the ruling class willingly chose an ESAP because key factions within that class believed that the free-market policies of ESAP would promote economic growth (and therefore profit).<sup>32</sup> This clearly shows that ESAP is not simply the result of some sort of imperialist conspiracy imposed on innocent local elites, but rather a policy which accommodates the class interests of the local rulers and the imperialist bourgeoisie. Nonetheless, it is certainly an additional advantage of ESAP that it allows the local bosses and rulers to claim that the policies that hurt workers are solely imposed by the IMF and World Bank demands . The blatant biases in ESAP against working people are reinforced by the nature of negotiations over ESAP conditionality : these are conducted in total secret between local rulers and IMF and World Bank executives; ordinary people are denied any say at all.

## **Rise of Eastern Bloc imperialism**

18. RISE OF EAST BLOC IMPERIALISM. The collapse of the old formal colonial empires, and the rise of the United States the main imperialist power was paralleled by the increasingly expansionist role of the so-called “socialist” countries of the Soviet Union and China. Both of these states occupied neighbouring territories on the grounds of “historical affinity” ( China in Tibet) or “spreading socialism” (the Soviet Union in East Europe and the Middle

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<sup>30</sup> see R. Sandbrook, 1985, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*. (Cambridge University Press). C. Ake, (1983), “Explanatory Notes on the Political Economy of Africa”, in *Journal of Modern African Studies*. vol. 2. no. 3. provides an excellent discussion of class in Africa.

<sup>31</sup> See N. Makgetla, (1993, October 13), “Need SA Fear ‘Rule by IMF’?”, in *The Star*. (Johannesburg).

<sup>32</sup> See T. Skalnes, (1993), “The State, Interest Groups and Structural Adjustment in Zimbabwe”, in *Journal of Development Studies*. vol. 29. no. 3.

East). As Anarchists, the very clear parallels between the imperialism of these countries and that of the United States and the West is not surprising, we have long recognised that these countries were not socialist but State-capitalist and thus subject to all the general laws and tendencies of capitalist / State development. SEE POSITION PAPER ON THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET BLOC.

## **The United Nations**

19. THE UNITED NATIONS.<sup>33</sup> The United Nations is not a neutral international peacekeeper, it is part and parcel of the imperialist system. Overall, it is nothing more than a loose federation of different States, a convention of exploiters and rulers. And from the start it has been dominated by the key imperialist powers who sit on the Security Council: the USA, the Soviet Union, France, Britain and China, all of which had the right to veto UN operations; the effect was to legitimise any spheres of influence enjoyed by these countries. As a result, UN intervention depended on, and was shaped by the interests of these countries. No action was ever taken against the Soviet invasion of Hungary or Czechoslovakia, or against the US war against Nicaragua. Interventions either took place where they were essentially irrelevant to imperialist interests (e.g. Rwanda) or compatible with them (e.g. the Gulf War had UN support). In addition, the UN solution for ending wars (when it actually does intervene) is to use the “official” channels : talking to governments and local warlords. For example, UN aid to Rwanda in 1994 was often channelled through the former government officials who controlled the refugee camps in Zaire and who were themselves implicated in the genocide; it strengthened these individuals who were part of the problem. Generally speaking, the UN seeks to reach “settlements” which are compatible with the interests of the imperial and local bourgeoisies, not the popular masses. The UN was and is incapable of ending war because it is the creature of those who cause war: the ruling classes of the world.

## **5. DO FIRST WORLD WORKERS BENEFIT FROM IMPERIALISM?**

20. We reject the idea that First World workers benefit from imperialism. According to this type of argument, these workers receive a share of the colonial booty and this improves their standards of living to levels which would not otherwise be possible. This argument, which originated in large part with Lenin’s 1916 book, *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, is a recipe for disunity in struggle. It is moreover inaccurate and unfounded.
  1. This argument misrepresents living conditions in the First World. For example, in the United Kingdom (UK) (Britain and Northern Ireland) , which was historically one of the “greatest” imperial powers, at the start of the 1980s, the top 10% of the population received 23.9% of total income while the bottom 10% received only 2.5%. The top 10% of the population also owned four fifths of all personal wealth, and 98% of all privately

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<sup>33</sup> See P. Sullivan, Autumn 1996, “The Real Spirit of the United Nations: Rulers of the World Unite”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement* (Dublin. Ireland); also A. Flood, summer 1992, “The Return of the ‘White Man’s Civilising Mission’: Imperialism Is Not Just Another Buzz Word”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement* , no. 35. (Dublin. Ireland).

held company shares and stocks. The top 1% itself owned 80% of all stocks and shares. Meanwhile the bottom 80% of the population owned just 10% of the personal wealth, mostly in the form of owning the house they live in. These economic inequalities correspond to material deprivation and hardship. A study published in 1979 found that about 32% of the population of the UK (15–17.5 million out of a population of 55.5 million) was living in or near poverty. A 1990 United Nations survey of child health in the UK showed that 25% of children were malnourished to the extent that their growth was stunted.<sup>34</sup>

2. This argument is theoretically and empirically flawed. It provides no explanation of how the alleged transfer of wealth takes place. It merely asserts that it happens. Nor does it provide any proof of the alleged process.
3. For example, it has been claimed that there were different wage rates for East African and Scottish miners in the 1930s and that, subsequently, the alleged disparities between the incomes of the two groups reflected a process whereby the Scots were somehow allegedly subsidised by the exploitation of the Ghanaians.<sup>35</sup> However, it simply does not follow that from a demonstration that there were nominal differences in wage rates between two groups of miners that the one benefited from the exploitation of the other.
  1. Such wage figures are misleading as they are almost never adjusted to take into account the real value of the different currencies relative to one another, differences in the cost of living, the effects of inflation and so on. As such, merely listing off figures does not actually establish that there were substantial differences in living standards between Third and First World workers. In other words, it is risky to take different figures and, without contextualising them, use them as a basis for an argument.
  2. Moreover, even if substantial wage gaps for workers in the same occupation in different countries were clearly shown to exist, it does not follow that they necessarily reflect a transfer of value from one set of workers to the other. A mere demonstration of disparities does not automatically establish what mechanism accounts for these disparities. At one level, there is no evidence of a correlation between imperialism and living standards in the First World. For example, the nineteenth century is commonly recognised as one of the most extreme periods of mass impoverishment in British history, the period of child labour in the coal mines and so on, yet it is precisely during this period that British imperial power in Asia and Africa and the Caribbean was at its height. Similarly, the welfare State, which provided some social insurance and benefits for First World workers and which marked one of the most substantial periods of working class material advance in the First World, took place after World War Two.

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<sup>34</sup> Figures for the UK from Robert Lekachman and Borin van Loon, (1981), *Capitalism for Beginners*. Pantheon Books. New York, esp. 44- 5, 67, 70. and *Class War* (1992), *Unfinished Business: The Politics Of Class War*. AK Press and CWF, p. 77. For the USA see Lind, Micheal, *The Next American Nation*, cited in "Stringing up the Yuppies", (24 September 1995), *Sunday Times*, p14; *Business Week* which estimated in 1991 36 million Americans (15% of the total population) were living in poverty; and *New York Times*, Sept. 25, 1992.

<sup>35</sup> by P. Fryer, *Black People and the British Empire*. Pluto.



That is to say, the welfare State was established precisely the period in which the European colonial empires in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean collapsed. Similarly, Western military interventions in the Third World have increased greatly since the late 1980s with the end of the Cold War, yet this same period has seen the greatest attack in working class conditions, and the greatest decline in real living standards in the First World, since the 1920s and 1930s. To take another example, Spain and Portugal are amongst the poorest countries in Europe, yet it is precisely these countries which had the longest standing colonial empires, dating from the 1400s to the 1970s. At another level, a number of alternative explanations for the patterns of change in working class conditions in the First World have been well established. These include: mass struggle which reached a revolutionary level (the key factor in the establishment of the welfare State); an economic boom (the greatest capitalist boom in history took place from the 1950s to the 1970s, resulting in increased crumbs available for social services without disturbing the underlying patterns of income inequality); increased mechanisation in production (greatly increasing workers' productivity thus allowing bosses to pay slightly higher wages while extracting greater levels of surplus from workers than ever before; this actually means that the rate of exploitation in the First World has increased, not declined).

21. It would be more accurate to claim that the interests of First World working people are actually harmed by imperialism.
  1. Firstly, the coercive forces and repressive techniques developed in the colonies and imperial dominions can and are utilised against working class resistance "at home". This coercive force is built up through taxes on the working people, consuming resources that would be far better used elsewhere e.g. on welfare.<sup>36</sup> The clearest example of this was in the Spanish Revolution where the fascists used the Spanish colonial army from North Africa to launch their attack in July 1936 and to slaughter Spanish the workers and peasants.
  2. Secondly, the national chauvinistic and racist ideas promoted by the ruling class in order to generate support for imperialism act to divide the international working class and divert it from realising its true interests.<sup>37</sup> These sorts of national hostilities are also promoted by Third World elites and nationalists who also oppose the idea of international class struggle unity. In this way, British workers are divided from French workers, and both are divided from Asian and African workers. This allows the bosses and rulers to divide and rule the workers and peasants, whose interests across the whole world are in fact identical. The more unity the bosses and rulers can try to build with local workers against a supposed foreign enemy, the lower the level of class struggle, and, therefore, the lower the wages and the worse the working conditions of the proletariat. The real ally for the workers of one country are the

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<sup>36</sup> see A. Berkman, "The Only Hope of Ireland", *The Blast!* vol.1, no.13, page 2; May 15, 1916; P.A. Kropotkin, *Anarchism and Anarchist Communism: Two Essays*, 1987, ed. N. Walter. (Freedom Press. London), p. 39 et seq.

<sup>37</sup> A. Flood, summer 1992, "The Return of the 'White Man's Civilising Mission' Imperialism Is Not Just Another Buzz Word", in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 35. (Dublin. Ireland).

workers of another country , not the local elites; the real enemy in a war is at home, in the form of the local ruling class.

3. The negative effects of imperialism are especially evident in the era of neo-colonialism. In this period, the MNCs are able to shift their investments around the world in search of the cheapest and most controlled labour; the threat of packing up and going where workers are more pliant is used to attack workers living standards across the world. In other words, the existence of repressive Third World regimes who smash unions, shoot peasant organisers etc. (thereby pushing down labour costs) is in direct contradiction to the interests of First World workers as these regimes directly help cause job losses, plant closures, wage cuts etc. in the First World itself as MNCs transfer their investments elsewhere .
4. Given that there is no evidence or theoretical support for the notion that First World workers benefit from imperialism, it is clear that the recipients of increased rates of surplus value due to low wages in some Third World contexts are capitalists, and not workers. In other words, the super-profits are going to the bosses not the workers. This strengthens the ruling class as a whole relative to the working class and working peasants.

## **6. WHY NATIONALIST POLITICS CANNOT DELIVER FREEDOM FROM IMPERIALISM.<sup>38</sup>**

22. Nationalism is a specific political strategy for decolonisation that is based on the idea that all classes within a given nation or people must unite to achieve decolonisation and self-determination through some sort of people's government. Nationalism has historically been a powerful current in anti-colonial and anti- imperialist struggles across the world. For example, in South Africa the African National Congress (ANC), the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) all subscribe to one or other variant of nationalist politics.
23. We reject the idea and the assumption that nationalism is the "natural" form of anti-colonial struggle. This idea is commonly put out in books and political commentaries which either claim that nationalism was the only way that colonised people responded to an imperialist relationship, or which use the word "nationalism" to mean the same thing as "anti-colonial struggle".<sup>39</sup> While clearly any serious politics has to address the issue of national oppression, it does not follow that the experience of national oppression automatically results in the dominance of nationalist politics. In South Africa, colonialism met with large- scale

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<sup>38</sup> The general perspectives outlined in the remainder of this paper draw on Alfredo M. Bonanno, 1981, *Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle*. Second English edition. Translated by Jean Weir. (Alfa Grafica Sgroi. Italy. Bratach Dubh Editions no. 1 London); A. Flood, summer 1992, "The Return of the 'White Man's Civilising Mission' Imperialism Is Not Just Another Buzz Word", in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement* , no. 35. (Dublin. Ireland); A. Berkman, "The Only Hope of Ireland", *The Blast!* vol.1, no.13, page 2; May 15, 1916; *Endless Struggle*, spring/summer 1990, "Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance", in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. (Vancouver); G.P. Maximoff, 1985, *The Programme of Anarcho-Syndicalism*. (Monty Miller Press. Australia); *Workers Solidarity Movement*, 1992, *Ireland and British Imperialism*, (Dublin. Ireland).

<sup>39</sup> e.g. E. Said, (1993), *Culture and Imperialism*. (Vintage. London).

political responses amongst the oppressed ranging from liberalism, to religious millenarianism, “tribalism”, and socialism. In other contexts, anti-colonial struggles have been led by political forces ranging from anarchism (Ukraine 1918–21) to religious fundamentalism (Iran 1978–9) to Stalinism (China 1948). The dominance of nationalist politics in a given struggle needs to be explained and challenged, not assumed away as inevitable.

24. As Anarchists/Syndicalists we believe that nationalist politics are fatally flawed and are unable to deliver freedom from domination to the majority of people in the colonially and imperialist-dominated world. For nationalists, freedom is achieved when an independent local government is established (as, for example, when the British colony of Gold Coast became independent Ghana in the 1950s). While we defend the right of people to choose to have a independent State, and while we support the establishment of systems of free elections to governments as an immediate demand, we disagree with nationalism as it cannot provide freedom for the majority of people living under a situation of imperial domination.

1. Nationalist politics cannot deliver freedom from external domination.

- 1.1 . Basic imperialist relationships continue to exist despite the establishment of an independent State. The ex-colonial countries are integrated into the world capitalist system as small economies exporting raw materials, and as sites of cheap industrial labour. Given that this world system is dominated by Western multi-national corporations who act as monopsonic buyers of these commodities and who control access to modern technologies, given that, moreover, the metropolitan countries dominate the multi-lateral financial institutions (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank) on whom many peripheral countries depend for development and fiscal loans, and given that, finally, countries such as the United States and France in particular have shown a continuing willingness to engage in military interventions in the Third World, it is clear that most of the patterns metropolitan imperial domination continue to exist even after the attainment of formal independence. Above we called these relationships “neo-colonialism”.

2. This does not mean that there is no difference between direct colonial rule and neo-colonialism. In the latter case, there is no direct rule from London or from Paris; the local State can form alliances with a variety of different imperialist powers, thus increasing its scope for manoeuvre as well as its ability to exact more concessions and favourable terms from the imperialist ruling classes, particularly if it is strategically important (witness the manner in which Third World countries played off the Soviet and Western powers in the Cold War to accrue maximum advantages); and the international laws and public opinions on the right of countries to govern themselves constrain the ability of imperialist powers to decree policy in the Third World. In other words, neo-colonialism is a slightly weaker form of imperial control than direct colonial rule, although it is still a powerful form of imperialism .

