

Appendix to an aborted debate on attack and anonymity

A debate is the in-depth exploration of a certain question through the confrontation between two or more sides, each one with their own position. Unlike those who think that debates are to be avoided as to not provoke divisions, we think that they have to be nourished. Because the goal of a debate is not to declare a winner before whom all have to bend the knee, but to enrich the conscience of each one. Debates clarify the ideas. The enunciation of and the confrontation between different ideas – a debate is exactly this! – elucidates the dusky parts and indicates the weak points of these ideas. This helps everybody, nobody excluded. It helps all of the sides who are participating in the ideas to refine, correct or reinforce their own ideas. And it helps everyone who assists to the debate, who will make a choice on which side to be (be it the one side, the other side, or neither of the sides discussing).

The history of the anarchist movement is full of debates. All were useful, even if sometimes they were painful. But its history is also full of lacking debates, different ideas which were never confronted, leaving everybody to their own initial certainties (or doubts). Was this for the better, since in this way sterile polemics have been avoided? According to us, no, it was for the worse, because in this way fertile discussions were prevented.

One of this lacking debates is about the use or not of acronyms, representing real organizations, claiming the direct actions against dominion. It seems to us that this debate, although important, was aborted on the moment it was born.

On an international level, one of the openings towards such a debate was proposed by the *Letter to the anarchist galaxy* which appeared at the end of 2011. This letter was a presentation of the ideas in favor of anonymity and against the use of organizational and claiming acronyms. It also spoke about the insurrectional perspectives, the notion of informality and the multiplicity of attack.

Exactly a year later, in November 2012, at the occasion of the international anarchist gathering in Zurich, the anarchists of the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire spread a text in which they presented the reasons in favor of using organizational acronyms and the reasons against anonymity. This text also presented some more general ideas about the anarchist intervention, like the relation towards “intermediary struggles” or the formation of urban guerilla groups. Good. Starting from different ideas, each of the sides made their own presentation. To launch the debate, the only thing still lacking was to confront these different ideas. And this is what for example the anarchists who in August 2013 spread a text called *Anonymity* in which they take explicitly as a starting point the writings of the CCF to criticize and to reply.

On the occasion of the International Anarchist Symposium held in Mexico in December 2013, the CCF spread a text (*Let's become dangerous... for the spreading of the Black International*)

of which the chapter “FAI, acronyms and the anonymity of the ‘anarchist galaxy’” opens with the following intimation: “We are aware of the flattening polemic, which has been unleashed against FAI by comrades and “comrades””. An evincive premise, because it reduces that what should have been a debate *in favor* of all to a polemic *against* somebody. Moreover, it operates a distinction between those who tried to launch such a debate, differentiating between comrades and “comrades” (?). This contribution refers explicitly to some texts like the *Letter to the anarchist galaxy* and *Anonymity*, dispatching this last contribution as “written by an anarchist from the tension of political anonymity [...] without any comradely mood.” A debate would have been possible and desirable as to deepen ideas, precisely avoiding blocking and locking all space with easy “pro” and “contra”, but it seems to us that blames of the style “theorists who don’t do anything” rather put an end to the discussion. So we could have shut up or let it drop. And indeed, we would have gladly saved ourselves from trying to nourish a debate which – contrary to what the authors of *Anonymity* were thinking – apparently isn’t desired.

So if we are yet to speak up, it is only because we would not want that an eventual silence would be seen as a suggestion, an error which in *these dark and sad days* could happen. This is why, in spite of the clear uselessness, we thought it still important to write an appendix to a debate which has now been aborted. It will be a final appendix, which will have a hard time getting any follow-up, an appendix written with rived reluctance, just to avoid being taken for obsequious.

