

# **Manifesto of the UCL**

Union Communiste Libertaire

2019

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## # 1. Another Future

Everywhere, reaction, regression and destruction are at work. Built on inequality, on the monopoly of wealth by the ruling classes, the capitalist system and its agents at the head of states have no intentions of slowing down their folly regardless of the ever more serious crises that they generate and which, by now, are out of their reach. Deeply deadly, this system, based on the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and on the search for profit, destroys living beings and devours the planet to the point of threatening our very existence. It organizes, on a global scale, a generalized competition that fractures societies, throwing them against each other.

Only one watchword seems to prevail: the precariousness of living, working and social conditions. Methodically, the solidarity chains essential to the proper functioning of society, together with the rights forcibly taken, through struggles, from the voracity of the dominant classes are being attacked and destroyed. All forms of protest are repressed by ever-increasing violence. In industrialized countries, authorities no longer even care to legitimize their domination through redistribution or the guarantee of public liberties. Social democracy is no more. The times we live in have given its place back to fear. The fear of losing one's means of subsistence, when everyone is forced into social isolation. The fear that allows hatred of differences—the ultimate asset of a system that has been laid bare—to flourish in political speeches.

An abundance of possibilities

In the face of such a situation, there is an urgent need to build a radical change in society. Yet, our social camp is experiencing difficulties.

The crisis of legitimacy that is hitting those in power, rightly accused of representing only themselves and defending a system from which they benefit, is also weakening the traditional organizations of the social and revolutionary movement, which are struggling to embody an alternative. But this legitimacy crisis is also giving rise to new mobilizations that reject old forms of organization and ideologies in order to demand direct and radical democracy. A thriving proliferation of both possibilities, and, lets face it, pitfalls, but experiments at any rate. This demand for direct democracy, this rejection for delegation, this affirmation of power given to the grassroots, are also ours. But there is still a long way to go before they break with the electoral illusions sold by social democracy, which mask the promise that abandoning one's capacity for decision making in favour of a few individuals would benefit everyone. It is also a break with the dictatorship practiced by authoritarian socialist regimes.

To this demand for direct democracy, we add the struggle against all alienations and oppression— capitalist, racist, patriarchal, religious... —without any hierarchy among them.

An organization useful to the struggles

We also assume our analysis that a formal organization is both a useful tool for struggles and a way of guaranteeing real democracy, through the implementation of collective frameworks. We inscribe this organization in the libertarian communist current. But we are not immovably set on a dogma that would have been defined once and for all. Basing our political practice on involvement in social struggles, where we work and where we live, in line with the realities of contemporary society, with the evolution of class relations and domination. Drawing from the revolutionary, self-managing, anti-authoritarian, anti-racist, anarchist, ecological, feminist and trade unionist currents, past and present, we take inspiration from the experiences of all the places where the exploited are fighting for their emancipation. Without limiting our references.

Without limiting ourselves, either, to the State borders, our fight echoes those carried out elsewhere and is in solidarity with them. It is part of a struggle that is international, and part of an internationalist project.

We know what we want

These are unstable times, and we do not claim to know all the answers to the challenges they pose. But we know what we want; we do not need providential men. We know in what conditions we want to live, grow old, work, learn, love. Our struggle, detailed in this manifesto, is a struggle for a society in which cooperation would be logical and competition absurd, in which working would be interesting and useful, in which the arrival of a foreigner would be good news.

A society in which workers would manage their own activity, in which users would determine their own needs, in which people would not be oppressed because of their disability, skin colour, gender or sexuality, in which the planet would be neither a garbage can nor a stockpile to be taken advantage of. A society in which a few, the owners of capital, would not stuff themselves on the backs of everyone else, in which a leader would not be right against everyone else. A society free from capitalism and state, from racism and patriarchy.

## **# 2. The Environmental and Social Emergency**

The global ecosystem is today threatened by climate change, the loss of biodiversity, the poisoning of both soil and water, land development, and deforestation... The environmental struggle has, in other words, become vital. This struggle will however only makes sense if it is both anti-capitalist and antiproductionist.

Capitalism's very existence depends on the continual growth of production and expanding its influence ever further, leading to the overexploitation of earth resources. In order to optimize production and distribution, vast regions of the globe have been urbanized to form specialized regions, leading to spatial inequalities. This has the effect of continuously furthering the distances between areas of production, and the areas people live, shop and work. Rather than facing the truth that capitalism is at fault, the dominant classes continue to argue that technology will resolve the environmental crisis. They will fight any measures, even essential ones, that endanger their profits.

Rather than questioning the insane idea of indefinite capital accumulation, they instead promote "green" capitalism, based on opening new markets to partially effective and theoretical technical solutions.

Accepting the capitalist *modus operandi* leads to at best, a diversity of individual solutions with limited global impact such as "simple living", or at worst, rationing policies for the working classes, who are, and always will be, the first victims of environmental disasters. The capitalists rob the working classes of their ability to choose how they consume, produce, move around etc., forcing them to participate in the destruction of the environment.

In complete contrast, we defend the vision of a world where production satisfies the needs of humanity without endangering the limits of the natural world. Instead of the destructive exploitation of nature, humanity must find a balance with all lifeforms.

Three revolutions are necessary:

A revolution in the way we produce. Handing control of production back to smallhold farmers will spearhead the fight against agribusiness multinationals: ending the agricultural specializa-

tion of entire regions: questioning the mass usage of pesticides and chemical fertilizers: abolishing industrial livestock production, industrial slaughterhouses, and largescale industrial fishing... A revolution of our lifestyles. We fight for an egalitarian society where the means of production are socialized. A new way of life will be able to emerge. This involves reviewing the organization of cities, rebalancing the relationship between urban and rural areas, managing new forms of housing that encourage the mutualization of goods and facilities—everything could be transformed. A rich convivial social life blending, culture, science, physical activities, festivities... could emerge, where the possession of material goods would no longer play a central role in the lives of human beings. A society where human beings no longer consider themselves superior to other species, and control the environmental impact of their activities, will mean we can live in harmony with the natural world.

A revolution in the way we trade. In contrast to free-trade, we defend "productive autonomy". Once countries are no longer dependant on multinationals, every region of the world will be able to produce what it needs freely. By this we don't mean a return to autarky, but limiting long range trade to necessities only and promoting local supply chains.

Entire branches of the capitalist economy will disappear, particularly the parts linked to the commodification of life, control of the dominated classes, advertizing, excessive packaging, land appropriation and housing control by private interests, to the stock market and the domination of global finance, the luxury industry, the absurd travel times caused by social-spatial segregation, and the exploitation of the Global South's natural resources...

The use of dangerous raw resources that are difficult to extract and recycle, and which destroy the environment will be severely limited and replaced wherever possible. We fight as much against nuclear power as we do against fossil fuels.

We demand an end to nuclear power, immediately in the civil sector (except for medical uses) and the military sector. Nuclear power is an authoritarian system linked to the military-industrial complex; it is exceptionally dangerous and as such is heavily dependant on police and security; the pollution it causes is irreversible, and it is the antithesis of a democratic and decentralized energy model. Energy needs, naturally reduced by new production models and a different way of life, will be satisfied by renewable sources of energy, produced locally and according to needs.

A combat with social environmentalism at its heart

Environmentalism is intimately linked with the fight for a different type of society. It is inseparable from the fight for direct democracy and economic equality, and in this sense, bridging the gap between the two movements so that they may combine, will be the keystone on which the subsequent environmental strategy will be built.

We refuse in advance any form of antidemocratic logic in which experts—who are too often linked to the dominant class—decide in the people's place.

We neither expect anything from the institutionalized environmental movement, nor environmental policies put forward by institutions. They have no effect, and only serve the interests of the capitalists.

Our will is to bring life to the construction of an environmental struggle that seeks diversity:  
- within specifically environmentalist movements, we want to defend the inclusion of the consideration of the working class' interests and seeking discussion as well as alliances with the social movements.

- within the syndicalist movement and within class struggle organizations fighting on matters like housing, health or else, we want the environmentalist component to be systematically taken

into account and the social movements to become forces of the environmentalist mobilizations. - we intend to take part to the creation of collective tools for production and distribution. Victories achieved by local resistance movements are important, but they must weaken the grasp of capitalist ideology to truly have an impact. The same goes for alternative-society experiments—when social struggle and the demand for the socialization of the means of production are what defines them—these experiments will allow the ideas of libertarian communism to spread, and support the counter-movement essential to overthrowing capitalism.

### **# 3. Anticapitalism is Vital**

We are resolutely anti-capitalist. We are not only opposed to the abuses of the system that dominates the whole world today. We are radically opposed to its foundations : the exploitation of human labour for the benefit of ruling and privileged minorities; the exploitation of natural resources leading to their destruction; unequal global development and imperialism; the alienation of the individual; state and employer domination over society.

As anticapitalists, we reject the race for profits, corporate logic, the productivist development model, hierarchy and social inequalities, which are the creeds of a society dominated by the capitalist mode of production.

We are anti-capitalist for social reasons, through our commitment to class struggle. We are anti-capitalist for ethical reasons, through our attachment to egalitarian, libertarian values, social justice and respect for the specificities of each individual. We are also anti-capitalist for vital reasons, since capitalism is based on an ever-increasing over-exploitation of environmental resources that threatens the survival of humankind.