2. Nationalist politics cannot deliver freedom from internal domination.

1. In addition to being subject to continuing external domination, the majority of the population of the post-colonial State also experience internal domination. The State

is a hierarchical structure of coercion which concentrates power in the hands of a small ruling class. It defends the class system and the forms of oppression (e.g. sexism) that the class system generates. Rule by the State makes it impossible for the mass of the people to actively participate in the decisions which affect their conditions of life .

2. In other words, decolonisation on the nationalist model delivers power to a new local ruling class. It does not provide self-determination for the working class and peasant majority. Even if nationalists take up socialist sounding slogans in order to win working class support, the interests of workers are not central to these movements, they are incidental. The effect of nationalist politics is to hide the very real class differences that exist even amongst colonised populations, and in this way nationalism smoothes the way for a local elite claiming to speak for a homogenous “nation” to take power for itself. In fact, it is the function of nationalist politics to deny the importance of class differences within the nation in order to facilitate the construction of a class alliance between local workers and peasants and local bosses and rulers. Nationalism is a politics of the frustrated local elite who seek to build a mass base for their own class programme by arguing that class alliances and State power are the way to resolve the genuine anti-colonial grievances of the popular masses.

## **7. WHY THIRD WORLD RULING CLASSES ARE PART OF THE IMPERIALIST SYSTEM**

26. The argument that there are no ruling classes in Third World countries because real power supposedly lies outside the borders is wrong.
  1. This argument sometimes pops up the African context in the form of the claim that the holders of State power who currently govern the country are really only a “petty bourgeoisie” (a middle class). As Anarchist-Syndicalists we do not accept the idea that the only criterion for determining class status is ownership or non-ownership of productive resources. Any group with State power is by definition part of the ruling class. Moreover, the Third World elites do control substantial parts of the local economy, particularly by means of State ownership and control of key industries such as mines and railways. As we discuss below, nationalisation does not equal socialism, all that it means is that a State capitalist rather than a private capitalist controls the means of production. The claim that there is no “real” indigenous ruling class is also inaccurate as it ignores the massive disparities in wealth and power that exist within the Third World. On the one hand, there is a small elite controlling the resources of the State such as the military. On the other, a disproportionate amount of income accrues to a tiny section of the population. In Chile ca. 1996, the wealthiest 10% receive 41% of available income while the poorest 40% receive only 13% ; 28% of the population is below the official poverty line. In Zambia in 1974 the top 5% received 35% of the national income; by 1983 the top 5% got 50% of the national income. In Zimbabwe in 1991, the richest 3% got 30% of total incomes while 50% of the population got less than 15% of total annual incomes. While the United Nations

1996 Human Development showed that 338 billionaires have more assets than the combined incomes of countries home to 45% of the worlds population, it also showed that about half of these billionaires were based in Third World countries. Clearly, the argument that there is no Third World ruling class is a gross distortion of the facts.<sup>40</sup>

2. Nor do we see Third World ruling classes as nothing more than the tools of the imperialist ruling classes. These classes have their own interests and agendas which do, however, tend to coincide with the interests of imperialism (see below).
27. The local ruling class who vault into power in nationalist- dominated anti-colonial struggles may, obviously, mouth anti- imperialist rhetoric. Indeed, it is likely to, given that it is the new elite's claim to have defeated colonialism which legitimises its place in power. Nationalism , "national unity" etc. may become the official ideology of state. Nonetheless, in objective terms, the new rulers are the allies of the imperialist ruling classes of the First World.
1. The local ruling class is dependent for its economic and political survival on the maintenance on close ties with imperialism. They defend the colonially derived economic relationships which they inherit at independence: they need to export copper etc. in the medium term in order to keep their economies functioning, and thus, their State funded and their lifestyles luxurious. They accumulate wealth by relying on the multi – national corporations, who it joins in business ventures, sells land and mineral rights, taxes and so forth enters into joint business ventures, charges taxes (they also, as noted above, accumulate wealth more "dishonestly" by plundering the State coffers, passing business contracts onto their friends and family, and by nationalising property). They are funded by IMF/World Bank loans and other forms of aid.
  2. This requires, in turn, that they continue to dominate and exploit the workers and the peasants who do the actual work in the agricultural, mining and manufacturing industries. In other worst, they maintain the old imperialist economic relationships, as well as the foundations of those relationships, which are the exploitation of the working people. Moreover, when the masses rise up, the new local bosses and rulers are happy to call on the aid of their friends in the imperialist States to help crush the resistance, because both the local and imperialist ruling classes are opposed to worker and peasant resistance. This is particularly evident in the ex-French colonies in Africa.<sup>41</sup>
  3. It is therefore incorrect to characterise Third World ruling classes as anti-imperialist, or to call for their defence against imperialist aggression. Firstly, these ruling classes are an essential part of the imperialist capitalist system as they provide the economic and political preconditions for continued imperialist domination throughout the ruling class. It is these ruling classes who bludgeon workers, throw peasants off the land and shoot students. Secondly, these ruling classes are unable to act in a consistently anti-imperialist manner as they are constrained by the continuing patterns

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<sup>40</sup> on Zimbabwe, see Saunders, R., (1996, July), "ESAP's Fables II", in Southern Africa Report. vol. 1.. no. 4; on Zambia, J. Hanlon, 1982, Apartheid's Second Front, p.86; on Chile, C. Madlala, 29 december 1996, "Hot Recipe for Growth from Chile", in Sunday Times, (Johannesburg), p16...

<sup>41</sup> See R. Sandbrook, 1985, The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation. (Cambridge University Press).

of neo-colonialism, and as they are the direct beneficiaries of, and are dependent on, continuing imperialism to maintain their positions of wealth and power. Given a choice between worker revolution and continued imperialist domination, they will always choose the latter as it is in their direct class interests. For their part, the imperialist ruling classes will not undermine a local ruling class, even if it is something of a renegade (see below), if this raises the spectre of mass revolution. On the contrary, the imperialist ruling class will put aside whatever conflicts it has with a local ruling class if continuing on a confrontational path threatens the bigger picture of continued State/capitalist rule. Thus, the US-led forces withdrew from their assault on Iraq in 1991 when deserting soldiers joined with peasants and workers in the North and South of the country to establish workers councils (“shoras”) and raise radical demands. This withdrawal provided Saddam Hussein with the opportunity to slaughter the local rebels.<sup>42</sup>

4. This is not to deny that conflicts will not arise between Third World and imperialist First World ruling classes. Conflicts often arise. The Third World ruling class may raise radical rhetoric which the imperialist ruling classes fear is too disruptive, or they may even nationalise foreign property in an attempt to bolster their own power-wealth position. The local ruling class will probably resent being trapped in a role as suppliers of raw materials and may undertake efforts to industrialise the country. In such situations, good examples of which are Cuba from 1959 onwards, and Nicaragua and Iran in the 1980s, the imperialist powers may intervene through means like sanctions, military action and other forms of pressure to bring the “renegade” local bosses and rulers back into line. This is a clear example of the power of neo-colonialism in the world. Nonetheless, all such conflicts are “secondary” in the sense that they are about the appropriate way to manage capitalism and the State, rather than about whether these structures should be preserved. Both sides agree on “primary” matters such as the need to maintain class structures and the systems of exploitation and domination entailed by capitalism and the State. All of the supposedly “radical” Third World regimes (China, Vietnam, Mozambique, Ghana etc.) were based on the repression and immiseration of the mass of the people, that is to say, the workers, the poor and the working peasants. At most power was transferred from local landlord and business elites to State elites. Nationalisation does not equal socialism, it only means that a State bureaucrat rather than a corporate bureaucrat is running the economy. SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING RACISM FOR MORE ON NATIONALISATION.
5. We do not, therefore, characterise the Third World ruling classes as “sell-outs” because this implies that they have become corrupted and failed in their alleged anti-imperialist mission and / or common destiny with the masses. Instead, we recognise that it is their natural role is to act, in objective terms, as partners for imperialism. Nor do we see the only problem with the Third World ruling classes as one of insufficient

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<sup>42</sup> See D. MacCarron, spring 1992, “New World Order: Same Old Slaughter”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 34 (Dublin, Ireland); and A. Flood, summer 1992, “The Return of the ‘White Man’s Civilising Mission’: Imperialism Is Not Just Another Buzz Word”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 35. (Dublin, Ireland).

anti-imperialism. Even if the local ruling classes were anti-imperialist (which they are not), we would still not defend them because their existence as a ruling class is based on the dispossession and exploitation of the majority of the population, which is the working class and working peasantry. In other words, the pro-imperialist nature of the Third World ruling classes is only one of their many faults, and not necessarily the worst of these.

## 8. THE CLASS STRUGGLE ROAD TO FREEDOM

28. As we have indicated, imperialism is part and parcel of capitalism and the State. So long as these structures continue to exist on a global scale, it is impossible to end imperialist relationships. Indeed, even attempts by local ruling classes to isolate themselves from imperialism in order to develop independent forms of capitalism are typically met with blockades, war and intervention. Clearly, this has several implications.
  1. Firstly, an anti-imperialist struggle cannot succeed if it is isolated in one country. There can be no “anti-imperialism in one country” as hostile imperialism will either (a) subvert the autonomy of that struggle through subjecting it to the logic of the international State/capitalist system, or (b) intervene against and/or destroy regimes it considers too renegade (in the case of a socialist revolution, armed intervention is a certainty). Thus a successful struggle against imperialism requires maximum international support and solidarity, both within the First World and across the Third World. The revolution needs to spread into nearby territories dominated by imperialism as well as into the imperialist countries themselves. In other words, it requires an assault on the whole edifice of world capitalism and the world State system.
  2. Secondly, imperialism cannot be defeated without simultaneously defeating capitalism and the State. In other words, the struggle against imperialism can only succeed if it is simultaneously a struggle against capitalism and the State. Since capitalism and the State can only be defeated by class struggle, and since the Third World ruling classes are objectively pro-imperialist, imperialism can only be defeated by means of a class struggle against all rulers and bosses, local and imperial.
    1. Alliances with local elites are a disastrous and anti-revolutionary strategy. In other words, the key force on decolonisation is not the “nation” but the international proletariat and working peasantry. In this struggle, therefore, the allies of the working classes of the Third World are not the local elites, but the working classes of the imperialist countries. The formation of an alliance with a local ruling elite requires the proletariat to put its revolutionary programme on hold in order to maintain bourgeois support, providing a veto to an exploiting class whose aid is neither desirable nor necessary to the anti-imperialist struggle. SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING RACISM FOR A CRITICISM OF THE IDEA OF REVOLUTION BY “STAGES”.
    2. The real division is not between the First and the Third World, it is between those who rule and exploit and those who take orders and toil. Within the Third World, “settler” working classes are potential allies of the colonised indigenous

toilers, although clearly, such alliances are not always possible (e.g. in Zimbabwe an alliance was highly unlikely due to the extreme material benefits the White working class received for its acquiescence in racial capitalism); while always desirable, the lack of such an alliance does not negate the need for a class struggle approach to the anti-imperialist struggle as this struggle can be based on the organisation of the indigenous toiling masses. Our approach is social not racial, the problem is not people's skin colour, it's a certain social system. We are not for the expulsion of all "settlers", but for an international, multi-racial social revolution that restructures politics and economics in the interests of all the masses. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE FOR MORE ON THIS POINT. 2. 3. The aim of the anti-imperialist struggle should not be the establishment of independent "nation" States, but rather the establishment of an international stateless socialist system which would embody the principles of equality, co-operation and grassroots democracy.

## 9. NATIONALITIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

29. As Anarchists we recognise the right of different nationalities/ethnic groups to express their own cultural beliefs and ways of life. These differences, like the individual, are a natural historic and social fact which must be recognised. Every nationality/ethnic group has the right, just like the individual, to think, feel, desire, speak and act in its own ways. A defence of the right to be oneself is a natural consequence of the principles of liberty and equality.
30. At the same time, however, it is also necessary to add certain general points on this issue.
  1. We reject the idea that there is a unified "national" culture which encompasses all the classes in one country. The different social and material conditions of different classes make impossible a shared set of customs and values. There are also regional differences within each country which enhance this fragmentation. At the same time, it would not be an exaggeration to maintain that there is more in common in terms of habits and customs between the working people of different countries than there is between the owning and non-owning classes within each country.<sup>43</sup> For this reason Anarchists sometimes distinguish between a "nation" (everyone living in the same country e.g. "the Germans") and a people (a class-bounded nationality (e.g. "German workers").
  2. A defence of the rights of different cultural groups within the working class and working peasantry does not imply an unconditional and uncritical defence of all elements of a given culture. On the contrary, we defend in each culture only the progressive and neutral elements, and we oppose all backward and reactionary manifestations. We do not defend "national rights" which violate the principles of liberty. To accept

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<sup>43</sup> Rudolph Rocker, (1978) *Nationalism and Culture*. Croixside Press, StillWater, Minnesota p.270-1 makes this point as does Alfredo M. Bonanno, 1981, *Anarchism and the National Liberation Struggle*. Second English edition.. Translated by Jean Weir. (Alfa Grafica Sgroi. Italy. Bratach Dubh Editions no. 1 London) and *Endless Struggle*, spring/summer 1990, "Against imperialism: International Solidarity and Resistance", in *Endless Struggle*, no. 12. (Vancouver).



culture as an aspect of freedom means to reject elements of that culture (e.g. sexist practices like genital mutilation; acceptance of the monarchy) which contradict this general principle. In addition, as the victims of backward practices are themselves part of that culture, it is also inconsistent with their own rights to self-expression to maintain or endorse such practices; these groups too have a valid claim to “own” and change that culture.

