

Cercle d'études libertaires – Gaston-Leval

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Communiqué

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As part of the “Anti-Authoritarian” International Gathering in Saint-Imier, which took place from 19 to 23 July 2023, there was a book fair at which the Kropotkin group of the French-speaking Anarchist Federation had a table. This table was the object of several assaults by people who demanded the removal of two books from the press table:

- “L'impasse islamique” (The Islamic Impasse) by Hamid Zanaz (Éditions libertaires, 2009), an Algerian author, former philosophy professor at the University of Algiers, contributor to the Arab Rationalists' journal “Al Awan” and other Arab and French journals and newspapers. The attackers accused the book of being “Islamophobic”.
- “Un voile sur la cause des femmes” (A Veil over the Cause of Women) by René Berthier, a small book consisting of several articles previously published in the libertarian press. The author was criticised for being “a white cis-gender heterosexual man” who “cannot write a book about the veil that concerns racialised women”. In fact, the book is not about the veil but about the Iranian constitution and Islamic “feminism”.

It is not our place to give a detailed account of the extremely violent events that took place over three days, which were marked by several attacks on the press table: the overturning of the table by hooded assailants, the theft of books, the throwing of coffee on the books on display, constant insults, threats and harassment, the facial injury of an activist from the Fédération anarchiste, and the burning of Hamid Zanaz's books. And finally, on the last day, a demonstration was organised against the FA, with a banner reading “racism kills”!

It has to be said that the “Team Care” (a euphemism for “security service”) responsible for ensuring the safety of the exhibitors was flagrantly incompetent and openly sided with the aggressors, first demanding that the books be removed from the press table, then outright demanding that the Fédération Anarchiste group leave the book fair. The Kropotkin group was also accused of being responsible for the situation because it had not wanted to remove the books in question.

In other words, the victims were the culprits.

It should be noted that both the attackers and the members of Team Care admitted that *they had not read any of the books in question...*

Faced with this attitude, a general meeting of exhibitors was organised on the initiative of the Kropotkin group. The meeting decided that, since the members of the “Team Care” were incapable of managing the crisis, the exhibitors, as anarchists, would self-manage the situation themselves, thus removing the book fair officials from their remit.

There was another attack on the press table, which was defused thanks to the support of the other exhibitors and in particular the comrades of the Italian FAI, the Greek comrades of the APO, the CNT-Vignoles, and other exhibitors.

Today, the Fédération Anarchiste is the only anarchist organisation in France which, while firmly maintaining its anti-racist stance and its opposition to all forms of discrimination, refuses to fall into the communitarian identitarianism that obscures class struggle. This attitude upsets many people and explains the constant attacks on the organisation, which have been going on for years.

The decision to self-manage the book fair with the other exhibitors, and to relieve the “Team Care” of its duties since it was unable or unwilling to assume its responsibilities, was the right response to these attacks.

Finally, it should be pointed out that those responsible for the general organisation of the International *Anti-authoritarian* Gathering, some of whom were already present at the International *Anarchist* Gathering in 2012, can in no way be held responsible for the unspeakable behaviour of those responsible for the book fair.