

excerpts from

Alfredo M. Bonanno's

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# Insurrectionalist Anarchism

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on the topics of:

Affinity Groups

and

Informal Organisations

written in the year 1998



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with a short foreword by

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first.

The same thing happens concerning the specific preparatory activity of finding revolutionary means (instruments). Again, this decision is often automatically delegated to other comrades. This is due to fear or remorse which, if gone into carefully, have little to say for themselves.

The professionalism that is flaunted elsewhere is not welcome in anarchist methodology, but neither is downright refusal or preconceived ideas. The same goes for what is happening concerning the present mania for experience as a thing in itself, the urgency of ‘doing’, personal satisfaction, the ‘thrill’. These two extremes touch and interpenetrate.

The *project* sweeps these problems aside because it sees things in their globality. For the same reason the work of the revolutionary is necessarily linked to the project, identifies with it, cannot limit itself to its single aspects. A partial project is not a revolutionary one, it might be an excellent work project, could even involve comrades and resources for great lengths of time, but sooner or later it will end up being penalised by the reality of the class struggle.

## A Short Foreword

There is a recurrent mode of anarchist organising in Berlin (and more generally worldwide) that could be described as platformism or the creation of “organisations of synthesis.” This mode is the most straightforward and well understood, and because of this it is easy to implement. An organisation (or collective, as we tend to call them) is formed. It is given a name, there are meetings with minutes, and without labeling them as such, there are both rules and majoritarian decisions on the organisations’ project. When majoritarian decision is not used, often consensus is pursued despite irreconcilable differences. Sometimes the answer is for the collective to dissolve and for the factions to go their own ways and pursue separate goals, and yet we are reticent and consider dissolution a sign of failure. Further, we have many fixed spaces (e.g., squats, housing projects, infoshops, and social centers), and we tend to turn over their stewardship to structures that are formalised and emphasise longevity. Such organisations are rigid rather than adaptive and fluid.

Organisations of synthesis are not neutral creations. Their existence determines how we act and relate to each other. Often, fixed organisations become protective of themselves rather than agile and dangerous entities that threaten the status quo. Individuals who cannot let go of vainglory or their lust for power will ascend in organisations and poison them, rendering them unable to carry out political and transformative work.

With the rise in the acknowledgement of the ways oppressions and bigotries permeate our spaces, namely sexualised violence and racism, we have turned to the idea of “awareness,” or simply put, the idea of formal protocols or external collectives that aim to handle internal harms to our movements. Events, spaces, and collectives are pushed to create awareness concepts that are well-defined and clearly stated about how exactly they will handle harms that arise. Formal statements like this reinforce the existence of organisations of synthesis because they require a unified position, and they assign blame and failure—should something unfortuitous happen—not to the individuals that comprise the organisation but to the organisation itself. This trend in how we choose to protect ourselves directly reinforces a particular mode of organising. We are not arguing against what awareness tries to do as there is far too much harm that is left unaddressed. We are only calling to attention that the nature of our organisational structures and the formulation of awareness reinforce each other to the detriment of our principles and our ability to accomplish our goals within broader society.

There are, however, other ways to organise ourselves. We speak of affinity groups so frequently, but often this is limited to small friend groups and how they behave during public demonstrations. What we often miss is that affinity groups exist beyond protest or direct action, and they can be the basis for organising. They don’t require friendship, but rather an affinity for a shared goal.

These groups form and disperse, possibly to reform again later as needed. Or, their members might take those experiences and spread what they've learned with others they encounter.

Organising within agile and fluid structures is critical for anarchist and insurrectionary success. At its simplest, we can see this in the interplay between protesters and police. Police forces that rely on centralised decision making cannot react to swarming tactics of autonomously acting affinity groups. At present in Berlin, despite how often we call out for autonomous activities at demonstrations, the main bloc of a demonstration often attempts to act with unity. Its members hesitates before taking action, and the police squads that are granted a degree of autonomy are quickly able to quash us. More broadly, large organisations can be disrupted and infiltrated far more easily than decentralised networks. Organisations must reach consensus before acting. Affinity groups can fracture and coalesce as necessary to route around obstruction or repression. We must act with haste, and the processes that exist within organisations of synthesis weigh us down.

What follows is the first and last sections of Alfredo M. Bonanno's text *Insurrectionalist Anarchism* written in 1998. The text has long segments in the middle that discuss the transformation of the economy and society based on the digitisation of the world. Some of these observations haven't stood the test of time, and others are effectively common knowledge. They may be interesting if one studies the history of anarchism, but they are less informative 25 years later. Thus, they have been omitted, as has the second edition's introduction. What follows aims to be instructional on the methods of insurrectionary anarchism, in particular the contrast between organisations of synthesis and affinity groups.

Perhaps there are cases where one truly *must* form or join an organisation, but our hope is that by reading this you will at least consider forms of organising that are fluid and ephemeral, those based on voluntary association rather than the compulsion to attach oneself to an organisation that has calcified beyond utility or to form one with so much associated process that it never achieves anything.

— Scrapy Capy Distro, Berlin, 2023

each one of us, whereas contemporary structures of dominion are dismantling bit by bit in favour of a weaker but more efficient form, perhaps even worse than a strong, boorish one. The new power penetrates the psychological fabric of society right to the individual, drawing him into it, whereas in the past it remained external. It made a lot of noise, could bite, but basically only built a prison wall that could be scaled sooner or later.

The many aspects of the project also make the perspective of the revolutionary task multiple. No field of activity can be excluded in advance. For the same reason there cannot be privileged fields of intervention that are 'congenial' to one particular individual. I know comrades who do not feel inclined to take up certain kinds of activity—let us say the national liberation struggle—or certain revolutionary practices such as small specific actions. The reasons vary, but they all lead to the (mistaken) idea that one should only do the things one likes. This is mistaken, not because it is wrong for one of the sources of action to be joy and personal satisfaction, but because the search for individual motivations can preclude a wider and more significant kind of research, that based on the totality of the intervention. To set off with preconceived ideas about certain practices or theories means to hide—due to 'fear'—behind the idea, nearly always mistaken, that these practices and theories do not 'please' us. But all pre-conceived refusal is based on scarce knowledge of what one is refusing, on not getting close to it. Satisfaction and the joy of the moment comes to be seen as the only thing that matters, so we shut ourselves off from the perspective of the future. Often without meaning to, we become fearful and dogmatic, resentful of those who do overcome these obstacles, suspicious of everybody, discontented and unhappy.

The only acceptable limits are those of our capabilities. But these limits should always be verified during the course of the event, not as something that exists beforehand. I have always started off from the idea (obviously fantasy, but good operatively) of having no limits, of having immense capabilities. Then daily practice has taken the task of pointing out my actual limits to me and the things that I can and can't do. But these limits have never stopped me in advance, they have always emerged as insurmountable obstacles later on. No undertaking, however incredible or gigantic, has prevented me from starting off. Only afterwards, in the course of particular practices, has the modesty of my capabilities come to light, but this has not prevented me from obtaining partial results, all that is humanly attainable.

But this fact is also a question of 'mentality', i.e. of a way of seeing things. We are often too attached to the immediately perceivable, to the socialist realism of the ghetto, city, nation, etc. We say we are internationalist but in reality we prefer other things, the things we know better. We refuse real international relations, relations of reciprocal comprehension, of overcoming barriers (also linguistic ones), of collaboration through mutual exchange. One even refuses specific local relations, their myths and difficulties. The funny thing is that the first are refused in the name of the second, and the second in the name of the

centre and the parties of the right are also moving in that direction in order not to remain isolated. The democracies of the West are moving closer to the dictatorships of the East. This yielding of the political structure corresponds to profound changes in the economic and social field. Those who have a mind to manage the subversive potential of the great masses are finding themselves facing new necessities. The myths of the past, also that of the 'controlled class struggle' have gone. The great mass of exploited have been drawn into mechanisms that clash with the clear but superficial ideologies of the past. That is why the parties of the left are moving towards the centre, which basically corresponds to a zeroing of political distinctions and a possible management of consensus, at least from the administrative point of view.

