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Alfredo M. Bonanno

**For An Anti-authoritarian
Insurrectionalist
International**

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1993

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As far as the future aims and development of the Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International are concerned, The two roads do not exclude each other and can go alongside each other.

It is its putting into practice that will show whether this choice of method is capable of bearing fruit or not.

In the not too distant future we hope, the second important organisational moment will be That of calling a first International Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist Conference to be held on a date and in a place to be agreed upon, an occasion of great importance for gaining reciprocal knowledge and for exchanging experiences of struggle.

Proposal For a Debate

This proposal for a debate for an Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International was first published in the Sardinian anarchist paper "Anarkiviu". Oriented towards in the Mediterranean region it is the fruit of various anti-authoritarian realities active in this region, particularly in Greece and southern Italy. We are printing it here to participate in this debate and to contribute to the diffusion of this perspective of an informal, insurrectionalist character which must be of interest to anti-authoritarians everywhere.

The reasons for choosing a particular geographical region

There are many ways to look at the Mediterranean: a sea rich in peoples, traditions, culture and history but also in uninterrupted wars and massacres.

At a time when this geographical area is involved in political games worse perhaps than ever before, it is important to reflect on the social, economic and political conditions that are intermingling and interacting, producing situations of extreme tension but also opening up a vast field of intervention to all revolutionaries. We are sure that this area that belongs to the old world will live through another historic moment in the clash between opposing classes, but in a different and more ferocious way. Acquiring strength and consistency impossible to perceive at the present time, it will certainly not respect the rigid divisions we had got used to through a social doctrine now worn out by time and bad historical experience.

The opposition between the Soviet and American superpowers came to such an abrupt and in some ways unexpected end that we have not been able to focus clearly on the new kinds of problems that are emerging as a result. In the first place the disappearance of the alibi of the global war that was to, and could have, turned the planet into something akin to the end of civilisation and reduced life to that of the caves which man once emerged from with such difficulty. The fact that the conflict was actually more theoretical than practical did not make much difference as it contributed to reducing much real

We consider the form of struggle best suited to the present state of class conflict in practically all situations is the insurrectional one, and this is particularly so in the Mediterranean area. By insurrectional practice we mean the revolutionary activity that intends to take the initiative in the struggle and does not limit itself to waiting or to simple defensive responses to attacks by the structures of power. Insurrectionalists do not subscribe to the quantitative practices typical of waiting, for example organisational projects whose first aim is to grow in numbers before intervening in struggles, and who during this waiting period limit themselves to proselytism and propaganda, or to the sterile as it is innocuous counter-information that has seen its day. Here again we do not want to discriminate against anyone. We only want to have recourse to instruments that are more congenial to us and which are more suitable to the present conditions of the clash, especially in the area that particularly interests us, that of the Mediterranean.

First organisational steps

As we have already said we are publishing this Proposal for a debate in this special insert of the paper "Anarkiviu". We are sending the insert along with the paper hosting it to all the comrades and groups, national and international, that we are in contact with.

All those interested can get in touch with us by writing and sending material directly to the promoting group specified below. All those interested, if they agree with the proposal and after having contacted the promoting group, should reproduce this document in their own language if it is other than English or Italian and send it to all the comrades and groups they are in contact with, proposing themselves as point of reference for eventual exchanges of specifications, clarification, documentation and anything else considered necessary. It will be up to them to decide whether to have these groups enter into contact with the promoting group or to manage this relationship directly.

We are leaving everyone the maximum freedom to find their own road, to develop their own itinerary in the search for their own comrades with whom to establish more significant agreements and relations, naturally with one main objective: an intensification and improvement in the present conditions of struggle.

For this same reason, there being no basic programme made out in detail, each adherent will not feel obliged to participate in the struggle of another with whom he has not been able, or has not wanted, to deepen reciprocal knowledge with the aim of verifying a mutual affinity. In other words we do not want to build an international party, but a series of international relations, a great occasion for all those who are interested in doing so to be able to develop these relationships to the maximum degree.

Two essential distinctions

We make two essential distinctions, however, which are present moreover in the name of the Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International itself.

And that is not because we want to be sectarian and preclude eventual possibilities for some and grant favours to others.

