

Organisation Communiste Libertaire

P R É S E N T A T I O N

TODAY more than ever before, capitalism dominates the world. Throughout the 20th century, the economic system has clearly shown that it is not only unable to eliminate inequality, poverty and exploitation, but to the contrary, it feeds on them, and produces them. There have never been as many wars, massacres and famines. Years and years of colonialism and neocolonialism have speeded the plundering of the resources of the South, while entire populations are exterminated at the same pace. Technological development, designed to increase profits, has led to the slow but sure destruction of the planet's ecosystem. Everywhere, the exploitation of the proletariat by an affluent minority serving the bourgeoisie that buys the services of armies of contingent workers forced into flexibility and constantly threatened with unemployment is increasingly flagrant.

We are for the destruction of this capitalist system. It is neither eternal nor the best of all possible worlds, contrary to what is contended by its advocates, of all leanings.

We are communists...

We are fighting for a society in which the means of production and exchange will not be in the hands of their present "legal owners" or by State bureaucrats, but will be directly run by the people who are primarily concerned, that is, the producers. This means management by grass-root meetings of factory, neighborhood, village, town and regional councils, composed of those women and men who live and work there, and who have the faculty to federate freely to determine the amount, quality and use of what is produced. A society in which the basic rule will be "From each according to her/his means, to each according to her/his needs": an economically communist, classless society with no State.

The role of political parties and trade unions will not be to manage this new organization of production and distribution, but simply to make suggestions. These new structures will exclude all permanent forms of delegation of power without a precise mandate and the possibility of revocation at all times. Party leadership, Parliament and state structures will be replaced by the self-organization of proletarians.

We cannot decide in advance what forms libertarian communism will take. The structures will depend on the general context and on specific situations, on local culture, and on people's possibilities and desires. That doesn't mean that libertarian communism is simply some vague utopia. The history of revolts and of revolutionary attempts is full of examples of the concrete application of our revolutionary anarchist project, adapted to the particular situation of the time and

place - the Paris Commune, the Russian soviets in 1917, the Makhnovist revolt in Ukraine in 1921, the collectivizations in Spain in 1936, the Hungarian workers councils in 1956, etc.

Our libertarian communist project is the radical opposite of the state communism that prevailed in Eastern Europe. We have every reason to rejoice at the collapse of that really existing communism! For some eighty years now, libertarians have been denouncing the so-called communist regimes as bloody dictatorships, run on a state capitalist basis with private property replaced by the domination of a class of bureaucrats who ran production and exchange for their benefit.

The social democratic model, whose idea was to achieve socialism through a series of reforms, by taking over the State through elections, ran amok on the all-powerful capitalist system, which relies alternately on repression and integration. The "socialists" gave up long ago on fighting for equality and the abolition of exploitation.

triarchal system (the domination of men over women), patriarchy must be fought specifically, since it crosses all class lines and is pre-existent to capitalism. The fight against the patriarchal system is a fight for the deconstruction of both male and female genders, shaped and imposed by all pre-existing societies. Taking repossession of our personal identities means the refusal to accept a social status linked to our sex, it means refusing to have our lives coded by today's norms (heterosexuality, monogamy...). We want to live our bodies and our desires freely.

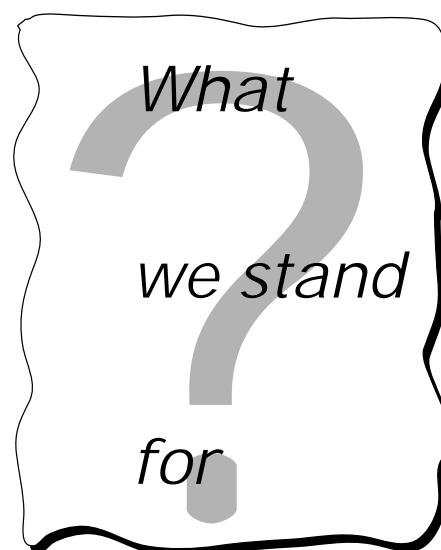
We want to do away with this society in which work takes the form of salaried slavery aimed at producing any old rubbish provided it sells and capitalists can make a profit on it, rather than an activity that is shared on the basis of freely determined needs.