Capitalism never puts "people first"

We are opposed to capitalism in whatever historical form it takes: liberal capitalism or state capitalism. We are opposed to liberal capitalism, based on an "autonomous" regulation of the market, which claims to be "democratic". It is based on a production mode that is inherently undemocratic and is entirely oriented towards making profits for the ruling classes. We are opposed to state capitalism, even when it claims to be "socialist" or even "communist". It is based on a tyrannical mode of exploitation and domination of the workers, and on the authoritarian determination of the market for the benefit of a privileged and all-powerful class. These two faces of capitalism create a bureaucratic and technocratic structure. We therefore do not advocate a partial or total state control of liberal capitalism, nor a partial or total privatization of state capitalism. Whether in the public or private sector, the rule by which capitalism operates has always been the collectivization of losses and the privatization of profits. "Protectionism" and "free trade", national capitalism and globalized capitalism are two sides of the same coin. Depending on their interests, the wealthy classes advocate the one or the other. It is useless to seek ideological coherence here. Their only dogma is that of private ownership of the means of production and distribution. Everything else is adaptable to circumstances.

Our anti-capitalism is part of the daily struggles and class struggle to achieve a self-managing and libertarian socialism.

## # 4. A Driving Force: the Class Struggle

We assert that the division of society in antagonistic social classes remains the prevailing mark of modern capitalism. Capitalism has undergone profound changes, it has never stopped and will never stop transforming itself, through a cycle of crises and expansions. But nevertheless it is first and always based on relations of domination—the ruling and the ruled—with their corollary: the exploitation of manual or intellectual workers by the ruling classes.

A modern conception of the proletariat

Social classes are determined by their place within relations of power and in production—be it the production of material goods, of merchandise, of equipments, or the production of services—in the private as in the public sectors. The class struggle opposes mostly the capitalist class and the modern proletariat. The capitalist class is made of the owners and managers of the means of production, those categories which organize production and snatch the surplus value that they share among them. The modern proletariat comprises all the social groups who, because they are deprived of all ownership or possession of the means of production, are obliged to sell their work force (for manual and/or intellectual work), most of them as wage worker, without any real power of decision over the production.

Between the capitalist class and the proletariat, new intermediate strata of waged workers have developed (executives, engineers, technicians...) who fulfil tasks of control and management. The importance of these strata, politically but also culturally, is ever increasing. To engage the class struggle presupposes a distinction between social classes, between those who issue orders purely for technical or professional reasons, and those who take part in decision-making regarding the goal of the production.

One part of the independent workers oscillates, from a material and ideological point of view, between the upper classes and the popular classes, depending on the capital they own (social, cultural and economic), on the income made with their activity and on their working conditions. Unwaged workers working in the agricultural, the building or the health sector in particular—most of whom suffer from being exploited by this system of domination—still make up an important social category, owing to the purpose of their work as much as to their place in the natural and social environment.

The recent mutations of capitalism in the wealthiest societies have diversified and atomized the proletariat in spite of its significant place in society, thereby increasing the difficulty to build and transmit class consciousness. The speeding up of the class struggle waged by the capitalist class results in plunging on the long term an increasingly larger part of workers into unemployment or precariousness. Some new forms of exploitation at work are developing apart from the wage system, like self-employment or independent contracting which allows large corporate firms, sometimes through digital platforms, to hire underpaid workers who are falsely called "independent", without granting them legal or social protection.

The resort to subcontracting which characterizes today's capitalism, with sometimes several levels of subcontracting, dilutes managerial responsibilities and the proletariat is thereby all the more divided between the subcontractors and those who are granted a status.

For an inclusive approach

In spite of common conditions and life experience, the proletariat is not a uniform social class. It is permeated with other systems of domination which subdivide it into distinct social groups. The working conditions, the remuneration, or the possibilities to find a job vary according to

qualification, but also sex, gender, handicap, skin colour, capacities, language(s) spoken, origin, sexual orientation, nationality, real or presumed religion...Women, LGBTI individuals and racialized people generally suffer from an increased and multifaceted exploitation.

Capitalism takes advantage of these divisions to set these different fractions of the proletariat in competition with one another. The struggles for professional equality between men and women, against racist or LGBTIphobic discriminations on the work place, or for the rights of undocumented workers are therefore an integral part of the class struggle. Likewise, people with disabilities find themselves particularly discriminated against and marginalized. Their specific needs are ignored by capitalism and normative institutions which see them as additional "costs", which makes their full and complete integration in society difficult, or even impossible. This is why we support their struggles for equal rights and equal living conditions. Added to that—and indeed an integral part of the class struggle—is the struggle against hierarchy, which aims to abolish the opposition between manager and operator at work.

A significant role to play

A view limited to a minority working class that would serve as sociological vanguard and sole training force is an outdated view which takes into account only the capitalist domination and which denies the other forms of oppression.

This new proletariat is polymorphous but can be unified on the basis of its shared situation as a victim of domination and exploitation; it must seek the convergence of protest movements and anticapitalist movements with large sections of intermediate layers of wage workers and with the other social categories dominated by capitalism. Such convergence will be built through social struggles, collective awareness and the emergence of new projects to transform society.

Today it is up to us, revolutionaries, to reinforce the inclusiveness of struggles. We must stop talking and struggling with only one particular constituent of the proletariat. Proletariat is multifaceted, and so must be our demands. By adding to our anticapitalist vision an antipatriarchal and antiracist vision, we will reinforce the revolutionary side, we will fight together for the entirety of proletarians. This convergence will be built through social struggles, through individual and collective awareness and through the emergence of new projects of transformation of society.

The class struggle is at the heart of our revolutionary fight. It will bring us at the same time some partial transformations (on work, the sharing of riches, rights, institutions...) which are opposed to the logic and the interests of the dominant class, and a revolutionary rupture that will lay the foundations of a new society capable of emancipating the whole of mankind. The proletariat, because of its place in the relations of domination and production, will have a central role to play in the break with capitalism and the setting up of self-management.

## **# 5. To free the Society from the State**

We refuse the myth of the neutral, democratic, republican State superior to individual interests. On the contrary the State is the instigator of the political violence imposed by the ruling classes on the grass-roots components of society.

Even though the principle of State emerged several thousand years ago, the modern State is a recent institution which concentrates in its hands the military, the police and the judicial forces as well as fiscal resources. Relying on the myth of national unity overriding social classes, the State is an essential tool for the control of populations and for cultural standardization. It is the

main weapon which the ruling classes use to establish their power, be it forcibly or through their ideology. It is the essential instrument of modern colonialism and imperialism.

#### The mutation of the modern State

Under the capitalist system of production, the government, to a large extent, serves the interests of the capital. It takes part in the constitution and the defence of the large private and public monopolies. The neoliberal wave of privatizations and of openings to free-trade competition is perpetuating the growing hybridization of high-ranking officials and the capitalist class whose members, all along their careers, move between finance, industry and administration, thereby weaving closer and closer links between the state sphere and the trade sphere. Although the neoliberal State claims to have reduced its direct interference with the economy, it continues to subsidize the private sector, in particular the strategic sectors (arms, energy, transportation, etc.).

The decentralization of state power initiated in France in the 1980s did not encourage popular power; it simply redistributed the prerogatives of the central State to local fractions of the political elite. The neoliberal globalization did not question the legitimacy of the principle of State, either; it merely transformed its methods of action. The construction of the European Union favoured an evolution of the rights granted to the State by aggravating democratic dispossession and by speeding up the destruction of public services.

Neither supranationalism nor regionalism are means to escape from the oppression of the State. At a time when neoliberal capitalism has gone through successive crises since the 1980s, the State all the more appears as the last stronghold to serve the bourgeoisie in order to impose its reforms, to repress social protest and to defend the inequitable social order. An increasingly important portion of the bourgeoisie is longing for the authoritative, racist and sexist reinforcement of the State – as shown by the rise of conservative and far right political forces which find more and more supporters within the ruling classes. Our generation is falling into a new era with a right-wing orientation; more than ever, we must build counter-powers that mark our estrangement from the State.

#### The meaning of our anti-statist stance

Libertarian anti-statism is radically different from liberal anti-statism. The former wants to emancipate the society from the State and from capitalism; it defends the collective managing of public goods and services. The latter wants at the same time « less state interventionism » so as to free the markets, and « more state interventionism » with police and military support so as to control the population and defend capitalist interests abroad.

Libertarian anti-statism also differs distinctly from the theoretical anti-statism of Marxism-Leninism. Contrary to Marxist-Leninist claims, the State is not just a «product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms » bound to die out of its own accord with the disappearance of the capitalist class. The Soviet experience has demonstrated that the State is an apparatus of domination in itself, whose internal logic is to breed by spawning a technocracy that will become the new exploiting class.

We also fight against the repressive law-enforcement institutions used by the State in order to maintain social order: police, justice, jails, file-keeping of personal information, administrative control...

#### The illusion of change through the ballot box

There can be no real democracy within the frame of capitalism. That is why, while not making an inviolable dogma out of abstentionism, we do boycott State institutions and representative elections. For the social and revolutionary movement, participation in representative elections is

a dead end which can only spawn division, compromising, renunciation, institutionalization and instrumentalization, luring the exploited away from direct action. Indeed, social conquests were not obtained thanks to ballot boxes, electoral alliances or allegiance, but by collective struggles. Far from implying any contempt for the people who do vote, the anti-electoral stance that we sustain is political and not confined to the electoral calendar: it recaptures the spirit of the First International which stated that « the emancipation of workers must be achieved by the workers themselves ».

