Articles from Insurrection

Various Authors

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Beyond Workerism, Beyond Syndicalism

> *The end of syndicalism corresponds to the end of workerism.*
>
> *For us it is also the end of the quantitive illusion of the party and the specific organisation of synthesis.*
>
> *The revolt of tomorrow must look for new roads.*

Trade unionism is in its decline. In good as in evil with this structural form of struggle an era is disappearing, a model and a future world seen in terms of an improved and corrected reproduction of the old one.

We are moving towards new and profound transformations. In the productive structure, in the social structure.

Methods of struggle, perspectives, even short term projects are also transforming.

In an expanding industrial society the trade union moves from instrument of struggle to instrument supporting the productive structure itself.

Revolutionary syndicalism has also played its part: pushing the most combative workers forward but, at the same time, pushing them backwards in terms of capacity to see the future society or the creative needs of the revolution. Everything remained parcelled up within the factory dimension. Workerism is not just common to authoritarian communism. Singling out privileged areas of the class clash is still today one of the most deep-rooted habits that it is difficult to lose.

The end of trade-unionism therefore. We have been saying so for fifteen years now. At one time this caused criticism and amazement, especially when we included anarchco-syndicalism in our critique. We are more easily accepted today. Basically, who does not criticise the trade unions today? No one, or almost no one.

But the connection is overlooked. Our criticism of trade unionism was also criticism of the "quantitive" method that has all the characteristics of the party in embryo. It was also a critique of the specific organisations of synthesis. It was also a critique of class respectability borrowed from the bourgeoisie and filtered through the cliches of so-called proletarian morals. All that cannot be ignored.

If many comrades agree with us today in our now traditional critique of trade-unionism those who share a view of all the consequences that it gives rise to are but a few.

We can only intervene in the world of production using means that do not place themselves in the quantitive perspective. They cannot therefore claim to have specific anarchist organisations behind them working on the hypothesis of revolutionary synthesis.

This leads us to a different method of intervention, that of building factory "nucleii" or zonal "nucleii" which limit themselves to keeping in contact with a specific

anarchist structure, and are exclusively based on affinity. It is from the relationship between the base nucleus and specific anarchist structure that a new model of revolutionary struggle emerges to attack the structures of capital and the State through recourse to insurrectional methods.

This allows for a better following of the profound transformations that are taking place in the productive structures. *The factory is about to disappear, new productive organisations are taking its place, based mainly on automation.* The workers of yesterday will become partially integrated into a supporting situation or simply into a situation of social security in the short-term, survival in the long one. New forms of work will appear on the horizon. Already the classical workers' front no longer exists. Like-wise the trade union is as obvious. At least it no longer exists in the form in which we have known until now. It has become a firm like any other.

A network of increasingly different relations, all under the banner of participation, pluralism, democracy, etc, will spread over society bridling almost all the forces of subversion. The extreme aspects of the revolutionary project will be systematically criminalised.

But the struggle will take new roads, will filter towards a thousand new subterranean channels emerging in a hundred thousand explosions of rage and destruction with new and incomprehensible symbology.

As anarchists we must be careful, we are carriers of an often heavy mortgage from the past, not to remain distanced from a phenomenon that we end up not understanding and whose violence could one fine day even scare us, And in the first case we must be careful to develop our analysis in full.

a.m.b.

Autonomous Base Nucleus

Mass structures, autonomous base nuclelii are the element linking the specific informal anarchist organisation 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 organising as many groups of exploited as possible.

[1] See "Workers' Autonomy" (Bratach Dubh);

[2] See *Insurrection* No. 0

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 organisational relations.

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 organisational 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 organisational 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 and economic struggle within it. In any case, why should the exploited have to enter and become part of a specific anarchist organisation 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 organisation and social struggles.

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

1. autonomy from any political, trade union or syndical force;
2. permanent conflictuality (a constant and effective struggle towards the aims that are decided upon, not sporadic occasional interventions);
3. 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.

