

# Declaration of the International Libertarian Meeting

Madrid, 31<sup>st</sup> March & 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001

International Libertarian Solidarity

April 1, 2001

The men and women from different parts of the world who have come here to Madrid to these Libertarian Workshops in order to think about, propose and defend a society in which freedom, justice, equality and solidarity allow us to live in peace with other human beings, with the Earth, would like to make public our conviction that it is possible to build a different type of world, and different worlds. We call on all libertarian men and women in the world to organise, to intertwine an international network which will foment social antagonism against capitalist globalisation, to braid resistance, to link those thousands of subversive threads which give form to the resplendent tapestry of social revolution.

By *libertarian* we mean:

- Direct action as a model and method in labour and social conflicts so that that peoples affected decide over, and take responsibility for, their struggles.
- A clear declaration in favour of anti-capitalism, anti-authoritarianism and the fight against all types of domination (patriarchy, fascism, ...) in all day to day social and cultural aspects.
- Applying self-management in internal and external organisational work, understanding this as promoting the rotation of posts, training people in posts, recall, transparency, the responsibility and capacity of all to decide in a structure which is both horizontal and federalist, anti-hierarchical and without vanguards which accumulate and monopolise power.

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Supporting the revolution is not limited to fighting for desirable radical changes, but rather daring to effectively prepare a means of breaking away from the capitalist system. For those who do not wish to limit their actions to mere propaganda deeds, planting the need to revolutionise this world implies determining the conditions from which we can build sufficient strength to make revolutionary processes thinkable and politically and strategically possible. Putting the

revolution on our agenda means building a process of political work, a relation of strength, giving a strategic dimension to social antagonism, forging alliances and becoming capable of being a guiding force in the process of social struggles.

In the face of a full frontal neo-liberal offensive, defending revolutions in these present times might seem unreal, especially in a historical context such as the present one: marked by a lengthy resistance to globalisation which has lasted more than a quarter of a century. Nevertheless, neither are the reformist proposals defended by the left in general realistic nor plausible. Social-Democracy has turned into Social-Liberalism. Between reality and desire there is only one path open. To follow it we need a strategy created through critical thinking, reflection and action, the libertarian will of millions of people to live in dignity, with autonomy inside their community, being the protagonists when decisions need to be made. Cooking up the strategy, encouraging subversive acts, bringing reality closer to wishes, dreams and needs are all tasks which call for libertarian co-ordination and organisation.

In this new millennium, aiming at the heart of the State, storming the Winter Palace, or setting an exact date for the revolution is not possible. The 20<sup>th</sup> Century has given us tragic proof of how many mistakes and barbarities can be committed in the name of the Revolution. We withhold the possibility of transformation, of revolutionising society whilst leaving it clear that, in the first place — and despite what some interested parties might think and publish — history is not already decided: history is wrought by human beings. In the second place, we reject the idea that nothing can be done, that the forces that steer social change are out of reach of human hands. Lastly, we affirm that we are not willing to delegate on anybody the protagonism of the exploited and the oppressed, the majority of society, in the flow of history.

If the century we have just left has taught us anything, it is to reject naive optimism and blind faith in the progress of humanity. Everything can get worse; there is nothing that can completely guarantee a favourable result in the evolution of society. The imposition of social structures based even more on inequality and social exclusion is possible. From this perspective, distant from any type of historical determinism, revolution becomes a vital necessity, and it must be built day by day in many spheres of freedom.

As libertarians we all drink from the same revolutionary spring of water: direct action, self-management, federalism, mutual aid and internationalism. Nevertheless, the different flavours and currents of this spring have caused on too many occasions fractionalism, divergency and separation. We do not wish to see who has got the clearest or purest water, we believe that they are all right and wrong, pure and impure. Wise winemakers mix different types of grapes to produce the best wines, each type of grape provides something. We propose that we do the same and propose a toast for what unites us: the vital need for a libertarian revolution.

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The myth of development is a painful inheritance that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has bequeathed us. An ideological construction of those in power to prolong in their benefit all the mythology built around Progress, which served capitalist interests so well, from the beginning of the first industrial revolution until WWII. The continuation of this myth through ‘development’ has inevitably lead to the globalisation of the economy, a process which has already caused thousands of traumatic shiftings of production centres throughout the world and, in consequence, has established

enormous areas where workers are hyper-exploited in indescribable working and environmental conditions.