We are labouring to preserve the unity of the social movement in front of the divisions which can appear at the time of elections.

However, we do not reject indiscriminately systems with elected representatives and authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. The formers do not lead to the same degree of oppression on populations as the latter. Public liberties – freedom of speech, of the press, of association, of public demonstration – like public services, are conquests of the labour movement; they were granted by the State only to preserve social order. Faced with the increasing recourse to police methods which aims at tightening the grip of social control over the population, we must defend fiercely, and extend every right conquered by struggles. Whatever the political regime, our objective remains the same: the emancipation of all men and women, and social justice.

A federalist alternative

Our political project proposes to substitute self-managed federalism for statist and capitalist organization. In such a society, the population will itself set the major economic and political orientations. It will be up to the revolution, such as we conceive it, to replace indirect democracy with a direct democracy. A wide federal decentralization will have to ensure that the people are not dispossessed of their power by a new State power, centralized and cut off from society.

A genuine, truly emancipating democracy will arise only outside of the capitalist and state shackles, within a classless society.

## **# 6. To Break the Mechanisms of Racism**

Fighting against racism is an essential issue for all those fighting for equality. It's of particular importance as it encourages solidarity between all exploited people facing the State and the employers. Whether it takes the form of hate speech or discrimination, whether it is conveyed by the state, the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, racism is a multiform system of domination that creates divisions within populations, between a majority group and a minority of oppressed groups, based on origins, physical traits or cultural criteria, thus forging stereotypes.

A product of nationalism and colonialism

The European states, in their desire to standardize controlled territories and centralize power, have politically and artificially constructed a national identity defined by whiteness and christianity, based on a truncated and selective version of history, a national myth known as the "roman national", literally "the national novel", leading to the exclusion and oppression of minorities who do not meet these criteria.

Till this day, minorities living in a country who are not considered part of its national identity have been and still are subject to racist domination. It is particularly in this context that anti-semitism and romaniphobia have developed in Europe, with Jews and Romani people being defined as the anti- national, racialized figure, designated as external to the national identity.

At the same time, the colonization of America, and then, from the 19th century onwards, the extension of colonial imperialism to the whole non-Western world, were based on a racist definition of non-European peoples. To justify their enslavement, and the monopolization of the territories they inhabited and their wealth, the colonized peoples were designated as inferior in order to legitimize massive recourse to slavery, deportation and forced labour for millions of individuals. Racism towards the descendants of colonized peoples, in France and in other colonizing countries, is also an extension of this history. Islamophobia, understood as racism affecting Muslims or those considered as such, was also born of these two dynamics.

A bulwark for the possessing classes

Periods of economic crisis and social regression are inclined to the reinforcement of racism. The political powers and the bourgeoisie can then use racism to divide those who would benefit from uniting to counter the devastating effects of capitalism.

Appointing scapegoats as responsible for unemployment, precariousness and misery, allows the bourgeoisie to divert the working classes from demands for economic and social equality. Border closing policies implemented by the State, laws aimed at stigmatizing part of the population, or the concrete methods of political institutions (police, justice, schools...) tend, in France, to favor the implementation of State racism.

As for Anti-Semitism, it protects the national bourgeoisie from popular anger by designating Jews as the dominant pseudo-class, by mobilizing racist stereotypes around the alleged domination of "Jewish finance". Anti-social policies are thus presented as the result of a "conspiracy" and not for what they are: the effects of capitalism.

For the self-organization of struggles

As we said, fighting against racism is an essential issue for all those fighting for equality. It's of particular importance as it encourages solidarity between all exploited people facing the State and the employers. Thus, our solidarity goes first and foremost to the movements which, in their anti-racist struggle, combine a democratic project of social emancipation by the action of the working classes. The representations constructed by the colonial Republics are still very much a reality and perpetuate the existence of a racist hierarchization in our society. In the territories France still occupies, colonialism continues to be a profound vector of racism.

It is also our responsibility to fight against racism within our organization by using all the tools at our disposal.

The revolutionary movement must acknowledge the transformations of racism as a systemic domination, progressively marginalizing "biological" racism in favor of "cultural" racism. This is what is at work with contemporary anti-semitism, which cannot be overlooked, where stigmatization and violence against people considered Jewish is increasingly linked to conspiracy theories.

This is also what has conveyed the success of the "clash of civilizations" theory, hugely responsible for the islamophobic violence and discrimination that strikes almost all Western countries. Denying the reality of this islamophobia, some people disseminate racist speech by shortcutting to religion criticism. We totally consider this criticism as necessary, yet here we must defend a clear, lucid anti-racism, based on an analysis of social reality free of fantasies and essentialisms.

## # 7. To destroy Patriarchy

The fight for emancipation and equality between men and women is one of the essential themes of the anarchist struggle. Our objective is the abolition of patriarchy as a system of domination; civil and social equality between men and women; and women's freedom to have control over their body, their capacity of reproduction and their sexuality as they like, in the private, domestic space as well as in the public space.

We reject all forms of discrimination based on sex, gender and sexual orientation. Indeed, we consider transphobia, homophobia, biphobia, lesbophobia and discrimination against intersex individuals as signs of patriarchy. They are notably based on the existence of only two distinct categories of sexes, which leads to the mutilation of intersex individuals, and on the supremacy of a dominant heterosexual model. We fight against these forms of oppression while acknowledging the interconnection and the specificities of LGBTI struggles.

Patriarchy is a political and economic system based on the gendered division of work which results in the domestic exploitation that women all over the world are still subjected to nowadays. It produces sexist culture, solidified in a system of traditions and customs, laws and social codes. Sexism is the set of prejudices that confer « inborn » qualities or faults to each gender. The « natural qualities » attributed by sexist prejudices lead to a process of prioritization between the group of men and the group of women. Patriarchy uses gender – which is a social construction – as a ground to justify both the existence of male and female categories and the inequalities between the two, as well as violence against women and assigned roles according to gender; it is also used to impose norms regarding heterosexuality and family structure. Intersecting with other relationships of domination based on social class, skin colour, sexual orientation, real or supposed beliefs, age, administrative situation, etc., patriarchy entails other forms of domination.

The domination is at once ideological, cultural, social, economic and political, relegating women to subordinate roles and dispossessing them of the control over their lives, their bodies, their sexuality. It is also physical, with domestic violence, harassment, sexual violence, all of which disrupt women's lives both through their reality and through the constant threat that they represent.

Women's acquired rights constantly challenged

Over the last decades, the feminist and anti-patriarchal struggle has permitted real progress in people's consciousness and in life. Yet no social gain is ever definitive; we have to defend acquired rights and to extend them further.

In all the places where some ground has been gained—equal rights, professional equality, abortion and contraception—some reactionary movements are fighting back in order to maintain the system of patriarchal domination.

A specific struggle is necessary

The struggle against patriarchy is a specific struggle which does not boil down to the struggle against capitalism, although each feeds on the other. Capitalism takes advantage of the unpaid work still mostly done by women in the reproduction of the labour force: to give birth, to bring up and

educate the children, to do the housework and care work. It relies on the patriarchal system to overexploit women in very poorly-valued and underpaid jobs. But patriarchy does not serve only the capitalist class. Indeed, even within our social camp, men benefit from women's unpaid work and find themselves relieved from a certain number of tasks that women will spontaneously un-

dertake, influenced by the various mechanisms which maintain and reinforce this relationship of domination. More affected by enforced part-time work, unemployment, precarious employment, women are used as a variable to be adjusted by employers according to their labour requirements. Reciprocally, the domestic tasks assigned to women (care services, housework...) in turn determine the gendered division of work (the gender-biased and hierarchical assignment of tasks and trades). Religions and State are also active supporters of patriarchy by imposing a moral order and a heteronormative, hierarchical family model, and by exposing women and sexual minorities to institutional and police violence. Rather than the patriarchal family structure, we defend all forms of familial and sexual associations free of hierarchy, based on consent and willing to take into account the rights of the children of LGBTI people who are also victims of violence and oppression.

Inclusive and egalitarian practices

Revolutionary organizations are made of people who are members of a society at a given time, and thereby vehicles for prejudice, operating modes, conditioning and habits unconsciously acquired through their education, in spite of their wish to create a more egalitarian society. That is why it is up to us to fight against patriarchy within our organization as well, with all the tools available to us:

- to work towards making our organization inclusive, through its practices, for women and gender minorities;
- to organize ourselves in a non-sexist way (when sharing out tasks, let us avoid “politics for men, logistics for women”);
- to favour access to responsibility for women and gender minorities at local or federal level by training men to refrain from domineering attitudes;
- to confront sexual or sexist violence by exercising vigilance and making aggressors feel insecure; they will not be tolerated within the UCL, or in our circles;
- to favour women-only spaces for debate in order to liberate speech;
- to question our own habits and reflexes so as to ensure that household and affective tasks will not be automatically assigned to the female members of our organization;
- to acquire tools favouring speech for the most timid and the least experienced members. We reject the traditional conception of the revolutionary activist whose availability for the cause is based on the domestic confinement of his spouse. We are seeking to develop a new, alternative form of activism such as will not reproduce patriarchal relationships and domestic alienations within the emancipation movement.

## **# 8. To fight all Forms of Alienation**

Bearer of egalitarian and anarchist aspirations that go beyond the class struggle alone, the emancipation of each individual is not, for us, a secondary perspective. Far from opposing them, we affirm that the struggle for individual freedom cannot progress without the help of collective struggles.

