

Alternative Libertaire in French Guyana

Interview with Alternative Libertaire in French Guyana: Anti-colonialists and libertarians

Alternative Libertaire

November 2004

For several months now, Alternative Libertaire has had a presence in Guyana where they have established a group. This short interview serves to give an idea of the specific nature of militancy in French Guyana.

Alternative Libertaire: How and why did you make the decision to create a branch of AL in Guyana?

Alternative Libertaire Guyane: First of all as a pole of information and anarchist propaganda. It seemed to us interesting to create an area for debate and discussion for Guyana's libertarians. Then, we wanted to appear as a specific organization in order to participate in local struggles and fights, to become an active part of the local social struggles and participate in their development. Thanks to the newspaper "Alternative Libertaire", which is distributed in Guyana, a group of comrades made contact with AL and organized a meeting between all those who were interested.

AL: What struggles are you involved in or hope to get involved in?

ALG: For the moment, we are concentrating on building the AL group. The people who are part of it are all involved individually in the struggles against precarious labour, the struggle of the "sans-papiers" and the housing struggle, in collectives which deal with the schooling of children and young people, etc. For example, a solidarity action with the UGTG (General Union of the Workers of Guadeloupe) was held in July 2004. These militants also participate actively in the labour movement, and are developing links of solidarity with the Amerindian people who have been victims of mercury poisoning. The collective investment in these struggles, the involvement in other movements such as the struggle for access to land or prisoner support will certainly become part of AL's work.

AL: What is your opinion on the anti-capitalist struggle?

ALG: It includes support for and involvement in the local anti-colonialist movement, but also solidarity with other colonized peoples, in particular with the Caribbean peoples due to

our geographical proximity. We act as mediator between local anti-colonialist initiatives and the metropolitan libertarian movement. We are engaged in information and libertarian propaganda among the people and educate the Guianan anti-colonialists on the specific contribution of anarchists to the anti-colonialist movement throughout the world and history. Finally, we participate in the regional social forums and work for the coordination of anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist and anarchist groups and movements in neighbouring countries such as Surinam, Brazil, Guyana and Venezuela.

AL: Can you describe for us quickly who is involved in the social and anti-colonialist struggles in French Guyana? Is there a certain unity or prospects of unity among the various activists and their groups?

ALG: The two biggest anti-colonialist organizations in Guyana at present are the UTB (Union of Guianan Workers) and the MDES (Movement for Decolonization and Social Emancipation). The UTB is Guyana's biggest labour union, with a great capacity for mobilization and a presence in almost every sector of activity. It pronounced itself in favour of independence at its Congress in Sinnamary in 1973 and has fraternal relations with the CGT. The MDES is the biggest pro-independence political party. Its members are often also members of the UTB. As anarchists, however, we strongly disagree with its electoral stance. There are other pro-independence organizations in Guyana, but their level of membership is quite low. There are also many serious individuals who are not members of any party. Any unity of the Guianan social movement is around the need for national independence but no precise progressive social content is given to this demand.

AL: Finally, how visible are anarchists in the movement?

ALG: We will be acting in the public arena with libertarian propaganda directed at the people. We will also address the militants of the Guianan social movement, and will be proposing that they link up with the libertarian movement in France.

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Retrieved on 19th May 2021 from www.anarkismo.net
Article from the November 2004 issue of the French libertarian communist monthly
“Alternative Libertaire”. Translation by FdCA – International Relations Office.

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