It is in things to be done, short term programmes such as the management of public welfare, that distinctions are arising. Ideal (therefore ideological) political projects have disappeared. No one (or hardly anyone) is prepared to struggle for a communist society, but they could be regimented into structures that claim to safeguard their immediate interests once again. Hence the increasing appearance of wider struggles and structures, national and supranational parliaments.

The end of politics is not in itself an element that could lead one to believe there has been 'anarchist' turning in society in opposition to attempts at indirect political management. Not at all. This is a question of profound changes in the modern structure of capital that are also taking place on an international level, precisely due to the greater interdependence of the various peripheral situations. In turn, these changes mean that the political myths of the past are no longer exist as a means of control, resulting in a passage to methods better suited to the present time: the offer of better living conditions in the short term, a higher level of satisfaction of primary needs in the East, work for everybody in the West. These are the new rules of the course.

No matter how strange it might seem, however, the general crisis in politics will necessarily bring with it a crisis in hierarchical relations, the delegate, etc., all the relations that tended to put class opposition in a mythical dimension. It will not be possible for this to go on for much longer without consequences, many people are starting to see that the struggle must not pass through the mythical dimension of politics but enter the concrete dimension of the immediate destruction of the enemy.

There are also those who, basically having no interest in what the work of the revolutionary should be in the light of the above social changes, have come to support 'soft' methods of opposition, claiming that they can obstruct the spreading of the new power through passive resistance, 'delegitimation' and such like. In my opinion this misunderstanding is a result of the fact that they consider modern power, precisely because it is more permissive and based on wider consensus, to be less 'strong' than that of the past based on hierarchy and absolute centralisation. This is an error like any other, and comes from the fact that there is still a residual of the equation 'power equals strength' in

## Introduction to the first edition

The following ideas have emerged from a long itinerary of struggle and reflection. They represent a tormented, complex thesis, which is not only difficult to set out—which would simply be due a defect of the author—but even to expose clearly and definitively.

In conflict with my whole being, I am about to set out the fundamental elements of insurrectionalist anarchism anatomically. Will it be possible? I don't know. I shall try. If the reading of these notes begins to suffocate, then just skip through them and leave it at that.

A mass insurrection, or that of a whole people, can at any given moment lead to the State's incapacity to maintain order and respect for the law and even lead to the disintegration of social and economic conditions. This also implies the presence of individuals and groups that are capable of grasping this disintegration beyond its immediate manifestations. They must be able to see beyond the often chance and secondary reasons for the initial insurrectional outburst. In order to give their contribution to the struggle, they must look beyond the first clashes and skirmishes, not put a brake on them or underestimate them as mere incoherent insufferance towards those in power.

But who is prepared to take on this task? It could be anarchists, not so much because of their basic ideological choice and declared denial of all authority, as for their capacity to evaluate methods of struggle and organisational projects.

Moreover, only those who have rebelled and faced the consequences of this rebellion and lived it to the full, be it only within the microcosm of their own lives, can have the sensitivity and intuition necessary to grasp the signs of the insurrectional movement in course. Not all anarchists are rebels, just as not all rebels are anarchists. To complicate things, it is not enough to be a rebel to understand the rebellion of others. It is also necessary to be willing to understand. We need to look at the economic and social conditions around us. We must not let ourselves be swept away like a river in full swell by the resounding demonstrations of the popular movement, even when it is moving full steam ahead and its initial triumphs lead us to hoist banners of illusion. Critique is always the first instrument, the starting point. But this must not merely be a surly taking sides. It must be a participatory critique, one that involves the heart, feels the excitement of the clash against the same enemy, now with its face finally stamped in the dust.

It is not enough to simply rebel. Even if a hundred rebels were to get together it would still not be sufficient, they would merely be a hundred crazed molecules writhing in destructive agony as the struggle spreads, wildly sweeping everything away. Important as an example and stimulus, rebels end up succumbing to the needs of the moment. No matter how effective and radical they are, the more their conscience carries them to attack—often blindly—the more they become aware of an insurmountable limit due to their failure to see

any organisational outlet. They wait for suggestions from the mass in revolt, a word here, a word there, in the thick of the clash or during moments of calm when everyone wants to talk before taking up the struggle again. And they are not aware that even during these exciting moments there are always politicians waiting in ambush. The masses do not possess the virtues we often attribute to them. The assembly is certainly not the place to risk one's life, but one's life can be put at risk by decisions made in assemblies. And the political animals that raise their heads at these collective moments always have clear ideas about what to suggest, with fine programmes of recuperation and a call to order already in their pockets. Of course, they will not say anything that is not absolutely correct, politically, I mean, so will be taken to be revolutionaries. But they are always the same, the same old political animals laying the foundations for the power of the future, the kind that recuperates the revolutionary thrust and turns it towards pacification. We must limit destruction, comrades. Please, after all, what we are destroying belongs to us ..and so on.

To shoot before—and more quickly than—others, is a virtue of the Far West: it's good for a day or two, then you need to use your head. And using your head means you need a project.

So the anarchist cannot just be a rebel, he or she must be a rebel equipped with a project. He or she must, that is, unite courage and heart with the knowledge and foresight of action. Their decisions will still be lit up by the flames of destruction, but sustained with the fuel of critical analysis.

Now, if we think about it for a moment, a project cannot just turn up out of the blue in the midst of the fray. It is silly to think that everything must come forth from the insurgent people. That would be blind determinism and would consign us gagged into the hands of the first politician that stood up on a chair and came out with a few organisational and programmatic proposals, throwing smoke in everyone's eyes with a few words strung one after the other. Although insurrection is a revolutionary moment of great collective creativity that is capable of producing intense analytical suggestions (think of the insurgent workers of the Paris Commune who shot at the clocks), it is not the only source of theoretical and projectual wealth. The highest moments of the people in arms undoubtedly eliminate obstacles and uncertainties, showing clearly what had only been hazy up until then, but they cannot illuminate what is not already there. These moments are the potent reflector that make it possible to bring about a revolutionary and anarchist project, but this project must already exist, even if only in terms of method. It must have been elaborated and experimented to some degree, although obviously not in every detail.

After all, when we intervene in mass struggles, clashes with intermediate claims, isn't that almost exclusively in order to propose our methods? Workers in a particular factory demanding jobs and trying to avoid being laid off, a group of homeless people trying to get shelter, prisoners rebelling for better conditions in jail, students rebelling against a cultureless school, are all things that interest us, up to a point. We know perfectly well that when we participate

radical critique. But what could this critique be? In a word, pointing out the uselessness and danger of centralised structures, the mentality of delegating, the myth of the quantitative, the symbolic, the grandiose, the use of the media, etc. As we can see, it is a question of a critique aimed at showing the other end of the revolutionary horizon, the anarchist and libertarian side. Refusing centralised structures, organisation charts, delegates, quantity, symbolism, entrism, etc., means to fully adopt anarchist methods. And an anarchist proposition requires a few preliminary conditions.

All this might seem (and in certain aspects is) less effective at first. Results are more modest, not so obvious, have all the aspects of dispersion and that cannot be reduced to one single project. They are pulverised, diffused, i.e. they concern minimal objectives that cannot immediately be related to one central enemy, at least as it is presented in the iconography invented by power itself. Power has every interest in showing its peripheral ramifications and supporting structures in a positive light, as though they had purely social functions that are indispensable to life. Given our incapacity to expose them, it manages to conceal the connections between these peripheral structures and repression, then consensus. This is the no small task that awaits the revolutionary, who should also expect incomprehension concerning actions when he starts to strike, hence the need for 'clarification'. And here lies another trap. To state these clarifications in ideological terms would be an exact reproduction of concentration and centrality. Anarchist methods cannot be explained through ideology. Any time that this has happened it has simply been a juxtaposition of our methods on to practices and projects that are far from libertarian.