In order to justify, or simply to mask the domination and the material mechanisms that implement it, the dominant classes and social groups maintain ideologies that, combined, form the dominant ideology. This ideology, relayed at all levels of society, leads an important part of the proletariat and dominated social groups to support a social order contrary to their interests.

At work, where the individual is fragmented, dominated and reduced to the status of a commodity. In daily life, where the mode of consumption is determined by the logic of profit, the dictates of beauty standards and the artificial needs generated by marketing techniques. If capitalism supports, while renewing them, multi-millennial alienations, it carries in itself specific alienations.

Capitalism has not engendered all the alienations that constitute this dominant ideology, but they serve to cement its domination, and to justify the established order by distilling hatred and divisions in the population.

A radical criticism of religions

As such, religions are among the main vectors of alienation: by the vision of the world they propose, by the hierarchical forms they have given themselves, by their claim to enclose the life of each and everyone, even in its strictest intimacy, in a network of dogmas, taboos and imposed rules (right to abortion, sexuality, marriage as a norm, patriarchy, etc.).

We are not fighting believers, but dogmas: we are for the freedom of worship, respecting the choice of each and everyone. We denounce persecutions and prohibitions against believers. But the UCL is an atheist organization, and we defend a project of society freed from religious alienation. Indeed, we refuse any grip of religions on society and we want to subject them to radical criticism, because they serve to justify an inequitable social order. We fight against speeches that seek to shield whole sections of social reality from criticism in the name of the "sacred" or the "divine".

Contrary to what they claim, religions are not cut off from society, they have a place in the political space and can be used to support extreme right-wing ideologies.

Against essentialist alibis

We question the gendered, social, hierarchical norms imposed throughout life in the name of an alleged "nature" or under the guise of a scientism that justifies social inequalities and confines each being to biological data, heredity or DNA that are supposed to determine their future and limit their free will.

For an emancipatory education

We affirm that the educational system plays a considerable part in the alienation of the individual by reproducing the established social order and making him or her accept it from an early age. An emancipatory form of education is necessary to collectively overcome our alienations. For all that, we are aware that action on education alone is not enough to build the society to which we aspire. Faithful to our political current which, since its origin, has taken up the educational issue, we defend values and pedagogical practices based on rationalism, cooperation, creativity, respect for the specificity of each and everyone to form free and responsible individuals, capable of understanding and acting on the world around them. We also give a special place to raising awareness against racist, sexist and social discrimination because it aims to empower people to act against it. Anarchists advocate an education that aims to develop, without prioritizing them, physical, intellectual and artistic capacities. An education accessible throughout life that will emancipate from submission to authority, to competition, and will make it possible to achieve a society of solidarity and equality. In order to achieve this, the means are as important as the ends, which is why we endorse the practices of anti-authoritarian pedagogies and popular education.

Against ableism

The capitalist society is an eminently ableist society. Ableism is an oppression that affects people with disabilities (physical or mental, visible or invisible). Capitalism encourages and supports ableist structures, insofar as it validates individuals according to the capacities that make them productive or exploitable in the sphere of wage-labour. People who do not correspond to these norms are literally invalidated, and thus excluded, marginalized or minorized. Ableism is also crystallized in urban infrastructures, which are, most often, only adapted to a typical able-bodied individual (an individual who is not in a wheelchair, for example). People with disabilities will generally be more affected by precariousness and dependence as they have more difficulty accessing the sphere of work. In a system that makes labour value a principle of integration and valorization, they are also discredited, both symbolically and socially.

No prejudices or bonds

We are in favour of a global struggle that will attack all forms of alienation and oppression, and seek to achieve the goal of absolute respect for each and every person, so that all people can live, love, work, create, and express themselves freely, without barriers of skin colour, creed, sex, nationality, age, or lifestyle, so that all people can find a place in human society, flourish, and have a satisfying livelihood.

We therefore advocate mutual support between the class struggle and the various struggles against alienation. The destruction of the capitalist order, of patriarchal and racist domination, the construction of new egalitarian and anarchist social relations, will provide the necessary—albeit not sufficient—basis for an era of emancipation. We do not, however, endorse radical individualism; the freedom of some must not become a pretext for the oppression of others.

## **# 9. A Social and Popular Antifascism**

Fascism cannot be reduced to the historical events embodied by Mussolini and Hitler. In forms adapted to our times, fascism continues to present itself as a modern political "solution". Fascism is an ideology that claims to hybridize social and national discourse. It is linked to the formation of a "revolutionary right" that challenges the bourgeois democratic ideology, the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Fascism is therefore lived as "revolutionary", but serves the interests of the bourgeoisie by breaking up popular struggles, seen as a threat to "national unity". It puts forward the nation presented as an entity that should be purified of internal enemies that are in its eyes minorities, foreigners, but also all that are considered as "subversive elements", inducing not only a racist, but also misogynistic and LGBTIphobic vision. It is finally a discourse assigning an identity to a territory.

Falsely anti-capitalist, this ideology defends the economic order, private ownership of the means of production and the search for profit. It opposes and arbitrarily separates industrial national capitalism, considered "authentic", to financial capitalism, then associated to Jews through anti-semitic discourse. This discourse is in the bourgeoisie's interests : national capitalism is thus legitimized, and the role of banks is readily accepted as long as they finance it.

Fascism wants to mobilize the masses

In practice, fascism as a government mode uses state terrorism combined with a strategy of terror carried out by armed gangs who serve the system with impunity. It seeks to mobilize the people on the streets in massive numbers to impose its views, to break through legislative

and constitutional locks that may hinder it, and to muzzle its opponents—the labour movement, feminists, minorities and progressive or democratic organizations.

While it has an autonomous dynamic as a movement and as an ideology, fascism comes as a last resort in maintaining the privileges of the possessing minority. It's for this reason that the majority of the bourgeoisie has always supported fascism against the labour movement in times of crisis, according to the French historical formula "Rather Hitler than the Popular Front". With this in mind, we affirm that the struggle against fascism is an absolute necessity. Far from being a secondary aspect of the class struggle, this struggle is a matter of survival for the dynamics of emancipation in times of crisis.

A strategy based on social movements

We generally favour social movements as instruments of change and action on reality. When it comes to antifascism, they can play an essential role of containment and put forward alternative perspectives.

A strike, a feminist mobilization, a struggle for housing, the defence of public services and public transportation are not necessarily antifascist. But, implicitly, by pursuing objectives of collective emancipation, they are an obstacle to the extreme right. First because they take space on social grounds, and target shareholders, beneficial owners, landlords and company bosses as members of an existing ruling class; but also because they put forward other values: class solidarity instead of nationalist solidarity, mutual help rather than rancour and hatred, the desire for individual and collective emancipation rather than attachment to the traditional order, collective responsibility instead of delegating to leaders...

It's fundamental to guarantee the anti-racist character of these struggles, their welcoming to each and every one, whatever their origin. Otherwise, according to their strategy fascists will try to take root in these social groups in order to orient them in a nationalist direction. However, while social struggles create a favourable political climate, they are not, in themselves, enough to stop fascism.

A specific fight against the far right

There is a specific antifascist fight to carry out: ideological, political, militant. It's necessary to refuse the normalization of reactionary theses, unmask the deceivers, undo their arguments. We must be prepared to self-defend our spaces, our struggles, our neighbourhoods, in the face of fascist aggression. We are supporters of the broadest unity, but on clear bases, both humanistic and class-based. Social and popular antifascism must go beyond republican professions of faith on the one hand, and affinity and counter-cultural activism on the other.

We promote an antifascism that is not limited to opposing the "official" far-right, but that fights against all policies, whether they be restrictive, oppressive, serve the police, etc., that pave the way for it.

## **# 10. Against all Forms of Imperialism**

We stand resolutely on the side of the people, against all imperialisms, be they global or regional. We fight for the abolition of the commercial plundering that ruins the Southern countries, and for the freedom of movement and settlement of workers.

The division of terrestrial space into nation-states is a construction linked to the historical development of capitalism and states. It's on the ideological foundation of "the nation" that the

political domination of the state and the ruling classes, of which it is the instrument, is forged. Nationalist ideology is based on the ultimate negation of all differences, all antagonisms in a given territory: negation of the plurality of cultures and languages, negation of the class struggle, negation of relations of domination and oppression.

We therefore reject the nationalist political logics that actually construct a myth based on purity and "cultural autarky" in order to set the exploited against each other and to justify their submission. libertarian/anarchist federalism seems to us to allow for the coexistence of multiple cultures and their intermingling, without a single one being imposed on individuals by a political power. The rise of capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries could not have taken place without the systematic plundering of the resources of the countries of the South. The consequences were disastrous: wars and massacres, destruction of ecological balances, food crops, local production, to the benefit of sectors exporting wealth to colonial empires. The local economies found themselves incomplete, dependent, unable to respond to the needs of the populations, leading to rising inequalities, misery, hunger, exile.

