

# Answer to three questions raised by a Brazilian comrade (2012)

René Berthier

- *What is your position on organisations such as Alternative Libertaire in France?*
- *And on Georges Fontenis?*
- *I know that the Anarchist Federation does not have much sympathy for the Platform, AL or Fontenis.*

**These three questions were asked during the preparation of  
the international anarchist meetings in Saint-Imier in  
2012<sup>1</sup>**

You raise three questions:

1. The Platform;
2. Fontenis;
3. Alternative libertaire.

These three issues must not be confused. Above all, the “Fontenis affair” has *absolutely* nothing to do with the debate on the platform.

## About the Platform

The debate on the platform dates back to 1926 in France. It is part of the history of the anarchist movement and is a matter for historians. The political proposals set out in Archinov’s platform apply to a situation that existed 90 years ago. To imagine that they could still be valid today without re-examination is, in my opinion, somewhat naive. It is certain, however, that activists who first heard about this text in 1990 may tend to overlook the fact that it was written in 1926. In France, organisations considered “platformist” no longer even refer to this document, which is considered “outdated”.

A few years ago, an activist from Alternative libertaire was interviewed by a North-East American anarchist group (Nefac)<sup>2</sup> ; when asked, “Why are there so few

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1 NB July 2023. — This text was written before the formation of the Union Communiste Libertaire (Libertarian Communist Union) through the merger of Alternative Libertaire and the Coordination des Groupes Anarchistes (Coordination of Anarchist Groups). Since then, the new organisation has gone through a crisis with the departure of many activists involved in class struggle and trade union action, who accused the organisation of engaging in activities that obscured the class struggle.

See *Monde libertaire* online (in French), “About the 34 who have resigned from the UCL”,

<https://www.monde-libertaire.fr/?>

[articien=6142&article=A\\_propos\\_des\\_34\\_demissionnaires\\_de\\_IUCL\)](https://www.monde-libertaire.fr/?articien=6142&article=A_propos_des_34_demissionnaires_de_IUCL)

2 <http://fdca.it/fdcaen/international/al.htm>

references to the Archinov platform in your texts?”, the answer was that the platform is one of their historical references, but that it is outdated and not adapted to the situation in France. The only thing they retain from it is the need to organise<sup>3</sup>. Obsolescence of the platform and the need to organise: the Anarchist Federation (FA) agrees on this, that is clear.

For us, the Archinov platform is a subject for debate among historians. *The same* can be said of the “anarchist synthesis”. No one in the FA thinks of referring to it strictly: individualists have disappeared, I haven’t met any in the FA for decades; on the other hand, libertarian communists and anarcho-syndicalists have largely unified practices. In addition, the FA has decided to re-establish contact with a group of comrades who split off about ten years ago and to invite them to return to the organisation;<sup>4</sup> in this perspective, it is clear that the FA will have to reconsider its basic principles which, incidentally, have been modified several times to adapt them to circumstances, clearly demonstrating that we are not dealing with a sclerotic organisation. In short, this means that the “anarchist synthesis” will no longer be valid. This has, in fact, been the case in practice for a long time.<sup>5</sup>

The debate on the Platform in France has been relegated to a mere historical question by the “platformist” organisations themselves. I will quote Guillaume Davranche, an activist with *Alternative libertaire*, who writes:

“In France, the debate only subsided in the 1990s. René Berthier and Gaetano Manfredonia proposed dispassionate approaches to the question. The highly synthetic Anarchist Federation (FA) actually moved away from Sébastien Faure’s catechism. The Union of Libertarian Communist Workers (UTCL), formed in 1976, quickly moved beyond the *Platform*, retaining more of its spirit than its letter – *Alternative libertaire* is part of this continuity.”<sup>6</sup>

What Davranche says is perfectly true.

There was a violent reaction against the Archinov Platform when it was written in 1926 *throughout the entire libertarian movement*, particularly in France and Italy. Personally, 90 years on, I would be inclined to agree with the authors of the Platform, and I regret that the French anarchists did not even attempt to discuss its terms, *as Makhno and Archinov proposed*.

But when viewed in the context of the time, the problem with Archinov’s platform is a false one, because the authors of the text were wrong, in my opinion, to address anarchists rather than the anarcho-syndicalists who had just split from the CGT and formed the CGT-SR in 1926, *the very year of the publication of the “Platform”*. To sum up, I would say that the French anarchist movement at the time was largely influenced by Kropotkin, while the CGT-SR was influenced by Bakunin.