These attacks are organised by the nucleii in collaboration with specific anarchist structures which provide practical and 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 nuclelii 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.

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 organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation, 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 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 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 organisation — 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.

Beyond the Structure of Synthesis

> *Instead of an anarchist organisation of synthesis we propose an informal anarchist organisation based on struggle and the analyses that emerge from it*

Anarchists of all tendencies refuse the model of hierarchical and authoritarian organisation. 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 organisations are certainly not instruments that lead to liberation.

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

Now, in our opinion, an organisation 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 realisation. 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 organisation 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 organisation of synthesis however that leads it to making decisions that are not adequate to the situation, as the main aim of the organisation 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 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 organisational 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 organisation 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 organisation can supply valid starting points for getting out of this uncertainty.

This different type of organisation seems to us to be capable of developing — contrary to an organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation 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 organisation 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.

Breaking out of the Ghetto

The struggles taking place in the inner city ghettos are often misunderstood as mindless violence. The young struggling against exclusion and boredom are advanced elements of the class clash. The ghetto walls must be broken down, not enclosed.

The young Palestinians throwing stones at the Israeli army rightly have the sympathy and solidarity of comrades who see them in their just struggle for freedom from their colonial oppressors. When we see even the very young of Belfast throwing stones at British soldiers we have no doubt about their rebellion against the occupying army whose tanks and barbed wire enclose their ghettos.

There is an area of young people today however who find themselves in just as hard a battle against their oppressors, who find themselves constantly emarginated and criminalised. These young people do not find themselves fighting a liberation struggle against an external invader, but are immersed in an internal class struggle that is so mystified that its horizons are unclear even to themselves. This war is taking place within what have come to be known as the "inner cities" of Britain, areas that are now recognised by the class enemy — the capitalists, with the monarchy leading, and the State in all its forms — as the most fragile part of the class society, one that could open up the most gigantic crack and give way to unprecedented violence.

The young struggling for survival from exclusion and boredom in the deadly atmosphere of the ghettos of the eighties are in fact among the most advanced elements in the struggle in Britain.

As such they find themselves surrounded by a sea of hostility and incomprehension, even by those who in terms of their official class positions should be their

comrades in struggle. No trade union or left wing party has anything to say about their struggle. They are among the first to criminalise it and relegate its protagonists to the realm of social deviance, perhaps with the distinguishing variable that instead of the 'short sharp shock treatment they prefer to employ an army of soft cops and social psychiatrists.

The anarchist movement itself, anti-authoritarian by definition and revolutionary in perspective, has so far produced nothing tangible as a project of struggle which encompasses the "real" anarchists, the visceral anti-authoritarians. The forms the violence from the ghettos takes does not have the content of moral social activity that anarchists want to find. This cannot emerge spontaneously from situations of brute exploitation such as exist in the urban enclosures. Suggestions such as those of taking this morality into the ghettos which are then to be defended and "self-managed" in our opinion are quite out of place. They ring of the old "Takeover the City" slogans of Lotta Continua years ago, now just as dead as that organisation itself. The problem is not self-managing the ghettos, but breaking them down. This can only come about through clear indications of a class nature, indicating objectives in that dimension and acting to extend the class attack.

The article by the Plymouth comrades gives an indication of what is happening in most major — and many smaller cities in Britain today. These events do not reach the headlines. In fact most of what happens is not reported at all.

Clearly the conditions of the clash are very different to those where the presence of a tangible "outside enemy" has clarified the position of the whole of the exploited against the common enemy. There is no doubt in Sharpeville or Palestine or Belfast about what happens to those who collaborate with the police. In this country on the contrary, the fact that the latter have made inroads into gaining the active collaboration of people within the ghettos themselves shows the barriers of fear and incomprehension that exist and divide the exploited in one area.

Levels of cultural and social mystification have succeeded to some extent in confusing class divisions. By defining the violence of the young in pathological or ethnic terms the latter find themselves isolated and ostracised even by those who are nearest to them in terms of exploitation.

