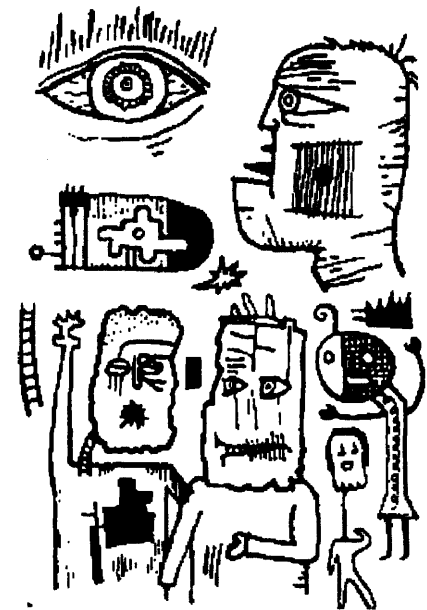


# ***THE QUESTION OF ORGANIZATION***



**A Recent Analysis**

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## THE QUESTION OF ORGANIZATION: A Recent Analysis

### INTRODUCTION

The question of organization is one that anarchists cannot ignore. Simplistic spontaneism seems to me to reflect a refusal to take responsibility for one's life and struggle similar to that shown by those Marxist revolutionaries who depend on the "forces of history" to bring revolution when "conditions are ripe". In either case, the individual neither has to think nor act on a seriously projectual basis.

But it is also a sign of laziness to simply embrace a particular organizational form as a program to impose upon the struggle. The industrial union of the syndicalists, the formal federation, the General Union of Anarchists (with its "executive committee") of the platformists all express a crystallized conception of social revolution. Formal relationships based on roles determined in advance into which people are to fit replace the real relationships that develop among the exploited in the course of struggle and revolt.

The simple fact is that there is no form of organization that can guarantee the success of revolutionary struggle or even immunity from relations of domination. The former can never be guaranteed – the choice to rise up, destroy one world and create a new one is always a gamble, a stake to be played. The latter can only be guaranteed by the refusal of individuals to be dominated.

So the question of organization is not a matter of seeking panaceas, but of discovering, creating and experimenting with self-organization. To be clear, the "self" I am referring to here is the individual. Every state, every corporation, every authoritarian structure is self-organized *as an organization*, but the individuals who make it up are organized *by the structure*. So when I speak of self-organization, I am speaking of individual self-determination in free association with others whose aspirations and desires correspond to one's own.

From a revolutionary perspective that seeks to overturn social relations and destroy every institution of domination, the

does not happen: the group either stagnates because there is no clear road for it to take, or it follows the tendency of the comrade or comrades who have the clearest ideas as to what they want to do while others allow themselves to be pulled along, often with little enthusiasm or real engagement.

The affinity group on the other hand finds it has great potential and is immediately addressed towards action, basing itself not on the quantity of its adherents, but on the qualitative strength of a number of individuals working together in a projectuality that they develop together as they go along. From being a specific structure of the anarchist movement and the whole arc of activity that this presents – propaganda, direct action, perhaps producing a paper, working within an informal organization – it can also look outwards to forming a base nucleus or some other mass structure and thus intervene more effectively in the social clash.

O.V.

synonymous. There could be comrades with whom we consider we have an affinity, but whom we do not find sympathetic and vice versa.

Basically, to have an affinity with a comrade means to know them, to have deepened one's knowledge of them. As that knowledge grows, the affinity can increase to the point of making an action together possible, but it can also diminish to the point of making it practically impossible.

Knowledge of another is an infinite process which can stop at any level according to the circumstances and objectives one wants to reach together. One could therefore have an affinity for doing some things and not others. It becomes obvious that when one speaks of knowledge that does not mean it is necessary to discuss one's personal problems, although these can become important when they interfere with the process of deepening knowledge of one another.