We have to demolish the old myths, including the necessity of economic growth, productivism, and the supremacy of the "economy".

Many socialist currents have contended that communism is only feasible once material abundance is achieved. But the ideology of growth, both economic and demographic, is a race that is lost in advance. It simply makes people more unequal, and lowers the quality of living. Our planet cannot provide the wherewithal for the entire world population to consume as much as the upper classes of the richest countries.

There are some local attempts, in all sorts of places, to set up alternatives to the prevailing models of consumption and production. We view them as revealing the need for collectively taking repossession of our lives, since our space is increasingly being restrained by the productivists, even if the possibility for these alternatives to make a real change in our lives remains limited as long as there is no overall opposition to the entire system, and no political project.

Inasmuch as our political project has developed historically, along with and in the midst of social movements, revolts and attempts to establish egalitarian social relations, we feel that it is within these movements that we must continue the combat, including by protesting against those aspects of their ideas which would tend to reproduce the old order (or to create a new one) based on domination. The beginnings of a different form of social organization, which sometimes burst out spontaneously in some situations, are rooted in the contradictions and conflicts of present-day society. We believe that it is when people are "in movement", partially breaking with the status quo, that they are vectors of ideas and practices that come closest to our own aspirations.



.... and libertarian

But the oppression we want to eliminate is not limited to the strictly economic sphere. We are against all power relations. We want a politically libertarian society with no domination of any sort.

We are opposed to uniformization of any sort (of ways of life, cultures, production and consumption), imposed by capitalist development.

We fight for new relations between men and women, relations in which there would be no reason to value virility and submissiveness. Because a classless society does not necessarily lead to the eradication of the pa-

L'OCL, trente ans d'anarchisme révolution- naire

L'OCL existe sous ce nom depuis plus de vingt ans. Elle est issue de la transformation de l'Organisation révolutionnaire anarchiste (ORA), qui change d'appellation à son congrès d'Orléans, en 1976. Elle estime alors que la diversité des pratiques et des projets regroupés sous le terme « anarchiste » est source de confusion, et donc un obstacle à son développement.

L'ORA pour sa part existait depuis 1967. C'est d'abord une tendance de la Fédération anarchiste (FA), qui s'autonomisera progressivement pour devenir une organisation spécifique en 1970. L'OCL telle qu'elle existe aujourd'hui est donc le produit de cette histoire, qui détermine son identité, ses pratiques et son projet politique.

L'originalité de l'OCL dans le courant libertaire ne peut être comprise qu'au regard des expériences militantes de ces trois décennies, qui fondent ses caractéristiques essentielles : une théorie et une pratique du communisme libertaire fondées sur la lutte des classes, le mouvementisme et la priorité aux groupes de base, l'anticapitalisme, l'anti-impérialisme et l'impératif d'une rupture radicale avec l'exploitation, la domination et l'aliénation dans tous les domaines : politique, économie, rapports sociaux de sexe, environnement...

La naissance de l'ORA dans la FA provient d'une critique du dogmatisme et de l'immobilisme de cette vieille maison, dont la vocation est de regrouper tous les courants de l'anarchisme (organisation dite synthétiste).

Les divergences y sont si importantes que les efforts et l'énergie militante sont dépensés davantage pour se neutraliser mutuellement que pour lutter. La FA des années 60 est en effet empreinte d'un anarchisme idéologique figé, et d'un antimarxisme caricatural qui la conduisent par exemple à nier la lutte des classes comme facteur d'évolution historique. Dans le meilleur des cas, la pratique des groupes FA se limite à la seule propagande de l'idéal anarchiste du xix^e siècle, dans une finalité pédagogique et éducationnelle : « Apprenons l'Anarchie aux masses, elles finiront par voir combien nous avons raison, et par se rallier sous les plis du

drapeau noir. » Cela ne satisfait plus certains anarchistes révolutionnaires, qui souhaitent développer une intervention libertaire dans les multiples luttes sociales des années 60 puis 70 (décolonisation, vie quotidienne, luttes des femmes, écologie, logement, immigration...), et créent donc d'abord une tendance de la FA, puis quittent cette organisation.