Human development, considered as the overall increase of its wellbeing, is not compatible with the capitalist set-up of society and production. Despite what worldwide capitalist rulers try to convince us, this development relies neither compulsorily nor solely on the replacement of traditional production processes by technological ones. Scientific progress must no longer be useful to capitalist development alone, which means to the benefits of a handful of people. On the contrary it must now be useful to everyone. It should ensure independence and autonomy of all peoples, and overall solidarity.

To ensure the acceptance of the development policies, both the capitalist as well as the so-called socialist block had the brightness of the new myth at their disposal, reflected in the American-way-of-life on the one hand, and through the exaltation of productivity as a liberating force in the so-called Socialist countries. This was helped by the enthusiastic collaboration of governments and national financial elite, which acted as local agencies, facilitating in their respective territories the programmes developed by international institutions and large transnational corporations. These had reserved for themselves the right to impose whatever modifications (prices of raw material and other goods, tariff barriers, commerce regulations, cutbacks of all types, etc.) to favour the spread of these new forms of production, making traditional ones futile. The era of development spread throughout the world in the 50's and 60's, dividing the world into underdeveloped, developing and developed countries, and creating a hierarchy under the orders of the new myths, rejecting those which did not accept these changes.

The oil crisis (a natural resource in decline), the collapse of the model of productive and technological competitiveness, and the drop in profits due to the social struggles and progressive extension of the "third-world countries" caused the continual plunder they face, indicate that, after decades of application, development is unmasked as statue with clay feet. The desire for general wellbeing, the levelling of differences between countries are just dreams which hide the painful inheritance of development.

The myth of shared development, spread at large by all capitalist media, allows capitalists to make a large number of people accept their rules, at least passively. But the economical and ecological crisis makes this lie crumble apart. Against capitalist development we propose social development, in equality, world-wide shared, lasting and compliant with the ecological balance. We support the overall increase in production insofar as it aims to cover the real needs and requirements of people from the south or the north, but not in its claims to increase the profits of the shareholders. Setting up such a production process requires collective control over the decisions. Economic, social and cultural development is only a tragic lie if no self-managed and federalist democracy comes with it. True development is a hoax if not everyone can take part in collective decisions.

The age of development caused a cruel widening of the inequalities between the inhabitants and peoples of the world, to extremes never before known in history. Development has shown its manifest inability to spread wealth throughout the world and is unable to even cover the minimal requirements of the majority of the population. The problems of housing, access to drinking water, basic requirements of energy sources are no more worrying than the lack of food. Advances in health and education have run to a standstill and half of the world population is piled up in slums around unsustainable metropolises and megacities, living in total dependence on external vital provisions which neither the remaining stocks of natural resources nor the global economic

system can sustain. The process of resettling the population in cities carries with strength, fanned by the destruction of local cultures, by wars and conflicts and by the increasing abandonment faced by the peasant population.

The response of the powerholders to the failure of development started in the 80's with a new international organisation and division of labour, and with the introduction of new technologies in the productive system to renew competitiveness, and the increase of monetary regulation of human activities. Privatisation and liberalisation were the answers: globalisation of the economy and the pre-eminence of this over politics, culture, ecology and social issues.

Development and its continuity in the form of economic globalisation have, over the last two decades, brought us an increase in social duality and the planet-wide ecological crisis. All of this increases the banal consumerism of the majority of the population of the North while, in the so-called South, scarcity and hunger take hold of its inhabitants and mortgages the future of generations to come.

We support local action. We support what the community can master, following an intergenerational ethic able to ensure an inhabitable world for our children. We reject productivism whose consequences deny the possibility of a future, because it is focused on the immediate profits of the capitalist rulers. The struggles of social ecology must inspire our actions in order to synchronize social struggles and lasting development. However we think local autonomy is not enough. In order to ensure a fair world where everyone stands together, regardless of place of birth or residence, we must link local autonomy and worldwide coordination, through the principles of self-managed federalism.