In this sense having knowledge of the other does not necessarily mean having an intimate relationship. What it is necessary to know is how the comrade thinks concerning the social problems which the class struggle confronts him with, how he thinks he can intervene, what methods he thinks should be used in given situations, etc.

The first step in the deepening of knowledge between comrades is discussion. It is preferable to have a clarifying premise, such as something written, so the various problems can be gone into well.

Once the essentials are clarified the affinity group or groups are practically formed. The deepening of knowledge between comrades continues in relation to their action as a group and the latter's encounter with reality as a whole. While this process is taking place their knowledge often widens and strong bonds between comrades often emerge. This however is a consequence of the affinity, not its primal aim.

It often happens that comrades go about things the other way round, beginning some kind of activity and only proceeding to the necessary clarifications later, without ever having assessed the level of affinity required to do anything together. Things are left to chance, as though some kind of clarity were automatically to emerge from the group simply by its formation. Of course this

questions that arise are: How do we find accomplices who share our aspiration to live free of all domination and exploitation? How do we create our projects in such a way that each individual involved is free to act fully on her or his own terms? How do we connect our own struggle as exploited individuals with the struggle of other exploited? How do we develop the tools, methods and relationships necessary for carrying out our projects? Of course, there is no answer that stands once and for all, timelessly, above the reality of our struggles. These questions have to be asked continually in the course of struggle as we experiment and carry out our projects with a sharp, critical eye.

One thing that is essential though to any attempt to develop shared projects of revolt that could blossom into a real movement against this world of domination and submission is the development of concrete horizontal relationships. And this requires the capacity for meaningful discussion. This is one of the main reasons why true public spaces are being eradicated at the same rate as free time is being eaten away or channeled into commodity consumption. So one of the most essential projects of revolt at this time is the reappropriation of time and space for real horizontal dialogue about the conditions we face and about our deepest desires and aspirations. This is the only way to find real accomplices with whom we can act against this world in such a way that our activity enhances each of us as individuals, enhancing our capacity for individual self-determination and the individual and collective self-organization of our activities.

I am publishing the following texts not as a definitive *answer* as to how we should organize, but as tools for discussion and experimentation. The texts developed out of the experiences of the authors in the insurgence in Italy in the 1970's as well as in struggles since then. Their experiences led them to draw conclusions about the necessity for those who reject all domination to develop means for opposing it as it exists in one's daily life and to find ways for those who define themselves as anarchists to connect with the struggles of the rest of the exploited. But to take these ideas as a program would be to miss the essential point — that our revolutionary anarchist project requires a liberatory openness that permits us to organize what we need in each moment to liberate ourselves.

## Beyond the Structure of Synthesis

**INSTEAD OF AN ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION OF SYNTHESIS  
WE PROPOSE AN INFORMAL ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION  
BASED ON STRUGGLE AND THE ANALYSES THAT EMERGE  
FROM IT**

Anarchists of all tendencies refuse the model of hierarchical and authoritarian organization. They refuse parties, vertical structures which impose directives from above in a more or less obvious way. In positing the liberatory revolution as the only social solution possible, anarchists consider that the means used in bringing about this transformation will condition the ends that are achieved. And authoritarian organizations are certainly not instruments that lead to liberation.

### **An anarchist structure such as a structure of synthesis presents not a few dangers**

At the same time it is not enough to agree with this in words alone. It is also necessary to put it into practice. In our opinion an anarchist structure such as a structure of synthesis presents not a few dangers. When this kind of organization develops to full strength as it did in Spain in '36 it begins to resemble a party. Synthesis becomes control. Certainly in quiet periods this is barely visible, so what we are saying now might seem like blasphemy.