The concept of delegating is criticised because it is a practice that, as well as being authoritarian, leads to increasing processes of aggregation. Refusal to delegate could lead to building indirect aggregation, a free organisational form. Separate groups then, united by the methods used, not by hierarchical relations. Common objectives, common choices, but indirect. Not feeling the need to propose aggregational relationships that sooner or later end up producing hierarchical organisation charts (even if they are horizontal, claiming to adhere to anarchist methods), which turn out to be vulnerable to any increase in the winds of repression, where each does their own thing. It is the myth of the quantitative that needs to fall. The myth that numbers 'impress' the enemy, the myth of 'strength' before coming out into the struggle, the myth of the 'liberation army' and other such things.

So, without wanting it, old things are transforming themselves. Past models, objectives and practices are revolutionising themselves. Without a shadow of doubt the final crisis of the 'political' method is emerging. We believe that all attempts to impose ideological models on to subversive practices have disappeared for ever.

In due proportion, it is the world as a whole that is refusing the political model. Traditional structures with 'strong' political connotations have disappeared, or are about to. The parties of the left are aligning with those of the

and improvisation. But it is not the 'cause' of action, it contains no element of justification in this sense. If correctly intended, the project itself is action, whereas the latter is itself a project, becomes fully part of it, makes it grow, enriches and transforms it.

A lack of awareness of these fundamental premises of the work of the revolutionary often leads to confusion and frustration. Many comrades who remain tied to what we could call reflex interventions often suffer backlashes such as demotivation and discouragement. An external event, (often repression) gives the stimulus to act. This often ends or burns itself out and the intervention has no more reason to exist. Hence the frustrating realisation that one needs to start all over again. It is like digging away a mountain with a spoon. People do not remember. They forget quickly. Aggregation does not occur. Numbers decline. Nearly always the same people. The comrade who can only act by 'reflex' often survives by going from radical refusal to shutting himself away in disdainful silence, to having fantasies of destroying the world (human beings included). On the other hand, many comrades remain attached to what we might call routine interventions, i.e. those involving periodicals (papers, reviews, books) or meetings (congresses, conferences, debates, etc.). Here again the human tragedy does not fail to present itself. It is not usually so much a question of personal frustration (which also exists, and you can see it), as the comrade's transformation into a congressional bureaucrat or editor of barely readable pages that try to conceal their inconsistency by going into daily events, explaining them according to their own point of view. As we can see, it is always the same story.

So, the project must be propositional. It must take the initiative. First operatively, concerning things to be seen or done in a certain way. Then organisationally: how to go about doing these things. Many people do not realise that the things to be done (in the context of the class clash) are not set down once and for all, but take on different meanings throughout time and in changing social relations. That leads to the need for their theoretical evaluation. The fact that some of these things actually do go on for a long time as though they cannot change, does not mean that this is so. For example, the fact that there is a need to organise in order to strike the class enemy necessarily signifies extension in time. Means and organisation tend to crystallise. And in some respects it is well that this should be so. That is not to say that it is necessary to re-invent everything each time one re-organises, even after being struck by the repression. But it does mean that this 'resumption' should not be an exact repetition. Preceding models can be submitted to criticism, even if basically they remain valid and constitute a considerable starting point. At this point one often feels attacked by misinformed critics and preconceived ideas and wants to avoid being accused of being an 'irreducible' at all costs, which actually sounds quite positive, but implies an incapacity to understand the evolution of social conditions.

So it is possible to use old organisational models, so long as they undergo a

in these struggles as anarchists, no matter how they end up there will not be any corresponding growth in our movement, and this is quite irrelevant. The excluded often even forget who we are, and there is no reason in the world why they should remember us, least of all that of gratitude. In fact, we have asked ourselves more than once what we were doing in the midst of such struggles for claims, we anarchists and revolutionaries who are against work, school, any concession to the State, property and also any kind of negotiation that graciously concedes a better life in the prisons. The answer is simple. We are there because we can introduce different methods. And our methods take shape in a project. We are with the excluded in these intermediate struggles because we have a different model to propose, one based on self-organised struggles, attack and permanent conflictuality. This is our point of strength, and we are only prepared to struggle along with the excluded if they adopt such methods of attack, even concerning objectives that remain within the realm of claiming.

A method would be no more than an agglomeration of meaningless words if we were unable to articulate it within a projectual dimension. Had they paid any attention to this aspect at the start, many concerned critics of anarchist insurrectionalism would just have gone back to their momentarily disturbed slumber. What is the point of accusing us of being stuck in methods a hundred years out of date without taking a look at what we are talking about? The insurrectionalism we are talking about is quite different to the glorious days on the barricades, even if it might contain elements of a struggle that moves in such a direction at times. But as simple revolutionary theory and analysis, a method that comes to life in a project, it does not necessarily take this apocalyptic moment into account, but develops and intensifies far from any waving of banners or glittering of guns.

Many comrades are fully aware of the need to attack and are doing what they can to bring this about. They perceive the beauty of the clash and the confrontation with the class enemy hazily, but do not want to spend much time thinking about it. They want to hear nothing of revolutionary projects, so carry on wasting the enthusiasm of rebellion which, moving into a thousand rivulets, ends up extinguishing itself in small isolated displays of insufferance. These comrades are obviously not all the same, you could say that each one constitutes a universe of his or her own, but all, or nearly all of them, feel irritated by any attempt to clarify ideas. They don't like to make distinctions. What is the point of talking about affinity groups, informal organisation, base nuclei or coordinations, they say? Don't things speak for themselves? Are not tyranny, injustice, exploitation and the ferocity of power, quite visible there in front of us? Don't they exist in the shape of things and men basking in the sun as though they had nothing to worry about? What is the point of wasting time in pointless discussions? Why not attack now? Indeed, why not turn on the first uniform we come across? Even a 'sensible' person like Malatesta was of this opinion, in a way, when he said that he preferred individual rebellion to waiting to see the world upturned before doing anything.

I have never had anything against this personally. On the contrary. Rebellion is the first step. It is the essential condition for burning our bridges, and even if it does not cut the bonds that tie us to society and power with a thousand ropes in the form of family, morals, work, obeying the law, at least it weakens them. But I am convinced that this is not sufficient. I believe we need to go further and think about the possibilities of giving one's actions more organisational strength to so that rebellion can become a project aiming at generalised insurrection.

This second step obviously does not appeal to many comrades. And, feeling that such efforts are beyond them, they underestimate the problem or, worse still, criticise those who do spend time and effort on the question of organisation.

Here we will try to provide a few elements to enable us to examine the organisational aspect of insurrectionalist anarchism in some depth. In particular, the problem of the affinity group, informality, self-organisation of struggles, base nuclei and the coordination of these nuclei (anarchists and non-anarchists) with affinity groups (of anarchists), through informal organisation.

As we can see, the question implies complex problems of method, and this means understanding certain concepts that often get distorted in the context of insurrectionalism. We must therefore give them our full attention so as to get rid of some of the preconceived ideas that often limit our vision without our realising it.

This introductory note will become more schematic as it takes a look at these key concepts. The text itself will be more articulate, but would probably be difficult to follow without first becoming familiar with such concepts.

An anarchist group can be composed of perfect strangers. I have often gone into anarchist meeting rooms in Italy and elsewhere and hardly known anybody. One's mere presence in such a place, the attitudes, the jargon and the way one presents oneself, the level of discussion and statements impregnated with basic orthodox anarchist ideology, are such that any anarchist feels at ease within a short space of time and communicates with the other comrades as well as possible, to their reciprocal satisfaction.