En réaction au vaste fourre-tout qu'est la FA de cette époque, l'ORA va développer une stratégie d'organisation structurée, fondée sur la cohérence, le volontarisme et la discipline militante (position dite plate-forme) — en référence à la plate-forme organisationnelle des anarchistes russes en exil après la Révolution russe de 1917, rédigée par Archinov). Mai 68 et le succès des groupes gauchistes qui s'ensuit finissent par faire de l'ORA une organisation peu différenciable de ses concurrentes trotskistes ou maoïstes, si ce n'est dans ses références idéologiques et ses buts proclamés. L'ouvrierisme outrancier, l'activisme organisationnel, la hiérarchisation des secteurs de lutte, la simplification théorique, les raccourcis doctrinaires sont autant de caractéristiques de l'ORA qui déclencheront une crise entre la pratique réelle des groupes et le discours de l'organisation. En 1976, l'ORA tient un congrès qui voit apparaître deux tendances antagonistes.



La première fonde sa pratique et sa stratégie sur le secteur de l'entreprise et l'intervention dans les syndicats. Elle formera à ce congrès une tendance pour une Union des travailleurs communistes libertaires

FASCISM

Fascism is a dictatorship advocating a doctrine of reconciliation between the classes to serve a nation-State based on a corporatist, vertical organization of workers structured around an all-powerful militarized State. Its professed anti-capitalism is simply a facade, since it actually only comes into power with the help and the backing of corporate capital and a fraction of the bourgeoisie, and often perfectly legally; that is, through elections.

The historical causes of fascism in the 1920s and 30s were the crisis in capitalism (a new phase in the industrial revolution, poorly controlled) and the absence of a revolutionary thrust (the defeat of the worker's movement in 1914, leading to the violent crushing of all truly socialist uprisings).

This shows that parliamentary democracy is no rampart against fascism, nor against any other future form of totalitarianism. History has taught us that when the choice is between social revolution and fascism, social democracy itself (and stalinists !) never hesitates to take sides against revolution, even when there is a clear risk of giving the victory to fascism (examples: the "union sacrée" in 1914, Germany in 1920, Spain in 1937, the full powers to Pétain in France, etc.).

Our brand of antifascism is a part of our commitment to fight the present social system, and cannot tolerate any alliance, however temporary, with those who are only antifascist when capitalism does not call for a dictatorship. We are therefore opposed to united front strategies (like: joining forces against such and such...). True antifascism is necessarily anti-capitalist, and only on that basis can our struggle be effective.

(UTCL), accordant la primauté à la lutte des classes sur le terrain économique, et au développement d'un appareil politique classique. Cette UTCL sera exclue au congrès d'Orléans pour s'être mise en dehors de l'organisation. Elle existe toujours sous l'appellation d'Alternative Libertaire¹ et travaille entre autres à sa reconnaissance institutionnelle par la gauche de la gauche, syndicale et politique.

La seconde tendance est aux antipodes de cette vision partidiste et ouvrière. Elle estime au contraire que l'effort militant doit investir tous les champs de lutte de la société, car la lutte des classes ne peut être réduite au seul secteur de l'économie. Elle fait le bilan des travers gauchistes de l'ORA, et considère que l'organisation telle que définie par la plate-forme d'Archinov (unité idéologique, unité tactique, programme anarchiste) est une structure illusoire. Car ce ne sont pas les organisations politiques ou syndicales qui transforment un sujet historique (le prolétariat) en sujet révolutionnaire, mais la combativité dans les luttes sociales qui permet à des gens en mouvement de passer d'une phase revendicative à une phase rupturiste selon un processus de conscientisation et d'autonomisation.