In recent times, the Anarchist Federation has, I think, been wrong not to understand the reasons for the appeal of Archinov’s platform in North and South

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3 “Platformism without illusions: France” (<http://nefac.net/node/530>).

4 This initiative has since been abandoned because the comrades in question seemed to be moving towards councilist positions. (Note from 2014)

5 The concept of “anarchist synthesis” does not even appear in the “Basic Principles”, no more than the existence of an ‘individualist’ tendency (Note from 2014).

6 Guillaume Davranche [*Alternative libertaire*, Paris-Sud] “Avec la ‘Plateforme’, l’anarchisme tente la rénovation” (With the “Platform”, anarchism attempts renewal). <http://www.alternativelibertaire.org/spip.php?article1596>

America. For us, this 1926 text was outdated. It seems to have been “rediscovered” in England around 1968-70 and in the Americas around 1990.

In North America, anarchism was more focused on issues of individual freedom, civil disobedience, counterculture, opposition to religion, and criticism of liberalism and socialism. There was no anarchist tradition in the European sense of the word, i.e. organised anarchism. In Latin America, this tradition, which had existed in the 1920s and 1930s, seemed to me to have been lost; there had been a lost generation, partly because of the hegemony of communism and partly because of military dictatorships. The “discovery” of the platform in the 1990s revealed to Latin American anarchists the existence of “organised anarchism”, i.e. a form of worker anarchism organised in a specific way, rather than just a diffuse and loosely organised form of anarchism within mass organisations such as trade unions.

But for us in France, talking about “organised anarchism” is a pleonasm. The same goes for “social anarchism”, etc.

Without wanting to sound paranoid, I think there has also been intense propaganda against the French Anarchist Federation on the part of European but also North American “platformist” organisations, especially French but not only French, which we have not paid attention to. This is *very clear* when you visit the discussion forums of Anarkismo or others: the Anarchist Federation appears there as a group that publishes “cultural newspapers”, propaganda texts that only we read, that “talk, talk, talk nonsense” and that are not in danger of “betraying” anyone because they do nothing. The guy who makes this kind of statement on *anarchistblackcat* didn’t invent this kind of argument: he must have read it somewhere.<sup>7</sup>

In a way, we (the FA) are guilty of abandoning the non-platformist anarchist groups in Latin America. I’m not saying this to widen the gap that may exist between different anarchist currents, but precisely because we could have helped show that it is possible to move beyond both synthesis and platformism, which are inventions that are almost a century old. The “platformism” for external use, which certain French activists promote but which they themselves have abandoned in France, served, in my opinion, as an excuse to isolate the FA. I find it rather amusing that Alternative libertaire is part of the Anarkismo network, which claims to be platformist, even though this group has abandoned platformism.

## About Fontenis

I don’t think that the militants of the Anarchist Federation who are interested in the “Fontenis affair” – and I can assure you that there aren’t many – think of Fontenis as being part of the Archinov platform. Fontenis organised a faction, a conspiracy, to take control of the FA, its newspaper, *Le Libertaire*, its premises and its finances, and he had all those who disagreed with him expelled, including a large number of his

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7 The website [anarchistblackcat.org](http://anarchistblackcat.org) used to feature some rather delusional statements such as the following (the site has since been taken down):

“Fontenis fought all his life to give consistency to the revolutionary movement along libertarian lines, fighting not against ‘ideas’ (as the Joyeux group did), but against Nazism, Francoism and French imperialism. He never hesitated to make alliances with other fighters against oppression, or to seek risky ways to achieve the goals of the social revolution, thinking that it was better to make mistakes doing that than to do nothing, but for some ‘anarchists’ that is an aberration. They prefer to publish cultural papers, lots of propaganda that only they read, and talk and talk and talk about nonsense. They are very happy: they will never ‘betray’ anyone. Yes, they will never bring about any social change. But that is of no importance, of course.

<http://www.anarchistblackcat.org/index.php/topic,467.15.html>

own “supporters” – an attitude entirely consistent with ultra-sectarian and paranoid groups. The symptom of this observation is revealed in the fact that the leader of this sect, Fontenis, held the positions of secretary general, head of the self-defence group, head of youth training, editor of the *anarchist magazine*, permanent editor of *Le Libertaire*, head of the education committee, president of the Jeunesses libertaires (Libertarian Youth) and, above all, president of the OPB, the secret organisation that had been the instrument of this total takeover. It cannot be said that there was any rotation of positions... Or perhaps there was not a single activist in the group competent enough to relieve the overworked leader.