This kind of structure is based on groups or individuals who are in more or less constant contact with each other, and has its culminating moment in periodical congresses. In these congresses the basic analysis is discussed, a programme is drawn up and tasks are divided covering the whole range of social intervention. It is an organization of synthesis because it sets itself up as a point of reference capable of synthesizing the struggles taking place within the class clash. Various groups intervene in the struggles, give their contribution, but do not lose

## The Affinity Group

*Contrary to what is often believed, affinity between comrades does not depend on sympathy or sentiment. To have affinity means to have knowledge of the other, to know how they think on social issues, and how they think they can intervene in the social clash. This deepening of knowledge between comrades is an aspect that is often neglected, impeding effective action.*

One of the most difficult problems anarchists have had to face throughout their history is what form of organization to adopt in the struggle.

At the two ends of the spectrum we find on the one hand the individualists who refuse any kind of stable relationship; on the other those who support a permanent organization which acts on a programme established at the moment of its constitution.

Both of the forms sketched out here have characteristics that are criticizable from an insurrectional point of view.

In fact, when individualists single out and strike the class enemy they are sometimes far ahead of the most combative of the class components of the time, and their action is not understood. On the contrary, those who support the need for a permanent organization often wait until there is already a considerable number of exploited indicating how and when to strike the class enemy. The former carry out actions that turn out to be too far ahead of the level of the struggle, the latter too far behind.

One of the reasons for this deficiency is in our opinion lack of perspective.

Clearly no one has a sure recipe that contains no defects, we can however point out the limitations we see in certain kinds of organization, and indicate possible alternatives.

One of these is known as "affinity groups".

The term requires an explanation.

Affinity is often confused with sentiment. Although not distinctly separate, the two terms should not be considered

theoretical support, developing the search for the means required for the action pointing out the structures and individuals responsible for repression, and offering a minimum of defense against attempts at political or ideological recuperation by power or against repression pure and simple.

At first sight the relationship between specific anarchist organization and autonomous base nucleus might seem contradictory. The specific structure follows an insurrectional perspective, while the base nuclei seem to be in quite another dimension, that of intermediate struggle. But this struggle only remains such at the beginning. If the analysis on which the project is based coincides with the interests of the exploited in the situation in which they find themselves, then an insurrectional outcome to the struggle is possible. Of course this outcome is not certain. That cannot be guaranteed by anyone.

This method has been accused of being incomplete and of not taking into account the fact that an attack against one or more structures always ends up increasing repression. Comrades can reflect on these accusations. We think it is never possible to see the outcome of a struggle in advance. Even a limited struggle can have the most unexpected consequences. And in any case, the passage from the various insurrections-limited and circumscribed-to revolution can never be guaranteed in advance by any procedure. We go forward by trial and error, and say to whoever has a better method-carry on.

*O.V.*

- (1) See Workers' Autonomy' (Bratach Dubh);
- (2) See Insurrection No. 0

sight of the theoretical and practical orientation that the organization as a whole decided upon during the congress.

Now, in our opinion, an organization structured in this way runs the risk of being behind in respect of the effective level of the struggle, as its main aim is that of carrying the struggle to within its project of synthesis, not of pushing it towards its insurrectional realization. One of its main objectives is quantitative growth in membership. It therefore tends to draw the struggle to the lowest common denominator by proposing caution aimed at putting a brake on any flight forwards or any choice of objectives that are too exposed or risky.

Of course that does not mean that all the groups belonging to the organization of synthesis automatically act in this way: often comrades are autonomous enough to choose the most effective proposals and objectives in a given situation of struggle. It is a mechanism intrinsic to the organization of synthesis however that leads it to making decisions that are not adequate to the situation, as the main aim of the organization is to grow to develop as wide a front of struggle as possible. It tends not to take a clear and net position on issues, but finds a way, a political road that displeases the fewest and is digestible to most.

### **the main fear is that of the unknown which pushes us towards organizational schema and formalism**

The reactions we get when making criticisms such as this are often dictated by fear and prejudice. The main fear is that of the unknown which pushes us towards organizational schema and formalism among comrades. This safeguards us from the search hinged on the risk of finding ourselves involved in unknown experiences. This is quite obvious when we see the great need some comrades have for a formal organization that obeys the requirements of constancy, stability and work that is programmed in advance.