Malgré cette rupture avec le plate-formisme en 1976, l'OCL continuera de vivre pendant quelques années sur un mode centralisé, notamment avec une dichotomie Paris-province dans la réalisation du journal de l'organisation, et donc dans sa principale expression politique. Cela conduira à une crise majeure en 1978-1979, où l'OCL parisienne sera un temps séduite par les sirènes de l'autonomie telle qu'importée d'Italie et plaquée sur une réalité hexagonale fort différente. Cette phase « autonome » ne sera qu'une résurgence de l'ouvrierisme des années précédentes, avec la « découverte » d'un nouveau sujet révolutionnaire, le jeune proléttaire rebelle et urbain, et la mythification de l'émeute urbaine comme lieu ↗

central de l'affrontement de classe. Cette dérive conduira à une rupture Paris-province, et à la disparition du quinzomadaire de l'OCL, Front libertaire, tout en donnant à l'OCL nombre d'acquis sur la violence révolutionnaire et la lutte armée.

Après 1979, l'OCL n'aura plus d'existence que « provinciale », avec une dizaine de groupes qui travailleront à la mise en place d'un nouveau mensuel, Courant alternatif (CA), pris en charge collectivement et de façon rotative pour éviter la centralisation des lieux de décision et d'expression de l'organisation. CA est d'ailleurs édité par l'OCL, et non l'organe de l'OCL — différence subtile mais essentielle dans la conception de l'organisation politique : l'organisation n'a pas une expression unique, mais est traversée par des débats et des pratiques dont elle n'a pas l'exclusivité.

Cette décentralisation conduira l'OCL de la première moitié des années 80 à disparaître en tant qu'organisation classique (bien qu'elle en conserve le nom), pour n'être plus qu'une coordination de groupes militants intervenant dans des mouvements locaux et spécifiques, mettant en commun leurs analyses et leurs pratiques dans Courant alternatif, ou lors de rencontres annuelles. L'OCL est ainsi devenue une organisation anti-organisationnelle, paradoxe à l'origine de bien des incompréhensions, en ce que la primauté de l'effort militant va non pas à l'apparition de l'organisation et de son développement, mais à l'intervention dans les mouvements sociaux et au renforcement de ceux-ci afin d'aller vers plus d'autonomie pour les acteurs/actrices et plus de radicalité dans les objectifs.

Cependant, depuis 1986 et la parution de L'État des lieux², l'OCL a fait le bilan des limites de la simple juxtaposition des pratiques, et tente de favoriser le développement d'une organisation conçue comme un outil de partage d'expériences et de réflexions au service des luttes sociales. Ces dix dernières années, l'OCL a ainsi participé ou construit avec d'autres un certain nombre de campagnes hexagonales (contre le sommet franco-africain, contre le G7, Initiative pour une alternative au capitalisme),

et choisi de réapparaître lorsque ses positions n'étaient pas développées par une lutte, et qu'il y avait besoin d'une affirmation communiste libertaire spécifique. La diffusion de Courant alternatif en kiosque depuis 1990 a traduit cette nouvelle approche, tout comme la production d'un matériel organisationnel spécifique : brochures, autocollants, affiches, tracts hexagonaux...



1. Alternative libertaire - France n'a rien à voir avec le mensuel belge du même nom.

2. L'État des lieux, et la politique bordel ! est un livre collectif qui a établi secteur par secteur les acquis et les positions de l'OCL en 1986 (mouvements de libération nationale, antinucléaire, syndicalisme, antimilitarisme, lutte des femmes...) Quelques exemplaires sont encore disponibles.