#### Our anti-colonialism

We oppose colonial and neo-colonial imperialism, which legitimizes racist speeches, military operations, the organized plundering of natural resources through the alliance between the Western bourgeoisies and their agents at the head of the states of the "former" colonies. The independence struggles of the 20th century led to a redeployment of imperialism. Formal independence resulted in the transition from a direct mode of domination to an indirect mode of domination, based on support for ruling classes that were now national, but exercising their power in the interests of the former colonial power. In many former colonies, the former colonial power retains a dominant military and economic presence and ensures that the governments in power are compatible with its interests. These relations of domination have been further accentuated with capitalist globalization through indebtedness, monetary control mechanisms and unfair trade relations. With the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the 21st century new powers have emerged, on a regional, continental and even global scale. They compete with the former imperialist powers, challenging their monopoly of neo-colonial economic predation and their political influence on the local ruling classes. If the latter sometimes take advantage of this situation to serve their private interests, for the populations of the former colonies it's only a question of perpetuating external domination. It is no less than a new imperialism replacing or superimposing itself on another, and

the competition between the two can even degenerate into a proxy conflict of which the local populations are always the victims. As resolute opponents of French imperialism, we demand the relieving of the French state's trusteeship over the overseas departments, the eradication of the Françafrique networks and an end to foreign military interventionism.

Our support for the peoples' struggles against imperialism is at the same time lucid and critical. Historically, the anti-colonial struggles, always legitimate in their refusal of domination, and in this a priori always to be supported, have often given birth to militarized bureaucratic regimes, even involved in forms of neo-colonialism. Our solidarity goes to the forces which, in their struggle against colonial domination, combine a project of social, democratic, even anti-capitalist and federalist emancipation, relying on the proletariat and the peasantry.

In doing so, we stand resolutely on the side of the peoples, against all imperialism, whether global or regional. Popular struggles are sometimes supported or despised according to which imperialist side they hinder: we reject this conception of events.

Class solidarity without borders

Capitalism was and is built on a global scale. A class strategy would therefore be unthinkable if it were limited to a single country. The issues are international, and social movements have an important gap to fill. A struggle for an internationalist orientation is necessary, which will have to overcome the body of many partisans of sovereignty and localist resistances. We are resolutely in favour of freedom of movement and installation. The most powerful states orchestrate the free movement of capital and goods, while erecting borders and walls between the exploited. These borders do not prevent migration: they kill thousands of migrants. On the contrary, they create a category of illegal and disenfranchised workers in the countries of the North. We campaign both for their regularization and for the abolition of the commercial plundering that ruins their countries and throws them on the roads to exile. There's no possible struggle against North- South inequalities without a struggle for freedom of movement and settlement. We advocate international solidarity among workers of all countries, among peoples, feminist and LGBTI solidarity, ecologists, against the states and all imperialisms. International unity remains to be built, especially through concrete coordinated actions to confront long-standing multinational powers.

## **# 11. A Strategy Based on Social Struggles and Self-organization**

Only direct struggles led from the base can impose actual social transformations against capitalists interests. We oppose a strategy of driving change through social struggles to the social-democratic strategy carried out through State institutions by political parties.

The actors and decision-makers of these transformations are therefore not the political leaders or the militant minorities, but the workers, the students, the population, who are part of mass movements, without elitism.

The self-management of struggles, power given to general assemblies, their democratic coordination, these are the necessary conditions for everyone to take part in and fulfil this role of collective decision-making. Multiple experiences have proven the validity of direct democracy through self-management.

A self-managed animation of struggles

Activists can provide decisive help in initiating and leading mass struggles. We promote a self-managed conception of the role of facilitator of struggles. Often placed in an active situation— organizers, spokespersons, coordinators, mandatees—self-management intervention is necessarily contradictory since it, at the same time, tends to the self-direction of social movements by their actors, encourages all to speak out and express themselves, and implies collective responsibility. This living dialectic is crucial. It prevents us from falling into two pitfalls: excessive leadership on one side, spontaneism on the other.

Workers' autonomy, and more broadly that of all social movements, is central: it appoints the social base as the subject who masters its own struggles. Autonomy from State institutions and employer powers. Autonomy from any form of external leadership. But also creative autonomy: in today's struggles, we are preparing tomorrow's society!

Social struggles are not limited to the struggles that workers lead in companies. Questioning the whole system in its globality also requires political investment in other self-managed mass mobilizations: those led in schools, colleges and universities, those of the unemployed and the pre-

carious, those concerning housing or our living environment, the ecological struggle, women's rights, struggles against racism...

Against all vanguardist temptations

In such a conception of social struggles, our priority is not ideological radicality, but to the possibility of mobilizing, to make act, to collectively debate on the important fringes of the dominated classes.

A self-managed revolution cannot be built without relying on a massive social willingness and social approval of the underlying social movements that will carry it. The impact of our struggles today on this collective consciousness will obviously depend on our capacity to develop self-management and alternative practices at a mass level.

In this perspective, we will fight all temptations of vanguard strategies, where minorities slowly claim to represent the base and eventually scorn or instrumentalize our collective frameworks. The first step is to build massive movements, while putting forward proposals aimed at overcoming their own limits (isolation, corporatism...) and supporting self-managed orientations. This does not mean the condemnation of any initiative led by a minority, but it does mean that such actions must be driven in perspective of then being broadened at a mass level. Awareness through experience

The capitalist system has an immense capacity to recover, and worse to question in its present all changes that past power balances have once succeeded on imposing upon it. In spite of this, we affirm that struggles for institutional social rights or other such claims—whose objectives are not, by definition, revolutionary—can yet lead to massive mobilizations of the exploited and encourage mass awareness raising through concrete experiencing of struggling and self-organizing, which will eventually lead to anti-capitalist ruptures.

In the same way, alternative practices, cooperatives and self-managed associative activities can bring about a global questioning of society, if they know how to stay in touch with the workers, the population, the class struggle.

Our strategy includes short and long term demands, our objective is to improve the material conditions of existence of all by aiming at the advent of libertarian communism.

## **# 12. Our Revolutionary Syndicalist Practice**

The trade union movement was born from the will to organize workers in revolt against oppression and exploitation. It opposes the employers, who count on the individual isolation of the proletarians, to their collective strength that concerted action brings.

The struggle for demands in study and workplaces is mainly carried out through union action. We therefore advocate active participation in unionism and syndicalism, understood first of all as an act of mass uniting in struggles and class self-organization.

As in any form of association, this collective force benefits the associated individuals and more widely our class, provided that it is not seized by a minority to the detriment of the collectivity. This is the case when there is a distinction between the leaders and the led, which results in leaders using the organization to serve their interests rather than that of the common cause. Unionism is not a career! We are also aware that the union movement is—like many things during a non-revolutionary period—crossed by a contradiction between integration and rupture. And that integration generates a strong tendency towards social compromise and bureaucracy.

However, we cannot be satisfied with the rejection of the unions by a part of the proletariat. It leads to demobilizing the employees rather than encouraging them to challenge the State and the employers' power. It is through a self-managing syndicalist practice, with a class struggle praxis that the unions will again become an attractive tool for social struggles.

#### A repertoire of direct actions

We defend a revolutionary syndicalism in the spirit and dynamics of self-organization as originally carried out by the proletariat, represented by the grassroots union movement, by integrating the historical conquests of the emancipatory struggles led since its origin.

We therefore promote the whole repertoire of actions of revolutionary unionism—strike, boycott, workers' sabotage, blockades—including their new and reinvented forms, as long as they are based on the direct action of workers.

To us, the perspective of the general strike is a weapon for the proletariat in order to defend its interests as much as a possible lever for a revolutionary takeover of the means of production. This does not mean that we should multiply, out of context, incantatory calls for a mythical general strike, but that we should set it as a strategic aim, structuring our action.

This implies participating in union debates and energizing, or even sometimes establishing, democracy in unions.

#### For workers' unity, despite divisions

We advocate the independence of unions against any external grouping aiming to instrumentalize them, internal democracy and federalism, the sharing, control and revocability of mandates. We want to revive unions as an interprofessional organizational frame, through the development of tools promoting the emergence of solidarity and class consciousness: local unions, departmental unions, industrial unions and federations, confederations.

Divisions in unions are caused by several factors: bureaucratization, questioning of union independence, anti-democratic manoeuvres, to which have since been added competition and partisanship. In opposition to this logic, beyond the "patriotisms of organization", we assert the necessity of workers' unity and intend to work to create the conditions for a reunification of the trade union movement of class and struggle, without denying the difficulty of such a task. We support all other forms of organizing that workers in struggle may adopt (general assemblies, strike committees, coordination...), in particular when these can complement, or even compensate for, the current limitations of trade union organizations.

We defend international solidarity in the trade union field. Finally, we support unionism that integrates the diversity of the proletariat: public and private workers, employed or unemployed, active or retired, whatever their origin, their nationality, their gender, their sexual orientation.

#### Carrying out a grassroots democracy

We may be led in concrete practice to inscribe our revolutionary syndicalism in different organizations. The essential thing for us is the real possibility, which may be offered by a structure or another, of developing activist collectives and truly advocating for social claims. Thus, we defend a practical syndicalism, grounded on how things concretely take place. It inscribes itself first of all in the base structures, but refuses to consider the fragmentation of the union movement as positive or inevitable.

It is to serve this activity of the grassroots collectives, and in the scrupulous respect of union democracy, that comrades can be mandated, in all positions and at all levels, by the members of their structures.

As revolutionary syndicalists, we refuse the social-democratic division of work between the party, which deals with politics i.e. also with questions of society, and the union, which is confined to immediate demands. For us, the union organization must carry its own strategy of transformation of society, elaborated in full independence. It is an essential space for the construction of a counter- power. It must allow us to sharpen the self-management capacities of our class. If it seems obvious that the case of trade unions, like all the important components of society, is discussed everywhere, including in the political currents, we disapprove of "fractions", of which members are led, whatever their opinion, to act in a concerted way to pass on the directives of their political organization in the union, discarding the independence and the capacity of elaboration of the latter.