It is not my intention to speak of the ways that an anarchist group can be organised here. There are many, and each chooses their own comrades as they think best. But there is a particular way of forming an anarchist group that puts real or presumed affinity among all the participants before anything else. Now, this affinity is not something that can be found in a declaration of principles, a glorious past, or a history of 'militancy', no matter how far back this goes in time. Affinity is acquired by having knowledge of each other. That is why one sometimes believes one has affinity with a comrade, then discovers that it is not the case, and vice versa. An affinity group is therefore a melting pot where such relations can mature and consolidate.

But because perfection is a thing of angels, even affinity needs to be considered with a certain mental acumen and not simply be accepted as the panacea

transforms itself into disorganic anxiety, a tumultuous desire to understand that invariably turns into pure confusion, lowering the primacy of the brain that they are trying to hold on to at any cost. This exasperation reduces their capacity to put order in their ideas, it widens their creativity but only in the pure, one might say wild, state, supplying images and judgement devoid of any organisational method that might make them utilizable. This person constantly lives in a kind of 'trance', eats badly, has difficulty in relating to others. They become easily suspicious, are anxious to be 'understood', and so tend to accumulate an incredible hotchpotch of contradictory thoughts with no guiding thread. The solution for getting out of the labyrinth would be action. But according to this model of polarisation this would have to be submitted to the power of the brain, to the 'logic' of reason. So, action is killed, put off to infinity or lived badly because not 'understood', not brought into to the pre-eminence of thought.

On the other hand, there is the endless doing, passing one's life away in things to be done. Today, tomorrow. Day after day. Perhaps in the hope that a day will come that puts an end to this postponing to infinity. Meanwhile, no search for a moment's reflection that is not exclusively linked to things be done, or very little at least. Devoting all one's time to doing kills in the same way as devoting it all to thinking does. The contradictions of the individual are not resolved by action as an end in itself. For the revolutionary, things are even worse. The classic flattery that individuals use to convince themselves of the validity and importance of the action they wish to undertake is not enough for the revolutionary. The only expedient one can have recourse to is eternally putting things off to better days when it will no longer be necessary to dedicate oneself 'exclusively' to doing and there will be time to think. But how can one think without the means to do so? Perhaps thought is automatic activity that one slips into when one stops doing? Certainly not. In the same way as doing is not automatic activity that one slips into when one stops thinking. The possession of a few things then, courage, constancy, creativity, materiality, can allow the revolutionary to bring the means they possess to fruition and build their project.

And this concerns both the analytical and practical aspects. Once again a dichotomy appears that needs to be seen in its inconsistency, i.e. as it is usually intended by the dominant logic.

No project can be just one or other of these aspects. Each analysis has a different angle and development according to the organisational proposal, which needs to be assisted by other, similar analyses.

The revolutionary who is unable to master the analytical and organisational part of his project will always be at the mercy of events, constantly turning up after things have happened, never before.

The aim of the project, in fact, is to see in order to foresee. The project is a prosthesis like any other of man's intellectual elaborations. It allows action, makes it possible, prevents it from being extinguished in pointless discussions



Now the problem comes to be seen differently. Nothing will be as it was before. Numerous connections and comparisons, inferences and deductions are made without our realising it. All the means in our possession begin to vibrate and come alive. Things of the past along with new understanding, old concepts, ideas and tensions, that had not fully been understood become clear. An incredible mixture, itself a creative event, which must be submitted to the discipline of method in order for us to produce something, limited if you like, but immediately perceivable. Unfortunately the destiny of creativity is that its immense initial explosive potential (something miserable in the absence of the basic means mentioned above) be returned to the realm of technique in the narrow sense of word. It must go back to becoming word, pages, figures, sounds, form, objects. Otherwise, outside the scheme of this prison of communication, it would be dispersive and abandoned, lost in an immense fathomless sea.

And now one last thing, materiality. The capacity, that is, to grasp the real materiality of what surrounds us. For example, we require suitable means in order to understand and act, and that is not so simple. The question of means seems clear, but it invariably leads to misunderstandings. Take money, for example. It is obvious that one cannot do what one wants without money. A revolutionary cannot ask for State financing to undertake projects aimed at its destruction. They cannot do this for ethical reasons and for a logical one (that the State would not give it to them). Nor can they seriously believe that with small individual subscriptions they will be able to do everything they want (and consider necessary). Nor can they simply continue to complain about lack of money or resign themselves to the fact that some things just can't be done for that reason. Even less can they adopt the stance of those who, being penniless, feel their conscience at rest and, stating they have no money, do not participate in the common effort but wait for others to do so instead of them. Of course, it is clear that if a comrade has no money they cannot be held to pay for what they cannot afford. But have they really done everything they can to procure some for themselves? Or is there only one way to get hold of money: go begging for it, letting oneself be exploited by a boss? I don't think so.

In the arc of the possible ways of being, taking personal tendencies and cultural acquisitions into account, two extreme kinds of behaviour polarise, both of which are limited and penalising. On the one hand there are those who accentuate the theoretical aspect and on the other, those who immerse themselves in the practical one. These two poles hardly ever exist in the 'pure state', but are often accentuated enough to become obstacles and impediments.

The great possibilities that theoretical study gives the revolutionary remain dead letters when they are exasperated, and become elements of contradiction and impediment. Some people only see life in theoretical terms. They are not necessarily men of letters or scholars (for the latter this would be quite normal), but could be any proletarian, an emarginated person that grew up in the streets coming to blows. This search for a resolution through the subtlety of reason

for all our weaknesses. I can only discover that I have affinity with someone if I reveal myself to that person, do away with all the affectations that normally protect me like a second skin, harder and tougher than the first. And this cannot simply come about through small talk, me chattering about myself then listening to the other's tales, but must come about in things that are done together. In other words, it must come about in action. When we do things, we unconsciously send out tiny signals that are far more revealing than words. It is from these exchanges that we create the conditions needed for us to gain knowledge of one another.

If the group's activity is not simply doing for the sake of it so as to grow in numbers, but has the qualitative aim of comrades being aware of each other and feeling at one with each other, sharing the tension towards action and the desire to transform the world, then this is an affinity group. If it is not, the search for affinity will be no more than the search for a shoulder to lean on.

Affinity is therefore the knowledge that comrades acquire of each other through action in the realisation of one's ideas. A glance backwards to allow my comrades to see who I am is reabsorbed by looking forward together into a future in which we build our common project. In other words, we decide to intervene in specific struggles and see what we are capable of. These two moments, the first, let us say, of the knowledge of the individual, and the second, the projectual one of the knowledge of the group intertwine and constitute affinity, allowing the group to be considered to all effects an 'affinity group'.

The resulting condition is not fixed in time once and for all. It moves, develops, regresses and modifies during the course of the various struggles, drawing from them so as to grow both theoretically and practically. It is not a monolithic entity. Decisions are not made vertically. There is no faith to be sworn on or commandments to believe in, in times of doubt or fear. Everything is discussed within the group throughout the course of the struggle, everything is reconsidered from the start, even if solid, eternal points might seem to exist already.

The affinity group's task is to elaborate a particular project, the best place to study and examine the conditions one decides to operate in. It might seem that organisations of synthesis are better instruments for intervening in struggles than affinity groups, but the vast range of interests held by anarchist structures of synthesis is only apparent. In fact, in an organisation of synthesis, groups are allocated tasks at congresses, and although they are free to interest themselves in all the problems that characterise this society divided into classes, basically only operate according to what has been dictated by the congress. Moreover, being linked to programmes and principles that have been accepted once and for all, they are unable to make independent decisions and end up complying to the rigid limitations fixed by the organisation in congress. The latter's role is to safeguard the organisation itself, in other words to 'disturb' power as little as possible and avoid being 'outlawed'. The affinity group avoids such limitations, sometimes easily, sometimes only thanks

to the courage and decision of the comrades that make it up. Of course, such structures cannot give courage to those who lack it. It cannot suggest attack unless each individual is already a rebel in his or her soul. It cannot go into action if people are only prepared to think at the level of an afternoon chat.

