

***Towards an
Anarcho-Syndicalist
Strategy for Africa***



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★ *Is There an Alternative*

Anarchist-Syndicalist and libertarian communist theory holds that the best people to run an industry are the workers and users of that service. Worker safety is held hostage to profitability and bureaucracy. Rather than private ownership and a monopolization of decision making roles by owners and managers, public ownership of the means of production through a decentralized system of federated workers and neighbourhood councils would prove far superior. These councils would act as channels to allow participants to exercise direct democracy and gives ordinary citizens the ability to control their own lives.

★ *Strategy to Get Us There*

There are many different tactics that can be utilized to bring increasing power into the hands of South African miners. Fighting for an increase in wages, shorter working hours and improved working conditions ensure a more efficient and happier workforce, while at the same time, increasing class consciousness and working class militancy. Miners must self-organize to demand these rights and be prepared to take direct action to hit the corporations where it hurts the most, their bank accounts.

Direct actions such as mass rallies and protests with the support of the community and strikes would be ways to achieving these ends. The key is strengthening rank and file organizations of miners and creating mass organizations in neighbouring communities that will struggle alongside these worker controlled groups. This is as anarcho-syndicalist theorist Rudolph Rocker notes, as creating “not only the ideas, but also the facts of the future itself”; that these self-managed organizations embody the structure of a future society.

Sala kahle
(Stay well in isiZulu)

The 2 texts by Blackstone are taken from
the Power to the People blog
power-2-people.blogspot.com

Towards an Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Africa

These articles look at the possibilities and opportunities for spreading anarchist ideas in Africa through the intervention of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists from abroad, by building pragmatic solidarity, supporting African trade unions and other movements of the workers and poor, along with some suggestions on the direction effective strategies and struggles should take.

*They also highlight some factors which need to be taken into consideration when doing so, and make some suggestions towards developing an **anarcho-syndicalist strategy for Africa**.*



Towards an Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Africa

by Jonathan [ZACF]

Between 28th April and 1st of May 2007 about 250 militants from five different continents came together in Paris, France for the CNT-F organised International Syndicalist Conference i07, a follow-up to the industrial Syndicalist Conferences held in San Francisco, USA, in 1999, called i99, and that held in Essen, Germany in 2002, called i02.

The goal of the meetings was to share experiences, debate and to start rebuilding links between different organisations and uniting workers of different countries, to appropriate the means of information, struggle and action by organising international solidarity against capitalist domination and exploitation. The weekend included discussions, workshops and debates dealing with syndicalist issues (co-operatives, repression, representativity, the European Union, casualised and unprotected labour, and relocation...) as well as social issues (anti-sexism, the campaign against Coca-Cola, migrant workers, anti-fascism, housing struggles, anti-imperialism and neo-colonialism...). Branch meetings (metallurgy, education, construction, postal services, health, culture, archaeology...) and meetings devoted to geographical regions (Palestine, Europe, the Americas, Africa, the Mediterranean zone) also took place. The conference ended with an anarchist/ anarcho-syndicalist/ syndicalist bloc of about 5,000 participants from every corner of the globe at the May 1st demonstration in Paris.

What is particularly interesting to us, and the focus of this article, is that, for the first time, the Industrial Syndicalist Conference had a significant African presence this year, with delegates representing trade unions from Algeria (Snapap), Morocco

- ★ the total chromium production was 7.59 Mt
- ★ the total manganese production was 4.61 Mt
- ★ the total platinum production was 302,000 kg
- ★ the total coal production was 245 Mt
- ★ the total diamond production was 15.8 million karats

★ ***Working conditions***

Mine workers are under-paid and over-worked. Declining grades of mines and increased depth of mining as lead to an increase in workplace injuries and deaths. Issues of mine safety received increased scrutiny during 2007, in large part due to multiple worker deaths. During 2006, 199 workers were killed during workplace accidents, and 191 have been killed during 2007. Around 200 workers die yearly in South African mines. One incident on October 4 2007 resulted in 3,200 workers being trapped for several hours.