The dividing line is a fine one, however, and it can take only a mass confrontation with the 'forces of order' to demonstrate to all where the real enemy lies. This happened in the Brixton nots for example where parents, seeing the police brutality at close hand, immediately moved from a tacit consensus to open antagonism towards them.

Maintaining consensus from people who have very little to gain from the "social order" involves a complex network of media, social workers, school teachers, community leaders, community police, etc, all of whom are recognised as being in

positions of authority. That authority is tolerated unwillingly today. It could break down completely tomorrow.

Our work must therefore be in the direction of continually clarifying and extending the class attack by identifying and striking objectives that are easily attainable and comprehensible in the perspective of breaking down the walls of the ghettos and opening up a perspective of mass action against the common enemy.

j.w.

The Catastrophe Psychosis

For a long time now there has been a terroristic blackmail in act leading to more and more recourse to the policeman-like logic of emergency. The media carries out the task of upturning problems and using the apocalyptic images of the imminence of catastrophe pushing great masses of people to mobilize to avoid it.

One should ask oneself what lies behind the picture presented by the media of the impending nightmare of ecological catastrophe. This is presented as a problem to be resolved beyond the realms of social relations or class conflict.

We have strong doubts about the show of good intentions made by politicians of every kind and color (including the environmentalists) and their sudden interest in the population's health.

We think that behind the bombardment of news concerning the ecological red alert in the areas of high industrial concentration where atmospheric pollution safety levels have been amply surpassed, there lies another far less noble battle: a battle for power between the old capitalist-industrial class and the new ascending one constituted of the public and private bureaucracy in view of the position the latter have reached within the technological apparatus of capital and the state.

We know that the image of catastrophe, in this case the ecological one, emotively pushes the mass to fight beyond any motivation coming from their own specific condition of exploitation, not so much for social change but to save their own threatened survival. That pushes them to adopt the reasoning leading to the conservation of the present social order.

The planet is dying, we all know it. It is full of poison and lacking in oxygen because of atmospheric pollution. The rivers are biologically dead; lakes and seas are reduced to dustbins; a greenhouse effect is produced by the raising of the levels of carbon dioxide thanks also to the massive work of deforestation of one of the main lungs of the earth, the Amazon forest. Growing drought is causing the extension of vast new deserts, and we are assisting in the tragedy of peoples and animal species on their way to extinction, sacrificed to the logic of profit and dominion.

Every class that aspires to domination brings with it its own world and its own logic. The ascending bureaucrats are using ecology to accelerate the process of taking over the old world.

But what can that cause in the mass, increasingly terrified by the possibility of catastrophe and interiorizing the logic of emergency, if not total adhesion to the repressive codes of behavior dictated by cybernetic power. With scientific punctuality it is inviting millions of proletarianized individuals to participate and mobilize alongside e the institutions to create and institute new organisms of control and to sanction new authorities under the thrust of a new democratic radicalism.

Beyond its immediate drama, the Chernobyl nuclear accident gave capital and all the states the chance to coldly experiment elements upon which to apply the repressive projects of control and consensus, precisely by exploiting the idea of a permanent state of emergency.

The emergency intervention therefore does not resolve the problem but serves to install control in order to eliminate conflict over the social territory through the blackmail of duty to collaboration between classes. All the emergency measures that are presented as being necessary for the general social interest, in actual fact give way to a process of privilege and submission given the inequality of existing material conditions.

The greens and environmental associations are not looking for a solution to the problem of pollution but to a capillary and spreading control in order to make it a source of profit. One discovers that the least polluted parts of the cities are areas destined to the higher social strata; the poor get square meters of cement and waste dumps on the outskirts.

It is time then, instead of giving acritical praise to such forces, to unmask their role as the new social pacifiers who are going beyond the spectacle rigged on the blackmail that "the planet must be saved at all costs", to lend themselves to managing existing alienation in an alternative way, but always based on exploitation and oppression.