Once the problems concerning what is to be acted on have been gone into, the necessary documentation been found and analyses elaborated, the affinity group goes into action. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of this kind of anarchist structure. It does not wait for problems to appear like a spider in the middle of a web. It looks for them and seeks a solution, which must obviously be accepted by the excluded who are bearing the brunt of the problem. But in order to make a proposition to a social reality that is suffering some specific form of aggression by power in a given area, it is necessary to be physically present among the excluded of that area and have a real awareness of the problems involved.

The affinity group therefore moves in the direction of local intervention, facing one particular problem and creating all the necessary psychological and practical conditions, both individually and collectively. The problem can then be faced with the characteristics and methods of insurrectionalism which are self-organisation, permanent conflictuality and attack.

One single affinity group cannot necessarily carry out such an intervention on its own. Often, at least according to the (few and controversial) experiences to date, the nature of the problem and complexity of intervention, including the extent of the area as well as the means required to develop the project and the ideas and needs of the people involved, require something more. Hence the need to keep in contact with other affinity groups so as to increase the number of comrades and find the means and ideas suited to the complexity and dimension of the problem that is being faced.

That is how informal organisation originates.

Various anarchist affinity groups can come together to give life to an informal organisation aimed at facing a problem that is too complex for one group alone. Of course, all the groups participating in the informal organisation must more or less agree with the intervention and participate in both the actions and ideas.

Affinity groups often develop informal relations that become constant as they meet regularly to prepare for specific struggles or—better still—during the course of these struggles. This facilitates the circulation of information about the latter and the projects that are in preparation, as well as signs from certain parts of the world of the excluded.

An informal organisation ‘functions’ quite simply. It has no name as it does not aim to grow numerically. There are no fixed structures (apart from the single affinity groups, each one of which operates quite autonomously), otherwise the term ‘informal’ would be meaningless. It is not formally ‘constituted’, there are no congresses but only simple meetings from time to time (preferably during the course of the struggles themselves). There are no programmes,

elaborating this project of theirs. First of all, courage. Not the banal courage of the physical clash and the attack on the enemy trenches, but the more difficult one, the courage of one’s ideas. Once you think in a certain way, once you see things and people, the world and its affairs, in a certain way, you must have the courage to carry this through without compromise or half measures, without pity or illusion. To stop half way would be a crime or, if you like, is absolutely normal. But revolutionaries are not ‘normal’ people. They must go beyond. Beyond normality, but also beyond exceptionality, which is an aristocratic way of considering diversity. Beyond good, but also beyond evil, as someone would have said.

They cannot wait for others to do what needs to be done. They cannot delegate to others what their conscience dictates to them. They cannot wait peacefully to do what others itching to destroy what oppresses them like themselves would do if only they decided, if only they were to awake from their torpor and from allowing themselves to be swindled, far from the chatter and confusion.

So they must set to work, and work hard. Work to supply themselves with the means necessary to give some foundation to their convictions.

And here we reach the second point: constancy. The strength to continue, persevere, insist, even when others are discouraged and everything seems difficult.

It is impossible to procure the means one requires without constancy. The revolutionary needs cultural means, i.e. analyses and basic common knowledge. But studies that seem very far from revolutionary practice are also indispensable to action. Languages, economy, philosophy, mathematics, the natural sciences, chemistry, social science and so on. This knowledge should not be seen as sectarian specialisation, nor should it be the dilettante exercises of an eccentric spirit dipping into this and that, desirous of knowledge but forever ignorant due to the failure to acquire a method of learning. And then the technics: writing correctly, (in a way that reaches one’s objective), speaking to others (using all the techniques on the subject), which are not easy to learn and are very important, studying (this is also a technique), remembering (memory can be improved, it does not have to be left to our more or less natural disposition), the manipulation of objects (which many consider a mysterious gift but instead is technique and can be learned and perfected), and others still.

The search to acquire these means never ends. It is the revolutionary’s task to work constantly to perfect these means and extend them to other fields.

Then there is a third thing, creativity. All of the above means would clearly be useless, mere specialisation as an end in itself, were they not to produce new experiences, continual modification in the means as a whole and the possibility of applying them. This is where we can grasp the great force of creativity, i.e. the fruit of all the preceding efforts. Logical processes become no more than a basic, unimportant element, whereas a different, totally new one emerges: intuition.

on the idea of State (including that which we harbour inside us, often without realising it) is only possible if we do so concretely on its historical realisation that stands there before us in flesh and blood.

What do we mean by attack? Things are solid. Men defend themselves, take measures. And the choice of the means of attack is also open to confusion. We can (or rather must) attack with ideas, oppose critique to critique, logic to logic, analysis to analysis. But that would be a pointless exercise if it were to come about in isolation, cut off from direct intervention on the things and men of the State (and capital of course). So, in relation to what we said earlier, attack not only with ideas but also with weapons. I see no other way out. To limit oneself to an ideological duel would merely augment the strength of the enemy.

Theoretical examination therefore, alongside and at the same time as practical attack.

Moreover, it is precisely in the attack that theory transforms itself and practice expresses its theoretical foundations. To limit oneself to theory would be to remain in the field of idealism typical of the bourgeois philosophy that has been filling the coffers of the dominant class for hundreds of years, as well as the concentration camps of the experimenters of both Right and Left. It makes no difference if this disguises itself as historical materialism, it is still a question of the old phagocytic idealism. Libertarian materialism must necessarily go beyond the separation between idea and deed. If you identify the enemy you must strike, and strike adequately. Not so much in the sense of an optimal level of destruction as that of the general situation of the enemy's defences, its prospects of survival and the increasing danger it represents.

If you strike it is necessary to destroy part of their structure, making their functioning as a whole more difficult. And if this is done in isolation it might seem insignificant, it does not succeed in becoming a reality. For this transformation to come about it is necessary for the attack to be accompanied by a critical examination of the enemy's ideas, the ideas that are intrinsic to its repressive and oppressive action.

But should this reciprocal crossing of practical action into theoretical action and theoretical into practical come about artificially? For example, in the sense of realising an action and then printing a fine document claiming it. The ideas of the enemy are not criticised or gone into in this way. They are crystallised within the ideological process, appearing to be massively in opposition to the ideas of the attacker as they are transferred into something quite ideological. Few things are as obnoxious to me as this way of proceeding. The place for the conversion of theory into practice and vice versa, is the project. It is the project as an articulated whole that gives practical action a different significance, makes it a critique of the ideas of the enemy. It ensues from this that the work of the revolutionary is essentially the elaboration and realisation of a project.

But before discovering what a revolutionary project might be, we need to agree on what the revolutionary must possess in order to be capable of

only the common experience of insurrectional struggles and the methods that distinguish them: self-organisation, permanent conflictuality and attack.

The aims of the informal organisation are conferred on it by the individual affinity groups that make it up. In the few experiences that have materialised it has been a question of one specific objective, for example the destruction of the Cruise missile base in Comiso in 1982–1983. But there could also be more than one intervention and the informal organisation would make it possible for single groups to intervene in these different situations. For example they could alternate when it became necessary to be in one place for a considerable length of time (in Comiso groups stayed in the area for two years). Another aim could be to provide both analytical and practical means, and provide the financial support that the individual group might require.