★ ***Class***

Ultimately, class, racism and capitalism are at the root of most of the problems in South Africa. Capitalism is a society that is divided by class and is dominated by the corporate community and upper class. The working class thus consists of all the people in society who do not own property and therefore have to sell their labour power - the ability to do work- to a boss in order to earn a living.

The interests of the working class are fundamentally opposed to the ruling elite - the corporate community and upper class. The companies must seek ways to make profits, even at the detriment of their employees, the very people who are responsible for creating their wealth.

Disregard for safety precautions aids capital by continually accumulating profit, yet it hurts the working class, specifically miners, who suffer fatal injuries in high numbers. Cuts in wages and refusal to accommodate union demands for wage increases, further harms the working class by lowering their standard of living at the expense of increased revenue for mining companies.

The working class therefore has a direct interest in improving all aspects of the mining industry, whereas capital does not. The solutions lie within the working class since its success is in its best interest.

An Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Africa

★ Mining Industry Council ★

by Blackstone

★ South Africa ★

South Africa is particularly rich in mineral resources and is one of the leading raw material exporters in the world. Rightly so, South Africa can produce all the minerals necessary for her economic independence. Gold, diamonds, platinum, chromium, manganese, uranium, iron ore and coal make up 60 % of its main exports. The country is also number one globally in exporting platinum, chromium, vanadium and manganese. Africa is also the world's largest gold producer. It has enormous gold ore reserves representing 40% of global reserves.

However, 95% of South Africa's gold mines are underground operations. Declining grades of the mines and the increased depth of mining and a shift in the gold price, costs for these operations had begun to rise and as a result production has been steadily falling. The gold mining industry is the largest sector of mining industry. It constitutes around 60% of South Africa's mining labour.

As of 2007, the South African mining industry employs 493,000 workers:

- ★ In 2005 the total gold production was 294,671 kg
- ★ the total iron ore production was 39.5 Mt

(UMT, CDT, ANDCN, poor peasants, FDR-UDT), Tunisia (CGTT), Guinea (CNTG, CEK, SLEG), Ivory Coast (CGT-CI), Djibouti (UDT), Congo DRC (LO), Mali (Cocidrail, Sytrail), Benin (FNEB, UNSTB, AIPR), Burkina Faso (UGEB, CGT-B, AEBF) and Madagascar (Fisemare).

The politics of the workers' CGT-B and the students' UGEB from Burkina Faso are described by the CNT-F as "class struggle, revolutionary syndicalism from a Marxist point of view". In a similar way the Madagascan Fisemare is described as an independent Marxist revolutionary union, while the Algerian Snapap is independent but not revolutionary, although it is of interest because it opposes what used to be the only union in the country, the UGTA. The Guinean CNTG is the biggest union in the country, affiliated to the mainstream International Trade Union Confederation, and won a big strike this year. A representative from a Guinean students' union-in-exile was also present at i07 and the CNT-F has said that the Cocidrail and Sytrail railway unions in Mali, affiliated to the main Mali union the UNTM, are very solid comrades. The UNSTB in Benin used to be a Marxist union linked to the state during the socialist period of that country and as a result is rather reformist. There was also a "very strange union" from the DRC Congo, Lutte Ouvrière, which the CNT-F says they needed to see "on the field" to assess their politics properly. The Congolese do, however, have links on their website to the CNT-F and fellow syndicalist unions the Spanish CGT and Swedish SAC. The CGT-Liberte and the public sector CSP from Cameroon were unable to attend because of visa problems, but they are "very interesting" according, once again, to the CNT-F.