CLASS STRUGGLE AND TRADE UNIONISM

"The history of all societies to date has been the history of class struggle", according to Marx. Before his time, the existence of class struggle had been recognized by revolutionaries such as Proudhon and Babeuf, but also by bourgeois economists such as Guizot. Marx's originality resides in his assertion that classes are related to specific phases in the development of productive forces, and that class struggle in industrialized society would automatically proceed through a transitional phase (the dictatorship of the proletariat) to a classless society. While we agree with the first point, we do not share the linear vision of History implied by the second point. We do not view communism as inescapable, and capitalist development, the construction of nation-States and of parliamentary democracies as necessary steps toward a classless society. This "progressive" view of History has often led revolutionaries to help accelerate capitalist development instead of destroying it. However unwillingly,

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NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES

As internationalists, we are naturally anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist. Struggles for national liberation have often been expressions of revolt against the situation experienced by exploited, dominated and colonized peoples.

Like any other struggle, they are fraught with contradictions, and are crossed by class struggle. They may participate in the fight to win back collective power in a particular, controlled space, but they may also cross a limit beyond which the assertion of belonging backfires into a logic of exclusion. They may uphold equality and integration, but they may also be, and often are, the stepping stone by which the local bourgeoisie, formerly held down by the colonizer, takes power.

This is why, when we support or participate in national liberation movements, we defend the concept of national and social liberation. This means:

- Defending the idea that true liberation requires the reorganization of production to fulfill the needs expressed by the exploited classes, rather than the "imperatives" of the market and profits.
- Combating tactics of participation in institutions, and encouraging counter-power and grass-roots structures as opposed to the power of parties.
- Combating those demands that would tend to reinforce the weight of a future bourgeoisie or of local notabilities.
- Encouraging those elements of identity that may be acquired (language, shared struggles, etc.) rather than those that are inherited (such as ties of blood).
- Refusing that armed struggle, when it exists, be put in the leadership.

they completed the bourgeois revolution, which is to say they eliminated pre-capitalist society rather than capitalism itself. It is in this framework that the history and role of trade unionism should be understood, as both representing a will to emancipate the exploited classes, a factor in their integration and an intermediary between capital and labor. To us, then, trade unionism is just one of many ways of furthering class struggle, which workers may choose at some points, depending on the circumstances. We never unconditionally support any union, but we are present when workers are fighting, when we feel that the battle has potential for a radical break or an opening to something new. Nor is there any question of our participating in any bureaucratic machine, or taking permanent leadership or paid official positions within a union. However radical some union-led struggles may be, we never lose sight of the fact that unionism cannot be an end in itself.

THE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST ORGANIZATION (OCL) is not a party, in that we do not consider ourselves as a vanguard that should lead struggles. The OCL is one of the many parts of those social movements that are fighting the capitalist and patriarchal order.. It is a place where people who are more or less on the same wavelength can exchange, discuss and act together;

One of the basic guidelines is that the functioning of the organization should reflect its political project, and that the means determine the end. The OCL therefore tries to be a place for experimenting and developing different relations between individuals and groups, by implementing a radical, libertarian way of running our political group. We function on the basis of a few principles such as direct democracy (the rejection of delegating power), general assemblies and collectivism, self-management and decentralization. Everything is done on a militant, voluntary basis, with no permanent or salaried workers of any sort.

Membership in the OCL requires acceptance by the nearest local group, since each local group is autonomous. Membership dues are in proportion to income, they ensure the financial independence of the local group, regional coordination when there is one, and contribute to the national budget, which is managed by a person mandated for a two-year period.

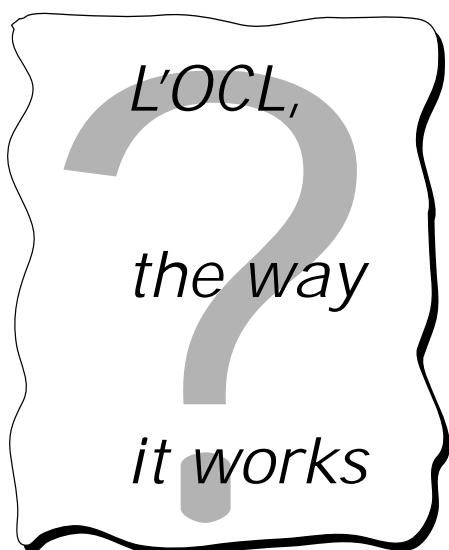
An inter-regional bulletin (BIR), reserved for members of the OCL (and for sympathizers for a period not exceeding six months) serves as a liaison between the different groups and isolated individuals. It is published twice monthly and gives everyone equal access to information on the life of the organization. It is fed by groups and individuals, and is put together by a given group over a two-year period. For more rapid consultations and contacts, there is also a minitel server and an internet site.