In reality these elements serve us in our need for certainty and not for revolutionary necessity.

On the contrary we think that the informal organization can supply valid starting points for getting out of this uncertainty.

This different type of organization seems to us to be capable of developing – contrary to an organization of synthesis – more concrete and productive relationships as they are based on affinity and reciprocal knowledge. Moreover, the moment where it reaches its true potential is when it participates in concrete situations of struggle, not when drawing up theoretical or practical platforms, statutes or associative rules.

**an organization structured informally is not built on the basis of a programme fixed in a congress**

An organization structured informally is not built on the basis of a programme fixed in a congress. The project is realized by the comrades themselves in the course of the struggle and during the development of the struggle itself. This organization has no privileged instrument of theoretical and practical elaboration, nor does it have problems of synthesis. Its basic project is that of intervening in a struggle with an insurrectional objective.

However great the limitations of the comrades involved in the informal kind of anarchist organization might be, and what the latter's defects might be, the method still seems valid to us and we consider a theoretical and practical exploration of it to be worthwhile.

g.c.

and economic struggles within it. In any case, why should the exploited have to enter and become part of a specific anarchist organization in order to carry out their struggle?

A radical change in the way society-exploitation-is being run can only be achieved by revolution. That is why we are trying to intervene with an insurrectional project. Struggles of tomorrow will only have a positive outcome if the relationship between informal specific anarchist structure and the mass structure of autonomous base nuclei is clarified and put into effect.

The main aim of the nucleus is not to abolish the State or Capital, which are practicably unattackable so long as they remain a general concept. The objective of the nucleus is to fight and attack this State and this Capital in their smaller and more attainable structures, having recourse to an insurrectional method.

The autonomous base groups are mass structures and constitute the point of encounter between the informal anarchist organization and social struggles.

The organization within the nucleus distinguishes itself by the following characteristics:

- a. autonomy from any political, trade union or syndical force;
- b. permanent conflictuality (a constant and effective struggle towards the aims that are decided upon, not sporadic occasional interventions);
- c. attack (the refusal of compromise, mediation or accommodation that questions the attack on the chosen objective).

As far as aims are concerned, these are decided upon and realized through attacks upon the repressive, military and productive structures, etc. The importance of permanent conflictuality and attack is fundamental.

**the objective of the nucleus is to fight and attack this State and this Capital in their smaller and more attainable structures**

These attacks are organized by the nuclei in collaboration with specific anarchist structures which provide practical and

## **Autonomous Base Nucleus**

**Mass structures, autonomous base nuclei are the element linking the specific informal anarchist organization to social struggles.**

The autonomous base nucleus is not an entirely new form of struggle. Attempts have been made to develop these structures in Italy over the past ten years. The most notable of these was the Autonomous Movement of the Turin Railway Workers(1), and the Self-managed leagues against the cruise missile base in Comiso(2).

We believe the revolutionary struggle is without doubt a mass struggle. We therefore see the need to build structures capable of organizing as many groups of exploited as possible.

We have always considered the syndicalist perspective critically both because of its limitations as an instrument, and because of its tragic historical involution that no anarchist lick of paint can cover up. So we reached the hypothesis of building autonomous base nuclei lacking the characteristics of mini-syndicalist structures, having other aims and organizational relations.

**a considerable barrier of reticence and incomprehension has been met among comrades**

Through these structures an attempt has been made to link the specific anarchist movement to social struggles. A considerable barrier of reticence and incomprehension has been met among comrades and this has been an obstacle in realizing this organizational method. It is in moments of action that differences emerge among comrades who all agree in principle with anarchist propaganda, the struggle against the State, self-management and direct action. When we move into an organizational phase, however, we must develop a project that is in touch with the present level of the clash between classes.