As seen by the preceding breakdown the African delegates present, entirely paid for by the CNT, seemed all to have come from a range of independent and radical unions influenced by Marxism, and it is interesting to consider what might have attracted them to attend an anarcho-syndicalist conference, and what this means for creating an opening for spreading libertarian socialist ideas in Africa. One cynical participant commented that they got the feeling that a lot of these people were present because the CNT wanted to have a big impressive event, and that they invited organisations to participate which they would otherwise have been a lot more wary of had they been from Europe. I don't think that that is quite the case however - that the CNT was doing it for show - and either way, it is crucially important for militants from a libertarian socialist tradition to engage with organisers from Africa coming from an authoritarian socialist (Marxist or otherwise) tradition. The reason being that one needs to consider the context in which their political identity would have developed, bearing in mind that there is very little libertarian socialist tradition in Africa as a whole, and that many people on the continent with Leftist inclinations would invariably have been attracted to authoritarian/ statist models of socialism and Marxist ideas or, for example, the type of "African socialism", as practiced notably in Tanzania and that was explicitly anti-Marxist, as that was all that most were exposed to.

It is also important to note that "African Socialism" has been tried and found wanting, and that radical Leftists in Africa might be becoming disillusioned with mainstream state socialism and be looking around for alternatives. Perhaps this is what

attracted the African delegates to i07? Perhaps they feel so isolated and in such a desperate situation that activists from a statist orientation are willing to try anything to garner some support from the international community. Or perhaps they were all, as with the delegate from Burkina Faso, just there to learn.

Whichever the case may be, it is a sound strategy for the French CNT to be in contact with these groups as it helps to facilitate a dialogue about forms of organisation, visions of the type of society we want to create and it allows for the building of solidarity struggles between groups in the so-called first and third worlds. Hopefully those delegates who attended from Africa would have learnt something and have been inspired by the anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary syndicalist movements they encountered. I strongly feel that the CNT-F has taken an initiative that I would love to see being followed by the other more developed and stronger anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groupings and movements, with the capacity to do so, from the former colonial regimes.

There is also, encouragingly, another similar initiative to i07, the “International conference on the co-ordination of base unionism and social connection in Europe and the Maghreb” being organised by the Spanish CGT, due take place in Malaga on 28, 29 and 30 September 2007. According to the CGT “a network of relations, information and solidarity actions has been developing between organisations on the northern and southern sides of the Mediterranean...” and these meetings will have the “objective of opposing the current neo-liberal politics [...]The principal objective is not to share long expositions on the different problems, but to achieve a consensus to establish some minimum agreements that will allow us to develop actions in a way that shows a clear and organised response to neo-liberalism”.

The legacy of Marxism and the Soviet Union is fading into history, and as a result, there is a vacuum of ideas in the African Left. At such a time it is crucial for anarchists to step in and try to fill this vacuum, at a point when people may be looking for alternatives and might be open to libertarian socialist ideas. Anarchists should not be sectarian about their engagement with the broader African Left as, without a doubt, if we fail to take the initiative and try to fill the vacuum of ideas with a libertarian socialist - or more specifically an anarchist communist alternative, the larger and still, regrettably, better organised authoritarian socialists will certainly seize the opportunity to provide material and ideological support to the African trade unions, social and anti-globalisation movements who, often desperate and uneducated as to the flaws of state socialism, will take whatever help they can get.

If, however, anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups abroad are going to try and develop contacts with unions in Africa, and try to spread anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist tactics and ideas, they would need to have a strategy for doing so. One key point to note however, when embarking on this strategy, is that every effort must be made to try to make contact with the rank-and-file workers, not the union bureaucrats, or to try and ensure that union leaders disseminate the information and ideas they receive from anarchists abroad at the base. They would need to make a commitment to persistence and patience in building such networks. It would also be advisable for delegates to be sent to Africa to make direct contacts with African

of all Senegalese. Thereby reducing hunger, poverty, child mortality and achieving universal primary education, improved access to water, sanitation, and healthcare services.