We are doing so because we want to avoid wasting time and do not want to waste other people's time either.

The first distinction is anti-authoritarianism.

We consider that all the revolutionary organisations who choose authoritarian structures internally as a method of relating to each other, and externally as method of struggle, are to varying degrees playing into the hands of the power they are claiming to fight. In the best hypothesis these organisations would end up defeating the ruling power only to put themselves in its place. For this reason we draw a distinction against these organisations from the start, asking all those who recognise themselves in this choice and practice not to contact us. We think that the time has now come to radically refuse the presence of any authoritarian ambitions in the revolutionary struggle. The world is ready for experiences of a different kind.

The second distinction is insurrectionalism.

opposition, in particular class opposition, which could have fanned subversive winds of revolutionary renewal everywhere, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. Even when things moved in the direction of a spreading of specific revolutionary nuclei, a reductive dimension destined to lose in the inevitable military confrontation that would have followed, there was always one absolute restraint, that of not upsetting the balance of power too much and finding oneself on the brink of atomic war as had happened at the time of the Cuba crisis. In borrowing party doctrines that had little to do with liberation, the metropolitan revolutionary movements put forward the in some ways quite platonic idea of importing the hotbeds of proletarian resistance typical of the Third World, into the metropolises of Europe. But they also failed to discard an articulate argument concerning the limitations and dangers of subverting the institutions of the main industrial States of advanced capitalism. This was one of the worst restraints ever made on the many attempts that might have gone a different way and drawn great masses of people into prospects of real liberation.

Recent events in Eastern Europe have come about and are still doing so in a dramatic crescendo, but they are failing to show how peoples bearing the consequences of just as dictatorial and repressive regimes as ever will be able to alleviate their suffering. Because that is what it is. Power factions are trying to replace those now out of date at both ideological and practical levels and are using tiny means whatsoever to do so. In the first place a badly expressed nationalist principle to push peoples against each other in civil wars that are capable of producing nothing but death and desolation.

Unfortunately civil war is an obligatory road which must be passed in any historical moment of profound, radical transformation. It is not civil war in itself that frightens or worries us, but the way it is being used to reach objectives desired by power where people are being instrumentalised and unspeakable sacrifices are being asked of them yet again in order to satisfy power factions fighting between themselves.

We would say civil war is a physiological condition of the social revolution, a kind of child illness that any society in course of

formation must pass through. It is a necessary evil, a supreme upheaval within a country which has let loose in order to radically, if not finally, resolve the social discontent that has accumulated over decades. But that is civil war where there is a clash of opposing real interests: those of the dominant class, assisted by its traditions of subservient forces; and the dominated one, strong in its creative capacity and courage. Quite different is the spectacle of civil war facing us now, exactly in the centre of the Mediterranean region in the territories of what was Yugoslavia, where real interests are undoubtedly clashing but which are being suffocated almost everywhere with inconsistent ideological blankets or are being controlled for political or military reasons by groups who have no intention of abandoning their conditions of privilege and domination.

Here the imperialism of the richer countries, in the first place American managerial imperialism, is trying to control the situation by striking any possible liberatory attempts by peoples that could take a different turning and create a hotbed of social demands and revolutionary potential in the middle of Europe. There can be no doubt that new conditions of exploitation will occur in these territories where poverty and economic backwardness are at levels unthinkable in the albeit fictional ease of the self-defined opulence of the West. And this goes not only for ex-Yugoslavia but for all the countries that once belonged to the Soviet empire and have now been given a somewhat stable autonomy or State independence. The whole network of these countries is now being supplied by a precarious economy. In the first place Russia, which requires western and Japanese investments and wants to take off using models that have come to an ignominious end in the capitalist experience. An anything but rose-coloured future, therefore, which could be seen as positive only by those who have lived a life of hardship in the name of a supposed ideal of proletarian revolution. But elementary needs, survival itself, are pressing and combative peoples such as the Albanians, the Croats, the Serbs, Slovaks, Bosnian Muslims, would not now be left with nothing had they not become caught up in the great equivocation of a struggle between different ethnic groups and religions. Hence the interest of managerial imperialism in feeding

An organisational possibility

Now some idea of what we mean by “organisational possibility”.

