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I.F.A. Introduction

Striving for a global anarchist movement in thought
and action

The IAF/IFA Secretariat

2011

The IAF/IFA fights for:

1. The abolition of all forms of authority whether economic, political, social, religious, cultural or sexual.
2. The construction of a free society, without classes, States or borders, founded on anarchist federalism and mutual aid.

(from the Statement of Principles of the International Anarchist Federation)

IFA was founded in 1968 in Cararra, Italy. The above statement of principles sets out clearly what the IFA/IAF hopes to achieve- an ambitious programme, but the only one that can achieve the goals of freedom, peace and justice that humans have struggled for, in different ways, since the beginning of our existence as a species. Though not calling themselves anarchists, people with anarchist aims and practices have always existed in every part of the world.

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However, it is only in the 19th century that organised, theoretically-explicit anarchism emerged with the founding of the first International Federation of Anarchists in St. Imier in 1872. It was founded by both workers (many from the watchmakers in St. Imier itself) and international anarchist activists who had had enough of the authoritarian nature of the Marxist international. It is significant that even though anarchists formed a relatively small movement in each country, they immediately sought to organise on an international level. The IFA considers itself the heirs of this tradition.

Today, the need for international solidarity and co-operation amongst anarchists is as vital as ever. Every aspect of our lives is woven into a global system of economic, political and cultural domination. This can lead to a feeling of helplessness as our anger cannot be vented directly against those making decisions affecting our lives. The global economic crisis has caused untold hardship for millions of working class people around the world. People's jobs and security depend on fickle, greed-driven international markets. Meanwhile, those who caused it, the global ruling class, maintain their power and privileges. The people of Afghanistan and Iraq are thrown into turmoil as a result of the interference of both the US military intervention and Saudi Arabian- imported Islam. GM crops are imposed on reluctant farmers from Brazil to Poland. Islands in the Pacific are on the verge of disappearance because of the greed for energy elsewhere. Africa, despite having thrown off the yoke of colonialism, continues to be plundered by global corporations and local warlords seeking to enrich themselves at the expense of local people and their environment. And even remote tribal people are losing their very way of life as a result of world demand for the resources on their land. But we are not helpless. We need to make international anarchism our weapon.

The IAF/IFA is only one part of what has become a global anarchist movement. Its member federations are active in a wide range of activities from helping to organise G8 summit protests

and No Borders camps to solidarity actions with struggles around the world. However, the International has a distinctive identity, bringing together social anarchists who stress the importance of:

1. being organised into free associations and
2. being part of the wider working class movement.

Though there are many differences between the member federations, they are united around the principles of the Associative Pact. Member federations include: Argentina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic & Slovakia, France & Belgium, Germany & Switzerland, Great Britain, Iberia (Spain and Portugal) & Italy. We are also in close contact with organisations in Holland, Slovenia & Turkey.

The IAF/IFA provides a means for comrades from around the world to communicate. We are confronting the same enemy everywhere and learning about the struggles of others can give us ideas for our own struggles. Within Europe, the vast experience of comrades from Italy, Spain and France can help those who have a much shorter history of anarchist struggle such as those in Eastern Europe. However, the comrades in Eastern Europe, not weighed down by tradition are able to offer new perspectives and ideas for struggle.

Good communication can also be revolutionary if it inspires. Just to know that people elsewhere are fighting back is important to those who may be experiencing a downturn in struggle. This knowledge can help people just keep going or it could motivate people to launch a major fight back themselves. The most important thing is to hear of successes. Spreading these stories of successful resistance is a major role of international anarchist propaganda. The struggles of the Argentinean working class were welcomed enthusiastically by people in Europe. Hearing about workers just ignoring bosses, banks and politicians and just doing things themselves confirmed the faith anarchists have always had in the power of workers to self-organise.

It is also important to have an international forum where more theoretical discussions can take place. Learning about what is happening in a variety of countries can help us to develop our analysis of the situation facing us. We need to have a thorough understanding of the political, economic and social realities so that we can organise more effectively and anticipate the strategies of our enemy. The experience of Venezuelans with Chavez, Brazil with Lula, Britain with Blair all help to reinforce the anarchist antagonism to reformism, a doctrine that seems to think that a government can bring about social change. The Italian experience of repression has been a salutary lesson, making us aware of the potential for any so-called democratic government to become overtly authoritarian. Internationalism remains vital as a weapon against the rise in ethnic and national conflict just as it was during WWI and WWII. Comrades in the former Yugoslavia, though organised as separate national federations, are beginning to come together on a wider basis, showing that anarchists are above the tragic divisions of the rest of the working class that have caused so much pain and suffering. By providing a framework where anarchists from different countries and ethnic groups can come together, IAF/IFA can facilitate the building of an undivided workers' movement.

For International Solidarity
The IAF/IFA Secretariat