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Interview with the organizing team of “Utopia Libertaria”

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This interview was conducted for “The Anarchist Herald” in 2010 by myself, under the pseudonym of Fernando Dáriem. 20 years after the founding of the magazine “Utopia Libertaria” we congratulate in The Anarchist Herald and thank the efforts of comrades who have worked so hard to maintain a publishing house that reached many young Bolivian and Latin American anarchists in the early twenty-first century, giving us in many cases our first anarchist books.

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At the beginning of the 21st century, the collection “Utopía Libertaria” emerged, its members came from anarchist militancy and several were members of the magazine UTOPIA. The collection was proposed as a libertarian bet on the level of the mythical Editorial Proyección and Americalee, imprints that left a very important anarchist legacy on the shelves of all scholars of libertarian ideas. Thus, in the mid-2000s the books of Utopia Libertaria circulated in self-managed fairs, book fairs and other spaces where traveling anarchists arrived with a package of books. Many young Bolivians were able for the first time to hold in their hands books by such emblematic authors as Mijail Bakunin, Piotr Kropotkin, Pierre Proudhon, Murray Bookchin, among others. In addition, the publisher’s commitment to free the books and make them available for digital download, allowed many to be inspired to take copies for dissemination.

Because anarchism is a human and intellectual ideal, books have always accompanied anarchists, regardless of the current they followed, books, book chapters, and fragments were always in the mind of an anarchist who faced domination. For many anarchism was what introduced us to the world of letters, their semantic challenges to imposed truth and the humanity with which they embraced their environment, led us to appreciate intellectuality, not for individual vainglory, but for the understanding of our environments. And so it is that Utopia Libertaria achieved its goal, today its red and black colors are recognizable in all anarchist book fairs, and are dear to every anarchist who finds in its pages, enlightenment and clarity. May libertarian ideas continue to go forward, reaching the hearts and minds of all those who do not want to dominate or be dominated.

Iván Fernando Mérida Aguilar: When was the construction of “Utopía Libertaria” planned and when was its effective reality consolidated?

Utopia Libertaria: The editorial project has several years and several previous attempts. In a first stage with the Altamira imprint, and sometimes in co-publication with Nordan of Uruguay, we published some titles, such as God and the State, Guerin’s Anarchism, and Christian’s El Lenguaje Libertario.

“Libertarian Utopia” in particular was conceived in the troubled Argentina of 2002, and as the prologue to the edition of Anarchism puts it: “The resurgence of the critique of all systems of representation, the understanding that social change can be realized without taking power (and more, that the taking of power necessarily goes in the opposite direction to the realization of this change) is, slowly but progressively, gaining space both in intellectual sectors without a libertarian background and among organized groups of unemployed considered radicalized, who do not fight for — and do not want — to be included again in the system. They do not seek to be

commanding anyone, that hopefully we can all avoid the humiliations of life and humiliate no one, and that anarchism is not a form of discord but of human fraternity.

Iván Fernando Mérida Aguilar is an internationalist lawyer, Master in International Relations and doctoral candidate in International Relations and Political Science. He is currently a member of El Heraldo Ácrata.

IFMA: After having been known in the libertarian sphere, as well as in other spheres, what expectations do you have of Latin American anarchists who are getting closer and closer in their relations, be it in debates, quarrels and alliances?

U.L.: Latin American anarchism is afflicted by the same evil that afflicts world anarchism, which could be synthesized in the word sectarianism or in the spirit of chapel. Lines of action that work on similarities and the identification of common enemies are not conceived, but rather the emphasis is placed on the differences of criteria, organizational and tactical differences. The very diversity that is our strength becomes an insurmountable obstacle to common action.

IFMA: How can the different groups that are being born in different parts of Latin America relate to you and be able to obtain books, who should they communicate with and basically how much would a shipment of books cost in the minimum sales margins they have?

U.L.: Access to the books is facilitated by the fact that they are all uploaded to the internet and can be downloaded as they are published. Each book has an anti-copyright notice that says “The reproduction of this book, by optical, electronic, chemical, photographic or photocopying means, is permitted and encouraged by the publishers”. In the case of requiring physical books, communication can be made by contacting us through the mails of each of the publishers. Shipping costs vary according to the amount of the order, and can be by registered mail, or for larger volumes, up to 50 kg, by one of the international shipping companies. We have a standardized procedure, and we have regularly shipped to Spain, Chile, Mexico, etc.

IFMA: What advice do you give to the boys and girls who have found a treasure of knowledge in the books of “Utopia Libertaria” that somehow have reached them?