The primary function of the informal organisation is to make known the various affinity groups and the comrades that make them up. If you think about it, this is still a question of a search for affinity, this time at a different level. Here the search for affinity is intensified by the project—which does not exclude the ever-increasing knowledge of the single individual—and comes about at the level of more than one group. One deduces from this that the informal organisation is also an affinity group, based on all the affinity groups that make it up.

The above considerations, which we have been developing over the past fifteen years, should have been of some use to comrades in their understanding the nature of informal organisation. This does not seem to be the case. In my opinion, the most serious misunderstanding comes from the latent desire of many of us to flex our muscles. We want to give ourselves a strong organisational structure because that seems to be the only way to fight a power structure that is strong and muscular. According to these comrades the first characteristic that such a structure should have is that it be specific and robust, must last in time and be clearly visible so as to constitute a kind of light amidst the struggles of the excluded—a light, a guide, a point of reference.

Alas! We do not share this opinion. All the economic and social analyses of post-industrial capitalism show how power would swallow up such a strong, visible structure in one gulp. The disappearance of the centrality of the working class (at least what was once considered such) means that an attack carried out by a rigid, visible structure would be impracticable. If such structures are not simply destroyed on impact, they would just be co-opted into the ambit of power in order to recuperate and recycle the most irreducible elements.

So long as the affinity group continues to look inwards, it will be no more than a few comrades giving themselves their own rules and respecting them. By looking inwards I do not just mean staying inside one's anarchist place, limiting oneself to the usual discussions among the initiated, but also responding to the various deadlines of power and repression with declarations and documents. In that case the affinity group would only differ from other anarchist groups superficially: 'political' choices, ways of interpreting the various responses to

the power structure's claim to regulate our lives and those of all the excluded.

The profound sense of being a 'different' structure, i.e. one based on a way of organising that is quite different to all other anarchist groups—in a word, on affinity—only becomes operative when it sets out a project of specific struggle. And what characterises this project more than anything is the presence of a considerable number of excluded, of people—in a word, the mass—bearing the brunt of repression that the project is addressing with recourse to insurrectionalist methods.

The essential element in the insurrectional project is therefore mass participation. And, as we started off from the condition of affinity among the single anarchist groups participating in it, it is also an essential element of this affinity itself. It would be no more than mere camaraderie d'élite if it were to remain circumscribed to the reciprocal search for deeper personal knowledge between comrades.

But it would be nonsense to consider trying to make other people become anarchists and suggest that they enter our groups during the struggle. Not only would it be nonsense, it would be a horrible ideological forcing of things that would upturn the whole meaning of affinity groups and the eventual informal organisation that might ensue in order to face the specific repressive attack.

But here we are faced with the need to create organisational structures that are capable of regrouping the excluded in such a way as to begin the attack on repression. So we come to the need to give life to autonomous base nuclei, which can obviously give themselves any other name that indicates the concept of self-organisation.

We have now reached the crucial point of the insurrectional project: the constitution of autonomous base nuclei (we are using this term here to simplify things).

The essential, visible and immediately comprehensible characteristic of the latter is that they are composed of both anarchists and non-anarchists.

The more difficult points reside elsewhere however, and on the few occasions of experimentation these have turned out to be a source of considerable misunderstanding. First of all, the fact that they are structures in the quantitative sense. If they are such—and in fact they are—then this characteristic needs to be clarified. They are actually points of reference, not fixed structures where people can count themselves through all the procedures of established membership (card-carrying, payment of dues, supplying services, etc). The only aim of the base nuclei is struggle. They operate like lungs in the respiratory system, swelling when the struggle intensifies and reducing in size when it weakens, to swell again when the next clash occurs. During quiet spells, between one involvement and another—and here by involvement we mean any aspect of struggle, even simply handing out a leaflet, participating in a public meeting, but also squatting a building or sabotaging one of the instruments of power—the nucleus acts as a zonal reference, a sign of the presence of an informal organisational structure.

words self-organisation of struggles, permanent conflictuality and attack.

## The revolutionary project

The various aspects of revolutionary activity are not easily grasped. It is even more difficult to see everything in terms of a complex project with its own logic and articulation. That is what I mean by revolutionary work.

We all, or nearly all, agree as to who the enemy is. In this vague definition we include elements from our personal experience (joy and suffering) as well as our social situation and our culture. We are convinced that we have everything we need to draw up a map of the enemy territory and identify objectives and responsibilities. Times change of course, but we don't take any notice. We make the necessary adjustments and carry on.

Obscure in our way of proceeding, our surroundings also obscure, we light up our path with the miserable candle of ideology and stride ahead.

The tragic thing is that events around us change, often rapidly. The terms of the class relationship are constantly widening and narrowing in a contradictory situation. One day they reveal themselves only to conceal themselves the next as the certainties of yesteryear precipitate into the darkness of the present.

Anyone keeping a constant, albeit non static, position is not appreciated as a forthright navigator in the sea of class confusion but tends to be seen as just a stubborn old chanter of abstract, ideological slogans. Whoever persists in seeing the enemy inside the uniform, behind the factory, in the ministry, school, church, etc., is considered suspect. There is a desire to substitute harsh reality with abstract relations and relativity. So the State ends up becoming a way of seeing things and individuals, with the result that, being an idea, it cannot be fought. The desire to fight it in abstract in the hope that its material reality, men and institutions, will precipitate into the abyss of logical contradiction, is a tragic illusion. This is what usually happens at times like this when there is a lull both in the struggle and in proposals for action.

No one with any self respect would admit to the State's having any positive function. Hence the logical conclusion that it has a negative one, i.e. that it damages some for the benefit of others. But the State is not just the idea State, it is also the 'thing State', and this 'thing' is composed of the policeman and the police station, the minister and the ministry (including the building where the ministry has its offices), the priest and the church (including the actual place where the cult of lies and swindling takes place), the banker and the bank, the speculator and his premises, right down to the individual spy and his more or less comfortable flat in the suburbs. Either the State is this articulated whole or it is nothing, a mere abstraction, a theoretical model that could never be attacked and defeated.

The State also exists inside us, of course so is also idea. But this being an idea is subordinate to the physical places and persons that realise it. An attack

synthesis would stop its collaboration (if it is in a minority) or impose the expulsion (in fact, even if not with a precise motion) of those proposing different methods of struggle. Some people might not like it, but that is exactly how things work. One might ask oneself why on earth the proposal of the group belonging to the organisation of synthesis must by definition always be more backward, i.e. in the rearguard, or more cautious than others concerning possible actions of attack against the structures of repression and social consensus. Why is that? The answer is simple. The specific anarchist organisation of synthesis has growth in numbers as its basic aim. It needs an operative force that must grow. Not to infinity exactly, but almost. In the case of the contrary it would not have the capacity to intervene in the various struggles or even be able to carry out its own main task: that of moving towards synthesis within one single point of reference. Now, an organisation that has increase in members as its main aim must guarantee proselytism and pluralism. It cannot take a clear position on any specific problem but must always find a middle road, a political road that upsets the smallest number and turns out to be acceptable to most. The correct position concerning certain problematics, repression and prison in particular, is often the most dangerous one, and no group can put their organisation at risk without first agreeing with the other member groups. But that can only happen in congress, or at an extraordinary meeting, and we are well aware that it is always the most moderate opinion that prevails on such occasions, certainly not the most advanced. So, unavoidably the presence of the organisation of synthesis in actual struggles, struggles reaching the essence of the class struggle, becomes a brake and control (often involuntarily, but it is still a question of control).

The informal organisation does not present such problems. Affinity groups and comrades that see themselves in an informal kind of projectuality come together in action, certainly not by adhering to a program that has been fixed at a congress. They bring about the project themselves, in their analyses and actions. It can occasionally have a point of reference in a publication or a series of meetings, but only in order to facilitate things, whereas it has nothing to do with congresses and such like. The comrades who recognise themselves in an informal organisation are automatically part of it. They keep in contact with the other comrades through a paper or by other means, but, more important, they do so by participating in the various actions, demonstrations, encounters, etc., that take place from time to time. The main verification and analysis therefore comes about during moments of struggle. To begin with these might simply be moments of theoretical verification, turning into something more later on.