What said the text *Anonymity*? Basically, two things. First of all, and this in order of speech but not of importance, the text said that anonymity is to be preferred from a so-called “tactical” point of view. The identity persistence gives more space to the judiciary to rain down associative accusations on comrades, because rather than leaving to the police and the judges the task of inventing some “organization” (like repression often did in the history of anarchism) in the distorting mirror of their repressive spectacle, the anarchists fascinated by the organization identity offer it directly to them. Repression will always try to reduce the subversion to one single organization (existing or invented), one single group or even just a few individuals as to try to dig a gap between alleged “actors” and “spectators” and to paste on the swamp of the anarchist and revolutionary subversion, on the singular tensions and individuals acts, on the affinities and regroupings, on the informality and the multiplicity of attack and methods, a diagram reflecting its own authoritarian structure (because judges do not know anything else and cannot conceive the existence of a diffuse and uncontrollable subversion), with a juridical translation of roles (leaders, treasurers, strategists, bomb experts, gunmen, sympathizers, saboteurs,...) in total contradiction with the anarchist and antiauthoritarian ideas. Because these ideas start from the individual – from the individual capacity to think, act and associate with others in the struggle against power – rejecting the adhesion or absorption of the individual by structures who mutilate its will and ideas. We are of course well aware of the fact that repression will also strike anarchists also if they do not use acronyms, and the question is not at all about being ashamed of one’s own actions or ideas. In this sense, the question is simply how to complicate the task of the judges as to prolong the hostilities, to make them last and open up always more space for other anarchists and rebels to throw themselves into battle. Anonymous actions – and by anonymous we mean actions accompanied by the most absolute silence, actions followed by minimal claims, without acronyms, or at least, without recurring acronyms – do not make the repressive task of the enemy more easy, because except of the act itself, the enemy has to invent everything by themselves, nobody is saying to them “it was me who did it”, nobody is giving any additional clues (like for example linguistic codes used in the responsibility claims, an organizational acronym,...) to locate the perpetrators.

To this remarks, suggested in *Anonymity* through a quote of the *Odyssey*, the anarchists of the CCF do not answer, do not reply. They limit themselves to state that “superficial knowledge is worse than ignorance” and to recall that “Odysseus, leaving from the island of Polyphemos, shouted from his

ship “I, Odysseus, blinded you...” It is terribly to see someone crawling clutching at straws. Odysseus claimed his act only *after* he left the island of the enemy, when he thought to be safe on his boat (and by the way, against the warnings of his own comrades). In other words, he claimed his action only when he thought that the war with the Cyclopes was over. While the war was still raging, he remained silent.

But let's leave the literary myths for now. The second point of *Anonymity* was to say that only the absence of identities emerging above others, also through the exploitations of the mass media, equality is possible. Where there are no leaders, there are no followers. Where there are no celebrities, there are no admirers. Where there is no one to emerge, there is nobody put behind. In the darkness of anonymity, all are equals. What sense does it make to take this one step further than the other dark insurgents who are attacking power?

In the contribution to the Symposium in Mexico we read that the FAI is “*FAI is simply the invisible community (sic!) where the desires of attack against our era meet*”. But why should the desires to attack against our era meet each other only in the limited space of three letters, and not in the subversion of the whole alphabet? An argument put forward by the anarchists of the CCF, is that they want to differentiate themselves from the anarchists who are running behind the left. But why would a name differentiate us from the inept syndicalists and the sly citizenship militants rather than the use itself of direct action as an expression of a permanent conflictuality, and not just a foxily alternating one? We also read that “Actions speak for themselves through communiques, because they keep their distances from the ‘anarchist’ opposition, which may sometimes burn down a bank in the name of ‘poor people and against plutocracy’s capital’, in order to prove it does at least something.” No, quick-tempered cells. You will not manage to sell us such confusion. Or actions are speaking for themselves, or they are speaking through claims. *This is not the same thing; it has never been the same thing*. According to you, actions speak through claims. According to us, they speak for themselves. And this is the core of the whole issue.

You don't have to look far to find some suggestive examples. On this last 1st of November, in Athens, somebody opened fire on some members of Golden Dawn. Two fascists are dead. An action speaking for itself. With fascists, one should not discuss, one should not negotiate, one should not ask the democratic State to withdraw its shock troops. No, we fight them directly, without mediations, with all attacking methods one thinks appropriate. That day, when this action was anonymous, anarchists of the whole world saluted it. Subversives of the whole world saluted it. A lot of ordinary people, in Greece and in the rest of the world, saluted it. What else was there still needed? In what way did the claim of the 16th of November by the Fighting Popular Revolutionary Forces enrich the action? In no way. No, the claim has rather weakened the action, linking it to the identity and the ideology of one of the so many splinter groups of the revolutionary movement. Would it have been different if rather than by the FPRF, the action would have been claimed by the GRA, or the FLG, or the BPC, or the BRKJ, or the XJT, or the ZZPPHQWX? Of course not. Last year, some comrades showed by a precise attack that the nuclear establishment is vulnerable. The action made clear that there exist men who are responsible and that is possible to attack them. In what sense did the claim which came afterwards enrich the action? Was this action not clear, precise and appropriate?