We think that the struggle against the domination of human over human is the only basis from which to start. It is the only one capable of attacking those responsible for the destruction of both the planet and social wealth. We must aim concretely towards the liberation of humanity and nature in the global sense.

The greens and environmentalists are so-called ecologists whose aim is not a clean ecological planet; their politics are a green apartheid that wants "green islands" destined to the comfort of the privileged. The international environmental associations are the multinationals of "ecology", capitalism revised and corrected following the damage done by its preceding phase of maximum industrialization.

The social struggle in the ecological sense is valid only if it strikes the relationships of dominion, the structures of capital and the state, showing its subversive

force that contains the prospect of a new world, not the alternative management of the old.

The Violence of Poverty

by Patrizia

Yet another rape. But today violence against a woman is more amusing if it takes place in a group: of at leas 14. This is what happened in a village in Sicily, Militello. A fifteen year old girl was raped by boys between 11 and 18 years old all looking for adventure. An adventure with a girl whose parents had just returned to Sicily after years of emigration.

The newspapers point out one particular: the girl, who became pregnant as a result of the rape, was mentally disturbed. Her womanhood, her freedom of choice, is trampled on before she starts. First by her parents, who almost kept the fact hidden because of their shame, then the whole village, who interpreted the event as a boyish prank to defend the rapist kids, then the judge. The girl is being prevented from having an abortion. The village priest shows off his sullen moralism.

This time they couldn't even use the alibi of a miniskirt, of the seductive gaze of the continental woman who — they say — attracts men and distracts them from their good feelings of father, husband or brother.

In that environment there is a more subtle violence, a violence that comes from ignorance and fear. The ignorance of the boy rapists who pursue images according to which a woman cannot be considered a human being to be respected and loved.

In the south, as in the north, sex is still something dirty, composed of violence and abuse. In Milan a girl is raped by a male nurse in a hospital bed. In Termini station in Rome eighty people stand by and watch as an attempted rape takes place on a station bench. The rapist was then covered by the crowd and escaped. So, look out. From the tiny Sicilian village to the huge metropolis, rape remains the alternative of idiots, the last beach of interior emargination and the incapacity to communicate one's rage in any other way.

But in a little village the authority of the priest, the judge, the carabinieri, the public opinion of "respectable" people who don't want any scandal, bears a fundamental weight on things. In such an environment it is even possible for abortion to be denied to a girl who has been raped.

Violence is practically subscribed to by a power structure which itself exercises a double violence on the population: on the girl who must submit to the decisions made by the family and the rest of the village; and on the boys.

They are all more concerned with obeying laws and morality than about the life of this young woman.

We must begin to shout our rage again, but not by asking for more severe laws or the application of new ones: this only helps the system to castrate any possible search for freedom, our own and that of others, men and women alike.

If we believe that the practice of rape is born from a precise social condition, then we must not humiliate ourselves with demands for laws that only play the game into the hands of those who rape and exploit us daily.

We are not interested in whether those who raped the girl are found guilty or innocent. That would be too easy. We must fight the whole structure that contributes to creating the idea of violence against women and against emarginated people and proletarians in general. And, as usual, the latter, instead of beating up the bosses, are fighting among themselves, numbing their minds with all the shit that power produces. Violence often grows from conditions of poverty and survival that create the need to possess at all costs what one cannot have through practices of freedom, be it sex or any other part of normal activity.

If we want to overcome this profound contradiction between the request to be "regimented" and a search for liberation within human beings, then we must struggle in our own way and with our own instruments against all the relations of dominion that generate violence. Perhaps that day in Militello the boys would have preferred to have beaten up a priest or to have created some perspective for a less rotten life. Today they are locked up in a cell and are asking themselves why. The state will pardon their misdeed, but they will always remain convinced that all that, even their very punishment, was right and fits into the normal way of things.

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