Our periodical, Courant alternatif, functions on the basis of rotating commissions (CJ), so that there is a meeting in a different town or city each month. There is no secretariat, no national council, or other disguised form of a politburo, at the OCL. Before it goes to work on the journal, each CJ begins with a discussion of organizational decisions. Each group mandates one or more members to attend the CJ, and if they are unable to attend they express their positions in the BIR, or directly inform the group hosting the CJ. This enables us to achieve great homogeneity in our positions and practices, since there is an ongoing discus-

sion in general assemblies that tends to avoid inequality and differences in levels between the groups or individuals.

When it is involved in specific action, the OCL functions by theme-oriented commissions, to take charge of a campaign, draw up a document, prepare a technical dossier, etc. The mandate is purely technical in this case, and the entire organization must give its political approval to the work done by the commissions. The decisions may be approved by a vote by a majority of two-thirds, if required, with each group having 3 votes and isolated individuals a single vote. In point of fact we rarely vote, and decisions are usually taken by mutual consent when debate on the subject has been exhausted. In addition to these regular meetings, there are two important gatherings for exchange, analysis and the development of our politics:

- The national meetings, held at least every two years. These are three-day periods when all available members work on the OCL's positions and functioning (write papers, define guidelines for strategy and tactics, define and assign mandates for two years...).



- the OCL summer camp, which has been in existence for over 20 years now, and is a highlight in our collective life, for two weeks each summer. It is attended by militant members of the OCL as well as anyone who is interested in discussing the combats of the past year, and other issues, but also in getting to know each other through sharing and collectively managing our everyday life.

Alongside this national structure, groups may publish their own material (local papers, fliers, posters, etc.) and freely define the focuses of their action and positions, as a local OCL group. Because of the regular meetings, direct debate between groups and the small number of militants, the different groups rarely take any contradictory positions in their local action, even when there is no prior discussion. Since there is no power for fractions or individuals to struggle for, to win control over a central organizational position (there isn't any !), disagreements generally resolve themselves through discussion, and do not lead to scissions and exclusions as they usually do in other organizations. As a result, when people leave the OCL it is generally because they are frazzled by the militant life rather than because of any political disagreement.

This assembly-based direct democracy has its pitfalls. At the OCL, exchange is mostly verbal, through talking and debating. This avoids the power of professional writers and motion-makers, but sometimes makes it difficult for people to participate, since our oral culture, achieved over the years, cannot necessarily be acquired in two or three meetings. And again, we can function this way because about twenty towns and some sixty-odd militants are involved. This is one thing that prevents our development, since we do not make any attempt to recruit, and to gain "card-holders". Integration in the organization is achieved through gradual assimilation on the basis of shared practices, and not on agreement on some high-sounding manifesto. This way of functioning also maintains some confusion as to who is actually a member of the OCL and who isn't, since anyone can participate in our activities without paying any dues. One outcome is that some of the conventional organizations become paranoid, and accuse us of manipulation and infiltration when our positions are espoused in struggles, since we don't have any official spokespeople.

Despite these limits, the OCL is an original organizational tool that we have adopted to act, take initiatives collectively and participate, to the full extent of our possibilities in the political and social reconstruction required by the present situation; that is , the need to up-date the idea that the world must be changed, to contribute to the emergence of a revolutionary pole that will not get its feet caught in the snares that the social democrats leave trailing behind them.