3. We also reject the idea that there is a common “national interest” between the different classes within a “nation”. Their interests are in direct contradiction. The phrase “national interests” hides the interests of the ruling classes, which are against the interests of the mass of the people themselves.
31. We reject the idea that the State, whether post-colonial or otherwise, provides a vehicle for the expression of different cultures.
1. States exist within a competitive State system which generates strong pressures towards national conflicts, and, ultimately, to wars, foreign conquest and attempts at forcible assimilation of minority groups. The basis for inclusion in a given State is typically not some sort of “national” characteristic, but the ability of a State to conquer and incorporate new territories and peoples. It is also common for newly independent States to deny national rights to their own subordinate minorities. Attempts by the State to impose or promote cultural uniformity upon the variegated population it rules (“nation- building”), and to inculcate loyalty to its structures amongst its subjects (“patriotism”) leads to attempts to destroy cultural specificity’s and, in particular, to the repression of the national rights and languages of ethnic minorities; no nationality can find suitable conditions for the free development of its culture within the confines of a State organisation that seeks to level all differences.
  2. Moreover, State power dampens artistic expression and cultural creativity amongst the population as whole; the more pervasive the power of the State, the lower the general levels of creativity in the country as a whole. Consequently, the free development of the arts and humanities requires a reduction of State power to a minimum. It also requires a society that prioritises human development over profit, a society that will give all people the maximum opportunity to develop their forms of expression, while imposing on everybody the obligation to work for the common good.
  3. The State is not a vehicle for the expression of the will of the majority of the people- the workers, the poor and the peasants- but is instead a tool of the ruling class. Consequently, the realisation of an independent State usually means the realisation of the right of the local elite to take power and exploit the proletariat.
  4. While we defend independence and secessionist movements (see below) we argue that genuine self-determination for the majority can only come through an Anarchist revolution that puts power in the hands of the working class and working peasantry. In Anarchism, society will be based on the free association of individuals into communes and syndicates, the federation of syndicates along industrial lines, and of communes on regional , country-wide and ultimately international lines. The new country-wide federations will not necessarily coincide with the borders of the previous States. These structures would be co-ordinated by democratic committees, and

councils of delegates and would be defended by a democratic workers army. This system will remove all causes of war and oppression, and allow every people of whatever size the right to self-determination with the provisions only that their internal structure does not threaten the freedom and self-determination of their neighbours, and that the fact of voluntary association does not permanently bind a member. Such a society can only be realised through a united, integrated international worker-peasant revolution that includes all races, peoples, genders and sexualities.

## **10. WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION ACTIVITY AGAINST IMPERIALISM**

### **General perspectives**

32. As Anarchists we are avowed opponents of imperialism. We believe that imperialism must be fought through mass action by the working people. We get involved in struggles against imperialism for their own aims, for the confidence that campaigning gives people, and because we stand in solidarity with our class. We recognise that it is in struggle that people are won to revolutionary ideas. We always try to link daily struggles against imperialism to our vision of a free society, and we argue that only a working class revolution can finally uproot and defeat imperialism.

### **Guidelines for day-to-day activities**

33. We are opposed to the intervention of any collection of imperialist “peacemakers” and this includes the United Nations. We are opposed to such interventions in all circumstances as they are examples of the continuing power of imperialism and as they are not part of the solution, they are part of the problem. We do not believe that such interventions are motivated by good intentions such as “restoring democracy” but are rather the product of political and economic calculations on the part of the imperialist ruling classes. There can be no “just settlement” that involves any imperialist power or the UN or similar bodies. Instead, such settlements will always be designed to protect the interests of the imperialists. Therefore we oppose any intervention in any region of the world for whatever reason by the imperialists. We are for the unconditional withdrawal of troops from the imperialist countries from any country they are occupying. Given that wars and occupations are largely the result of ruling class drives to increase power and wealth, we do not decide who is right or wrong in a given situation on the basis of who is the apparent aggressor, nor do we take sides in wars between States. Instead, we argue that for the workers in each country the real enemy is their “own” ruling class, and that their allies are the working people of the enemy State. On this basis we would seek to undermine the war effort.
34. In a situation of imperialist aggression towards a Third World country or ruling class (e.g. the blockade of Cuba, the Gulf War against Iraq), we do not raise slogans such as “Defend Castro” or “Victory to Iraq”. Instead, we call for a solidarity with, and a victory to, the popular masses of those countries (e.g. “Solidarity with Cuba, not Castro”), as it is they

who bear the brunt of hardship imposed by imperialism. We make this concrete by offering solidarity including material aid to independent working class and working peasant and anti-authoritarian organisations. We do not send aid to the local State as it can use this to repress mass resistance. Aid of any sort must go to the masses of workers and peasants and allow them to organise to defend and advance their own interests. We call on First World workers to oppose the interventions. Local defeats for imperialism are to be welcomed as they give confidence to working class struggles in the imperialist countries and as they encourage anti-imperialist struggles in other countries. However, any defeat of imperialism that does not have Anarchist-Syndicalist goals will not be able to remove imperialism from that country or region. We recognise that the local ruling classes are unable to challenge imperialism and that only a international worker-peasant revolution can actually defeat imperialism, capitalism and the State.

35. We defend movements for greater regional autonomy. We defend the right of ordinary people to choose to have an independent State and/or secede from an empire, and we support every independence struggle that expresses the will of the peasants and proletarians, even if we do not support the political currents that dominate that struggle. We demand the liberation of all colonies and sites of imperial oppression, and we oppose all imperialist interventions against secessionist movements. This reflects our general commitment to progressive struggles and to freedom and equality. We always stand in solidarity with the struggles of the working class and the poor, even if they fight under the banner of nationalism. We support all progressive struggles for their own aims and for the confidence that campaigning gives to people. However, only a victory of the toiling masses can deliver genuine freedom from imperialist domination.
36. As Anarchists we recognise that in the course of an anti- colonial or anti-imperialist struggle that the nationalists are on the side of the progressive forces. They are not the real problem in this context, the situation of colonial / imperialist domination , capitalism and the State is the problem. Therefore we defend nationalists from attacks by colonialists and imperialists and we support progressive initiatives on the part of nationalist organisations.
  1. Nonetheless, we clearly have deep political differences with nationalist organisations. Although we are willing to fight alongside various nationalist currents who represent or advocate class alliances, we will not hide our politics, we will not enter into alliances that undermine our ability to function as an organisation . We will argue for class politics, direct action, anti- statism, anti- capitalism and the need for revolution. Our role as Anarchists is to take up the battle of ideas and we know that this is most effectively done in struggle. Thus, while we side against imperialism by defending nationalist organisations, our role is to win workers and peasants away from these movements by exposing the limits of their politics and their class nature as the politics of the frustrated local elite. So although we defend nationalists against imperialism we do this on the basis of building a mass Anarchist-Syndicalist movement that will replace them. In place of “national” identity we promote class pride, class unity and class struggle. SEE POSITION PAPERS ON THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION AND ON RELATIONS WITH OTHER LEFT GROUPS FOR MORE DETAILS.

2. In countries where nationalist movements do come to power our role is not to support them but rather to organise for a revolution that will place power in the hands of the working class and working peasantry. In the imperialist country concerned our role is to undermine the war effort and argue that the workers of such countries are the natural allies of the working classes of the colonial countries. The final defeat of imperialism requires an international working class and working peasant revolution in both the First World and the Third World.
37. No ESAP has yet succeeded in resolving the African economic crisis, despite its government's promise that ESAP would improve living standards, increase employment and establish a modern, growing and internationally competitive economy has proved a hollow one.
1. This could be related to the technical faults in the programmes. For example, the ESAP package assumes that the cause of the African economic crisis is internal, the result of too much government intervention in the market.
  2. However, this question is merely an academic one as the workability of ESAP is irrelevant to as Anarchist-Syndicalists. Our concern is with fighting capitalism, not designing better ways for it to work. We do not choose one set of capitalist economic policies over another, we do not collaborate in economic restructuring. We do not fall into the trap of calling for the reform of the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO or any other imperialist institution, or into the trap of calling for a more (or less) State-led economic capitalist development process . Instead, we realise that it is only class combat, not policy intervention, that will deliver real material gains to the working class, the working peasantry and the poor. Even in the course of day to day struggles, this holds true. Welfare reforms in Europe after World War Two (the welfare State) were not won by allegiance on the part of workers to Keynesian demand management economics, but through titanic class struggles that forced the ruling classes to introduce some basic reforms. Consequently, our role is to reject and resist any policy that harms the interests of workers and peasants, and to do so by means of mass struggle. We resist all attacks on the conditions of working people by means of mass struggle, we strive by the same means to advance the gains of the working class and peasants, and, ultimately, we stand for the destruction through of imperialism, capitalism and the State through mass action and revolution.
38. We are for an international minimum wage and international working class unity. If capitalism is global, the workers struggle must become global as well. The way to defeat MNC manipulation of different national wage rates in order to attack workers is not protectionism against cheap imports or surrender to the demands of capital, it is international unity in support of basic worker and consumer living standards across the world. We therefore support all initiatives at international trade union unity. We are for solidarity strikes between workers in different countries in general, and for solidarity action and trade union unity between workers employed by the same MNC in different countries in particular. The international integration of production, which sees different parts of the same product made in different countries, does not necessarily weaken workers. A workers strike in

one country can disrupt production across several countries; just-in-time production techniques which mean that firms produce exactly enough goods at short notice in order to cut down on warehousing costs increase the bosses vulnerability as they run out of stock almost immediately that a strike takes place; the new communications technology used by the bosses to co-ordinate the MNCs (e.g. the Internet) are also available to workers and provide a powerful potential resource.

## 7. WOMEN'S FREEDOM

*Why do you women allow people to mistreat you? Because you depend on others to eat... Why don't you have food to eat? ... Because the rich have stolen our property and walk over the majority of the people ...*

*What is [the] solution? Practicing [anarchist-] communism... All women know that there is nothing more evil than money.*

*Everyone, become of one mind! Unite with men and completely overthrow the upper classes and the rich! Then money will be abolished... At this time, not only will eating not require reliance on others, but the food that will be eaten will be good food, too.*

**He Zhen, Chinese woman Anarchist/Syndicalist, "What Women Ought to Know About [Anarchist-] Communism", cited in P. Zarrow, "He Zhen and Anarcho-Feminism in China", (1988), Journal of Asian Studies, vol. 47, no. 4,**

### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. The WSF recognises that women are specially oppressed as a sex (they face oppression as women as well as due to their class position). We call this oppression sexism.
2. As Anarchists/Syndicalists we oppose this oppression on principle and in practice.
3. Our movement has long championed the rights of women, recognising the specificity of women's oppression but always linking it to the class struggle. Examples of this commitment:<sup>1</sup>
  1. the US Anarchist/Syndicalist Emma Goldman focussed specifically on issues affecting working class women and was jailed for distributing information on contraception; she criticised the male-dominated family and called for equality between men and women; she was critical of the reformist feminists of her time and argued that they were detached from the economic realities of working class women; she was a class struggle revolutionary;

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<sup>1</sup> for Emma Goldman see P. Marshall (1993), *Demanding The Impossible: A History Of Anarchism*. Fontana. London. pp403-9; ), p279; on China, P. Zarrow, 1988, "He Zhen and Anarcho- Feminism in China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (4), and P. Zarrow, 1990, *Anarchism and Chinese Political Culture*, Columbia University press. New York. chapter 6; also see M. Molyneux, 1986, "No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism In Nineteenth Century Argentina," in *Latin American Perspectives*, 13 (1); on *Mujeres Libres*, see M.A. Ackelsberg, (1993), "Models of Revolution: rural women and Anarchist collectivisation in Spain," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 20 (3); P. Carpena, (1986), "Spain 1936: Free Women- a Feminist, Proletarian And Anarchist Movement," in M. Gadant (ed), *Women of the Mediterranean*. Zed Books. London and New Jersey; V. Ortiz, (1979), "Mujeres Libres: Anarchist Women In The Spanish Civil War," In *Antipode: A Radical Journal Of Geography* 10 (3) & 11 (1).

2. in Argentina, the women anarchists who set up La Voz De La Mujer (an “anarchist-femmenist” paper in the 1890s) were the first to link women’s liberation with revolutionary working class ideas in Latin America as a whole and called for women to mobilize against their oppression as both women and workers;
3. in China the movement developed a distinct anarchist position on women’s liberation that argued that women’s oppression is linked to the class system, economic exploitation and traditional culture and called for a total social revolution;
4. in Spain Anarchists set up the Mujeres Liberes (“Free Women”) group in 1936 with the aim of focussing attention on women’s specific concerns and increasing the amount of women activists in the movement; Mujeres Libres saw its role as working to emancipate women from the traditional passivity, ignorance and exploitation that enslaved them in order to move towards a real understanding between men and women so that they could work together; it organised women workers; distributed information on health, contraception and sexuality, combated illiteracy amongst women, opened child care facilities and organised military brigades that fought in the Spanish revolution (1936- 1937).

## 2. ASPECTS OF WOMEN’S OPPRESSION

4. Women face special exploitation and oppression in the workplace, community and home.<sup>2</sup>

### **Workplace:**

5. In the workplace women are forced into low paying, insecure and unskilled jobs and are often paid less than their male co- workers. They are often sexually harrassed by their male co- workers and bosses. They are also not given full maternity rights and are often fiered if they are discovered to be pregnant. Some pregnant women have to work in dangerous working conditions and place their own lives at risk.
6. Unions tend to be male-dominated and few women are elected as shopstewards or worker leaders.
  1. This is partly due to the sexist ideas that both men and women workers harbour. Workers question the competance of a women in these positions and tend to think that men naturally make better worker “leaders”.
  2. In some cases unions will set up women’s structues or spaecial posts for women. What usually happens in these cases is that the union is just paying lip service to women’s problems, and as a result womens issues are often ignored or gehettoized.
  3. Women also find it difficult to participate effectually in the Union and partake in meetings. Often husbands and boyfriends prevent their wives and girlfriends from

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, A. Bird, 1985, “Organising Women Workers in South Africa”, South African Labour Bulletin, vol. 10, no. 8; J. Baskin, 1991, Striking Back: a History of Cosatu. Ravan.chp. 23; F. Haffajee, 12 Novemeber 1993, “Putting Gender on the Union Agenda”, in Weekly Mail; and the various materials produced by the POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse) organisation.

being active in the union. When these men get home they expect their food to be on the table and the children to be fed and washed. When they come home to find that these things have not been done because their wives are at a union meeting they get angry instead of giving their wives support they need. Union meetings are often held at night and this makes it difficult for women to attend. We all know how dangerous it can be for women to go out at night were they are the potential victims of rape and assault.

### **Home and community**

7. Working women face a double shift of house work. When they come home from a long day of unrewarding work they have to cook, clean, and take care of the children with little help from the male members of their families. Poor social services ( such as electricity; hot water; and sewerage facilities) and the lack of child care facilities for working mothers, intensifies this double load for poor working class black women.
8. Women are often subject to abuse: thousands of are raped, beaten, and emotionally abused. In a lot of cases of violence against women, it is not strangers that rape and beat women, but the very same people that they love and trust (such as husbands and fathers). In South Africa, it has been estimated that every 6 days a women is killed by her husband or boyfriend.
9. There are very few crisis centers in working- class and poor communities. those that do exist are underresourced and understaffed. When women report cases of violence to the police they are treated like dirt. In most cases when a case is brought against a husband or a boyfriend, nothing is done and these bastards get off scot free. The courts and the police are not interested in protecting women against violence, they are only concerned about protecting the property and privileges of the rich.