I understand very well that, from 20,000 km away, things are not seen in such a trivial light. It seems obvious to me, however, that a veritable myth has been constructed around Fontenis’s three disastrous years in power. This stems from a more or less conscious desire for a hero, if not outright personality cult.<sup>8</sup> But Fontenis is certainly not the Bakunin of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is true that from thousands of kilometres away and 60 years later, the myth may seem appealing, but if we take stock, what do we have? A small group of men took control of an organisation weakened by five years of war, diverted it from the basic principles on which it was founded and abandoned it to its fate when they had finished ruining it.

These men allied themselves with André Marty, a Stalinist of the worst kind, who had been sent by Stalin to Spain to lead the International Brigades. Marty was nicknamed the “Butcher of Albacete” for covering up the liquidation of members of the International Brigades in that city. Marty was also known in Spain for his hunt for anarchists and POUM militants. At the end of the war, Marty was *the No. 3 man in the French Communist Party*. Stalin’s death in 1953 called his position into question and he was expelled *because he was too marked as a Stalinist*. When Fontenis decided to approach him, Marty was therefore not a revolutionary activist opposed to the party leadership, but a confirmed Stalinist who found himself politically unemployed. In 1955, *Le Libertaire*, which was controlled by Fontenis and his friends, opened its columns wide to Marty. Fontenis was convinced that he would be able to manipulate Marty, but the opposite happened. As I often say, when anarchists want to play at being Leninists, they are always worse than the Leninists themselves and trip themselves up.

The Libertarian Communist Federation, which had succeeded the Anarchist Federation, unanimously passed a resolution declaring that the electoral battle was a form of class struggle and that participating in elections had become a viable option. In the January 1956 elections, Fontenis supported André Marty who, prudently did not stand for election himself, incidentally. It was a catastrophic failure: in terms of votes, of course, but also for the organisation’s finances. The FCL was completely ruined by this election campaign. I can say without much risk that Makhno and Archinov would not have supported this kind of drift...

I think that activists who claim to be libertarian communists and oppose anarchist synthesis have every right to express themselves, develop their theses, and even try their luck by creating an organisation that corresponds to their approach to anarchism.

What Fontenis is criticised for is not having expressed his views, nor is it for having created a fully-fledged libertarian communist organisation, but for having *destroyed* an existing organisation *from within*. No one is saying that the Anarchist Federation was perfect, but it had the merit of existing. Fontenis and his friends’ stranglehold on the FA lasted barely three years, and when it ended he had expelled

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8 On the anarkismo forums (anarchistblackcat), it is clear that some contributors have developed a veritable cult of personality around Fontenis.

almost everyone, *including many of his own friends*. After the disastrous election affair, Fontenis left a void behind him. A desert. But it is also true that if all this was possible, it was because of the incredible shortcomings of the Anarchist Federation itself.

We could have credited Fontenis with his support for Algerian independence: many anarchists of all stripes did so, but covertly, clandestinely. *The very nature of support for a clandestine organisation is that it is done clandestinely!* Not by shouting it from the rooftops. Fontenis' choice to lead the organisation into this ostentatious support led to a series of convictions and the ruin of his organisation.

Fontenis was not a visionary activist who anticipated the perfect model of anarchist organisation and prophetically foresaw the anarchist programme of the future; he was a manipulative madman who destroyed the only organisation that existed, built nothing in its place and left behind a scorched earth. This, I believe, is not an honourable attitude. The destruction of the Anarchist Federation is not a badge of honour for Fontenis and his friends. It took *years* to rebuild the Anarchist Federation.

I know a fan of Fontenis who argues that anarchists cannot make revolution on their own, that they need to find allies, and that the alliance between Fontenis' FCL and the Stalinist Marty and his friends was simply a tactical alliance, and that it is purism to be shocked by it. I do not dispute the need to form alliances, what I am saying is that alliances with other forces can be considered when we ourselves are in a position of strength and when these alliances do not call into question all our principles. In any case, we do not ally ourselves with a guy who had many anarchists assassinated.