We believe that due to profound social transformation it is unthinkable for one single structure to try to contain all social

## **THE INFORMAL ORGANIZATION**

The informal anarchist organization has nothing to do with programs, platforms or flags but is based on a common affinity between comrades whose objective is to intervene in struggles in an insurrectional direction. In that way it is possible to be present in and heighten the class struggle.

Anarchist groups and individuals are often spread over the territory with little contact between them and few ideas on methods and possibilities of intervention in social reality.

There is a certain presence in some areas, especially of a syndicalist nature. In others there is action against nuclear installations. The widest area of intervention is that of counter-information and propaganda.

An anarchist movement that is really active and incisive needs two main factors: an agile and effective instrument and an objective that is that is sufficiently clear in perspective.

We think the informal organization and insurrection are concrete possibilities that present themselves at the present time.

...The organization of synthesis, based on the congress and political program, is a structure that because of its internal characteristics and the mechanisms that support it, cannot be a valid instrument for comrades wanting to move in an insurrectional perspective. Political programs and platforms are organizational models which, from an insurrectional point of view have seen their day.

One thing that is indispensable in the informal anarchist organization is reciprocal knowledge between members. This and affinity among comrades is what characterizes the informal form of organization.

We have all reached anarchist positions through time, maturing certain convictions concerning social problems. We also have some idea of how to intervene in social reality and the relative strategic choices to be made. Well, let us go into these problems, ascertain whether we agree on certain points, show each other how we think.

Certainly, it is easy. It is nevertheless indispensable to confront one another. Without this no kind of informal structure or informal relationship is possible.

The informal proposal does not mean that one has to agree on every single problem that arises. Affinity does not possess a uniform level of intensity. Knowledge of another is an infinite process that reaches greater or lesser depth according to the circumstances and the objectives one is trying to reach.

The basic project of an informal anarchist organization has, in our opinion, the objective of intervening in struggles in an insurrectional logic. This organization does not give one area privilege over another, does not have a stable centrality. It singles out an objective which at a given moment presents a particularly acute area of social conflict and works in a perspective of insurrection.

The debate is open on this point. Criticisms that insurrection is not a valid proposal today sometimes confuse insurrection with the old "propaganda by the deed". On the contrary we think that the insurrectional project gives itself the aim of attacking power in each one of its manifestations by the stimulation of the anarchist informal organization, but always with mass participation, showing in deed the possibility and validity of such attacks.

In that way it is possible to be present in the class struggle and heighten the level of it.

We see the informal organization therefore as a number of comrades linked by a common affinity. The wider the range of problems face as a whole, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that real organization, the effective capacity to act together, i.e. knowing where to find each other, the study and analysis of problems together, and the passing to action, all take place in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with programs, platforms, flags or more or less camouflaged parties. The informal anarchist organization is therefore a specific organization that gathers around a common affinity.

Undoubtedly it will tend towards a growth in numbers, but this is not the main aim of activity. As the organism born in this way develops it will give itself common means of intervention. First of all, an instrument for debate necessary for analytical examination, such as a paper or a review, capable of supplying indications on a wide range of problems and of becoming a point

of reference for continually verifying affinity or divergence of opinion between groups and individual comrades.

Secondly, these specific groups can also form base structures involving the exploited in specific areas of struggle, not as an element of growth in the specific movement. In this view, it becomes dispersive to give life to a permanent structure to confront specific problems. The base structures have a single objective. When this objective has been reached or the attempt fails, the structure either widens into a situation of generalized insurrection, or dismantles as the case may be.

It should be stressed here that although the element holding the informal organization together is undoubtedly affinity, its propulsive element is always action. If it limits itself to the first alone, all relations will become arid in the Byzantine perfectionism of whoever has nothing better to do than to try to hide one's will to do nothing.

The problems that have been touched on here deserve more going into and we invite all comrades to take part in the discussion of them.