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Globalisation of the economy, free trade areas and world government are the three pillars that the so-called information society or era is strongly built upon. The globalisation of the economy is based on a new international division and organisation of labour, in the development and application of information technologies in order to make worldwide production decentralised, flexible and less local. At the same time it is building a spiderweb of business networks, interconnected and related to each other whilst simultaneously breaking the working class into thousands of small pieces, hyper-exploiting the new generations of workers: young workers, women, immigrants, children. This is not an apparition of the past, of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but rather a real nightmare from the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Globalised exploitation is particularly aimed at immigrants. With their rights taken away, and without identity roots, this group is easily exploited and is used to divide workers, creating a fictitious group of competitors generated and create by racism.

The sans papiers are a docile and compliant workforce for the bosses. Separating the rights of nationality for freedom of circulation and residence is a way of checkmating capitalism.

Fascism is becoming an ever faster growing reality. Its influence in politics (and in our minds) is a real danger for the values that we defend.

Both private and State capitalism need an increasingly stricter control over the population in order to maintain and increase their benefits. To this end they are establishing a penal State influenced by the extreme right and adopted by Social-Democracy (when its interests are in danger).

The most worshiped idol in the temple of economy is Free trade areas, which has legions of fanatical economists erecting it as the fundamentalist totem of economic globalisation. However, the use of competitions as a way of regulating the economy is marked by a series of depredatory conducts, backed up with the use of arms. Competitiveness in international markets is complemented by greater productivity, and this is increased by mastering and directing the technological innovations, endangering workers' lives. This is how it has been over the last twenty years and this is the present and future policies of capital. What we can expect from Free trade areas and international competition is an even further concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the transnational corporations and governments that support them.

World capitalism has its institutions to favour the spread of globalisation: the IMF, World Bank, WCO, G7, etc. At the same rate as the social, ecological and economic consequences of globalisation advance, there are more and more voices that call out in favour of more control, in favour of a worldwide government. Encouraging any type of world government, arising from the current political situation, will only lead to legitimising the driving forces of capitalism, accelerating the consolidation of political structures which are totally out of the control of the inhabitants and peoples of the world. The use of force, the wars fought by UN peace-keeping troops, coupled with the direct subsidies by transnational companies to the UN reveals the plot of the tragedy: a world government using NATO armed forces as gendarmes, while dressing them up as humanitarian forces, with soldiers paid by the UN with funds from transnational corporations.

Neither a State nor a world government, the only government acceptable is the self management of society from local collectives coordinated regionally and world-wide, that of a libertarian community or municipality, in which decisions are made from the bottom up and in which federalism is the formula for cooperation. No, to competition and free trade areas. Yes, to mutual aid and solidarity amongst peoples; we reject globalisation and dependence in favour of autonomy to put fate in our own hands. These are not brushstrokes to a pretty picture of the society we hold in our hearts: ends and means are one and the same in the libertarian strategy. These are shovelfuls to the site we are building day by day through social resistance: at the same time as we fight against and pull down the power of capital we must also construct the libertarian alternative, step by step, minute by minute.

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Throughout history, the other types of exploitation have been based on patriarchy and the exploitation of women. Insofar as it is a social system of male domination, patriarchy assures the double discrimination of women: in the workplace and at home. Capitalism uses the patriarchal form of organising families to its advantage by establishing a strict separation between what is private and what is public; to be precise, between "reproductive" labour (by women) and "productive" paid labour (largely by men). This hierarchism of social relations is a result of male domination: since social relations between men and women is unequal their domestic and professional activities are not given the same economic or social value.

Nowadays, within the context of privatisation, and monetary regularisation of all social activities, housework is considered to be a "local service" which was and still is a woman's affair. Capitalism has discovered a real goldmine through which it can continue to increase its benefits thanks to the exploitation of young women and immigrant women.

Even when women are able to obtain paid employment, mostly in the so-called industrialised countries, it is restricted to part-time jobs and is paid less than work done by men. This is the answer to the needs that capitalism has of flexibility and allows the continuation of exploitation of women in their households.

One of the replies of libertarians to patriarchal domination is obtaining a shorter and equal workweek and salaries for men and women: this is essential in order to create a fair distribution of labour, including housework.

The equality achieved in the greater part of the so-called industrialised countries has not suppressed nor diminished patriarchal domination. The forms of this have changed, above all due to the different type of family models. But women are still victims of daily violence, in their families or raped and abused during wars (“ou comme arme de guerre lors de conflits.”)