I insist that we cannot equate Fontenis with libertarian communism, or Fontenis with platformism. Libertarian communism as a theory and practice, as a legitimate current of the libertarian movement, is in no way tainted by the actions of one man supported by a few accomplices, whose misdeeds lasted only three years. The Anarchist Federation eventually recovered, in any case, and is doing rather well today.

In the 1950s, there were libertarian communists who were not platformists and who did not question the existence of the FA. They should not be confused with those who followed Fontenis. That said, Fontenis could very well have said: I don't agree with the FA, let's build *something else*, and those who wish to can follow me. I am sure that some activists would have followed him. The fate of libertarian communism in France would undoubtedly have been completely different. The problem is that he managed to disgust most of those who had joined and supported him with his practices and authoritarianism. This was the case with the Kronstadt group, whose opposition had nothing to do with personal differences. The memorandum that this group drafted clearly shows that these were entirely political differences<sup>9</sup>. It is extremely regrettable that it has not been translated into English, Spanish or Portuguese.

It seems clear to me that the aura surrounding Fontenis grows with the distance. The idol would be somewhat demystified if his distant comrades had read the December 2002 issue of *Alternative libertaire*, in which two activists from the organisation reviewed a book that Fontenis had just published at his own expense, *Non-conforme*:

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9 [http://www.fondation-besnard.org/IMG/pdf/Memorandum\\_du\\_groupe\\_Kronstadt.pdf](http://www.fondation-besnard.org/IMG/pdf/Memorandum_du_groupe_Kronstadt.pdf)

“Unfortunately, while Georges Fontenis is still keen to ‘break taboos’, he does not do so with much relevance in *Non conforme*. The exercise here turns into a search for an iconoclastic stance that more often than not misses the mark, when it does not go completely astray. The argument is confused and ambiguous on certain social issues. Ultimately, Georges Fontenis wants to ask non-conformist questions, but the often ambivalent wording of his answers risks leading readers to conclusions that are too conformist... to the dominant ideology.”

For it is true that in the end, Fontenis had become rather inconvenient for the militants of Alternative libertaire, but this should not be said too loudly.

Today, most of the younger activists in the FA are completely uninterested in the “Fontenis affair”. All that is over. We are no longer in the 1950s, and we are not going to keep harping on about the past indefinitely. But while we need to understand the extent of the disputes among our older comrades, and the extent of the trauma they have suffered, this must not prevent us from moving forward. I think we need to lance the boil and say what needs to be said. We need to openly express what is in our hearts. We need to establish the facts clearly. Then we can move forward. And I insist once again that all this is closely linked to the French context, and that it is probably incomprehensible to an American from the north or south (or the centre...).

Le *Monde Libertaire* recently published two articles on Fontenis<sup>10</sup>. These articles are not polemical, they are very moderate, they are perfectly “academic” work, which expresses very well the general attitude of the FA on the issue, and which says almost everything there is to say. I say “almost” because the author of these two articles, whom I know well, told me that he did not want to report information that he could not verify, but which came from an AL defector, according to whom Fontenis was in fact expelled for homophobic remarks.

So I have nothing more to say about Fontenis than what is said in these two articles.

The “Fontenis affair” is also a thing of the past and has no bearing whatsoever on the FA’s decisions regarding its attitude towards Alternative libertaire. The “Fontenis affair” no longer determines the attitudes of either party, and that is a very good thing. The “Fontenis affair” is ancient history. But history remains present, even if it should not prevent us from moving forward. It is essential that anarchists in other countries not be held hostage in this debate: they are strangers to it and probably do not understand much about it.

## About Alternative libertaire

The activists of the Anarchist Federation are not affected by the existence of an organisation that declares itself to be libertarian communist. There are libertarian communists, but not platformists, in the Anarchist Federation as well. Curiously, when I hear comrades talk about Alternative libertaire, they *never* mention political or theoretical differences, they talk about their *behaviour*, their manipulations, their habit of taking credit for actions they did not carry out, their attempts to infiltrate the FA (it’s a habit of theirs), their mania for making naive people believe that they are much more numerous than they really are. All these things have already been seen by those who have spent a lot of time with the Trotskyists. with them), their mania for

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10 <http://www.monde-libertaire.fr/portraits/13723-georges-fontenis-parcours-dun-aventuriste-du-mouvement-libertaire-1/2>

<http://www.monde-libertaire.fr/portraits/13756-georges-fontenis-parcours-dun-aventuriste-du-mouvement-libertaire-2/2>

making naive people believe that they are much more numerous than they really are. All these things have already been seen by those who have spent a lot of time with Trotskyists.