## # 13. Values for a New World

Libertarian communism aims to articulate as harmoniously as possible our need to belong to a collective and our aspirations to be recognized and respected in our singularity. What we aim for is a society where "each to their own" is replaced by cooperation and mutual aid. A society where there are no longer those who possess, and those who have nothing or little. A society where there are neither rich nor poor. A society where the orders of ruling minorities are swept away by collective, free and assumed choices. A society where the individual, the local, the collective, the social, the cultural are balanced and mutually supportive: an egalitarian and anarchist society.

Equality and freedom can only be effective in a real democracy that prevents the reconstitution of new powers and new oppressions, that allows everyone to assert their choices and aspirations. Libertarian communism is horizontal and direct democracy; the sovereign people self-institute society, self-govern its politics, self-manage its production, and more globally determine its collective needs and the ways to meet them.

The self-management of production, freed from the imperatives of productivism and the race for profit, can finally put research and technical advances at the service of individuals. Respectful of the environment, it opens the way to a new relationship that reintegrates the human community into the balance of ecosystems.

Because it satisfies collective needs and is no longer inscribed in a relation of exploitation, work can become meaningful, lose its alienating character, and allow each and everyone to gain control over their activities.

Individual and collective emancipations are inseparable

Satisfying the needs expressed in a society in an egalitarian way, based on the emancipation of individuals and grassroots communities, does not mean levelling or standardization, and respects the multiplicity of lifestyles, tastes and aspirations.

Libertarian communism is the fight for a society where individuals are free, equal and responsible. Free in a world where material necessities are weighed down, and in a society where people participate in common tasks and collective responsibilities. Free to express themselves, to create; free of their lifestyles, their sexualities, their cultures. Responsible, masters of their work, participating alongside everyone else in the self-management of production and society. Equal to all, thus having equal access to the distribution of the products of work.

In order to foster empowerment and responsibility taking, a self-managed society must make effective access to education, information and culture on an emancipatory basis.

Libertarian communism is the end of a certain world order. The end of colonialism and imperialism, in favour of an egalitarian and supportive relationship between all peoples, based on the productive autonomy of each region, and the sharing of wealth between rich and poor areas. The end of the state order, in favour of a free federation of self-managed regions. The end of borders and the threat of war, for a world without barriers and totally demilitarized.

Defending an ethic

The advent of a libertarian communist society would not mean the end of history and the establishment of an "earthly paradise; relations of domination could subsist or re-emerge. It will remain important to put forward values, keep on questioning our functionings, our practices, and probably lead struggles.

All of these values imply a coherence between means and ends without which there is no hope of living libertarian communism. This is why, without waiting for a revolutionary changeover, we try to make the ends live here and now, in our actions and commitments, in and nearby the places we live, and in our struggles.

## **# 14. Carrying an Alternative Society Project**

We are revolutionaries, that is to say we are advocates of a radical transformation of society. Our political action is aimed at matching our society project with the means to achieve it: the record of social democracy has shown that capitalism cannot be fought effectively by conquering power through elections and gradually reforming it.

Nevertheless this does not imply waiting passively for an "inevitable" break: the future is not written anywhere, it will be what we make of it, and in every historical situation the field of possibilities is wide open. There is no reason for History to have reached its ultimate stage: capitalism will not be the last form of human society. Racist and patriarchal systems of domination are not inevitable.

But a self-managing socialism and egalitarian social relations will not arise mechanically at the end of a "final crisis" with only one possible outcome. They will arise from the conscious and determined action of the exploited masses. Materialists, and educated by historical experience, we know that a true popular movement is never "pure". It can be composed of contradictory forces, both progressive and retrograde, each of which try to make their own political project prevail. Revolutionaries cannot be satisfied with dispensing good and bad points externally. It's by direct implication in struggles that they can hope to influence events.

Against isolated armed action

As revolutionaries, we are not a priori in favour of a violent solution. What is essential in a transformation process is constructive work, which requires the self-defence of the population in order to preserve what has been achieved. But the degree of violence of a revolution is first chosen and imposed by the overthrown ruling classes. This violence may therefore be necessary. It is therefore necessary to remain wary of the excesses and dangers inherent to militarization, and to install safeguards against it.

Except in situations of dictatorship or military or colonial occupation, we are opposed to actions carried out by armed minority groups cut off from the population and the social movement. Armed actions carried out under these conditions leads to dangerous confrontation with the state, and leads to the strengthening of the state and the isolation of those who perform them. Obvi-

ously, we are not confusing armed minority actions with the harsh forms taken by the struggles of the workers and the population in defence of their gains and struggles. The legitimacy of the action of revolutionaries is not fixed in terms of respect for what the State imposes as legal or not, but evolves according to the conscience of the masses.

Imagining to transform reality

A revolutionary project is necessary, an alternative to State Socialism and liberalism. A project that focuses on implementing libertarian communism on the scale of the whole society, on the economic level (socialization of the means of production and the products of collective work), on the political level (libertarian federalism as an alternative to any centralization of political power) and on the social level (social equality between individuals regardless of gender, sexual orientation, origin, physical or psychological capacities...). The elaboration of such a revolutionary project is based on the historical and contemporary experiences of struggles, taking into account the difficulties encountered. The revolutionary project therefore requires regular re-evaluation, integrating new social struggles and changes in society.

Utopia can have a decisive impact on social movements. By stimulating the collective imagination, it fuels immediate struggles, both in their forms and in their objectives, and it can give strength and credit to our struggles by exploring the possibilities of an alternative society. Imagination is necessary to transform realities.

If it seems to us necessary that our trend carries such a project, it does not have the hubris of predicting the future, nor to foresee everything, nor to be a set of promises, nor to be the ready-made recipe to build socialism as such.

It's through their experiences that the workers will find their answers to many of society's questions. But in this elaboration, our proposals can have the value of contributions and incentives, influencing the debate of ideas and practices in the most libertarian, self-managing possible way.

## # 15. Counter-power, Dual power and Revolutionary Rupture

The libertarian communist revolution is not the substitution of a leading group by another: it is a global revolution of the economic, social, political and cultural forms of the society.

The revolution is not due solely to an ideological maturation, nor solely to "objective" economic conditions. Contemporary social practices encourage collective awareness together with the emergence of a societal project, shared more and more widely; it is based on such dynamics that what we call revolution can occur.

In non-revolutionary times: building counter-powers

It is generally through class struggle that revolutionary consciousness rises, be it by concretely experiencing emancipatory struggles, self-organization, or else. Struggle unions, committees of unemployed people, committees of badly housed people, feminist organizations, anti-racist collectives, committees denouncing police violence... All participate in a counter-power logic against capitalism and the State.

These counter-powers are potentially the embryos of a political and social alternative, but only potentially. They can become so if they adopt self-management practices and anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, ecologist... in short: revolutionary perspectives. The libertarian communist current must actively contribute to this, and take care to oppose all supervisory discourses

and practices; because freedom is not for us a distant endpoint authorizing the use of any means, but truly is the goal and the means.

Moreover, strengthening popular power also means strengthening our autonomy in the face of the capitalists and the state. Thus, it's useful to participate in initiatives that allow us to claim back production, distribution, education, etc., by bringing our analysis and our anti-capitalist struggles and by impelling self-managed and emancipatory practices.

During a pre-revolutionary period: pushing for dual power

A pre-revolutionary period begins when the state is overwhelmed by the rise of the class struggle to the point that it begins to disintegrate, and its authority is questioned. If certain places of production are taken over by the workers, the employers themselves see the use of their status directly threatened.

The countervailing powers active beforehand, here and there on the territory, can then form a network of democratic bodies—whether they are called local federations, federations of industries, municipalities, councils, neighbourhood or factory committees, or people's assemblies—that begin to take control of economic and social activities. The gradual federation of these bodies is creating the contours of a people's power that competes with state power.

By "people's power" we do not mean a "Workers' State" according to the Leninist conception, but a dynamic of direct, federalist, grassroots democracy.

During this process—in which capitalist power is openly challenged—the libertarian communist current does not seek to form a "governing body" aspiring to seize state power. On the contrary, it pushes for popular power to become self-aware, to consolidate and expand, and to consider replacing state power.

The libertarian communist current must contribute to directing the revolutionary process towards a self-management oriented solution, avoiding the traps of bureaucratization, without relying completely on spontaneity. The latter has already shown, in history, its extraordinary creative power, but also its instability.

## # 16. The Inventiveness of the Proletariat

We do not conceive socialism as elaborated from outside the struggles of the proletariat. On the contrary, we affirm that it's the workers themselves who have invented and reinvented the bases of an alternative society to capitalism through their struggles, especially in revolutionary times.

From immemorial to contemporary times, peoples have sought paths to social and political equality. All over the world, during the Paris Commune in 1871, in Mexico between 1910 and 1917, in Russia and Ukraine from 1917 to 1921, with the Korean commune of Shinmin (1929-1931), in Spain from 1936 to 1937, bases for another socialism developed, finally crushed by the bourgeoisie and/or fascism, or betrayed by the constitution of a new ruling class. The revolutionary experiences in Chiapas since 1994 and in Rojava since 2012 are other such examples.