Yes, actions speak for themselves. They do not need bombastic claims. *It is the fighting organizations who need claims to impose their hegemony on the movement, to make their own light shine brighter than the rest of the revolutionary galaxy, to become stars of reference surrounded by satellites*.

One could reply that if actions remain anonymous, they could also be done for reasons which one does not share, or with motivations one does not appreciate. Or they could even be the work of sinister forces, of mafia and racket, of fascists or even of the State itself. And therefore, to avoid all confusion, and because violence is surely not the privilege of anarchists or antiauthoritarians, one should claim

his actions. But in the mirror of the democratic management of the social peace, in the corpse spectacle, words always lose their meaning; the anarchist ideas cannot be spread other than on an anarchist way, in the struggle itself, far away from the claws of the State; if not, they are being mutilated depending on the necessities of control and production of consensus by power. The organized confusion is a basic aspect of repression, a pillar even, but one cannot break it with claims, one can only break it in the spaces of struggle where the words and the meanings are forged by the rebels themselves to dialogue between *each other*, without mediations, without representations.

If the attacks anarchists are proposing and realizing aim to *destroy* the persons and structures of domination, the important aspect is the destruction itself. We want freedom, and for this, what is suffocating us has to be destroyed. Good. From freedom, or from chaos if you prefer, even if it is only temporary or brief, many tendencies towards anarchy can grow, but also tendencies to much less beautiful things. One cannot delude oneself that this depends on responsibility claims: this will depend on the ideas we are capable to develop and spread, the comprehension and assessment anarchists succeed in making of the reality which is changing or being overthrown by the attacks and the revolts. And there we come yet again to the same fundamental problem: *thought and dynamite*, as an anarchist of the end of the nineteenth century stated. Dynamite cannot replace ideas; ideas cannot replace dynamite. They are two intimately linked aspects of anarchism, aspects which are corroding the authoritarian society: in its ideologies as in its structures, in its men as in its values, in its social relations as in its cops. The relation between these two aspects is the *perspective*, and in fact the debate should be about this. The problem of the perspective cannot be solved by sending a pompous claim or by reinforcing an identity-organization-logo, neither by repeating all the time the ten same base banalities of anarchism or of what resembles to a credo of individualism.

The CCF does not like “those who hide behind anonymity”. They chose a name and “its name is FAI and it is our “we”. A collective “we”. This makes us think of those dulled anarchist militants of the past who blame an Emile Henry for not letting himself be arrested like an August Vaillant did, for not having wanted to claim his action on the place itself (because he wanted to continue to attack!). The CCF suggests to “leave the theorists of the “anarchist” galaxy, who preach political anonymity without doing nothing, behind us. Because, if we want to speak the truth, a part of the tension of political anonymity essentially hides its fear of repression, behind its theories.”. That the anonymous comrades stay “behind” the CCF is for sure. If you consider the frenzy of the CCF to run forward, to make themselves be seen, to speak up... But that the comrades who decided to not just put their actions at the mercy of the mass media, who want to continue to remain “dark individuals between other dark individuals” would only be doing this to hide their own inactivity or their fear of repression, this is really the demonstration of a vicious circle. A perfect argument to cancel all debate: those who criticize do it only because they don’t do anything and are afraid.

But the desire to remain anonymous expresses at the same time the refusal of all vanguardism and an attempt to stay out of the claws of repression to prolong the hostilities, and not the shame about your own actions. And by the way, the frenzy to claim actions didn’t always exist. Or were Ravachol, Henry, Novatore, Di Giovanni... perhaps “hiding” behind anonymity? No, they just acted. Without any need to admire oneself in the mirror of the media which continues to reflect one’s own identity logo. And if the actions of these anarchists were not clear or comprehensible, then the anarchist movement as a whole tried, through debates, newspapers, posters, pamphlets,... to render them understandable, because in the end, these actions belonged to *everyone* who recognizes oneself in the anarchist struggle. In this way, thought and dynamite tried to go hand in hand, both aspects of anarchism, in the space of the *perspective* of the struggle. But yes, this was the Old Anarchy.