Not long ago, one of the most well-known activists of Alternative Libertaire proposed to a comrade in the FA that they form a secret faction within the FA. The intention was to spread propaganda in favour of AL within the FA, and then provoke a split. This attempt was not an isolated one. I will not, of course, mention the name of this Alternative Libertaire activist, but he is someone who is fairly well known in our circles. The FA comrade pretended to go along with it for a while to see how far the other guy would go. In short, *Fontenis' methods continue*. In fact, this kind of approach makes us laugh, because when anarchists try to imitate Leninists, they always do so clumsily. This is what Fontenis did, but in his case it cost him dearly.

During the International anarchist meeting in Saint-Imier in 2012, a comrade from Sao Paulo told me a rather amusing and significant anecdote. He told me that when anarchists in the region organise an event, all it takes is for one platformist activist to wash a plate for the whole event to be attributed to the platformists. Of course, this is an exaggeration, but it is significant. I myself have observed how platformist organisations tend to take credit for actions in which they have had little or no involvement. What separates platformism from other anarchist currents is therefore much less theoretical differences than the *behaviour* of the platformist activists.

Although the Fontenis experience severely hampered the reconstruction of the Anarchist Federation, it has nevertheless recovered. In fact, it has remarkable vitality. The Fontenis experience, on the other hand, severely hampered the future of libertarian communism *in France itself*. Whatever those in France who claim to follow Fontenis or present him as a model may say, he was a disaster for the anarchist movement *as a whole* and, I would not hesitate to say, undoubtedly *especially* for the libertarian communist current itself.

The main organisation representing libertarian communism in France emerged from a split in the FA in 1970, followed by an expulsion from this splinter organisation. However, this organisation has a monthly magazine and only very recently acquired premises in Paris. In other words, *for more than 40 years*, libertarian communism has made virtually no progress in France. Need I say that this is absolutely no cause for celebration?

The Anarchist Federation has a monthly newspaper, a radio station that has just celebrated its 30th anniversary and, thanks to the Internet, can be heard everywhere, a bookshop in Paris, as well as bookshops set up in many provincial towns by local groups, a book publishing label with a very respectable catalogue, etc. I would say that, all in all, we are not so badly organised.

For us, Alternative Libertaire is just an organisation that is legitimately trying to survive, but unfortunately often does so in a way that is unfair to other libertarian organisations. But the FA is capable of overcoming this. None of this prevents relations between our two organisations from improving. Joint campaigns have been carried out on certain issues. Local groups work together on occasion. Relations are generally quite good on a grassroots level. In fact, we do not fear relations with them because the “balance of trade” is in our favour. By this I mean that there are many more AL activists who come to the FA than the other way around.

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## Excerpts from “About the 34 people who quit the UCL”<sup>11</sup>

3 January 2022

On 15 December 2021, the “Libertarian Communist Platform under Construction” published a text entitled “We are leaving the UCL for political reasons”. It had been known for some time that the situation was not looking good within Alternative Libertaire, and then within the UCL after the merger with groups from the CGA. It matters little that this merger may have exacerbated problems within the new organisation, as the new arrivals may have brought their own issues with them. Those leaving present themselves as long-standing activists, some for more than forty years, which implicitly suggests that there is a (generational?) divide with the younger activists.

There are 34 signatories to this text, a figure that undoubtedly does not include those who have already left and those who are about to leave. Their observation is that ‘human relations’ are being mistreated in the Union Communiste Libertaire, created two years ago, and that the ‘founding texts’ are no longer respected. The organisation, which has become an ‘end in itself’, is said to have made a ‘break with any revolutionary perspective’. In short, ‘the evolution of the UCL is undermining the communist-libertarian project’: this is an extremely serious accusation.

What is the substance of this accusation?

The debate is no longer fuelled by political points of view but manifests itself in ‘anathemas based on the essentialisation of activists’. It is no longer the content of what is expressed that is retained, but the person expressing it, based on ‘the colour of their skin, their age, their gender, etc.’ We can conclude that the discourse of certain people defined by the degree of their ‘oppression’, real or perceived, has more value and deserves more attention than that of a person who is not supposed to be a victim of any ‘oppression’ — and it is a short step from there to placing that person in the camp of the oppressors, not because of any action they may take, but simply because of who they are.