In an informal organisation there is no question of synthesis. There is no desire to be present in all the different situations and even less to formulate a project that takes the struggles into the depths of a programme that has been approved in advance.

The only constant points of reference are insurrectional methods: in other

To see autonomous base nuclei as needing to grow quantitatively would be to turn them into union-style organisms, i.e. something like the Cobas in Italy, who defend workers' rights in the various productive sectors through a wide range of activities such as claiming and defence of those they represent. The more delegates there are, the louder the voice of the claimant. The autonomous base nucleus does not have delegates, it does not propose struggles based on wide objectives such as the defence of jobs, wage increases, or safeguarding health in the factory, etc. The base nucleus exists for the one objective that was decided upon at the start. This can also be a claim of some kind, not made through the representative method of delegation, but faced using direct methods of immediate struggle such as constant unannounced attacks and the blunt refusal of all the political forces that claim to represent anyone or anything.

Those who form the base nuclei should therefore not expect some complex level of support to cover a wide range of needs. They must understand that this is not a question of some union-style defence organisation, but is an instrument of struggle against one specific objective, and is only valid if the initial decision to have recourse to insurrectional methods stands firm. Participation in the nuclei is quite spontaneous, as there are no benefits other than the specific, exclusive one of strength and organisation concerning the objective that has been chosen together, and attacking it. So, it is quite logical not to expect such organisms to develop a high numerical or (even less) stable, composition. In the preparatory phase of the struggle those who identify with the objective, agree with it and are prepared to put themselves at risk, are few. When the struggle is underway and the first results begin to appear, the hesitant and weak will also join in and the nucleus will swell, only for these last-minute participants to disappear later on. This is quite natural and should not worry us or make us see this instrument of mass organisation in a negative light.

Another common area of incomprehension is the short lifespan of the autonomous base nucleus itself. It comes to an end upon reaching the objective that had been decided (or through common agreement concerning the impossibility of reaching it). Many ask themselves: if the nuclei 'also' function as a regrouping point of reference, why not keep them in place for possible use in some future struggle? Here we come back to the concept of 'informality' again. Any structure that carries on in time beyond its original aim, sooner or later turns into a stable structure whose original purpose is distorted into the new and apparently legitimate one of quantitative growth. It grows in strength in order to reach the multiplicity of goals—each one interesting enough in itself—that appear on the nebulous horizon of the exploited. As soon as the informal structure plants roots in a new, stable form, individuals suited to managing the latter will appear on the scene: always the same ones, the most capable, with plenty of time to spare. Sooner or later the circle will close around the so-called revolutionary anarchist structure, which by now will have found its sole aim, its own survival. This is precisely what we see happening when such an

organisational structure, albeit anarchist and revolutionary, establishes itself: it becomes a rarefied form of power that attracts all the comrades who want to do good for the people and so on, etc, etc.—all with the best will in the world, of course.

One last organisational element, which is necessary at times, is the ‘coordination’ of autonomous base nuclei. The coordinating structure is also informal and is composed of various representatives of the base nuclei. Whereas the individual nuclei, given their function as ‘lungs’ can be informal to the point of not even having any fixed meeting place (because a nucleus can arrange to meet anywhere), this cannot be so for the coordinating body. If a struggle—still circumscribed to the specific question that started the project—lasts for a considerable length of time and covers a fairly wide area, it is necessary to find a place for the various activities of the base nuclei to coordinate themselves.

The presence of anarchist affinity groups is not directly visible in the coordination, and this can also be said concerning the informal organisation. Of course anarchists are present in all the various base nuclei, but this is not the ideal place for anarchist propaganda in the classic sense of the word. The first thing to be done, both within the coordination and the individual nuclei, is to analyse the problem, the objective to be reached, then look at the insurrectional means to be used in the struggle. The task of comrades is to participate in the project and go into the means and methods to be employed, along with everyone else involved. Although this might sound simple here, it turns out to be far more complicated in practice.

The function of the ‘coordination of the autonomous base nuclei’ is therefore that of linking up the struggles. Here we have only one thing to suggest (absolutely indigestible for anarchists, but quite simple for anyone who is not an anarchist): the need, in the case of a mass attack against a given structure of power, to decide upon individual tasks before the attack takes place, i.e. to agree on what needs to be done down to the minutest detail. Many imagine such occasions of struggle to be an orgy of spontaneity: the objective is there in front of everyone, all you need to do is go ahead and rout out the forces protecting it and destroy them. I am putting things in these terms here, although I know that many will have a hundred different ways of seeing things, but the essence does not change. All of the participants must have a precise idea of what to do, it being a question of a struggle taking place in a given area that will have to overcome specific armed resistance. Now, if only a few people know what to do the resulting confusion will be the same, if not worse, than if no one does at all.

A plan is therefore necessary. There have been instances where it was necessary to have an armed military plan simply to hand out a leaflet (for example during the insurrection of Reggio Calabria). But can this plan really be made available to everybody, even just a few days before the attack? I do not think so. For reasons of security. On the other hand, details of the plan of attack must be available to all the participants. One deduces that not everybody can

## Informal organisation

First let us make a distinction between the informal anarchist organisation and the anarchist organisation of synthesis. Considerable clarification will emerge from this distinction. What is an anarchist organisation of synthesis? It is an organisation composed of groups or individuals that relate to each other more or less constantly and have periodical congresses. Basic theoretical analyses are discussed at these meetings, a programme is prepared and tasks shared out covering a whole range of interventions in the social field. In this way the organisation sets itself up as a point of reference, a structure that is capable of synthesizing the struggles taking place in the reality of the class clash. Its commissions (single comrades or groups) intervene in different struggles and give their contribution in first person, without for that losing sight of the theoretical and practical orientation of the organisation as a whole as was decided at the last congress. When this kind of organisation develops fully (as happened in Spain in '36) it starts to dangerously resemble a party. Synthesis becomes control. Of course, in moments of slack this involution is less visible and might even seem an insult, but at other times it becomes more evident. In substance, in the (specific, anarchist) organisation of synthesis, a nucleus of specialists works out proposals both at a theoretical and ideological level, adapting them as far as possible to the programme that is roughly established at the congress. The shift away from this programme can also be considerable (after all, anarchists would never admit to adhering to anything too slavishly), but when this occurs care is taken to come back to the line previously decided upon as soon as possible. The project of this organisation is therefore that of being present in various situations: antimilitarism, nuclear power, unions, prisons, ecology, interventions in living areas, unemployment, schools, etc. This presence is either direct or through participation in interventions managed by other comrades or organisations (anarchist or not). Clearly any participation aimed at bringing the struggle into the project of synthesis cannot be autonomous. It cannot really adapt to the conditions of the struggle or collaborate effectively in a clear plan with the other revolutionary forces. Everything must either pass through the ideological filter of synthesis or comply with the conditions approved earlier during the congress. This situation, which is not always as rigid as it might seem here, leads to organisations of synthesis dragging struggles to the most basic level, proposing caution and using contrivances aimed at redimensioning any flight forward, any objective that is too open or means that might be dangerous. For example, if a group belonging to this kind of organisation (of synthesis, but always anarchist and specific) were to adhere to a structure that is struggling, let us say, against repression, it would be forced to consider the actions proposed by this structure in the light of the analyses that had roughly been approved at the congress. The structure would either have to accept these analyses, or the group belonging to the organisation of

ical nature, to the more central areas where class divisions are more rigid, economically based conflict will give way to conflictuality of an irrational nature.