### **3. ROOTS OF WOMEN'S OPPRESSION.<sup>3</sup>**

10. We reject the idea that women are biologically inferior to men, or that women are biologically predisposed to assume certain roles in society (like childcare). There is no evidence whatsoever to support such arguments.
  1. There is absolutely no evidence that women are biologically "inferior" to men. And women's oppression has not always existed, so it follows that there is no "natural" basis for this oppression. SEE BELOW.

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<sup>3</sup> Some useful material that refutes biologically determinists arguments may be found in S. Coontz and P. Henderson, (eds.), (1986), *Women's Work, Men's Property: the Origins of Gender and Class*. Verso; . N. Chevillard and S. Leconte, (1986), "The Dawn of Lineage Societies: the Roots of Women's Oppression", in Coontz and Henderson (eds.), above; F. Dahlberg, (ed), (1981), *Woman the Gatherer*. Yale University Press. New Haven and London; E. Friedl, (1975), *Women and Men : an Anthropologist's View*. Waveland Press. Illinois; L. Liebowitz, (1986), "In the Beginning... The Origins of the Sexual Division of Labour and the Development of the First Human Societies", in S. Coontz and P. Henderson (eds.), above; A.L. Zihlman, (1981), "Women as Shapers of the Human Adaptation", in F. Dahlberg (ed), above.



2. There is no sound evidence that women are especially “suited” to cook etc. These so-called “female” characteristics are not genetic traits but have been socially constructed- they have changed over time and differ between societies, depending on the norms and production requirements of the social and economic order. What is seen as womens’ work changes over time in given societies. For example, mining was womens’ work in nineteenth-century Britain; today it is seen as an exclusively male domain.
11. We reject the idea that specific forms of women’s oppression (e.g. female genital mutilation) are acceptable as they are part of a given group’s culture. Although we support the right of different ethnic groups and cultures to preserve their traditions and customs, we are against any oppressive practices. It should be noted that traditions change over time and are therefore not fixed. Women in different cultures have the right to strive for liberation within their own cultures and contribute towards the creation of new egalitarian traditions. SEE ALSO POSITION PAPER IN ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND ON GAY RIGHTS.

#### **4.THE ORIGINS OF WOMEN’S OPPRESSION..<sup>4</sup>**

12. Women’s oppression emerged with the division of society into classes about 10,000 years ago. Since this time, women’s oppression has existed in many different types of class society because it was in the interests of the ruling class.

##### **Ancient times**

13. In the pre-agricultural age, there were no class divisions and real oppression; women were seen as valuable members of the wandering bands of hunting/ gathering humanity, and were equal to men. In fact, many gods were women. There was a sexual division of labour (men and women did different work) but this did not lead to inequalities between the sexes.

##### **The Agricultural revolution**

14. The Agricultural Revolution was that time when people began to cultivate crops and domesticate animals, and it took place about 12,000 years ago. This was one of the most decisive developments in human history and had a profound impact on the way in which people organised themselves.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for this section, the extremely important essays in S. Coontz and P. Henderson, (eds.), (1986), *Women’s Work, Men’s Property: the Origins of Gender and Class*. Verso; the essays in R. Bridenthal, C. Koonz and S. Stuard (eds.), (1977, 1987), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Houghton Mifflin Co. [please note that there are two different editions of this book, with different essays; one must also take exception with Kaplan’s treatment of *Mujeres Libres* in the 1977 edition as it is hostile, inaccurate, and misrepresentative- see articles in earlier note for more accurate views]; series on “Women’s Oppression”, in *New Nation* newspaper, *Learning Nation* supplement, April 5 1991 to 24 May 1991; the materials in C. Walker, (ed), (1990), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. David Philip. Cape Town. James Currey. London; A. O’Carroll, (Autumn 1992), “The Not Vey ‘Natural’ Oppression of Women”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement*, no. 36. Dublin. Ireland; A. O’Carroll, (Autumn 1992), “Sex, Class and the Queen of England”, in *Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement* . no. 36.Dublin. Ireland.

15. In agricultural societies, people were no longer dependant on the daily search for food and societies started to settle in one place. For the first time societies were able to produce surplus food (ie. more food than is needed for survival). This surplus marked the first real form of wealth. Surplus food was stored to eat during dry seasons and traded for other goods. The key to this wealth was land, which could be “owned” in a way that, for example, wild animals pursued by the hunter-gatherer could not.
16. In a number of societies, a ruling class gained control of the surplus, and lived off the labour of those who produced the surplus: the kings, chiefs etc. of old. The state was established at this time to defend the ruling class of kings, chiefs etc. from the exploited labourers. Religion acted to justify the new divisions, for example claiming that the exploiters were chosen by the gods.
17. How did women’s oppression arise in this situation?
  1. Firstly, we need to look at some of the customs that were inherited from the pre-agricultural period. Because of the sexual division of labour, women tended to do much of the actual farming. At the same time, life was still initially organised around the kin group (large family-type units in which people were “related” to each other). The wealth that was produced by farming (the surplus) was not owned by individuals but by the kin group. Those who married into the family were had no real rights over the kin’s property. In some societies, the kin group was structured around “patrilocality” (this means that women married into the group, and that kinship/relations were traced down through men; the daughters of the group married out into other patrilocal groups); in others the principle was matrilocality (it was men who married into the group; descent was traced through the women; sons married out).
  2. Thus, in each set of groups (patrilocal and matrilocal), there was one sex that was propertyless). For a number of complex reasons, the patrilocal groups tended to be more succesful than the matrilocal ones, dominating resources in given areas. As a result, more and more groups became patrilocal. The effect was that groups structured around women’s oppression became common. At the same time, within the patrilocal groups, some men’s households within the kin group became more powerful than others, meaning that some men became more powerful than others, constituting a parastical ruling class over the actual producers. The propertyless men were dependent on, and exploited by, the ruling men’s households. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE FOR AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IN AFRICA (THE LINEAGE MODE OF PRODUCTION).
  3. In this situation, women became central to the continuation of the class system. Firstly, women provided (male) children to the ruling class that allowed property to be inherited. This implied that women were tied for life to a particular man. Secondly, the number of women in a household became the key to its success, and men who could got as many wives as possible who could work the land, and have children (who could provide more labour and wealth, and, if daughters, be married off in return for brideprice (surplus paid to the father by the other household for permission to marry the daughter). As a rule, the richer men had more wives than the poor men, who

were usually monogamous (had one one wife); in turn, the poorer men typically had to borrow productive goods from the rich in order to get married (and pay the bride-price) and set up productive households; in return they had to work for the ruling men and pay material tribute and obedience. In these way, the special oppression of women and the origins of the class system were bound up with one another.

18. From these early beginnings, class societies developed in different directions. Some became what we call "tributary modes of production" (the Zulu and Swazi kingdoms), others "Ancient modes" (Ancient Rome), others "feudal" (medieval Europe and Japan, parts of India and Africa), and others capitalist.
  1. In each of these societies, the basic principles of women's special oppression remained, although it took drastically different forms, and although upper class women often had opportunities, wealth and power that lower class women lacked (their class modified their sex position). Where these different forms of class society came into contact, they interacted in complex ways to produce new forms of women's oppression. The systems of women's oppression also interacted with other specific oppressions like racism. And many of these oppressions were themselves linked in complex ways to the systems of capitalism, the state, imperialism etc. SEE VARIOUS POSITION PAPERS.
  2. Thus, in Southern Africa, the contact between capitalism (brought by colonialism) and indigenous class systems (such as the lineage mode) helped lay the basis for the migrant labour system- it was precisely because the ruling chiefs could control the labour of young, poor men that they could send them to work for a period on the mines and farms of colonial and later Apartheid South Africa; it was precisely because of women's subordinate position that they could be forced to stay on the land for the years while their husbands were gone, to raise the children and crops, and care for the old; it was precisely because of the sexual division of labour that women (not men) were the ones kept on the land to work the increasing longer hours required to maintain production at previous levels in the face of the absence of men and the shortage of land. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE FOR DISCUSSION OF VARIOUS MODES OF PRODUCTION.

## **Under capitalism**

19. Women's oppression is in the direct interests of capitalism and the State.
  1. By giving women the worst work, with no job security, the bosses create a flexible workforce which they can hire or fire at will. By paying women lower wages than men, the bosses are able to increase their overall profits. Because women have no real job security they are often fired when they get pregnant, meaning the bosses do not have to pay extra benefits or maternity leave. That is to say, women are potentially more expensive workers than men, because they can demand maternity leave and so on; the bosses meet this problem by hiring women as part-time and casual staff. In these ways, the bosses use women's oppression to create a cheap, rightless workforce that receives no non-wage benefits.

2. Women's unpaid work in the household supplies the bosses with the next generation of workers at no extra cost, as women are doing the cooking, cleaning and child rearing for free. They also take care of the sick and the elderly in the same way. The bosses say that women's low wages are justified because men are the "breadwinners" in the family. But most working-class women do the housework as well as join the workforce. In this way, they work a "double shift" at great personal cost.
  3. The bosses' media promotes women's oppression and sexist ideas by providing hateful and exploitative images of women, ideas that say that women are inferior and exist to be used and abused. The point of this propaganda is to "justify" women's oppression and to divide men and women workers and poor people from one another.
  4. Women's oppression and the sexist ideas that try to "justify" it divide the working class and poor. By using the threat of replacement by cheap women workers, the bosses are able to undermine the conditions of male workers, and thus reduce the overall wage bill. By promoting hostility between men and women, the bosses and rulers weaken workers organisation and resistance. This increases the power of the ruling class.
  5. Some men believe the sexist lies of the ruling class. One reason is that the media is very powerful. Another key reason is the frustrations that men feel with undemocratic and often racist work situations, feelings of inadequacy due to unemployment etc. This leads them to take out their resentment on their families and women. (Of course, this does not make such behaviour acceptable, as such actions are intolerable). But these factors show that sexist behaviour by men is rooted in conditions under capitalism, not in men's hormones or biological nature, as the ruling class claims. The point is that while ordinary men may play a role in women's oppression, they are not the primary cause of the problem.
20. Clearly, it follows that it is not just sexist attitudes that keep women in a situation of being second class citizens. Low wages, no job security etc. all keep women relatively powerless and isolated in society. Bosses' propaganda, underpinned by the hellish conditions of the state/capitalist system is the primary cause of sexist ideas.

## **5. DO WORKING CLASS MEN GAIN FROM WOMEN'S OPPRESSION?**

21. We do not deny that ordinary men may gain from women's oppression in the sense that they may have a feeling of "superiority" to women, or have a slightly lower rate of unemployment or better-paid jobs.
22. But at the same time, women's oppression has disastrous results for working class and poor men. It divides workers' struggles. It results in lower overall family incomes and lower job security for all. It creates personal unhappiness.
23. Therefore, it is not in the real interests of men to have women oppressed. On the contrary, women's freedom is a prerequisite for men's freedom because only if women's oppression

is challenged will men themselves be in a position to improve their own lives, to fight for better conditions and more control over their own lives.

## **6. SHOULD WOMEN ORGANISE SEPERATELY TO MEN?**

SEE POSITION PAPER ON SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS

## **7. WOMEN'S LIBERATION THROUGH WORKING CLASS REVOLUTION.<sup>5</sup>**

24. We recognise that all women suffer oppression. We oppose sexism wherever it exists.
25. However, the experience of sexism is differentiated by class. Wealthy women have access to maids, lawyers etc. which enables them to "buy" their way out of a lot of the misery that ordinary working class women face. Conversely, it is working and poor women who face the brunt of women's oppression.
26. Given that capitalism and the State are the key sources of women's oppression, real freedom for women requires a revolution against these structures of oppression.
  1. Since women in the ruling class benefit from capitalism and the State, and from the super-exploitation of working class and poor women that these structures utilise, they are incapable of challenging the root source of women's oppression. There for we do not call for an alliance of "all women" against sexism, we realise that, strange as it may seem, some women (the ruling class women) have an objective interest in the preservation of the structures that cause sexism (capitalism and the State).
  2. Only the working class and poor can defeat capitalism and the State because only these classes do not exploit (they are productive), only these classes have no vested interests in the current system, and because only these classes have the power and organising ability to do so (they can organise against the ruling class at the piont of production). This means that it is only the class struggle that can ultimately defeat sexism. It is not multi-class "womens' movements". Although the class struggle against capitalism and the State is in the interests of all working class and poor people in any case (these systems exploit, impoverish, dominate and humiliate them), women have a additional reason to fight this battle: capitalism and the State's usual predations are compounded by the special oppression of women that these systems inevitable produce.
  3. It follows from the above that the real allies of working class and poor women in the fight against sexism are working class and poor men, and not women of the upper class. These men do not have an interest in the perpetuation of women's oppression- it

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, A. O'Carroll, (Autumn 1992), The Not Vey 'Natural' Oppression of Women", in Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement, no. 36. Dublin. Ireland; A. O'Carroll, (Autumn 1992), "Sex, Class and the Queen of England", in Workers Solidarity: Magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement . no. 36.Dublin. Ireland.

is in fact directly against their interests. Working class and poor women benefit from this sort of alliance because it strengthens their overall struggle, because it helps to prevent their issues from being isolated and ghettoised.

4. This sort of unity in action requires that two things happen: one, that issues and demands are raised that are in the interests of all workers, both men and women; and, two, that special attention is paid to women's specific issues in order to strengthen unity, prevent the marginalisation of these issues, and consistently fight against all oppression. It is precisely because you cannot mobilise all working class and poor people without raising issues that are relevant to all sections of the workers and the poor, that women's issues are not something optional that can just be tacked onto the struggle, but a central plank of a successful workers movement. Thus, the working class and the poor can only be mobilised and united for battle and victory if this is on the basis of a consistent fight against capitalism, the state and all forms of oppression.
5. Consequently, it is clear that the struggle for women's freedom requires a class struggle by the workers and the poor. And, in turn, the class struggle can only be successful if it is at the same time a struggle against women's oppression.
27. We thus disagree with those feminists who think that all you have to do is for women to become bosses and politicians to achieve equality. We want to destroy the existing structures of domination and exploitation. The struggle for women's liberation is the struggle against capitalism and the state. And it is both a struggle against sexist institutions (like capitalism) and sexist ideas (as internalised or accepted by both men and women); both are essential to the success of the revolution and the realisation of its full potential.

Capitalism, state, sexism: one enemy, one fight! Workers of the world- unite! For anti-authoritarian, stateless socialism!