For example:

“Only “post-modernist” anti-patriarchy seems to have the wind in its sails and in fact constitutes a political bureau that does not say its name, thereby marginalising the voices of activists who take a different approach and methodology. Gender has indeed become the prism through which all exchanges are viewed. Male heterosexual comrades are, in particular, subject to constant criticism simply because of who they are, regardless of their concrete commitment to the struggle for equal rights, including in their daily lives.”

Specifically, for those who resigned from the UCL, “people must be recognised for their words and actions, not by a list of the forms of domination they have experienced. As for experiences and feelings, while they have their place, they do not justify the imposition of a political line.”

(...)

The resigning comrades write in their document that “Platformism, originally founded to draw conclusions from the total failure of the anarchist movements during the Russian Revolution, is indispensable in these bad times.”

(...)

The supporters of the Archinov Platform who dominated Alternative libertaire do not themselves seem to have been able to “draw the consequences of the failure” of their own organisation and have not been able to find in the Platform the means to avoid this failure — which does not exactly speak in favour of the Platform. Unless we think that the merger of AL with the CGA was a way of marginalising the “class struggle veterans” of the former UTCL by creating space for supporters of fashionable woke theories.

While woke ideology legitimately aims to engage with people who are sensitive to social injustice and racial inequality, it should be remembered that these issues are at the very foundation of anarchism. Unfortunately, this woke ideology, which has enveloped the UCL in its invasive wing, is based on the rejection of the principle of class struggle, which is also one of the basic principles of anarchism. The UCL resigners are of course well aware of this, since they write that in today’s UCL, “class struggle is

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.monde-libertaire.fr/?>



systematically opposed to 'intersectionality', whereas for us all struggles must be articulated together", which seems obvious to me.

The explanation for the split that led to the resignations is perhaps not political but sociological: for class struggle to appear obvious to someone, they must be in a position to experience it in their daily life. People who do not experience exploitation and want to appear "radical" find themselves confined to "supposedly radical discourse", as the UCL resignation letter puts it, because they have no "concrete commitments directly linked to the working classes". This is perhaps an allusive way of saying that those UCL members who provoked the resignations are petty bourgeois: isn't this what is expressed when we read that "in the UCL, it is now mainly those who are masters of time who express themselves"? How did this organisation come to establish such intellectual terrorism that those who are not "masters of time" (in short, those who work as opposed to those who have leisure time) have no choice but to "suffer public opprobrium, self-censor or remain silent", or face baseless accusations of "racism or anti-Semitism, sexism, complicity in rape culture, transphobia, ableism, whorephobia"? (Would bald people escape these categorisations?)

The relentless insistence on countless partial micro-struggles presented as essential obscures the fact that proletarians, as understood by the CGT-SR in the 1930s<sup>12</sup>, have common interests and that the struggle against all forms of exploitation and oppression can only be effective if it is global. This insistent focus on countless partial micro-struggles also leads the victims of one form of "oppression" to deny the right of victims of another form of "oppression" to call themselves oppressed. It should be noted that in this debate, there is much more talk of the oppressed than of the exploited.

Finally, there is the question of religion. Those who resigned from the UCL tell us that "criticism of all religions, which has always been embodied by the libertarian movement, [...] has become taboo and even gives rise to accusations of racism when it is proposed, even though the UCL Manifesto reaffirms its commitment to defending 'a society free from religious alienation'." There was a similar problem at the FA, although it did not take on disproportionate importance. One of the comrades whom the UCL resigners present as a "master of time", in other words someone with leisure time, tried a few years ago to introduce into the FA the relativisation of the importance of religion, the refusal to criticise Islam, etc., but it didn't last long.

But here we are dealing with a general, I would even say international, problem: for years, there has been a kind of laxity in the libertarian movement on the question of religion, even though the issue is extremely clear: to be an anarchist is to be an atheist. Belief in God, that is, in a being placed above us and superior to us, is alienation. To be an anarchist is to be opposed to the economic alienation of capital, the political alienation of the state and the religious alienation of God. However, many anarchists today tend to relax the pressure on religious alienation, to the point of considering that it is not contrary to the principles of anarchism to accept believers into the organisation. These comrades seem unable to distinguish between a specific organisation based on principles, including atheism, and a mass organisation bringing together the exploited and oppressed regardless of their beliefs. They seem to think that because we are atheists, we cannot fight side by side with believers. This is obviously idiotic.