For libertarians, the consequences of patriarchal domination does not stop there. We men and women demand freedom of reproduction, the “ownership” of our own bodies, the freedom to choose different ways of living together and the right to different forms of sexuality (homosexuality, bisexuality, transexuality, etc.) the right to difference. We propose the self-management of our identity. This will allow us to solve the frequent tension between individuals and the group, allowing a solidarious and communitarian development. We want to break the male domination inside our organisations and in society.

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Direct action, propaganda by deeds is a sign of identity of libertarianism that has its roots in the beginnings of revolutionary syndicalism. Today direct action is part of the strategy of the redistribution of wealth through social reappropriation. Making demands is no longer enough; we must socially reappropriate the wealth that has been stolen by the powerful. Direct action must be self-managed by the people who carry it out. We oppose authoritarian so-called revolutionary activists, we claim no messianic role over oppressed peoples, and we encourage and support self-management of struggles. Anarchists are themselves involved in these struggles, but we are not the only ones.

The wealth generated by a society is not only the fruit of capitalist entrepreneurs (who take the largest slice) and of their payroll of workers (who get the smallest slice). Wealth is generated socially and counts with the participation of unpaid workers who, through their jobs of reproduction, training or simply lowering of labour costs (women, students, the unemployed...) get, in the best of cases, the crumbs: dependence on a husband or parents or the pittance of an unemployment benefit or, at worst, empty hands.

From each according to his ability and to each according to his need: this is the communist and libertarian sharing of wealth that we have historically defended and fought for. A sufficient social income for all people who lack income or patrimony could be a main calling point around which we can unite and join forces in this battle of social antagonism for a fairer sharing of wealth. But until we manage to implant a social salary or income, people still have real needs to meet and must fight for survival.

Direct action in the form of social reappropriation of wealth is carried out by squatting houses, by participating in collective meals with food that has been obtained for free, by assuring your health through associating and cooperating towards healthy eating, avoiding mad cows, chickens with dioxins, vegetables with toxins and transgenic foodstuffs. Direct action as a libertarian

strategy and practise allows us to immediately satisfy our needs, builds alternatives to capitalist domination and the best propaganda by deeds to mobilise the majority of society to fight for and achieve a real sharing of wealth.

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In the libertarian tradition, revolutionary syndicalism has been important (with its roots in the 1<sup>st</sup> International) in the fight against capital in Europe and America. From the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the Second World War, revolutionary syndicalism and anarchosyndicalism have been the central point of the major organisational initiatives of anarchist groups and organisations. Organising workers into unions — autonomous from political parties, owners and the State, ideologically independent, but with a firm belief in social revolution — was the first major task of anarchism in the first decades of the last century.

Although we cannot talk of one single type of anarchism, as the varieties of anarchism were and are numerous, revolutionary syndicalism was the workers' masterpiece that allowed millions of workers through the world, from France and Spain to Sweden and Mexico, to join and fight for their emancipation. Coinciding with the second industrial revolution and of the new workplace organisation, anarchosyndicalism headed the struggle and aspirations of a new proletariat reacting to new forms of production and in the process of professional specialisation.

After the second world war, the hidden social pact that the implantation of the welfare state implied, (with its social security, collective negotiation laws, unemployment benefits), helped institutional trade unions, -mostly Social-Democrats-, to push revolutionary syndicalism into a corner and almost completely wipe it out in all countries. The capitalist crisis of the 70's and the resulting new organisation of work, as well as the drift towards globalisation of the economy and the social changes which took place in the first few decades of the information era and up until the new century in which we have entered have not counted with the presence of organised revolutionary syndicalism. Its presence is generally marginal in almost all parts of the planet.

But the same has not occurred with anarchist ideas. All the new social movements relaunched from the 60's onwards, ecology, feminism, anti-militarism, etc. have been a reflowering of libertarian flowers. Social antagonism against domination through sex, race, sexual inclinations and so on, has used direct action; calling it civil or military disobedience; federalism and affinity groups have used it to organise, and mutual aid, calling it cooperation and solidarity. It is for that reason that the groups and organisations that identify themselves as anarchist or libertarian have, over the last few decades, dedicated their efforts to participate in the social struggle of these movements, undertaken in cities and urban areas.