## **8. WORKERS SOLIDARITY FEDERATION ACTIVITY AGAINST WOMEN'S OPPRESSION**

### **General Perspectives**

27. The priorities of the women's movement have reflected the fact that it largely dominated by middle-class women. We believe that it must become more relevant to working class women. We believe the fight against women's oppression is vital part of the class struggle and a necessary condition for a successful revolution. Our priorities on this issue are those matters which immediately affect thousands of working class women.

### **Guidelines for day-to-day activities**

28. We fight for equal pay for equal work, for women's access to jobs that are traditionally denied to them, for job security for women, for free 24 childcare funded by the bosses and the State where women demand it, for paid maternity leave and guaranteed re-employment.
29. We are opposed to all violence against women and defend women's right to physically retaliate against abusive men.

30. We are for men doing a fair share of the housework.
31. Women to have an equal right to all positions of “leadership” in mass organisations.

SEE POSITION PAPER ON UNIONS FOR MORE DISCUSSION OF UNION-SPECIFIC ISSUES RELATING TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS.

32. We believe in the right of women to control their own fertility. Women must be free to decide to have children or not, how many and when. Thus we believe in the right to free contraception. Thus we support free safe abortion on demand. Women should be free to leave relationships that they no longer find satisfying.
33. Sexist attitudes must be challenged in the here and now. Comrades in the WSF who exhibit such attitudes will be challenged and, if neccessary, suspended.

## 9. GAY AND LESBIAN OPPRESSION

*We demand complete liberty to give ourselves to those who please us, and absolute liberty to refuse ourselves to those who displease us.*

**Emile Armand, French Anarchist, on free relationships.**

### 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Gays and lesbians have long been subject to discrimination and prejudice in South Africa and other countries. Personal freedom in the area of sexual preference (as in all other areas of life) is tightly controlled under capitalism and the State, with laws in almost all countries defining what forms of adult sex are and are not acceptable.
2. We believe that all consenting adults should have the right to engage in the sexual practices and relationships that make them happy, and we therefore oppose the oppression of gays and lesbians.
3. We do not accept the argument that gay and lesbian activity is unnatural, because such behaviour has always existed in all societies. This includes Africa, contrary to the claims of bourgeois nationalists.<sup>1</sup>
4. The gay rights clauses in the new constitution of South Africa represent an important victory for all people. They were won through struggle, and must be defended in the same way. Such legislative reforms, while important, are not enough. For example, the laws will still be applied by the same bigoted police and judges who implemented the old anti-gay laws. Moreover, there is a gap between paper rights and the reality on the ground. In general, the broad structures of gay and lesbian oppression remain in place in practice. The forces which gave rise to this oppression (see below) are very much alive and kicking.

### 2. THE ROOTS OF GAY AND LESBIAN OPPRESSION

5. The oppression of gays and lesbians, just like the oppression of women, is rooted in the nature of capitalist society and the ideas it promotes.

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<sup>1</sup> This is documented for Africa. See, for example, B.D. Adam, (1986), "Age, Structure And Sexuality: Reflections On The Anthropological Evidence On Homosexual Behaviour", in E. Blackwood (ed.), *Anthropology and Homosexual Behaviour*. Haworth. NY. London; E. Blackwood, "Breaking the Mirror: the Construction of Lesbianism and Anthropological Evidence on Homosexuality", in E. Blackwood (ed.), *Anthropology and Homosexual Behaviour*. Haworth. NY. London ; M.J. Herskowitz, (1967), *Dahomey: an Ancient West African Kingdom*. 2 vols. Evanston. Northwestern University Press; S.F. Nadel, (1942), *Black Byzantium: the Kingdom of the Nupe in Nigeria*. Oxford. London; E. Pritchard, (1971), *The Azande*. Oxford. Clarendon; E. Pritchard, (1970), "Sexual Inversion Amongst the Azande", *American Anthropologist*, no. 72; M. Wilson, (1963), *Good Company: the Structure of Nyakusa Age Villages*. Oxford. London.



1. Capitalism relies heavily on the heterosexual family which provides care for the workers, the sick, the elderly and the next generation of workers. The hostility towards gays and lesbians stems from the challenge that their sexuality poses to the idea that this is the only possible form of family. Clearly, it undermines the idea that sex is only for reproduction. Homosexuals are condemned as unnatural because their sexual activity cannot produce children.
2. Promoting hatred of gays and lesbians (homophobia) is also a very effective way of dividing and ruling the workers and the poor.

### **3. STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVES**

6. This analysis of the roots of gay and lesbian oppression has a number of important implications for strategy and tactics in the fight against gay and lesbian oppression.
  1. Some gays and lesbians see the solution to their oppression in separatism and lifestyle politics. We do not see these as real solutions as these people are trying to drop out rather than struggle to change the society in which they live. The fight for gay and lesbian liberation needs to be taken up by all progressive forces and definitely should not be seen as “their struggle” only.
  2. Given the roots of gay and lesbian oppression in the class system, capitalism and the State we do not think that the way to defeat gay and lesbian oppression is by promoting gay “business power” or by uniting all classes of the “gay community”. The presence of capitalists in the gay movement is a serious problem, not part of the solution. The gay bourgeoisie objectively defends capitalism and the State and cannot thus consistently fight lesbian and gay oppression. Instead, it tends to try to divert the struggle into safe channels like sponsoring glossy magazines, trying to make gay pride marches into harmless carnivals and advertising events etc.
  3. Instead, we think that the fight must be linked to the class struggle against capitalism and the State, and we think that all progressive forces should support gays’ and lesbians’ right to equality.
  4. United class- struggle is the only way to finally defeat gay and lesbian oppression racism for once and for all. There is no substitute for a programme of “boring within” and “anarchising” the trade unions . SEE POSITION PAPER ON SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS.
  5. Non- homosexual people do not benefit from gay and lesbian oppression, as it seriously divides and weakens the working-class in its struggles for a better, freer life, resulting in worse conditions all round.

### **4. IMMEDIATE DEMANDS**

7. However, although we believe that true liberation for gays and lesbians will only come about with the abolition of capitalism and the State, and the creation of a society that

gives everyone real control over their lives, we do not put off the fight for freedom until the future. Gays and lesbians are entitled to full support in their struggle for equality.

1. In immediate terms, we must raise the issue of fighting against discrimination on the job, in our trade unions. An end to harassment must be demanded. Stereotyping and anti-gay attitudes must be challenged everywhere.
2. We support physical self-defence by lesbians and gays against gay bashers and the police where necessary.
3. We reject the right of the State to dictate the sexual choices of consenting adults.
4. We support progressive initiatives of the gay movement such as Gay Pride marches, the scrapping of anti-gays laws and anti-discrimination campaigns. We also think that links must be built with other working class campaigns.
5. The right of gay parents to keep their children must be supported.

## 8. THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

*It rests with you [the youth of the well-to-do classes] either to palter continually with your conscience, and in the end to say, one fine day: "Perish humanity, provided I can have plenty of pleasures and enjoy them to the full, so long as the people are foolish enough to let me."*

*Or, once more the inevitable alternative, to take part with the [Anarchist-] Socialists and work with them for the complete transformation of society ...come and place your services at the disposal of those who most need them. And remember, if you do come, that you come not as masters, but as comrades in the struggle ...*

*The never-ceasing struggle for truth, justice and equality among the[working and poor] people, whose gratitude you will earn — what nobler career can the youth of all nations desire than this?*

**Peter Kropotkin, *An Appeal to The Young*, 1880, various editions**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1. We support the progressive student movement in higher education because it is progressive, because it is fighting racism, because we oppose racism wherever it exists, because we stand in solidarity with the struggles of working class students, and because we believe we can recruit serious Anarchist/ Syndicalist activists from it.

### 2. WORKERS AND STUDENTS

2. We recognise that the problems students face -low bursaries, bad conditions, racism etc.- are the product of capitalism and the State, and that this has concrete implications for how we approach the student struggle.
  1. This means that the student movement can only succeed if it is anti-capitalist. In turn, this means that links have to be built with other anti-capitalist struggles like rent boycotts etc. In concrete terms, the university is not an island, it is vital to build alliances.
  2. Given students distance from the production process, varied origins and general numbers in the overall population, the student movement is unable to make a revolution. That is to say, it cannot solve its problems by itself. Only the working class can make the revolution because it a productive class with no vested interest in capitalism united in the workplace and powerful because of its ability to disrupt production. Therefore a student-worker alliance is necessary to students.

3. However, such an alliance should be on workers terms- if students do not defend workers, they should not be supported by workers. In other words, there must be a principled alliance that emphasises the needs of the working class. Moreover, our general principles of class struggle lead us to argue that workers should play the leading role in this alliance. The students should not come as experts and leaders but as comrades coming to aid the struggle of the workers. Overall, these students would fall into the category of the middle class that splits to join the workers in the struggle and the revolution. They should renounce the privileges of the middle class and ambitions for power in the State and capitalism.

### **3. TOWARDS THE WORKERS UNIVERSITY**

3. The universities and technikons need to be fundamentally restructured in two ways:
  1. democratised and placed under worker-student-staff control (as should all education)
  2. reorientated- at present they train experts and managers whose function is to work for the bosses to provide knowledge, control etc. Instead of this situation, the intellectual resources of the tertiary education sector must be made to serve the needs of the working and poor people, who, after all, sustain the universities and technikons through their labour. At present the professions are distorted by capitalism: the doctor cannot practice properly, for the people are ill due to the conditions of capitalism; the teacher is regulated to teach obedience and bourgeois history, not independent inquiry and the struggles of the working class etc.

### **4. WSF ACTIVITY IN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT**

4. We argue as follows:
  1. For a breaking off of alliances between student groups and political parties in parliament.
  - 4.2 . For the unification of student groups into broad transformation fronts with the end goal of forming Black-centred progressive student unions.
  3. For solidarity from students for workers struggles against repressive labour relations, casualisation of jobs, retrenchments etc. with an immediate focus on the thousands of workers who already work in the tertiary education sector as cleaners etc. Solidarity with teaching and office staff.
  4. For a class struggle approach to the student struggle, not a black nationalist approach that denies the importance of class.
  5. For opposition to all funding cuts, discrimination and bad conditions. For increased funding to historically Black tertiary education, and for increased bursaries to prevent the exclusion of the Black working class youth from higher education. Unconditional opposition to racism.

6. For mass action, not reliance on politicians, as a way to win gains.
7. Affirmative action to make the university populations of the historically white universities and technikons representative of the country as a whole.
8. Defence of all student activists victimised for fighting for transformation.
- 9.. Opposition to all reactionary uses of science. For example, military research, work on surveillance, vivisection. Defend the rights of students to refuse to perform vivisection. Fight for a people-centred form of science, not a bosses technology tool increase exploitation.

## 10. SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS?

*The revolution and the honour of the workers obliges us to declare ... that we make war on the same enemies: on capital and authority, which oppresses all workers ... The bourgeoisie of all countries and nationalities is united in a bitter struggle against the revolution, against the labouring masses of the whole world and all nationalities ...*

*The path toward the emancipation of the workers can only be reached by the union of all the workers of the world. Long live the workers international! Long live the free and stateless anarchist commune.*

**Makhnovist Army and Nabat Anarchist group, May 1919, “Workers, Peasants and Insurgents. For the Oppressed, Against the Oppressor- Always!”, leaflet issued in the Anarchist-led revolution in Ukraine, 1918–21. Reproduced in Peter Archinov, History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918–21. 1987 Freedom Press edition.**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

PLEASE EXAMINE OTHER POSITION PAPERS FOR FULLER ANALYSIS OF CLASS STRUGGLE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FIGHT AGAINST ALL OPPRESSION.

1. As Anarchists/Syndicalists, we stand for class struggle between the bosses and rulers, on the one hand, and the workers, peasants and the poor, on the other hand. We therefore call on working and poor people to organise separately from the class enemy, the rich and powerful. All working and poor people have essentially the same interests, and can only defeat capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression by organising separately on the basis of CLASS, and only class. We stand for maximum unity amongst the oppressed classes. We oppose any alliances between the oppressed classes and the oppressing classes.

### 2. WSF COMMISSIONS

2. Having said this, we do recognise that there may be a need to organise special commissions (committees) of the Anarchist political organisation, the WSF, to concentrate on all the various issues relevant to the working class and poor: for example, racism, sexism. Also, in the long run it may be possible to set up WSF youth and other sections e.g. a “Syndicalist Youth” wing.
  1. The point of WSF commissions is to make sure that all issues relevant to the working and poor people are dealt with in a comprehensive and effective fashion. Examples: commissions on women’s freedom, trade union democracy etc. Such groups would be set up by WSF National Conference. SEE WSF CONSTITUTION.

2. Neither commissions nor sections should be go-it-alone isolated bodies with no aid from other structures, or as “ghettos” to which controversial issues can be assigned and forgotten. Instead, they should be seen as integral parts of the WSF.
3. The WSF is a class-struggle based organisation- we promote organisation and struggle on the basis of class as the means to change society. We oppose divisions between working and poor people. Given that the working-class/ peasantry are multi-national and multi-racial, this clearly means that the WSF must be an integrated non-racial, non-sexist organisation. It also implies that the working class struggle must be fought on non-racial, international lines.

### **3. WHY WE OPPOSE NON-CLASS SEPARATE ORGANISATIONS**

4. As noted above, we call for the working and poor people to organise separately from their class enemy: the ruling class. However, we do not support the tactic (advocated by some political currents) of forming non-class based separate organisations. For example, women-only movements (advocated by radical feminism), Black-only movements (advocated by Black Consciousness), gay-only movements etc. Although we recognise that such approaches are capable of gaining fair amounts of support and publicity, we nonetheless argue that they are a weak and flawed approaches unable to deliver liberation to the groups whose interests they profess. At the same time, we unconditionally defend people’s basic democratic right to associate with whoever they wish .
  1. Typically, approaches that call for non-class based separate organisation fail to correctly identify the source of the oppression of the group in question. They typically fail to even provide critiques of capitalism and the State; even where they do, they fail to provide workable strategies for liberation. For example, radical feminism argues that all men benefit from women’s oppression, and that, as a result, women must organise separately from men (the enemy). Such an argument fails to identify the real roots of special oppressions (primarily in capitalism and the State), or to recognise that no workers actually benefit from such oppression. It thus fails to realise that only class struggle can end special oppressions, and that the real allies of specially oppressed groups are other working and poor people (in this case, men). It thus fails to see the need for united organisation, and thus for class consciousness, and class power.
  2. Another questionable claim that is sometimes used to promote these non-class based separate organisations is that “they are necessary to make sure that the group in question is not marginalised by other forces”. For example, some Black nationalists argue that Blacks must organise separately so that they are not bossed around or ignored by whites in progressive struggles. This is a legitimate concern, but it does not follow that separate organisation is the best way to deal with it. On the contrary, separate organisation is a particularly weak approach to the problem.
    1. Firstly, separate organisation often tends to reinforce and deepen the marginalisation of the voice of a given group. (a) The existence of a separate organisation often allows the “ghettoisation” of that group’s concerns. For example, men can

say that issues of women's oppression should be dealt with by the women, and are thus able to avoid changing backward ways of behaving (e.g. sexism) that are, ultimately, against the interests of all working/ poor people. Instead, all sections of the working class and poor need to win to a programme of opposing (rather than ignoring) all forms of oppression. (b) Even if these other sections do not themselves have first hand experience of a given form of oppression, it does not follow that they cannot be won to a position of opposition to that oppression. Such a position is in their own interests because no workers really benefit from oppression. In addition, all workers share a common form of oppression as workers which provides a basis for unity. We reject the notion that "the facts" can only be understood by members of a given group- social-scientific analysis can produce reasonably objective, context-free knowledge.(c) Third, separate organisations can lay the basis for the isolation and defeat of a specially oppressed group. For example, the Black minority in the USA is too small and weak to overthrow the US ruling class on its own. It needs allies. Yet the logic of separate organisation advocated by US Black nationalists is to oppose all such alliances, because it effectively claims strength flows from isolation, and denies the very real common interests of all workers.