We think that the Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International should not have a quantitative aim, we should not simply seek a numerical growth in its adherents. This growth will only come about if the participants find it useful to establish reciprocal contacts for going into, each on the basis of their own personal and political affinity, reciprocal knowledge with a view to working together. These contacts will, let’s say, be the result of the existence of the International, but will not in any way be bound by it. The individual participants will look for their own comrades, starting off from reciprocal knowledge within the international and building their own kind of affinity with them. This could therefore exclude all the others with whom, although belonging to the same organisation, do not feel close because they lack this affinity.

Here the non-quantitative concept of organisation becomes clearer. Not having the characteristics of formal organisations, it does not have growth as its objective, therefore makes no claim to draw into it the whole reality of the struggles in their various national and international expressions as though it were a tiny social laboratory. Instead it intends to limit itself right from the first moment of its existence, to becoming a point of reference, an occasion for those interested to meet and exchange knowledge and form links of affinity, friendship, affection, not in order to create a wider circle of friends but in order to make the others’ experiences available to those who want it in order to widen their own possibilities of struggle, therefore their own revolutionary capacity to act on reality.

A minimal programme

For this reason we are not proposing a platform or detailed programme, we are not suggesting membership procedures or organisational blueprints in order to divide up work and relations between adherents.

An informal organisation

The Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International is aimed at being an informal organisation.

What do we consider an “informal organisation” to be?

A whole made up of individuals, groups, structures, movements and other more or less stable forms of relationship between people who attempt to enter into contact in order to deepen their reciprocal knowledge.

The first element of any informal organisation is therefore not constituted by the birth of a precise structure with a singling out of particular people or of tasks to be carried out, where there is a division of labour and a delegation of work of co-ordinating, etc. The main element of any informal structure is given by reciprocal knowledge.

The Anti-authoritarian Insurrectionalist International is therefore based on a progressive deepening of reciprocal knowledge among all its adherents. This will undoubtedly be revolutionary knowledge in that it will address itself towards an exchange of information concerning the work that each component, group, structure, etc. is developing in their own reality. To this end all those who adhere to it should send the documentation that they consider necessary to make their activity known, (papers, pamphlets, books, leaflets, posters, etc.) to the promoting group. In exchange they should translate the text of the present document into their own language and send it to all the groups, both national and international, that they are in contact with.

In this way the first informal organisational phase will begin, constituted of the spreading of the present Proposal for a debate. For the time being this Proposal is being edited by the promoting group and is being published in a special insert in “Anarkiviu”. All organised comrades are therefore requested to contact the promoting group by writing to the address below.

wars of religion and nationalistic contrasts aimed at controlling the more difficult areas, particularly in the Mediterranean region.

So, the Mediterranean as site of a further development of conflicts of a seemingly nationalistic nature but which are really based on problems of a social, economic, and only in minimal part ethnic kind. And conflict worsening the present tensions, intensifying migratory flows, and producing more unthinkable economic and social hardship will develop in this Mediterranean area over the next few years.

It is in this theatre of social clash already in act in some areas, but which could soon become generalised, that anarchists and libertarians who are against any kind of struggle for power or interest in domination and exploitation, should contact each other in order to better co-ordinate resistance against the hegemonic projects in course, and organise the best ways for moving to an attack on these power centres, aimed at guaranteeing acceptable conditions of life, development and progress for everyone.

The condition of the traditional left

Simply ridiculous. The conservative offensive has seen the world Left move backwards almost to the point of disappearing. The number of socialist parties in the Socialist international has grown following recent new memberships, but the real strength of this organisation is absolutely nil. In most cases, leaving aside the “socialist” models in the Middle East because they are incomprehensible to westerners, the aforementioned socialist parties are participating in power, and they are the forces controlling the passage from the old order to the new. The social State is disappearing completely, whereas one of a new kind, run by information technology is rising up which is far more dangerous than the old Reaganism or Thatcherism.