Class struggle still exists. It is a essential part of the fight towards the emancipation of humanity. It is important to bear in mind that the relations between the owners of the means of production/capital and the workers is unchanged. Although class struggle in the daily life, identity and conscience of the workers is no longer looked upon as the leading struggle, the domination of capitalism over the society and the exploitation of human labour is a major deciding oppression, but it is not the only target of the anarchist fight. We will work to make class struggle converge with other struggles against alienation, patriarchal and moral order, racism, nationalism or religious integristism. Nowadays struggles have several identities, several shapes. They rely on various ways to organise. There cannot be any domination of one way over another in the struggles.

On the other hand, syndicalism has not been able to renew and reorganise itself to meet the new organisation of the workforce that has been imposed over the last few decades. What's more, the general tendency has been towards a greater fragmenting of the working class broken up into fixed, precarious, submerged employment, self-employed, part-time, unemployed, etc. This and the reduction of the field of action of labour rights and laws in favour of commercial rights and laws, plus ever-increasing tendency towards individual negotiation to the detriment of collective negotiation, limits and reduces the role of syndicalism. In this situation it must urgently change its strategies and organisational structures or be destined to disappear, limiting itself to the institution role assigned to it by companies and governments.

Libertarianism should currently strive towards encouraging convergence, the interaction of social movements – including the workers' movement – in a solid social movement antagonist to capital and its present true face: economic globalisation and all other types of domination. This antagonistic social movement does not have, and nor should it have, a single organisational expression. It is plural, based on current reality, coming and acting together in the same territory, re-creating a common territorial identity, composed of many single identities.

Local territorial organisation is the 21<sup>st</sup> century's equivalent to what revolutionary syndicalism was in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Economic globalisation is a flux of information and capital flowing at the same rate, with no reference to local concerns. Needs and social struggles are locally rooted: in the neighbourhood or town. This is where we must work to challenge capitalist domination and exploitation by building libertarian alternatives outside of official local institutions. In this way, different identities can work together because we are supporting a common territorial identity under direct democracy interconnected through networks with other towns.

In a world where social resistance strengthens our libertarian ideas, anarchist groups and organisations have got a lot to learn and a lot to give. The libertarian strategy should be that of strengthening the antagonist social movement through interaction with social movements, the workers' movement, the unemployed, the excluded, indigenous movements, discriminated groups, ecologists and feminists, promoting direct action as a way towards social reappropriation of wealth and as a form of propaganda by deed, as an exercise in direct democracy, participative and federalist, without delegations or intermediaries, constructing on a community level in each territory and as an alternative to the authoritarian institutions.

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Libertarianism and anarchism have been and are internationalist. In times of world globalisation of the economy, our need to be able to interconnect in every corner of the planet where a libertarian person or group is struggling grows even greater.

Libertarian groups and organisations have historically organised themselves by affinities and have created or constituted societies, mutualist societies, trade unions and ateneos (self-managed social, cultural and educational centres) to defend, promote and foment demands, education, alternative culture or different lifestyles for specific goals, always with social emancipation as their aim.

Today we support, as a first step, the constitution of a world-wide libertarian network in which all affinity groups which so desire will find their space, open to libertarian organisations, associations, ateneos, trade unions and other libertarian groups. This network will serve to spread



mutual aid, solidarity in struggles, as a source of information and debate for the libertarian world, will organise the international meetings, will set up training schools, video conferences, Internet and all types of tools available to join together strategies which will the libertarian idea to be introduced into and to guide the diverse social struggles.

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Discussed and approved in Madrid on 31.3.01 and 1.4.01. Pending final ratification by groups participating in Madrid:

Al Abdil (Lebanon), AL (France), CGT (Spain), CIP de Oaxaca "Ricardo Flores Magon" (Mexico), CNT (France), FAG (Brazil), FAU (Uruguay), Marmitag (Greece), No Pasaran (France), ORA-S (Czech Republic), OSL (Argentina), OSL (Switzerland), SAC (Sweden).

Groups which have sent declarations of support or interest and are also studying the possibility of signing the declaration:

IWW, NEFAC, SKT, WSM (Ireland), USI-Rome, Anacho-Sindico, Bikisha Media Collective, Zabalaza Books

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