2. Secondly, this view expresses a lack of confidence in the abilities of Blacks, women etc.. to function in integrated organisations. But it is folly and patronising to assume that, for example, Black people in such organisations will always be passive followers of "White leaders". Exactly the opposite is true. Even within Europe and the USA, Black workers will be in the forefront of the struggle, a crucial part of the layer of activists whose role is so vital to the revolution. In South Africa, the Black working class will be the agent of revolutionary change. To claim that Black people will "always" be reduced to passive followers in integrated leftist movements is to be blind to the capacities of the Black working class.
3. Taken to its logical conclusion, separate organisation divides the working class into competing and even hostile sections to the detriment of all. Why stop at Black-only or women-only movements? The basic idea of separate organisation readily leads to an emphasis on difference, and a process of continual fragmentation: blacks versus whites versus Asians versus blacks of one sort of origin (e.g. America) versus those of another (e.g. African) versus blacks of one sex (e.g. men) versus those of another (e.g. women) versus blacks of one sexual preference (e.g. straight) versus those of another (e.g. gay) versus blacks of one religion (e.g. Christian) versus those of another (e.g. Islamic) etc. etc.. Such fragmentation of political struggle is common in many countries. Instead of emphasising difference, and using it to justify separatism, we need to find points of agreement and common interest; divided we are weak, united we can win. Class provides the basis for uniting the vast majority of the world against the key source of poverty, oppression, and domination: capitalism, the State and their ruling classes.



4. The claim that only separate organisation can prevent the marginalisation of a group's concerns is false. On the contrary: the most effective way to, for example, commit the working class to the struggle for women's freedoms is not to confine the issue of women's rights to small women-only groups, but to win all working-class people to a position opposed to sexism. This increases the support for such demands, and strengthens the struggle for such demands. Moreover, since it is in the interest of all working/ poor people to support the struggle against all oppression, the task of winning all workers to this position is quite practical/ possible.
3. Separate organisation on a non-class basis is NOT always progressive. Whilst we defend the right of free association, and defend and support progressive organisations that fight oppression, we also recognise that in some cases separate organisations are clearly a reactionary and a backward step.
  1. Separate organisation in the workplace (e.g.. women-only trade unions) is not acceptable in any case where industrial unions of all workers exist. The logic of trade union organisation is to unify different categories of workers, who can only find strength in their unity. Where the unions exclude categories of workers, these workers should be organised to separate unions as a transitional step, but in all cases United Front action between the different unions should be promoted because it strengthens struggle, and because it helps lay the basis for future unification. Maximum unity on a principled basis (i.e. anti-racist etc.) must be promoted.
  2. Separate organisation is only admissible as a tactic for liberation in cases where workers face a special oppression. We do not, for example, support tribalist movements such as the Inkatha "Freedom" Party because Zulus do not face a special oppression as Zulus.
  3. Separate organisation that is not on a class struggle basis is dangerous because it almost always lays the basis for multi-class alliances as it is based on non-class identities and (supposed) non-class common interests. As argued in POSITION PAPERS on FIGHTING RACISM, WOMEN'S LIBERATION etc., only class struggle (not cross-class unity) can end racism, imperialism, sexism etc.

#### **4. RELATING TO ALREADY EXISTING MOVEMENTS**

5. In practice, as we have noted elsewhere, working and poor people have responded to the repression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism in a variety of ways. For example, at the ideological level, people have supported various political ideologies. Some of these ideologies share much ground with anarcho-syndicalism (e.g.. other types of socialism); and others with which we have relatively little in common and/or reject (e.g.. nationalism).
6. In addition, people have organised themselves to fight against capitalism in a variety of ways and areas of social life. Two key forms of response are:

1. “Political” responses. For example, some people work to build parliamentary parties (e.g. the ANC) , or build wings of political parties (e.g. SASCO or PASO). What these approaches have in common is that they recruit people on the basis of a specific set of political beliefs (e.g.. the Congress tradition).
  2. “Economic” responses. For example, civic associations, rent-strike committees, youth structures, self-defence units, and, of course, trade unions). What these organisations have in common is that they are broad-based grassroots structures which organise people (regardless of their political beliefs) to fight for their daily needs against the power-that-be i.e. on the basis of their economic and social interests (for example, more rights, better schools, lower rent, better working conditions). Such organisations typically have a class dimension in that they are based largely amongst working-class people and address issues relevant to the workers and poor. Class struggle is not just about wages-it is about every action by working and poor people to resist the bosses and rulers. The economic and class aspects of these structures remain true, no matter which political ideologies influence their membership (a variety of political currents are commonly present within these structures).
7. Organisations with homogenous memberships (for example, only Black members) may exist within both types of response (i.e. 6.1 and 6.2). Some of these organisations have such a composition because it reflects members’ political beliefs. For example, AZAPO. Therefore it is a “political response” (belief in non-class based separate organisation). The composition of other structures reflects their grassroots base. For example, a township-based civic is almost certain to be entirely Black in membership. Nonetheless, such a structure is an “economic response” in the sense outlined above and should be treated as such.
8. The following “rule of thumb” should be applied by the WSF when relating to these two types of body:
1. Political groups. In other parts of these Position Papers we have criticised both the strategy of using parliament for social change, and the strategy of using non-class based separate organisations. SEE OTHER POSITION PAPERS AND SECTION 3. OF THIS PAPER. This means that we do not do political work within such organisations. However, we are more than ready to work alongside/ in co-operation with such organisations through the tactic of United Front action (see POSITION PAPER ON PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR WSF ACTIVITY).
  2. Economic groups. We would generally work within such organisations (including through WSF commissions) to win them to our programme. Our aim:
    1. promote class-consciousness, an explicitly working-class programme, an end to class collaboration (as opposed to nationalism, support for politicians etc.).
    2. put control into the hands of the working-class grassroots, not middle- and upper-class politicians and “radicals”.
    3. promote unity with other mass economic structures because of the common interests of the workers and poor, and because of the need to prevent isolation leading to defeat. Promote principled and progressive co-operation with unions.

4. also, we take up arguments about the need to support the struggles of specific part of the working class (e.g. women) with other sections of the working class (e.g. men).SEE PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE.
3. As indicated in the UNIONS Position Paper, our aim is to unite and merge all of these “economic”/class struggle bodies: those at the workplace should unite into “One Big (Trade) Union”; those in residential areas should unite into “One Big (Community) Union” - into integrated fighting structures that rally all working class people against capitalism, the State and all oppression. The actual process of unification would not exclude tactics like united fronts, WSF commissions, work with caucuses (e.g. women’s caucuses) .These workplace and community “unions” will lay the basis for self-governing worker and community councils in the Anarcho-syndicalist future. See ROLE OF REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION, Part 5.

## 11. THE VIOLENCE QUESTION

*Anarchism is opposed to any interference with your liberty, be it by force and violence or by any other means ... But if someone attacks you, then it is he who is invading you, he who is employing violence against you. You have a right [and a duty] to defend yourself ...*

*To achieve its purpose, the revolution must be imbued with and directed by the anarchist spirit and ideas. The end shapes the means, just as the tool you use must be fit to do the work you want to accomplish ... Revolutionary defence excludes all acts of coercion, of persecution and revenge. It is concerned only with repelling attack and depriving the enemy of the opportunity to invade you ...*

*[The strength of the revolution] consists in the support of the people, in the devotion of the agricultural and rural masses ... Let them believe in the revolution and they will defend it to the death ... The armed workers and peasants are the only effective defence of the revolution. By means of their unions and syndicates they must always be on guard against counter-revolutionary attack ... the active interest of the masses, their autonomy and self-determination are the best guarantee of success ...*

*Let them [counter-revolutionaries] talk as they like .. To suppress speech and press is ... a theoretic blow offence against liberty [and] a direct blow at the very foundations of the revolution ... [While forcible attack will be actively resisted] the revolution must be big enough to welcome even the severest criticism, and profit by it if it is justified...*

**Alexander Berkman, “Defence of the Revolution”, in his ABC of Anarchism, various editions.**

### INTRODUCTION

1. There are three basic positions which can be adopted on the “violence question”-pacifism, terrorism or defensive violence.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. PACIFISM

2. With regret we have to dismiss pacifism as being hopelessly unrealistic.
  1. Restricting a struggle to pacifism or non-violent direct action in a campaign or strike can in some circumstances seriously undermine that struggle. We are against the adoption of such tactics as an absolute principle, although obviously it may be tactically wise to rely on peaceful methods of protest in certain situations.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of these issues are dealt with in greater depth in the pamphlet *You Can't Blow Up a Social relationship: the Anarchist Case Against Terrorism*. Anonymous Australian comrades. Jura books.

2. Violence will also be an inevitable part of a revolution as the ruling class will not give up its power or wealth without a bloody struggle. To refuse to prepare to meet this contingency with counter-violence, or to rely on pricking the conscience of the oppressor to prevent bloodshed in such a situation, is a recipe for the massacre of the working-class and poor.

## 2. ARMED STRUGGLE AND “TERRORISM”

3. We reject the tactics of armed struggle and “terrorism”.
  1. This approach relies on the military actions of an armed vanguard to free the working class and poor (or other oppressed groups, e.g. national minorities). It is thus substitutionist to the core in that it substitutes the activity of a small group for the actions of the toiling masses as a whole. It is clearly therefore elitist and sows the seeds for a new elite to take power over the heads of the workers and the poor in the event of the armed struggle succeeding. In fact, this tactic readily degenerates into authoritarianism even prior to the actual seizure of power as the armed vanguard is not accountable to the working people and is instead controlled by a typically unelected central circle of leaders. In this model the masses are reduced to a passive role, acting at most as the providers of logistical support to the guerrillas. Even if sizeable popular support can be won for the armed struggle, this fact remains. Such a tactic is clearly at odds with Anarchism which involves the masses in self-managed action to establish an anti-authoritarian socialist society.
  2. Generally speaking, the tactic of armed struggle is a relatively ineffective one. This is particularly true where the armed struggle is urban based (and thus almost never unable to consolidate “liberated” territories), but it also holds in the case of rurally-focussed struggles. The murder of individuals in no way weakens the system. Bosses, police and so on are all easily replaceable. So are powerlines and other facilities. The military power which clandestine guerrilla forces can mobilise is typically minimal compared to the full power of the State. As Anarchists we realise that under capitalism and the State the strength of the masses lies primarily in their economic power – their ability to struggle at the point of production- yet the tactic of armed struggle relegates the workplace struggle to a secondary role (if any at all). Even in conditions of harsh political repression, underground activity should prioritise workplace organising over the formation of a guerrilla army.
  3. Although the intention of those engaging in armed struggle is often to secure freedom for the oppressed, the actual effect may be quite different. Typically, armed struggle puts the lives of working people at risk which provides the State with an excuse (and, often, the popular support) needed to introduce more repressive measures. We also do not support the tactic of small groups provoking a violent response from the State in order to “radicalise” the majority. In fact, this is often used by the State to victimise activists and intimidate those involved.
4. This is not to say that we deny the sincerity of those who take up the gun in an attempt to change society, merely that their method is a wrong one. However, while we do not ad-

vocate armed struggle, we defend those who participate in it from repression, reactionary attacks and criticism. we never side with the State against such groups. The real problem is not the gunmen, the primary responsibility lies with the system which leads people to resist in such a manner.

### **3. OUR POSITION: SELF-DEFENSIVE VIOLENCE**

5. Our position is to accept the need for self-defensive violence.
  1. Short of revolution, there are many occasions on which the State uses violence to break the collective power of the working class and poor. For example, attacking picket lines and demonstrations, victimising, arresting and even murdering activists. We always support those who are victimised and defend them against State repression.
  2. On occasions, demonstrations or strikes can turn to violence. We recognise that this is an inevitable feature of large-scale resistance to the bosses and rulers. In such cases where violence is inevitable, we argue for the creation of self-managed defence squads under democratic mass control.
  3. Violence sometimes also takes place in smaller situations due to the necessity of intimidating scabs or due to frustration. In such cases, we defend those involved from State repression. Where such manifestations can only damage the struggle, we argue against the use of violent tactics. In cases where their use is correct we argue for the greatest possible democratic control of their use and implementation.
  4. We do not glorify or encourage random attacks in members of the ruling class. Attacks on individuals and their property may well demonstrate an ineffective expression of legitimate anger but the function of Anarchists is to argue for collective action by the working class. These tactics may make individuals in the ruling class uncomfortable but they do not undermine the ability of this class to rule. Obviously we defend those who show their anger in this way, but we also argue that such energy is better directed at mobilising and politicising the working class.
  5. Revolution should be as bloodless as possible. As we mentioned above, violence becomes inevitable as the ruling class will not give up its power and wealth without a bloody struggle. Our violence will be in defence of the gains of the revolution. We will work to minimise the violence by winning the State armed forces to the side of the workers and the peasants. The defence of the revolution will be organised through an internally democratic workers militia under the control of the trade unions and other working class and working peasant structures of self-management. The need for such violence will be almost universally understood.