This crisis cannot be explained simply by the collapse of the USSR. That would be too facile. Moreover the left, especially the European left, has never, at least in recent times, had a unity of intent and has always flirted with the more advanced technocratic capitalism. The crisis is therefore more a crisis of ideals than a real one. With the fall

Organisational suggestions

of the alibi of Soviet State communism, these parties and their men have been exposed in their task of guaranteeing, directly or indirectly, the smooth functioning of the mechanisms of exploitation and the extraction of the proceeds of capitalism. With this crisis the great idealistic aspirations of the struggles of the traditional left which allowed a vision of equality, the end of exploitation, the liberation of man and the formation of a society where individuals and peoples could live without killing or being killed have disappeared, along with all their contradictions and tactical and strategic mistakes.

In fact the idea of class struggle in the traditional sense, i.e. as interpretation of movements within a strictly economic division of social phenomena, is quite out of date. All political organisations who still insist on dwelling on such mechanistic explanations are destined to extinction, handicapped as they are by their narrow reformist objectives and incapacity to understand that the traditional social fabric no longer exists. The objectives of the mass movements of today are not strictly class ones, that is to say they do not see society divided into classes as their main point of reference. They are presenting themselves -only at superficial level because the substance of things has not changed, although even this is of some importance — as having a wide social unrest, as though power's attack against the weakest part in the class clash really took account of reality as a whole. This has made two elements that seemed to have been long forgotten re-emerge from the mist, which could become the cause of a new and more interesting conflict. On the one hand the individual with his rights, cultural identity and need for liberation against every kind of oppression. On the other, the irrational preoccupation that takes hold of all of us and makes us react in an often absurd way in the face of anything that is different and that justly claims to have its own rights. The reflowering of racism can be explained in this way.

In this new field of struggle where people are mobilising not only in defence of the planet, against world famine and against economic imperialism, but also for struggles based on nationalist sentiments that are being threateningly used by power elites, the role of the traditional left has finally sadly, faded.

We propose that all the groups and movements who are interested contact the promoting group indicated below.

In many ways the model of trade union resistance and the generally corporate model of the past have been swallowed up by the mechanisms of uniformity inherent in information technology capitalism. Post industrial technology has finally gained the upper hand, and, wiping out the ideological talk, it has reduced the role of the left wing organisations, the more or less classic socialist parties, to a new, simplified and sullen one: that of supporting and guaranteeing exploitation and domination.

No going back

We do not consider the choice of the Mediterranean as taking a step backwards, a return to our origins or a search for common roots with other peoples to add together in order to give value to aims that are in themselves limited. On the contrary, we think that an awareness of one's own historical condition, of one's geographical, political, economic and social placing, are starting points in overcoming the forced fragmentation that a totally information based management of capitalism could hold us in for ever. It would be impossible to pull ourselves out of the individual isolation we are being forced into by a simple recourse to ineffective (or even useful to the aims of power), rhetorical universalism where man is turned into an unreal ideological entity in the name of which we can become plausible (therefore acceptable) sacrifices to submission.

If we have learned anything from recent years at all, it is that we cannot simply close our eyes and hide social problems under the carpet. At one time one stood up and defined one's own social position — worker, bourgeois, lumpenproletarian — and begin to work out some kind of intervention: one's successes and what one proposed to do in what was considered to be a well anchored social framework. Things are different now. We are no longer clouded by ideology, so feel unsatisfied when we speak of exploitation in purely economic terms. We want to go into the very mechanisms of this complex and difficult process which is not purely economic and could become less and less so in the future. How much instead is it psychological, ethical and even imaginary. The excluded of

today, and even more so those of tomorrow, are in the first place individuals. Then they are unwaged workers, or lumpenproletarians at the mercy of the social confusion of the great metropoli. Today pictures of poverty and degradation that the literature of nineteenth century England had made familiar to us are reappearing before our eyes. Epidemics that it was thought belonged to the catalogue of horrors of the past are reappearing with new names. Alcoholism reaps an increasing number of victims, while in one year cancer kills a number of people equal to those killed in all the wars preceding this century.

Social conflict today tends to discriminate less on an economic or class basis, and more on a cultural, then a natural one. The risk run by the excluded of today is not so much that of being exploited or at least not of just being exploited, so much as being dehumanised i.e. of being reduced to more or less conscious appendices of machines. Of course, the more this dehumanisation extends the easier it becomes to use the swindle of religious and ethnic wars, and power always has an interest in fuelling such wars in order to break the excluded's resistance, ripe for consensus.