Learning from past mistakes

Every revolutionary experience, every high point of the class struggle has confirmed this aspiration for such a society and for grassroots takeover. Spread over time and space, from collectivized and self-managed companies and industries to free communes, countless experiences provide evidence for it.

Our libertarian socialism is therefore the heir of the anti-authoritarian tendencies developed since the First International by part of the workers, peasants and social movements. It must be noted that other currents have imposed themselves for decades: state socialisms—Social Democracy, Leninism, Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism—which opposed the popular aspirations of self-management and direct democracy and led the popular movements into an impasse.

Libertarian communism, autonomously elaborated by working men and women, has opened an extraordinary perspective for humanity, outlining through concrete achievements a superior form of democracy.

But historical experiences have also revealed limitations and weaknesses that need to be taken into account. It's for this reason that a coherent project carried by a militant organization is necessary today to raise the issues that libertarian communism faces and will face.

If the existence of such a project is not an infallible guarantee, it can nevertheless help the struggling masses to avoid the errors of the past in order to achieve integral emancipation.

## **# 17. Against all Forms of State Socialism**

The outcome of state socialism, in its various forms, is negative overall. Historically, state socialism has been used as a weapon against the form of socialism developed by the workers themselves: crisis management by social democracy, construction of a "patriotic" capitalism by left-wing nationalism and of a bureaucratic state capitalism by Leninism, then Stalinism and Maoism.

Although these regimes have been able, for a period, to orchestrate social reforms, they did so without ever setting free from the capitalist paradigm of production, nor from its inherent hierarchies between those who lead and those who are led.

Each time repressing or domesticating the independent social movements, they even, in some periods, assumed explicit responsibility in playing a counter-revolutionary role (Germany 1918- 1919, Russia 1918-1921, Spain 1937-1939, Hungary 1956, Algeria 1965, Czechoslovakia 1968, Poland 1980...).

In doing so, they stifled the political capacities of the proletariat and subsequently facilitated the return of the traditional bourgeoisie to power.

Social democracy

Social democracy is based on the illusion of a "neutral" State above all classes, which could therefore potentially be convertible in favour of the interests of the exploited.

But in this illusion lies a double lure: first, the promise of running the State against capitalist interests; second, the promise of a progressive, reformist, peaceful and legal transformation of society—through laws and decrees—from capitalism to socialism.

The result is a "respectful" political strategy embedded in the institutions of capitalism. Should it self advocate as "socialist", "labour" or "environmentalist", social democracy always remains above all a statist socialism, based on delegation of power, benefiting politicians and the bureaucratic ruling classes.

In the course of the 20th century, the accession to power of social democracy may have coincided with some social advances. But these achievements are the fruit of grassroot struggles. Social democracy as an agent of the dominant classes is there to put an end to these struggles, satisfying some of their demands before they spread too far and start questioning the foundations

of the capitalist system. When outside struggle periods, the social democracy in power does not obtain any concessions, and quite on the contrary even participates in destroying what had been conquered.

The balance of social democracy is disastrous for the proletariat: the establishment of "social peace" in which workers lose their capacity to resist; the submission of the trade union organizations and the social movement to the electoral calendar or to governmental politics when the left is in power.

In the end, caught in the trap of the management of capitalism, social democracy has always ended up adopting its codes and ideology.

#### Left-Wing Nationalism

Governments sometimes claim to oppose capitalism in the name of the nation. Thus, regimes such as Nasserism in Egypt, Peronism in Argentina and Chavism in Venezuela have claimed to be a form of socialism by nationalizing key sectors of the economy and improving the situation of the poor classes.

However, the real ambition of left-wing nationalists is to shape a national capitalism, bringing together a strong State led by a charismatic leader shaking hands with a patriotic employer class, and putting social movements under tutelage.

Historically, far from working in the interests of their homeland, left-wing nationalist regimes have produced a bureaucratic class and an owning class that have always ended up serving their own interests, to the detriment of the working class, reduced to celebrating the beneficent leader.

#### Leninism and Stalinism

As a project of revolutionary transformation of society under the leadership of a ruling party and through the stateization of the entire economy, Leninism also failed by disregarding and fighting most of the self-governing and federalist socialism that had emerged within the proletariat. The balance is terrible, and bloody dictatorships have tainted the very word "communism".

History has now shown that the stateization of the means of production does not imply a break with the capitalist relations between the rulers and the ruled, but the passage from a fragmented, competing capitalism to a state capitalism, with a new exploiting class at its head.

No party can proclaim itself "the vanguard of the proletariat" and impose its dictatorship on the workers in the name of their emancipation. The centralized and hierarchical form of the Leninist party, in line with its function of taking power and monopolizing the state apparatus, leads to tyranny inside the organization, to the crushing of protest outside, to the separation of the party from the workers and from society.

The strategy of taking the power through the party also leads to odious practices within the framework of the daily struggles: submitting the mass organizations and the trade unions to the directives of the party—the scheme of the transmission belt—sprawling state intervention or else prevailing the superior interest of the party over the necessities of the struggle.

Of course, we do not consider Leninism and Stalinism to be the two sides of a same coin. The former is an authoritarian revolutionary current, while the latter is a totalitarian bureaucratic system. However, they both come from Bolshevism, an authoritarian current of socialism. And it must be said that Leninism has sown the seeds of this bureaucracy, and opened the way for crimes against democracy and against the proletariat. These regimes are responsible for the restoration of capitalism and their ruling classes have generally remained in power by converting themselves back to the capitalist system and ideology.

## # 18. For a Libertarian Communism

We propose a society project based on the practical experiences of the struggling workers, in both revolutionary and non revolutionary periods: reclaimed and self-managed factories, free communes, labour councils, socialized industries, agricultural communities, federations...

This project is called Libertarian Communism, not in reference to the Marxist-Leninist branch of "communism", but rather following on from an older and larger branch at the intersection of anarchism, syndicalism, council communism, and anti-authoritarianism.

By communism, we mean that the means of production are put in common, no longer under private ownership, but decentralized, that is to say without a state or social classes and with all resources allocated according to the needs of one another.

By libertarian, we mean a society that necessarily allows emancipation for each individual that is part of it, favoured by economical and social equality and by a federalist and self-managed democracy. Libertarian communism is a project for a society in constant evolution, driven by a permanent revolutionary process, which will gradually spread over the surface of the planet, thus earning and integrating the whole of the population.

Unlike predatory capitalism, incapable of escaping from its own destructive spiral, libertarian communism can achieve balance between productive capacities, needs of the population, and the capacities of the biosphere.

Here we indicate the main lines of this project as we can conceive it in its primary phase of construction; that is, considering a large part of the population has yet to be convinced, that the revolution still has many inner and outer enemies, and that we still have no other choice than dealing with Capitalism and its legacy in terms of technologies in use, town and country layout, and social inequalities.

### Self managed relations of production

The communism we defend rests on three inseparable pillars: socialized means of production, self-management of each work unit, democratically planned production.

- Socializing the means of production implies that they are a social property, a common asset for the whole of society, placed under the responsibility of both the industrial federations (metalworking, building, agricultural and food industries...) and of the different territorial agglomerations (municipalities, regions, federations...). A large council constituted by delegates, representing the workers of the various production sites, coordinates each industrial federation. Thus affiliated to an industrial federation, no production site has an interest in competing with another, as the mechanisms of free market would necessarily encourage: on the contrary, production sites have everything to gain from cooperating with one another and dividing production in a complementary manner.

- Self-management means power to the workers' assemblies for decision making, with total freedom of speech and democratic voting. Self-management must break the dividing line between the leaders and the led, put an end to the social ranking of trades, and more generally to their division into sectors.

With self-management, supervisors, delegates, coordinators, controlled by an imperative mandate, are all elected and revocable by based held assemblies in charge of elaborating the key points of future work organization.

Overthrowing the relations of production implies a radical transformation in the nature of labour. Manual and intellectual activities, seen as distinct in our capitalist system, will be reuni-

fied: each worker must have the possibility of getting involved in the whole production process, from start to finish, by taking part in both the conception and the decision making. Working time includes moments of decision, execution, and in-service training. By employing all the unemployed and suppressing all useless tasks, such a reorganizing of work promises a massive redistribution, and therefore reduction, of individual working time.

With work no longer being alienating, the whole productive system is entirely remodelled, along with the role of technologies: by locally building production sites for easier self management on a human scale and by using technological innovation not to intensify exploitation but rather to serve labour collectives according to their needs.

- Democratic planification means that production is no longer driven by the quest for profit, but by the needs of the population. Economically speaking, use value takes over market value. Nevertheless, it won't ever be possible to objectively quantify human needs: always will they depend on cultural factors, individual aspirations and what is materially / physically available.

Thus, from the diversity of needs springs the necessity of a large planification mechanism, conjointly with a trading system for goods and services, at the initiative of both individuals and communities.

The goal of planification is to make an inventory of needs and incentivize production towards the satisfaction of the most basic ones, respecting all ecological requirements (housing, food, healthcare, transports, education...) in doing so. In a non competitive and non contradictory way, the trading system must give to everyone access to complementary shops and services.

A federalist and direct democracy

There is a radical difference between a parliamentary state and a self-managed federation: inversion of power, democratic choice of the person in charge of coordinating and usual managing, but power delegation is not tolerated for crucial decisions. It is what we call direct democracy.

Direct democracy is based on three points: federation of territories, popular assemblies, imperative mandate (linked to the self managed structures composing the work units).