## 12. THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET BLOC

*We learn in Russia how Communism cannot be introduced.*

**Peter Kropotkin, June 1920, “Message to the Workers of the West”, in P. Avrich (ed), *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, (Thames and Hudson), p151. Documents of Revolution series.**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

While there have been many changes in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and parts of Asia since 1988, it is important to state that these countries were not in any way socialist and to explain why.<sup>1</sup>

1. Since at least 1918, Anarchists have recognised that the Russian command economy was State capitalist because
  1. it maintained the separation of the producers from their means of production and undervalued their labour power in order to extract surplus value for a ruling class which owned and controlled the means of production. This is the case in all capitalist countries.
  2. it was also subject to the same law of constant accumulation.
  3. In the case of the Soviet Union, all property/ means of production belonged to the Soviet state so all surplus value accrued to it, and, more specifically, to the bureaucratic elite which controlled that State.
2. The absence of internal markets in the USSR and other Marxist-Leninist countries did not mean that the capitalist mode of production was not in operation.
  1. Surplus value is incorporated into goods at the point of production under capitalism. Value is not created in the process of distribution (e.g. the market), but by labour-power in the process of production.
  2. In the West, this surplus value is realised as money profits by selling these goods on the market. But the surplus value is incorporated into goods whether or not they are sold. This can be used directly for providing use values for the capitalists such as weapons or extra plant or machinery.
  3. This is the way that State-capitalism worked. Internally surplus value was realised directly as use-values (e.g. weapons, plant ) which (i) kept the system ticking over (ii)

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<sup>1</sup> A useful discussion of the theory of State-Capitalism is J. Crump and A. Buick, (1986), *State Capitalism: the Wages System Under New Management*. Macmillan.

maintained the bureaucracy in its privileged class position. It is also important to note that many goods were sold on the international market (particularly raw materials and arms) and the money shared out amongst the bureaucratic elite in the form of bribes, wages and awards.

4. In any capitalist system profit is extracted at the point of production by undervaluing labour power (remunerating the producers with less than the full value of their production). Whether or not this profit is realised as cash money on the market is not of primary importance. Much of this surplus can be fed directly into the system as means of production. A system in which all value is fed back as means of production is possible in theory. All capitalist systems tend towards this with more and more profit going into plant and machinery and less and less labour from which to extract a profit being used over time (this has been called “the tendency for the rate of profit to fall”).
  5. The Soviet Union exemplified this, it was a night mare form of capitalism where weapons systems and heavy machinery proliferated but basic consumer needs were not met.
3. The absence of private property rights (e.g. individual legal ownership) is often put forward as evidence that the Marxist-Leninist countries were not capitalist but some sort of new “post-capitalist” system.
    1. Property forms (in the sense of who owns what in law) can be a convenient legal fiction concealing the essential relations of production. For example, in the lineage mode of production, property was supposedly collective but in practice it was held “for the people” by an oligarchy of patriarchal leaders and their direct descendants. So all tributes and profits passed to them SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE REGARDING THE LINEAGE MODE. State- Capitalism in Russia employs a similar ruse to conceal its exploitative nature.
    2. Ownership of the means of production cannot be reduced to individual legal title to stocks. Ownership can be disaggregated into 3 components: legal ownership (title to property, and legal status as an employer); economic ownership (control over investments and resources); and possession (control over the physical means of production, and over the labour power of others).
      1. In the West, the ruling class are juridical owners of the means of production, and also control the accumulation process, decide how the physical means of production are to be used, and control the authority structure within the labour process, whilst the “working class” has no legal rights over the means of production (and must thus sell its labour power), and is excluded from control over authority relations, the physical means of production, and the investment process . That is one reason why top corporate executives and managers of parastatal enterprises can be classified as bosses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, E.O. Wright (1978), *Class, Crisis, and the State*, New Left Books. London. Although Marxist, this book develops a model of the class system which is fairly similar to the Anarchist model outlined in an earlier section (except it fails to deal with the position of those who occupy military and bureaucratic positions separate to production, strictly defined). See POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE.



2. In the East, the ruling class had economic ownership and possession. It also had collective legal ownership in the sense that it was legally entitled to run the economy on behalf of the working class and peasantry, both as the ruling vanguard party and as the “legitimate” occupants of the appropriate posts in the State apparatus.
4. Despite the claims of Stalinists and Trostkyists of various hues, there has always been unemployment in the Soviet Union, especially high in oppressed outlying regions such as Armenia and Azerbaijan. This unemployment was concealed as unpaid slave labour (labour camps), low paid work, and seasonal and migratory work in the outlying areas. There was also homelessness, poverty and all the other common features of capitalism.

## 2. HOW DID RUSSIA BECOME STATE-CAPITALIST?

5. Basically, after October 1917, the organised working class had expropriated most of the means of production, and most land was seized by the peasants. But before the masses could consolidate and expand these gains, they lost power to a rising bureaucratic class comprised of the remnants of the Tsarist bureaucracy and also the Bolshevik (Communist ) Party. The new ruling class placed the means of production under the control of a one-party State run by the Communist Party.<sup>3</sup>
6. This was not an inevitable or an accidental development. This transfer of class power was partly rooted in Marxism. Marx had proposed the centralisation of all finance, land and means of production in the hands of the State as an essential step towards socialism. The Bolsheviks developed these views into a rigorous attack on workers self-management. Workers control was seen simply as a step on the road towards nationalisation, with socialism placed very far down the road. Such a philosophy led directly to State-Capitalism (as predicated by Bakunin in the First International). the transition from capitalism was seen as a process in which an enlightened vanguard party would assume State power too impose “socialism” (in the sense of State ownership) on the “backward” masses. As we have discussed elsewhere (SEE POSITION PAPER, FIGHTING RACISM), nationalisation is not real socialism, it is a policy that places the means of production under the control of a State managerial elite.
7. By 1921, the emerging ruling class had wrested power from the workers and peasants. this process was completed in essence in 1918, and accelerated by the “war communism” of the civil war period and Trotsky’s “militarisation of labour” proposals. The civil war

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<sup>3</sup> On the degeneration of the Russian revolution, the classic studies are still Voline, *The Unknown Revolution*. Black Rose; A. Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy*; P. Archinov, (1987), *The History of the Makhnovist Movement*; G.P. Maximoff, *Bolshevism: Promises and Reality*; E. Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*. More contemporary accounts can be found in WSM, *Stalin Did Not Fall From the Moon!* Ireland.; WSF, 1997, *What is Anarcho-Syndicalism?* Johannesburg. On the history of the Russian Anarchist movement is outlined also in P. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* . P. Avrich (ed.), *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* is very useful as it brings together an uneven collection of Russian Anarchist literature from the time of the Revolution. Also useful is J. Westergaard-Thorpé, “The Workers Themselves”: Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, which looks at the conflicts between the international Anarchist/Syndicalist movement and the new Russian Marxist State in the 1920s.

contributed to this degeneration of the revolution insofar as it provided an excuse to impose repressive anti-worker measures, and insofar as it weakened the working class's ability to resist the Communist-led counterrevolution.

8. The process of State-capitalism was finalised by Stalin in the 1920s and 1930s, but the actual transfer of power had already been completed by the old Bolsheviks (Lenin, Trotsky and co.). The only small difference was that the "New Bolsheviks" recruited after 1917 were subjectively as well as objectively State-capitalists.

### 3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA AND EASTERN EUROPE

9. Russia and Eastern Europe have never been without workers opposition to the one-party State-capitalist regime. These reflected workers grievances with the political and economic hardships under which they lived. They were not "imperialist plots" which had to be crushed but progressive popular struggles.

1. Examples include Kronstadt 1921 in Russia. Also the revolts in East Germany and Hungary in 1953 and 1956. In Czechoslovakia in 1968 regime attempts to liberalise the economy snowballed into a popular revolt that had to be put down with Soviet tanks.

2. In Poland there were riots in 1970 and 1976 and in 1980 a mass strike movement spread out of the Gdansk shipyard. The Solidarnosc movement that developed was a mass trade union that included many left currents advocating workers self-management. However, the leadership was made up of reformists like Kurion and Walesa, These made common ground with the Catholic Church and reform-minded Communists. Demands for workers' self-management were channelled into power-sharing in a liberal capitalist economy. Reformist and conservative currents dominated the union from the start, despite notable rank and file action such as the take-over and management of the entire city of Lodz by the local Solidarnosc in 1981. The imposition of martial law in 1981 was aimed almost exclusively at destroying rank and file opposition: while the leaders served brief terms under house arrest or in prison, the base resistance in the factories and mines were crushed. The union leaders were then released to help supervise the rush from State-capitalism to market-capitalism alongside the reform-minded Communists .

3. These years of struggle in Poland found an echo in other parts of the Eastern bloc. In Romania an embryonic freed trade union, the SLMOR, took government officials hostage and in Russia the Free Workers Inter-Professional Association (SMOT) was formed. In China, autonomous unions played an important role in the Tiananmen Square movement that was crushed by the Communist Party.

10. Gorbachev inherited (sic!) a Russian economy in severe crisis. For the Communist Party to survive and maintain control, he realised that some economic liberalisation , a move towards a more market-driven form of capitalism, was needed, the threat of mass revolt and economic bankruptcy was hanging over the CP's head.

1. In terms of economic restructuring (“Perestroika”), his initial aim was probably to bring about some form of limited internal market in consumer goods while maintaining bureaucratic planning and power and arms in heavy industry. However, this form of hybrid capitalism proved impossible to maintain and there was a rapid move towards a market form of capitalism. At first, these reforms had substantial mass support.
  2. In order to achieve support for Perestroika, Gorbachev had to allow a large amount of political liberalisation (“Glasnost”). This opened space for the expression of popular dissent and thus increased the opportunities for popular resistance to attempts to reimpose a one-party State.
11. The reforms in the Soviet Union prompted a massive popular response in Eastern Europe, with Gorbachev unwilling or even unable to intervene to crush dissent as had happened previously. In Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland and Romania mass demonstrations and (in the Romanian case) armed insurrection swept the ideology of Marxism-Leninism into the dustbin of history, and led to the establishment of parliamentary regimes. In Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Hungary the change over to a multi-party system, was brought about gradually by reform Communists thus avoiding mass demonstrations.
  12. In all of these countries there has been a rapid shift towards more market-based forms of capitalism. This was often far from the intentions of the masses who were demanding more political rights and economic well-being.
  13. While many of the enterprises in the formerly State-capitalist countries have been closed or privatised to foreign investors, others are now “owned” rather than merely “managed” by their former directors.
  14. Neither of the two ridiculous orthodox Trotskyite notions that (1) the reforms were the vital injection of workers democracy that would transform these countries into socialist paradises or (2) that workers would actively defend the so-called “post-capitalist” property forms has been borne out in fact.
  15. However, there have been strikes and other working class actions in defence of some of the welfare and employment measures of particular State-capitalist countries, such as greater access to abortion (East Germany), cheaper transport etc. We absolutely support workers in defence of jobs and better facilities if these exist. This in no way commits us to the defence of State-capitalism any more than, for instance, a defence of greater freedom of speech and freedom of movement in the West commits us to defending market-capitalism. Our criteria and concern here is whether these facilities and rights are in the interests of the working class. If they are, we are for their defence and enhancement through mass struggle; the niceties of different forms of regulating the capitalist economy are not our concern. We are here to fight capitalism and the State, not to give them tips on how to run things better.

## 13. THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE

*the revolutionary collectivists [i.e. Anarchist/Syndicalists] try to diffuse science and knowledge among the people, so that the various groups of human society, when convinced by propaganda, may organise and spontaneously combine into federations, in accordance with their natural tendencies and their real interests, but never according to a plan traced in advance and imposed upon the ignorant masses by a few 'superior' minds.*

**Mikhail Bakunin, quoted in M. Salvadori (editor), (1968), Modern Socialism. Harper Torchbooks. Harper and Row Publishers. New York. Evanston. London. pp. 148-9.**

### INTRODUCTION

1. This Position paper broadly outlines our view of the role of the revolutionary organisation.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. CLASS STRUGGLE AND REVOLUTION

2. Anarchist/Syndicalist-Syndicalists believe that it is important to build a mass Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation in the working class and the poor. The role of this organisation is to popularise and fight for the creation of a society based on the principles of Anarchism: that is, a society based on a federation of workers and community councils, production for use and distribution according to need. This society can be described as Stateless Socialism. The Workers Solidarity Federation (WSF) aims to build such an Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation.
3. Such a society can only be built by a conscious movement of the working class and the poor, using their industrial power. SEE POSITION PAPER ON CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE.

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<sup>1</sup> Our position on the role and structure of the Anarchist/Syndicalist organisation is based directly on the Makhno, Archinov et al, [1926], The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists (reprinted by Workers Solidarity Movement. Ireland). As such, we stand within the "Platformist" tradition of Anarchism, but we do not think that this is incompatible with the tactic of promoting revolutionary trade unionism. We agree with the Platform that the Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation must be based on ideological and tactical unity, collective responsibility and federal organisation. We agree that it is necessary to build a large and democratic Anarchist/Syndicalist organisation that can ensure that Anarchism becomes the "leading concept" of the exploited masses. The idea that Anarchist/Syndicalists must not "lead" the masses into revolution, but prepare the masses to make the revolution for themselves is, of course, a basic principle of Anarchism.

**In order for this to take place the working class and the poor must have two things:**

1. First, a revolutionary consciousness. This includes: a rejection of the State, capitalism and all forms of oppression; the desire to reorganise society in a new better way in the interest of the workers and the poor; the recognition of the fact that only the workers and the poor can make and secure the revolutionary transformation, and following from this, the belief that only the mass organisations of the working class and the poor- in the workplace and in the community- are to make decisions in society. The State will not be allowed in any form. ON THE CENTRALITY OF CLASS SEE DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE
2. Secondly, industrial organisation. The workers must have enough organisation and solidarity to be able to physically take over the means of production and distribution and destroy all remnants of the state. In concrete terms this means that the workers must be organised into revolutionary trade unions in the mines, factories and farms (Anarchist/Syndicalist-Syndicalism). It also means that the workers and the poor must be able to defend their revolutionary conquest by means of a democratic workers militia under the control of the mass organisations of the working class and the poor and poor. SEE DISCUSSION OF THE UNIONS FOR MORE ON THIS POINT

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE ANARCHIST/SYNDICALIST POLITICAL ORGANISATION.**

4. The role of the Anarchist/Syndicalist organisation is to win the most widespread understanding and influence of the Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas and methods in the working class and the poor. Anarchism must become the “theoretical driving force” or “leading idea” of the working class and the poor.
  1. We believe only these ideas can make possible a successful revolutionary transformation of society. Only these can both destroy capitalism, the State and all forms of oppression AND prevent the emergence of a new form of oppressive elite.
  2. Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas link a criticism of capitalist/ State society with a vision of a new way of organising human society. This link involves practical understanding of the means necessary and acceptable to achieve results, and which can also help build the confidence of the class in its own abilities and decision- making power.
  3. The Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation does not aim to “lead” the working class and the poor into socialism, or to decree socialism from above. The working class and the poor must make the revolution by and for themselves. The role of the Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation is to educate and organise the masses to take power in their own name.
5. In concrete terms this means we need to build a mass international political, Anarchist/Syndicalist organisation.
  1. This aims to link a criticism of the modern State/ Capitalist society with a vision of a new way of organising human society. It will produce propaganda and help to build

the confidence and ability of the workers and the poor to fight for themselves and make their own decisions.