In this situation, especially in such an exceptionally varied context as that of the Mediterranean region, it is necessary to underline our differences, not flatten them out with feeble attempts at integration but bring them out and free them from the false distinctions that only serve power.

No micro-communitarian ideology to pull the wool over one's eyes in order to hide the misery that various schematisms are forcing us into and trying to make us accept. No defence of the general at the expense of the particular, or modernity at the cost of tradition. Here we do not mean that specific communities should be safeguarded in the name of their ancient principles that have since disappeared through time due to the levelling process required by advanced capitalism. When these conditions exist they must, to deserve our attention, be a starting point for the subversive side of resistance on the one hand, and for the attack on the other. Any traditionalistic restraint would be nothing more than a further element in the cementing of the new power structure which is building new illusions of communitarian brotherhood on the old model of life.

with the United States and including Germany, the latter will, over the next ten years, invest something like a thousand billion marks in the ex Federal Republic aimed at bringing the country, not exactly one of the poorest and in any case not one of the underdeveloped ones, up to Western level. Bearing these proportions in mind, aware that the ex Federal Republic has almost seventeen million inhabitants while the western belt of the ex-Soviet empire alone has almost two hundred million, we can get an idea of the impossible sum that would be required in order to improve the conditions of this economy. Not to mention North Africa and the troubled economies of the Middle East. The problem is consequently unsolvable in economic terms, and will develop along the lines of its natural consequences: an increase in immigration, a further impoverishment of the already poor countries, an increase in ethnic, social and economic conflicts as well as wars and massacres of all kinds.

The end of the second millennium is beginning to resemble the end of the millennium that preceded it.

Provisional conclusion

We think that common problems, both theoretical and organisational, can be faced on common ground.

Points to be gone into in a possible discussion would be the following:

Considering that the economic and social conflict in the Mediterranean area will get worse instead of better;

Considering that the movements, groups and individuals who have the freedom and safeguard of peoples and individuals at heart, and for this reason alone, have some interests in common;

Considering that the tragic failure of the ideologies and organisations of the traditional left is now a fact and no longer just a perspective;

Considering that it is becoming more and more urgent for the realities facing the Mediterranean to give themselves an internationalist organisation;

modern political world and introducing positions and interpretations that belonged to the museum of horrors of the past. Of this alternative to the lay horrors of the socialist and marxist regimes – some of which do not disdain to present themselves now as true defenders of the believers, confusing the picture more and more – there is little to be said. Things are going from bad to worse.

Then there is the old-style liberal-socialist lay individualism, which is perhaps unable to follow new trends but is certainly able to stir up the drive towards a kind of religion of the ego by sanctifying a human abstraction which a few years ago seemed defeated for ever. It is true that we need to rid ourselves of the schema that have now seen their day, upon which we based our thinking until recently as though we were facing sacrosanct truths. Nobody even mentions analyses now that take as their starting point ridiculous dichotomies such as that between bourgeoisie and proletariat. But not for that should we come to support an abstract, naturalistic kind of humanitarianism. In other words, we cannot speak of the defence of nature, of safeguarding man against the dangers of technology, or resistance against the process of deculturation imposed by the power structure, unless we place all this within a specific social reality. This might vary from the most economically advanced countries to the most backward ones, but it always has one constant: the division of classes between dominators and dominated, between included and excluded.

The impossibility of advanced capitalism

Perhaps the most illuminated capitalists are aware of the hidden volcano gathering momentum at the doors of European well-being even inside their own homes and in the crowded streets lined with shops containing every kind of commodity in the European capitals. But even if this awareness were to extend to the utmost, capitalism would still not be able to resolve the economic problem of the poor countries.

It cannot do so because of the difficulty that nearly all the seven most developed countries of the world find themselves in. Beginning

Not an ideological container

In the same way, we are not proposing a cluster of ideological pigeon holes. We would not know what to do with proposals airing abstract theoretical prejudices divorced from specific present conditions taking into account what can and must be meant by the Mediterranean area of social conflict.

The free circulation of simply the empty shells of old ideologies, (including the respectable pluralist anarchism of the past), would only produce an impression of a revolutionary movement, not a true and really effective one.