U.L.: That anarchism is an adventure of thought and life, that it is better to live without being commanded and without

exploited again, but want to build an alternative sociability, a new world. Very few of them know their anarchist background. Only a few know of the struggles of the men and women who preceded them on such an arduous path, of their hopes, frustrations and ephemeral triumphs. For them and for all those who are interested in approaching a vital, multifaceted, passionate and surprisingly current thought, we reprint this book”.

In 2003 the first two titles of the collection were published, with the reissue of God and the State and Anarchism.

IFMA: We know that before there was a magazine called “Utopia”, of an analytical theoretical character, was the initiating group of Utopia Libertaria related to the aforementioned magazine or was it a project of strange anarchist individualities?

U.L.: Indeed, the initiators of the project came from the editorial group of the magazine UTOPIA. Cutral, who was also the magazine’s designer, Cutral, who passed away a few years ago, was the one who designed the collection, just as — with slight changes — it is still maintained.

IFMA: Many anarchists, if not all, advocate as a feasible form of self-management in economic projects, but this project with its scope and the diffusion it has had, how did it consolidate economically, how was it possible to achieve an economic platform — this in the Utopia Libertaria project — for the investment and growth that is reaching hundreds of bookshelves in both popular and non-popular bookstores?

U.L.: The collection, as the flaps of all the copies say, is shared transversally by several groups that claim to be libertarian and each one has its own publishing label. At the moment there are four publishing houses: the TUPAC imprint (of the José Ingenieros Library), Reconstruir (of the Federación Libertaria Argentina), Terramar and Libros de Anarres. In addition, co-publications with La Malatesta of Madrid and Tierra de Fuego of the Canary Islands have been and are being car-

ried out. The initial economic platform was the possibility of offering the books in the bookstores of the publishers of Ter-ramar and Libros de Anarres, in addition to the direct sale in the premises of both the Library and the FLA, and in different and numerous sales stands of different groups of militant comrades, in Argentina and abroad, thus achieving the objective of disseminating and contributing to the self-financing of each group. A national distribution is also carried out through commercial distributors, which, although not significant from the economic point of view, allows the books to reach bookstores and the public that cannot be reached by other means.

IFMA: *Utopia Libertaria, from “Utopia is Possible” to the latest books they have published, such as “ABC of Libertarian Communism” by Berkman and “Against the Judges” by Aníbal A. D’Auria, have been able to gather a large number of people. D’Auria, they have managed to bring together different positions be it with Stirner, Proudhon, the postanarchism of Christian Ferrer’s compilation, history and even such necessary analyses as that of “Anarchism versus Law”, all this seems to have no end, do you think that this project is similar to the one launched in the last century by Americalee, which gathered works by Jesús Prados Arrarte or Jean-Marie Guyau with his “Irreligion of the Future”? What similarities exist and what new goals have you outlined for Utopia Libertaria?*

U.L.: Yes, of course there are similarities, not only with Americalee, but also and perhaps even more with Proyección. One important difference, however, is the lack of a formal Editorial Board, which, in the case of Proyección, was composed of delegates from different lines of anarchism in those years and had a veto power over what was or was not published. In the case of Utopia, participants can publish the book of their choice within the broad ideological spectrum of anarchism. This has

allowed us to publish Stirner and Armand as well as Santillan, Proudhon or Kropotkin.

IFMA: *In my experience closer to Chile and Peru, anarchists have created somewhat deep divisions between those who do analysis and studies on politics and economics, who are a small number, and those who have a very spontaneous action, reading is greatly devalued and relegated to the intellectuals, this in the ranks of the libertarians, many discussions could be settled in advance if they had prior knowledge, but we are still in a very incipient process of construction of an anarchism proper to Latin America, whether with Brazil, Chile, Argentina, or Venezuela. How do you see this problem between the intelligentsia and the spontaneous action that is becoming more and more biased among anarchists?*

U.L.: While it is true that there is a kind of distancing between what we could call intellectual activity and active militancy, it does not seem to be something of local importance. There are certain groups that prefer leaflets or pamphlets to books for dissemination, but that does not imply that there is a disdain for theoretical production or even less an abandonment of classic texts.

IFMA: *There are recent works such as “La traición de la hoz y el martillo” by the Mexican Erick Benitez and others that are appearing in different parts, will “Utopia Libertaria” reach or try to take the current works that are coming to light, are there lines or rules for the works of certain authors to enter the edition of Utopia Libertaria?*

U.L.: In the collection in fact, and not because there has been a specific planning, there is an alternation between classic authors and new authors, the latter certainly in general around new visions on historical themes or new research on past events. We lack texts on new theoretical elaborations, but that seems to tell us something about the current state of the movement.