Ba suba ak jam

(Goodbye in Wolof)

percent of Senegal's total population is infected with malaria (Global Fund 2004). According to the United States Pharmacopeia, the problem impinges on every region of the country and is exacerbated by the free flow of poor quality anti-malarial drugs and increasing parasite resistance to traditional first-line drug treatment.

Tuberculosis is another concern of Senegal. Close to 9000 cases were reported in 2000 and 5832 were considered contagious. According to the UNAIDS 2002 update Senegal had an HIV/AIDS prevalence of 1.43 percent, with an estimated 27,000 adults and children living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001, 24,000 being adults (aged between 15-49) (UNAIDS Country Profile 2004).

These startling figures are due to many medical and social failings, including, but not limited to, inadequate nutrition and healthcare, poor access to improved water supply and sanitation and of course, poverty. Only 40 percent of the population of Senegal has access to health services. However, healthcare personnel are concentrated in the two largest cities of Senegal, Dakar and Thiès, leaving the majority of the rural population poorly or uncovered. Not only that, but Senegal suffers from "Brain Drain", an epidemic where skilled and qualified people (including doctors, nurses, dentists) leave Senegal in search of a more stable life in France or another Western country.

★ *Is There No Alternative*

A revolution in which society is reorganized where the people are in control must remedy this situation. It can do so by providing an alternative economy. One where there is equal distribution of health services and resources being made to the whole population of Senegal. It will also provide a stable society to prevent "Brain Drain", as well as increasing and perfecting medical services to provide the best possible service to the population. This equitable allocation alone can cut cases of malaria and tuberculosis, as well as the infant, under five and maternal mortality rates.

Diego Abad de Santillan, in his work *After the Revolution*, notes, "There will be no private doctors, since the entire profession will be at the service of all. They will be incorporated, however, along with dentists, pharmacists, etc., in respective Councils and form similar organizations as in other branches. The Council of Sanitation will create schools and research institutions, and will also take care of public health in the cities and in the country." What specific role or function, a "Council of Sanitation" is to play, is to be determined in the future by the Senegalese. Yet, from this passage we can gather that an anarcho-syndicalist strategy upholds the anarchistic values of self-management and anti-authoritarianism. An alternative economy will need to incorporate these and other anarchistic values into new institutions to provide equitable circumstances and services to the Senegalese.

An anarcho-syndicalist strategy holds that self-managed workers organizations and mass organizations will form the basis of a self-managed society. These new values and institutions, which vary greatly from the ones of capitalism, allowing for advances to be made and services to be exchanged not for profit, but for the benefit

organisers and in order to gauge the impact of their attempts, adjust and revise strategies where necessary, and measure the adequacy of the dissemination of their materials, via the union leaders or contact persons, at the base.

Another point worth noting is that - given the small size of the African working class, high levels of unemployment and relative lack of industrialization - anarchist intervention from abroad in industrial struggles, and the cultivation of anarcho-syndicalist tendencies alone in Africa is not sufficiently going to help spread anarchist ideas on the continent, and special attention should also be paid to ways and means of carrying industrial struggles into communities. In order to effectively spread anarchist ideas across the continent, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists should not confine themselves to industrial struggles, but should try to find ways for taking up and supporting social and community struggles in the industrial arena, as well as encouraging workers who may become influenced by anarcho-syndicalist ideas to try and take these ideas back to their communities, and organise there too.

The CNT-F have already taken libertarian socialist debate on Africa significantly forward with the publication of what was intended to be *Zabalaza's* sister journal, the French-language Africa-focused journal *Afrique XXI*, and I hope that measures are being taken to ensure that this publication finds a decent circulation in Africa and that it is not confined to the Francophone African immigrant communities in Europe (although its circulation there would also serve to spread libertarian socialist ideas amongst African immigrants to Europe who, in turn, could send such ideas back home). It should be noted, though, that this journal is not produced by the CNT-F alone, and that there are also some groups and organisations that do not come from the libertarian tradition, which might moderate its message to a degree - but which also ensure a wider readership than a purely anarchist journal would reach.