2. It will work inside the unions and other class organisations for the leadership of the Anarchist/Syndicalist idea. It will fight for the reconstruction of the union movement on the basis of Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas (Anarchist/Syndicalism). The unions must be the battering ram that destroys capitalism. SEE DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE UNIONS FOR MORE ON THIS POINT
3. The Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation must be big enough and effective enough to block the tendency of political parties to substitute themselves for the masses.
4. The Workers Solidarity Federation, and its sister organisations internationally, aim at building such an Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation.

### **3. THE ANARCHIST/SYNDICALIST POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORKING CLASS AND THE POOR**

6. The Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation sees itself as part of the working class and the poor, its Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas a historical development of the experiences of workers, who as an exploited class seek to create a new world free of tyranny and exploitation in any form.
7. We wish to win the most widespread understanding and influence for our Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas and methods in the class and in society, primarily because we believe that these alone will expedite a successful revolutionary transformation of society. In this sense we recognise our role within the class being a “leadership of ideas”.
8. We seek influence for our ideas in all working class organisations. In real terms that means that the WSF will go forward for all positions in the unions and other bodies where there is the possibility of mandating and recall. We will never accept any position that is not under the control of the members of that body. Such positions are not ends in themselves. The struggle to win them must be bound up with a fight for more democracy, more mandating, more control. We are striving for the self-activity of the many.
9. We have to be able to explain and clarify what is happening in society. We have to be capable of combating false ideas such as Marxism and nationalism. We aim to be a “collective memory” for the class- in terms of combating false ideas, and in terms of keeping alive and developing the traditions of the working class movements and Anarchism. This includes analysing the lessons of past community and workplace struggles.
10. History teaches us that organisations like ours can experience a rapid growth in membership and support for its ideas during a revolutionary situation...but also that a certain size is necessary for this to happen. So it is important that we recruit but this will be worthless unless we ensure that people are joining us because they understand and agree with

Anarchism and share our libertarian values. It is not enough to build a small organisation with many sympathisers. Where there is no clear line between members and supporters a massive central apparatus is needed to hold together a mass of half- politicised people in a series of political activities. Political discussion gets toned down, a lack of seriousness creeps in. This in turn reduces the capacity of member to make independent political evaluations and provides the basis for a dependence on a central bureaucracy. This would be in absolute contradiction to our Anarchist/Syndicalist values.

11. "Only the truth is revolutionary". Whoever first said this was correct. We do not raise as immediate demands those that are impossible at the time because of the balance of forces. We do not play at politics. We do not fool, intimidate or manipulate workers towards Anarchism. We aim to win the arguments for change and Anarchism. It is not part of our program to try to take power "in the name of the workers". Anarchism will either be the creation of a free and politically aware working class and the poor ... or it will not be Anarchism.

#### **4. ANARCHISM AND EVERYDAY STRUGGLES**

12. We understand the centrality of struggle and organisation in the workplace because that is where we have real power.
  1. But this does not mean that we neglect or ignore the struggles that take place in other areas of life. We don't. We support all struggles that can improve the conditions we live under: in schools, the communities etc.. Nor do we think the class struggle is just about wages, etc.. It is also a struggle against racism and all forms of oppression, and to unite the working class and poor in a progressive struggle for freedom.
  2. At every opportunity we seek to bring these struggles into the union and workplaces, we try to bring the potential strength of organised workers to bear in their favour...to link up the different struggles into an understanding of their common roots in Capitalism and the State, and to establish the legitimacy of political issues being taken up on the shopfloor.
13. We support all progressive struggles both for their own aims and for the increased confidence that campaigning can give people. Secondly, we support them because of the confidence that campaigning gives people. Thirdly, we support them because we recognise that it is in struggle that people are most readily won to the revolutionary ideas of Anarchism. Fourth, we support them because it is in struggle that people can potentially create organisations of self-management that develop their skills and that may possibly help in the revolutionary transformation of society.
14. We argue in campaigns strongly against reliance on politicians, the courts, arbitration etc.. It is through mass struggle that the greatest potential lies.
15. We defend other progressive organisations that are involved in struggles, from repression. Where necessary, we will engage in United Front action alongside them. However, whilst

we defend these groups unconditionally, we do not do so uncritically- we maintain our political independence and argue for our politics.

16. In addition, we see involvement in campaigns as a central part of the political work of the WSF because it forces us to test our ideas against existing reality and because it provides a forum in which new members learn the skills needed to be active in politics. Finally, most campaigns are a political education in themselves as activists acquire first hand experience of the reformists, leftists, the law etc.

## 5. BUILDING TOMORROW TODAY

17. It is important that we Anarchist/Syndicalists have a clear idea of the type of society that we aim to establish.<sup>2</sup>
  1. The two fundamental structures of the Anarchist/Syndicalist society will be the syndicate (democratic workplace associations) and the Free City- commune (the self-managed city or village, made up of syndicates and community committees in a given area).
  2. Communes will be federated into regions and nations; they will also be linked by federations of syndicates that provide services impossible to organise purely at the level of the individual commune (e.g. transcontinental railways, post).
  3. Each commune must be located in a particular ecological region (bio- region) and must learn to preserve, enhance and integrate itself into that region's natural dynamics.
  4. There will also be a workers militia to defend the free society.<sup>3</sup> This militia will be internally democratic, and accountable to, and bound by, the decisions made at congresses of the mass organisations of the revolutionary working class.
  5. These structures may also be referred to as "worker and community councils (or committees)"
18. We believe that the trade unions and community organisations of today (e.g. civic associations) can provide the nucleus of the future syndicates and communes, as well as the vehicles of revolutionary transformation. SEE SECTION ON THE UNIONS FOR MORE DISCUSSION ON THIS POINT.
  1. In order for this to take place, such structures must be restructured on anti- bureaucratic and grassroots democratic lines, and won to the ideas of Anarchism and class struggle.

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<sup>2</sup> On the theory of the syndicates, communes and regions as developed by classical Anarchism, see Guerin, Daniel, (1970), *Anarchism: From Theory To Practice*. Monthly Review Press. New York and London. Chapter 2, esp. pp. 56–60. See also G.P. Maximoff, (1985), *The Program of Anarcho- syndicalism*. Monty Miller Press. Australia. pp. 42–8. The addition of the bio- regional dimension is found in Purchase, Graham, (1991) *Anarchist/Syndicalist Organisation: Suggestions And Possibilities*. Black Rose. and Purchase, Graham, (1990), *Anarchist/Syndicalist Society and its Practical Realisation*. San Francisco. See Sharp Press.

<sup>3</sup> On the defence of the revolution, see Makhno et al, [1927], pp. 29–31; Berkman, (1964), *ABC of Anarchism*. Freedom Press. London. chapter 14; G.P. Maximoff, (1985), *The Program of Anarcho- syndicalism*. Monty Miller Press. Australia. pp. 49–55.



2. Within them revolutionaries have to fight the ideas of authoritarian tendencies and continually argue that, in a revolutionary situation, the new workers' democracy must not delegate away its power to any elite, or allow any minority to seize that power. Within them members of the revolutionary organisations must be the "driving force". This means winning the battle of ideas. It does NOT mean capturing the leading positions, vesting them with undue authority and then dishonestly interpreting this as a mandate for giving orders.
19. After the initial stage of the revolution when the ruling class are dispossessed of their wealth and power, the Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation will continue to grow. There will be a massive surge of working class and poor people into its ranks because of its politics will seem all the more concrete and realistic.
1. In the transitional period (that time before between the overthrow of the old order and consolidation of the new), the main task will be to further Anarchist/Syndicalist ideas and values, and fighting for all power to be taken by the mass organisations of the working class.
  2. As the revolution consolidates its gains and begins the reconstruction of society the task is to help the class towards the Anarchist/Syndicalist ideal. As this ideal becomes more and more established and the obstacles to its achievement fade away, the revolutionary Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation becomes less necessary and eventually vanishes completely.

## **6. ARE ANARCHO-SYNDICALISTS A "REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP"?**

20. Our role is that of educators and instigators. In so far as we are leaders it is because we are a "leadership" of ideas.
1. We have no time for the leadership of personalities or that of a higher committee of a party. We have no wish to be what the Marxists (Leninists, Trotskyists) call "The Revolutionary Leadership" (or "vanguard"), which implies their Party has reached a stage where it has the "right" to take decisions for the class (whether they like it or not). We reject this sort of leadership as authoritarian and destructive of workers' democracy. We reject the notion that the revolutionary political organisation has the right to "lead" or rule the working class and poor because of its "leadership of ideas". We are totally opposed to the idea that power must be controlled by the "vanguard party" during and after the revolution.
  2. While we do recognise that there is an uneven level of political consciousness amongst the working class and the poor, and that only a few are presently won to a revolutionary position. Our aim as an organisation is always to minimise such unevenness without compromising political content. We recognise and will always fight against that influence in our class that seeks to promote the need for a permanent, unelected leadership no matter what context, explanation or excuse is used.

19. We reject the idea that the State can be used to create Socialism. The State is a hierarchical, centralised, top-down structure built in order to allow the exploiting minority to rule over the poor and working majority. No State can ever create a free society for the masses.
20. The division between leaders and led, between those who rule and those who are ruled has lasted far too long. The revolution must be made by and for the working class and the poor. These masses must rise up in their own name. The State must be destroyed: any attempt to control it “for the workers” can only lead to the creation of a new ruling elite. Socialism cannot be brought into being from above by the decrees of a “vanguard party”. These are the lessons of the Russian Revolution. All power must lie in the democratic, mass organisations of the working class and the poor. Such power shall be compatible with the Anarchist/Syndicalist slogan that individual freedom will know no limit except that it does not take away the freedom of others.
21. It is on this issue that our fundamental difference with Leninism is made clear. We agree with Lenin that authority can only be defeated by authority, that the authority of the bosses will be destroyed by the authority of the workers. We agree on the need for a lead to be given within the class, but while our leadership is one of persuasion and education, the Leninist party goes way beyond this and tries to grab power through control of the state. It seeks to exercise the authority of the party over the workers. In doing this it prepares the way for the growth of a new oppressive ruling class.

# 14. BUILDING AN ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST INTERNATIONAL

*The path towards the emancipation of the workers can only be reached by the union of all the workers of the world.*

*Long live the workers international! Long live the free and stateless anarchist commune.*

**Makhnovist Army and Nabat Anarchist group, May 1919, “Workers, Peasants and Insurgents. For the Oppressed, Against the Oppressor- Always!”, leaflet issued in the Anarchist-led revolution in Ukraine, 1918–21. Reproduced in Peter Archinov, History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918–21. 1987 Freedom Press edition.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1. Capitalism and the State dominate every part of the earth. There is nowhere on the planet that is not subject to some boss or ruler.
2. Capitalism cannot contain itself in national/ State boundaries. Since the Second World War in particular, capitalism has organised itself on an international basis. This is seen in the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations (UN), the European Community (EC), the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT), and many other organisations and treaties. It is seen in co- operation between governments in the interests of capitalism as a whole, or of a bloc within capitalism (e.g. the Gulf War). And it is seen in the rise of massive transnational corporations (TNCs).
3. To combat this international situation, workers need international solidarity and unity. The WSF promotes international working class solidarity, challenging nationalist, imperialist, racist, protectionist and/or “labour aristocracy” arguments. SEE POSITION PAPERS ON ANTI-IMPERIALISM, FIGHTING RACISM, AND CLASS STRUGGLE, CAPITALISM AND THE STATE IN PARTICULAR.

## 2. ANARCHIST INTERNATIONAL

4. To combat this situation, Anarchism must also be an international movement. There can be no “Anarchism in one country”. While a single country may be the first to move to Anarchism it will not be able to survive for long if it remains isolated. The ruling class, both local and foreign, are not democrats who will stand by and allow people to take control of their own lives. They will not only object to losing profits, but will also fear

the living example of Anarchism in action. Trade boycotts, embargoes on supplying raw materials, economic sabotage, sealing of borders and outright war will be their answer. The success of Anarchism is dependent on it spreading across borders. SEE POSITION PAPER ON FIGHTING IMPERIALISM.

5. An international Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation is necessary to provide international solidarity within the movement, promote working class solidarity across borders, help provide a co-ordinated response to capitalism, facilitate the international revolution etc. Such an organisation would have agreed policies on major issues such as the role of the Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation, activity within the trade unions, fighting racism and fascism, the type of struggle needed to advance the movement for women's freedom, anti-imperialist conflicts, and gay and lesbian rights. It would also have an agreed international strategy, the capability of fostering international debate among Anarchist/Syndicalists and the capability of giving aid to weaker sections or to those engaged in mass struggle.
6. Such an international organisation is more than a loose network of like-minded groups. It is not a paper body. It only has a purpose if it can contribute to the Anarchist/Syndicalist movement. Therefore it only becomes real when based on a number of sizeable organisations. Anything less would need finance, administration, translation, publications, and conferences but would not be capable of making the return necessary to justify this expenditure of resources.

### **3. IMMEDIATE STEPS**

7. In order to reach a situation where an international Anarchist/Syndicalist political organisation can be formed we must start preparing the way now. Our tasks are to:
  1. Establish and maintain contact with other Anarchist/Syndicalist groups, and tendencies within other organisations moving in the direction of our politics
  2. Making the politics of both the WSF and the "Platformist" tradition more widely known with the Anarchist/Syndicalist movement abroad.
  3. Take part in debates within the international Anarchist/Syndicalist movement with an aim of explaining the policies of the Workers Solidarity Federation, and of getting the various groupings to clarify their political positions. An international discussion bulletin jointly produced by a number of organisations would be a contribution to this work which would be immediately realisable if the idea wins agreement.
  4. Proposing concrete international co-operation on specific issues where there is agreement between ourselves and other organisations.
  5. We should set up formal relations with other Anarchist/Syndicalist groups in Africa (e.g.) the Awareness League in Nigeria, and the Industrial Workers of the World in Sierra Leone. We should aim in the medium term to get contacts in nearby countries, with the aim of setting up organisations along similar lines to ourselves.

6. Applying for the closest possible formal relationship with the Workers Solidarity Movement in Ireland, a group whose politics are extremely close to those of our own.

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Workers' Solidarity Federation  
Position Papers and Constitution of the WSF  
(South Africa)  
May 1997

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