Today, we hear more and more speaking about the “New Anarchy”. How ridiculous this pretention is, is already shown by the name itself. Already since the last millennium anarchists from Spain and

Italy, from France and Argentina, from here and there... grew up with in their ears all the time the same refrain of the old anarcho-syndicalist militants pretending that the only true anarchists are those who are part of the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica, Federazione Anarchica Italiana, Fédération Anarchiste Française, FORA in Argentina,...). Outside of the FAI, there is no salvation, only ambiguity. Outside of the representative organizations of anarchism, there is nothing. Well, and nowadays, here come anarchists from all around the world to recall that the true anarchists, the anarchists of praxis, are only those who belong to the... FAI (Informal Anarchist Federation). At the limit, they can tolerate those who accept to adhere to the Black International or those who “for an esthetic reason” as the CCF puts it, act in an anonymous way. The New Anarchy doesn’t seem to us such a new thing, it only reproduces the Old one: federations, programs, pacts, claims, acronyms and swollen slogans.

Several texts and contributions tried and are still trying to open up the debate on the matter of informality, and also the *Letter to the anarchist galaxy* was focusing on this. We are bewildered on how one can seriously think to sell us a stable revolutionary organization, a permanent and formal acronym, a method of acting which is rigid, always the same and defined in advance (do an action, write a claim and send it around), as *informality*. Even in the simplest of meanings of the word “informal”, which points nevertheless to the absence of all formalization, it seems difficult to deny that an acronym is formalization. So the Informal Anarchist Federation, the International Revolutionary Front or whatever else are no *informal organizations*. The problem is not to fight over the paternity of the word “informal” (we aren’t interested in building a party with its dogmas, its a priori definitions, always detached from the struggle itself, and thus merely parasitic) – the problem is the confusion which is obstructing a true debate. If one is in favor of the construction of a permanent anarchist fighting organization, one should just say it and then he can be understood by all anarchists. If one is in favor of a syndicalist approach of the struggle, accepting to logic of “step by step” and the revendicative struggles to improve the existent and in this way make the famous “proletarian conscience” grow, it doesn’t help anything (a part from spreading confusion) to present this approach as an insurrectional one. Informality, at least how we have always understood it, is the refusal of all fixed structures, all programs, all pre-established methods, all stamps, all representation. Informality and informal organization therefore only exist in the continuous experimentations between comrades who deepen their affinities and mutually propose projects of attack and struggle. Informality does not have a founding text, nor has it representatives. It only exists as a support for the anarchist struggle, for the anarchists in struggle, to enable us to do what we want to accomplish. In their contributions, the anarchists of the CCF say that “Naturally, FAI has no exclusivity. This why our proposal is not the quantitative increase of FAI. [...] Our proposal is to organize armed cells and affinity groups, forming an international network of anarchists of praxis.” We then ask ourselves, if the proposal is the multiplication of affinity groups (we will not enter into detail about the use of a word like “cells”, recalling – at least historically, but yet again, maybe this was the Old Anarchy – hierarchy and party organization), why the FAI? As a support for this proposal? But an affinity group is exactly the encounter between individuals and the true autonomy to act, it is not the basic element of a big superstructure, and even less of a superstructure established years ago. The link between affinity groups could be the informality, it is to say, the exchange of ideas and perspectives, the development of common projects, a development which is never finished, always in evolution, always without any formalization. The proposal of the FAI only puts fences on the vast terrain of informality.

The State, the parties, the assemblies, the organizations... all this entities are founded on a “collective we”: citizens, or militants, or activists. The individual, they do not even know what it is. We on the contrary, we love the individual, with his thoughts and his unique and singular acts. Also when they are solitary, also when they are plural because their paths crossed those of other individuals. For this reason, we hate the State and the parties (which are always authoritarian) and we distrust the

assemblies and the organizations (which can sometimes be libertarian). Unlike the CCF, we do not think that the “Rebel I” can find a home in the “collective we”. Unlike several claims of the FAI, we are not interested in handing out certificates of good or bad behavior to anarchists who try to fight, defining the one as “an anarchist of praxis” and the other as “a theorist who doesn’t do anything”. It is a blatant lie which closes all space for debate and deepening to pretend that the only anarchists attacking power would be those who are supporting the proposal of the FAI and those who shut their mouths, even if they are not agreeing with the ideological hegemony the FAI is trying to impose (by force of things or otherwise) on informal anarchism and on the practice of attack and sabotage. Debates and discussions are cruelly lacking today in the international anarchist movement and the ready-to-wear proposals are closing more doors and spaces for subversion than they are opening. This concern made us participate in this aborted debate, and this same concern will continue to animate us.

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