- a Federation of territories implies that society is structured around municipalities and then regions, scales that are the most easily controlled by the population.

Newly federated regions will not necessarily reproduce the current territorial dividing. The important point is that all new regions achieve agricultural and industrial productive autonomy, in order to enable and promote local distribution networks as much as possible.

Libertarian communism's goal is a universal federation of regions, beyond language frontiers. A federation which provides itself with a set of common rules guaranteeing protection for each individual and community. Federalism prevents us from two pitfalls : bureaucratic centralism on the one hand, and destructure of society on the other. It is balance between initiative and autonomy of the federated territories, links people through solidarity; it mutualizes resources, provides interregional public services; it is a free of hierarchy mutual dependence where the decisions and orientations for our society are collectively taken and followed by everyone. Federalism implies an open conception of society as the ideal framework for coexistence between general and particular interest, without ever fading one into the other.

- People's assemblies are the reference unit for democratic debate. Far from implying constant meetings and perpetual debating over every single detail of the city's life (indeed they can only bring together a given number of people in a given amount of time), they provide the framework for discussing greater projects. They are the first democratic step before formal consulting of

the population, at all relevant scales, for final settling over the important political stances under debate.

It is also in these people's assemblies that the delegates who form the councils of the municipalities, the regions and the federation are mandated and, possibly, revoked.

Direct democracy allows freedom of speech and freedom of organization, freedom of cult and freedom of press. Different schools of thought or different groups of people sharing common points of view can come together to fuel the debate beforehand, but delegates are always mandated collectively and, once appointed, they must apply the collective decisions and not that of their own tendency. - Imperative mandating is a way of controlling from the base appointed delegates to the different democratic councils (from municipalities to the federation). Based on their integrity and their competences, and not on a political program or mere promises, they are chosen to coordinate the implementation of previously made collective decisions. Thanks to the imperative mandate, they are revocable at any time and although the main line of the position they are appointed to hold remains fairly strict, their stances are permitted to evolve according to arguments defended by others. Self managed federalist democracy represents a radically different and new form of collective empowerment, breaking with the existing separation between the rulers and the ruled, between the state and society, and putting an end to all social class systems. Each person being part of this collective power, governing as such finds its place back down into the workshops and communes: society is self-governed, thus answering the self-management of production.

A self defending society

Such a new society will necessarily encounter internal and external enemies which it must defend itself from. Revolutionaries can therefore not get around putting self-defence methods in place. At least in the first phase of the revolution, the persistence of societal ills—racist, homophobic, sexist violence, environmental depredations and crimes—compels us to deeply think about putting in place an emancipatory law and rehabilitative and restorative justice system. However, the self-defense and justice structures of society will have to be closely linked to the

population and controlled by the councils, completely leaving behind the repressive organs of the old society.

The risks of militarization or police order are obvious in a revolutionary period and require acute vigilance. The goal of libertarian communism is a society free of military and police control.

## **# 19. A Self-managed Activist organization**

The Libertarian Communist Union is not a party: it does not have the vocation of seeking the votes of the electorate. The essential activity of the organization is the development and self-organization of struggles against all systems of domination: by its politics and propaganda, by its collective reflection, by training, by the help it provides, by the action of its members.

It works for the emergence of a counter-power from the grassroots of society and for a break with the capitalist, patriarchal and racist order.

Solidarity, struggles, self-management

We also want to make the UCL a privileged space for solidarity and mutual aid, especially in the face of repression.

The organization is based, until the members decide otherwise, on the present Manifesto. Neither a historical program nor an immutable declaration of principle, this Manifesto is in fact only a moment in a theoretical, practical and organizational process, which itself contains a potential dynamic of overcoming.

A statutory contract sets the rules for the functioning of the organization and binds all freely associated members. The strategic orientations of the organization, its positions and decisions are subject to debate, collective decision-making and voting by the entire organization. The organization thus constitutes a field of experimentation for self-managing and federalist democracy, in coherence with the libertarian communist project: we want an egalitarian society, without leaders, and we strive to make it live within the UCL.

This alternative in act allows the activists to have a real self-management experience and practice. It gives them the possibility to instil these practices more easily and confidently within the struggles and social movements, in the collectives, unions and associations in which they are active.

A functioning in coherence with our goals

The organization is therefore a self-managed federation, placed under the collective responsibility of all its activists. By reversing the traditional image of the hierarchical party, but without denying the necessity and importance of the organization's coordination and animation activities, we seek to establish a framework for horizontal and decentralized debate and intervention.

Mandatement as an organizational and delegational tool allows members to reconcile collective elaboration and efficiency ; mandates are defined, controlled by the members of the organization who can, if necessary, dismiss the mandated persons. The organization is a plural place where, against a common political background, a great diversity of opinions can be freely expressed. While it is natural that it democratically gives itself a majority orientation, it nevertheless scrupulously guarantees the rights of minorities and local groups to express themselves. This applies to the internal debate of course, but also to the organization's press, according to the terms established by the statutory contract.

The organization seeks the convergence of the actions of its members with an obvious concern for efficiency. Activists are bound by their mandate when it comes to speaking or acting on behalf of the organization, but outside of this, each member can act according to his or her personal choices.

The organization refuses any leadership or substitute relationship in the direction of the struggles of workers and the population. It can participate in the organization of initiatives and mobilizations. The activists of our current can take their full place in these struggles. But the leadership of social struggles must remain under the collective control of those who make them happen. Our struggle is international as is the structuring of the current that we will build.

## **# 20. An Open Approach**

The libertarian communism that we promote is part of a long history, that of anti-authoritarian socialism, which has its roots in the First International. It inherits for the most part decades of struggles, analyses, and strategic questioning of the libertarian "class struggle" current. It's in this current, which is the main political incarnation of this socialism that we are inscribed.

It has nothing to do with an individualism that would deny the antagonism of classes and the necessity of collective action to upset the world order. The appropriation, socialization and self-management of the means of production are our agenda to put an end to capitalism. We reject bourgeois politics, and our intervention can only be resolutely extraparliamentary. The "dictatorship of the proletariat", Leninism and the experiences of the so-called "socialist" countries are not part of our history.

However, we do not claim any monopoly. Various existing organizations and groupings claim a libertarian filiation. We are in favour of debate, so that forces are pooled as often as possible, without denying the specificities of each one. The same desire for confrontation and unity leads us to reject sectarianism between all the forces that sincerely fight capitalism and other systems of domination.

#### Refusing sectarianism

We are in favour of self-organization and direct democracy, and in this respect we are resistant to the cult of unanimity as well as to summary spontaneism. We know that these concerns can meet those of other "schools" of socialism. Since the second half of the twentieth century, even more so after May 1968, the libertarian communist current has been able to open itself to experiences, to take an interest in the currents with which it shares common points and even to integrate their positive achievements.

Thus we believe that a dialogue is always possible and desirable between different revolutionary currents, of Marxist or anarchist origins.

Even though we reject the statist illusions conveyed by Marxist currents and theories, libertarians have largely drawn, like Bakunin in his time, and without fetishizing it, from the materialist and dialectical thought synthesized notably by Marx. This continues to occupy a singular place for those who want to change the world. Especially when it does not stray into economic over-determinism. For us, there's neither destiny nor fatality: it's indeed all of us who, through our actions, make history.

#### To draw from the best sources

We draw more broadly from the currents that are working for the emancipation of all. By experimenting with them concretely, our current has been able to make revolutionary unionist practice its own: the trade union and worker democracy, the meaning of strikes, the role of self-managing struggle leaders, the strategy of counter-powers...

In the same way, on ecology, feminism, anti-colonial and anti-racist struggles, our analyses have evolved in contact with real militant currents, struggles and resistances. Above all, it's by immersing ourselves in the heart of these struggles and resistances that we will avoid becoming sclerotic, or shrivelling up behind narrow doctrinaire fences.

This is why we have a twofold approach:

- to develop our libertarian "class struggle" current;
- to contribute to the emergence of a vast anti-capitalist and self-managing movement, necessarily unitary.

The libertarian Communist Union does not claim to become, by relying on its own forces alone, the alternative to capitalism. It would be not only pretentious but also dangerous to believe or pretend the opposite. Rejecting all sectarianism and isolationism, we want to be one of the unifying forces for the revolutionary movement and the workers' movement. In times of retreat, the unity of all anti-capitalists and openness to the social movement allows solidarity in the face of repression and of a state machine that hunts down revolutionaries. In periods of rising

struggles, this unity favours and amplifies the action of revolutionaries in the face of those who fight against the rupture with the old world. But this unity must not mask our ideological or strategic divergences, which will not fail to assert themselves in revolutionary times.

Becoming a political force that matters

This open approach aims to achieve a mass force, which will weigh on a very large scale in society, helping to multiply counter-powers and preparing the conditions for revolutionary rupture. This means giving priority to its interventions on the social terrain, at the base of society, linking the anti-patriarchal, ecological, anti-racist, and workers' struggles, by proposing a self-management perspective to them. A political-social movement, therefore, and not a new party.

New actions are necessary to allow the expression and organization of the revolts of the base of society. We want to actively contribute to this because these common practices will allow the necessary responses to the threats of the extreme right and the illusions conveyed by the institutional "left". We want to become tomorrow a major political force, which gives the libertarian "class struggle" current a basis among the broad masses, and this in a revolutionary movement, part of a refounded and renewed workers' movement.

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