That does not mean to say we are trying to lower the ideal content of the struggle in the sense of a circulation of the ideas suggesting the great principles of freedom and equality. On the contrary, it means we want to compete to clarify and put to flight any attempt to upset the revolutionary and transformative capacity of these principles and ideas.

In a world that is witnessing the collapse of the strongest ideologies of the past we cannot abandon ourselves to vague depression or think that we will find solutions to problems by simply trying to escape from the changed conditions of world history. This is what many are doing in the name of a badly construed individualism or with ideas of nature as being something objective when facing some of the great problems of the planet. They are running away from the new difficulties to be encountered when facing the problem of social conflict.

The conflict between rich and poor countries

This in our opinion will be one of the essential elements of The class struggle in The Mediterranean in the near future. All over the world this confrontation could take the place of the one between communism and capitalism that we now consider out of date. But where the latter was a purely formal difference, there being no real difference between planned economy and free market capital, the

conflict between rich and poor countries is becoming more and more real.

And many of these poor countries, or rather which are effectively poor in the present state of affairs, look on to the Mediterranean. The advanced countries' intent to transfer their capitalist enterprises to these countries was aimed solely at maintaining the unequal growth upon which international exploitation has always been based. Now, in a rapid process of transformation some aspects of the problem of the distribution of wealth could change and fearful, colossal conflicts could develop in the wake of the ethnic or religious fundamentalists.

The arms market constitutes one of the essential points of a traditional politics of exploitation and submission that could change rapidly over the next few years. That would put the more backward States, who have however strengthened militarily over recent decades, in a condition to declare continual peripheral wars to the extent of their becoming full blown conflicts in the Mediterranean region, which in many ways is still a geographically important area.

This conflict is taking on fundamentalist religious connotations in the area of the Islamic countries. This is a very important development because it corresponds to a questioning of the domination of the socialistic or marxist orientated laities. The Islam distinction between friend and enemy, faithful and unfaithful ("mu'min" and "kafir"), corresponds to the modern one between oppressed and oppressor ("mustad" and "mustakbird"). And it is within the immense theoretical laboratory of militant Islam that disturbing similarities are appearing between civil war and military war, war of peoples to liberate themselves and war of States to impose their own domination. And Muslim fundamentalism finds a good hold where it equates oppressors with the unfaithful and the latter the most advanced, ie, wealthiest, countries of the West. Poverty has always been short-sighted, and is a bad counsellor.

Like any other form of fundamentalism, the catholic one for example, it is responding to the isolation and suspicion of the rest of the world by considerably stiffening its positions, which is indirectly an effect of the so-called Iranian revolution. In particular there is a mental closure that comes into contrast with the tradition of civility and tolerance peculiar to the Muslim world which, is transforming

Islam into a theodicy of dominion, a totalitarian regime. Aspects of daily life are no longer regulated as maxims of virtue, but are regimented as the earthly conditions for obtaining certain favours, when not pure and simple survival.

The possible outcome of this political movement of recuperation in the Muslim countries could be an explosion at mass level and become a movement capable of drawing millions of people into a widespread war of religion. Or an implosion, a regression in the present growth of the same fundamentalism. The geography of present day Islam being almost entirely confined to within the region of the poor countries or to those which even though wealthy from oil resources are still unable to escape the mortgage of American and world managerial imperialism, is such that it could lead to a war of religion and possibly follow itineraries parallel to a real war of social liberation. But these are suppositions that do not always turn out to be close to reality.

The breaking out of irrationality in the sphere of politics

This is happening more and more each day before our very eyes.

First nationalism, the kindling of the great ethnic mosaic of the European part of the ex Soviet empire and the countries of the old world of real socialism. There we see irrational drives serving to light the fuse in what are really economic and social conflicts aimed at domination, but which also contain popular struggles in search of a solution to the most impelling problems of poverty and oppression. Once these drives are let loose it will be difficult to put a brake on them, and they will produce more and more pressing invitations to war and to national liberation struggles where it will no longer be easy to tell where the militarism of States ends and the natural, just need for the liberation of peoples begins.

Secondly, Islamic fundamentalism (indirectly supported by the other religious extremisms who in opposing it make it grow and legitimise it), is bringing an "old style" theological dimension to the