This laxity is particularly visible when it comes to Islam: under the pretext that it is the "religion of the oppressed", we are not allowed to criticise it. It does not occur to these comrades that if it is the religion of the oppressed, it is a religion that oppresses them all the more. These anarchists therefore strive to defend women who wear the veil rather than defending the countless women who do not want to wear it. How can we conceive of a situation in which an anarchist organisation includes women who wear the veil but also women who fight not to wear it? Wouldn't the anarchist organisation be better off recruiting women from Muslim cultures *who are fighting against the wearing of the veil*?

There was a form of demagoguery in the UCL's attitude when it became involved in organising the demonstration against Islamophobia on 10 November 2019. Let us be clear that it was not the call to demonstrate against anti-Arab racism that was questionable, but rather the organisations alongside which the UCL called for the demonstration: notorious Islamic fundamentalist organisations. This was, it must be said, a very serious political mistake, a trap into which the FA did not fall.

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12 « ... l'ouvrier de l'industrie ou de la terre, l'artisan de la ville ou des champs – qu'il travaille ou non avec sa famille – l'employé, le fonctionnaire, le contremaître, le technicien, le professeur, le savant, l'écrivain, l'artiste, qui vivent exclusivement du produit de leur travail appartiennent à la même classe : le prolétariat. » Pierre Besnard, *Les syndicats ouvriers et la révolution sociale*.

The list of Islamist organisations and figures who signed this appeal was published on an internal FA list, along with a CV for each signatory, and the result was appalling: the UCL had clearly compromised itself with class enemies.

A text circulated internally within the FA, which read:

“The Union Communiste Libertaire and the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste<sup>13</sup> did not simply add their signatures, among others, at the bottom of an appeal: these organisations are AT THE INITIATIVE of an appeal alongside organisations whose objectives are diametrically opposed to our objectives of human emancipation. The choice made by the UCL to sign this appeal with the NPA shows, on the one hand, that the former Alternative libertaire’s habit of following the crowd has not been abandoned and, on the other hand, that the UCL persists in its desire to merge into the magma of the ‘radical left’ in the hope of carving out a place for itself, even if it means renouncing any libertarian perspective.”

It is amusing to note that the Anarchist Federation, designated by all platformists around the world as “lifestyle”, “folkloric” and theoretically inconsistent has been able to demonstrate such acute political foresight. I would like to know what the position of today’s 34 resigning members was on this matter.

The UCL resigners say, with regard to Islamophobia, that they are “not fooled” by Islamophobia. It would be interesting to know exactly what they mean by this. Most FA activists are very reluctant to use this term, which is a euphemism for anti-Arab racism, but which has the considerable advantage for Islamists of confessionalising this racism, a trap into which our good comrades of the “radical left”, the NPA and the UCL, which never strayed far from it, have fallen headlong.

In times of crisis, regression of critical thinking and expansion of reaction, revolutionary activists can come to doubt their atheist and materialist convictions and, out of a desire to conform, end up wondering if there is not some truth in the discourse of the triumphant reactionary forces that they have become imbued with.

I strongly feel that this is the case today. The influence of religion is so strong that some comrades are relativising the importance of atheism in the doctrinal foundation of anarchism for fear of being marginalised, even though in these periods of retreat we must clearly affirm our principles.

But in reality, religion only seems strong today because it is extremely loud, and activists on the so-called radical left are impressed by this noise, even though surveys show that only a third of French people today believe in God.

It seems to me that the fight against anti-Arab racism in the confessional form of the fight against Islamophobia is a way for a certain sections of the left, including some anarchists, to find a substitute proletariat on which to pin their petty bourgeois guilty conscience.

(...)

The Anarchist Federation has its flaws, that goes without saying, but I find it hard to imagine that it could be hijacked by a bunch of crackpots spouting hazy theories, partly because I think most of its activists have a sense of reality and think sensibly, but also because its structures would not allow it. Our comrades in the UCL should think about this, as their platformist convictions have not been able to prevent the excesses of their organisation.

I don’t think anyone in the FA is happy about what is happening. Two years after a merger that the FA cautiously stayed away from but which could have been potentially promising, some of the most experienced activists in this new organisation are resigning. I hope that those who have remained in the UCL will try to understand the causes of this failure.

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13 Trotskyist.