Given the scarcity of known libertarian socialist socio-political traditions in Africa, which were mainly confined to North and southern Africa and its small and thinly spread anarchist movement, the support and intervention of anarchists coming from regions with more developed anarchist traditions is vital for the spread of the anarchist idea on the continent. In particular the anarchists of the former colonial powers (who have the advantage of linguistic and cultural ties with Africa) should try to support the growth of anarchism in Africa. Also, sharing experiences of struggle and methods of anarchist organisation under similar socio-economic conditions, such as in Latin America or other parts of the developing world, would be very beneficial.

To this end we need to consider a few things:

1. How can anarchist's abroad work with, and assist, existing anarchist groups and individuals in Africa?
2. How can they establish and maintain contacts with African trade unions, social movements and Left-wing groups?
3. What are the priorities when doing so: to spread anarchist awareness; to support existing struggles (materially, ideologically or through solidarity actions); or to counter authoritarian traditions?

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4. How can they embark on joint international campaigns involving African groups?
5. How can they show practical solidarity with African struggles?
6. How can they work towards turning single-issue and reformist campaigns and struggles into revolutionary movements and promote horizontal, egalitarian, participatory democracy?

When engaging with African trade unions and trying to facilitate the establishment of an anarcho-syndicalist presence on the continent, it is wise to avoid or to set aside the sectarian infighting which has plagued certain sectors of the movement thus far. In the old debate of whether or not anarchists should bore-from-within existing unions, to organise inside or work alongside existing and probably reformist unions, what must be avoided in the African context is the “purist” line (which argues against this boring-from-within), which does not work except in very particular circumstances – which don’t obtain in Africa at present. The hard reality in Africa is that the purist position of trying to establish new, specifically anarchist unions will probably fail – until such time as there is a significant growth in the African anarchist movement itself. Until then, new anarcho-syndicalist formations are likely to remain isolated, numerically and strategically insignificant – if not totally ineffectual.

To conclude, there are two possible options that may contribute to spreading the ideas and methods of anarcho-syndicalism in Africa. The first is for Africa-based anarchists to agitate for anarcho-syndicalism either within existing unions or, possibly at a later stage, by trying to set-up new unions along anarcho-syndicalist lines from scratch. The second and more viable option – because of the insignificant number of organised anarchists in Africa and their relative lack of capacity – is for anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists from abroad to intervene and assist by trying to establish contacts and build pragmatic solidarity with any existing African unions – preferably independent and revolutionary ones where possible.

The text of this article was taken from:

www.Anarkismo.net

An Anarcho-Syndicalist Strategy for Africa

★ Health Councils ★

by Blackstone

★ Senegal ★

Senegal is a country located in western Africa. Its population numbers over 11 million, with 70% living in rural areas. Approximately 54% of all Senegalese households live below the poverty line. Thus, similar to most Sub-Saharan countries in Africa, Senegal suffers from numerous health problems typically associated with severe poverty.

Poverty, and various health problems, follow the same geographical distribution and reach high points in rural areas. This is due to the fact that the poorest live in the poorest sanitary conditions. Only 48% of Senegal have access to improved sanitation conditions. In Kolda, the poorest area, only 27% has access to piped water and 7% to toilets.

The Under Five Mortality Rate is 139 per 1000 live births in the year 2000 and estimates of maternal mortality rates (MMR) have are estimated to be around 690. The correlation between poverty and health can also be seen in accordance to Infant, Under Five and maternal mortality rates. From statistical samples, it is clearly evident that these rates increase in the poorest areas as well.

Malaria is Senegal’s most serious concern and is the leading cause of death for children under five years old. The Global Fund reports that a total of 800,000 people have been diagnosed with malaria as of July 2003, meaning that approximately 8.9