In their projects of control the included are aiming at general consensus by reducing the economic difficulties of the excluded. They could supply them with a prefabricated language to allow a partial and sclerotised use of some of the dominant technology. They could also allow them a better quality of life. But they will not be able to prevent the outbursts of irrational violence that arise from feeling useless, from boredom and from the deadly atmosphere of the ghetto.

In Britain, for example, always a step ahead in the development of capital's repressive projects, it is already possible to see the beginning of this tendency. The State certainly does not guarantee survival, there is an incredible amount of poverty and unemployment, but the riots that break out there regularly are started by young people—especially West Indian—who know they are definitively cut off from a world that is already strange to them, from which they can borrow a few objects or ways of doing things, but where they are already beginning to feel “other”.

The mass movements that make such an impression on some of our comrades today because of their danger and—in their opinion—uselessness, are signs of the direction that the struggles of tomorrow will take.

Even now many young people are no longer able to evaluate the situation in which they find themselves. Deprived of that minimum of culture that school once provided, bombarded by messages containing aimless gratuitous violence, they are pushed in a thousand ways towards impetuous, irrational and spontaneous rebellion, and deprived of the “political” objectives that past generations believed they could see with such clarity.

The “sites” and expressions of these collective explosions vary a great deal. The occasions also. In each case, however, they can be traced to an intolerance of the society of death managed by the capital/State partnership.

It is pointless to fear those manifestations because of the traditional ideas we have of revolutionary action within mass movements.

It is not a question of being afraid but of passing to action right away, before it is too late.

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participate in drawing it up, but only those who in some way or other happen to be known either for their participation in the autonomous base nuclei, or because they belong to the affinity groups adhering to the coordination. This is to avoid infiltration by police and secret services, something that is more than likely on such occasions. People who are not known must be guaranteed by those who are. This might be unpleasant, but it is unavoidable.

The problem gets complicated when the project in course is known to many comrades who could be interested in participating in one of the actions of attack we are talking about. In this case, the influx would be considerable (in the case of Comiso, in the days of the attempted occupation, about 300 comrades came from all over Italy and beyond) and the need to avoid the presence of infiltrators becomes far more serious. Comrades turning up at the last minute might not know about the action in course, and will not be able to understand what is going on. In the same way, all those who decide not to accept the above verification will end up feeling left out.

And finally two last points that merit a concise, linear explanation: why we consider the insurrectional methodology and projectuality to be the most suitable means in the revolutionary clash today, and what we think can come from the use of insurrectional methods in a situation that is not insurrection in act.

As far as the first question is concerned, an analysis of social and economic reality today shows how structures of synthesis reproduce all the defects of the political parties of the past, great or small, making them ineffective or only useful to the restructuring of power.

To the second question, one could reply that it is impossible to say in advance how the conditions leading to insurrection will develop. Any occasion might be the right one, even if it looks like an insignificant experiment. But there is more. To develop a project of insurrectional struggle starting from one specific problem, i.e. a precise manifestation of power to the detriment of a considerable mass of excluded, is more than a simple ‘experiment’. It is insurrection in act, without wanting to exaggerate something that starts off as something small, and will probably remain so. What is important is the method, and anarchists still have a long way to go in that direction, otherwise we will remain unprepared in the case of the many insurrections of whole peoples that have taken place to date and continue to do so.

Basically this book is a contribution to the great problem ‘What is to be done?’.

Catania, 21 November 1998.

# Excluded and Included

The end of ideology has almost arrived, but not quite. No political apparatus could ever do without it altogether. The substantial changes in the productive structure of capital that have occurred globally over the last ten years, have almost emptied the existing ideological cover of any meaning. With this you cannot say that politics, intended as the management and repressive action of the State, has got any closer to people's needs. Vague new arrivals whose ideological cover is still in formation are appearing on the heels of the ghosts of the past. We can only say that, in the present state of affairs, their aim is always to put pressure on irrational instincts, to solicit behaviour disposed to maintaining the order imposed by the ruling class.

What leaps to our attention is the illusion of freedom embalmed in all the logical trappings of the old liberalism hastily dusted to make way for the sinister operation of managing the new markets in Eastern Europe. Liberalism bases itself on a precise discrimination between two categories of person: one who can enjoy not just human and political rights but also practical ones such as the right to life itself, and the others for whom such rights exist in a reduced form and can be suspended or withdrawn at any moment.

Historically there is no need to point out that the champion of political freedom, Locke, owed his fortune to private investment in British companies who operated in the slave trade for nearly a century. The English Revolution, from which the idea of political liberalism came, was considered a major victory over Spain as the Peace Treaty of Utrecht achieved the destruction of the Spanish monopoly of the slave trade and so it began this lucrative business itself on a large scale.

In fact, if we look closely we can see that the new ideological trappings that the academic organisations dealing with such affairs are about to throw over things hastily is a grafting of the old liberal hypocrisy on to a social body that is now extremely fragmented. Only one element of all the old chatter remains: that people are equal in principle alone, in practice they are divided into two categories, those who have rights and those who do not. By rights we mean the ability to access sources of material wealth and create change aimed at reducing discrepancies in income distribution, in other words, hopes for a better future or at least one that is better than the present.

Whether the political movements that are moving towards a phase in global management that could be seen as the participation of lower strata in the living conditions of the upper will reduce the power of States, remains to be seen. The effects of this ideological perspective are already there, helping to create the optimal conditions for the global productive system in a post-industrial perspective.

The main aspect of this process is that only a tiny number of producers will attain humane living conditions, i.e. will perceive any correlation between

In an era that could still be defined industrial, consensus was based on the possibility of participating in the benefits of production. In an era where capital's capacity to change is practically infinite, the capital/State duo will require a language of its own, separate from that of the excluded in order to best achieve its new perspective.

The inaccessibility of the dominant language will become a far more effective means of segregation than the traditional confines of the ghetto. The increasing difficulty in attaining the dominant language will gradually make it become absolutely "other". From that moment it will disappear from the desires of the excluded and remain ignored by them. From that moment on the included will be "other" for the excluded and vice versa.

This process of exclusion is essential to the repressive project. Fundamental concepts of the past, such as solidarity, communism, revolution, anarchy, based their validity on the common recognition of the concept of equality. But for the inhabitants of the castle of Teutonic knights the excluded will not be people, but simply things, objects to be bought or sold in the same way as the slaves were for our predecessors.

We do not feel equality with the dog, because it limits itself to barking, it does not "speak" our language. We can be fond of it, but necessarily feel it to be "other", and we do not spare much thought for its kind, at least not at the level of all dogs, preferring to attach ourselves to the dog that provides us with its obedience, affection, or its fierceness towards our enemies.

A similar process will take place in relation to all those who do not share our language. Here we must not confuse language with "tongue". Our progressive and revolutionary tradition has taught us that all men are equal over and above differences of mother tongue. We are speaking here of a possible repressive development that would deprive the excluded of the very possibility of communicating with the included. By greatly reducing the utility of the written word, and gradually replacing books and newspapers with images, colours and music, for example, the power structure of tomorrow could construct a language aimed at the excluded alone. They, in turn, would be able to create different, even creative, means of linguistic reproduction, but always with their own codes and quite cut out of any contact with the code of the included, therefore from any possibility of understanding the latter's world. And from incomprehension to disinterest and mental closure, it is a short step.

So reformism is in its death throes. It will no longer be possible to make claims, because no one will know what to ask from a world that has ceased to interest us or to tell us anything comprehensible.

Cut off from the language of the included, the excluded will also be cut off from their technology. Perhaps they will live in a better, more desirable world, with less danger of apocalyptic conflicts, and eventually, less economically determined tension. But there will be an increase in irrational tension.

From the most peripheral areas of the planet, where in spite of "real time" the project of exploitation will always meet obstacles of an ethnic or geograph-



for me—is the anarchism that thought it could become the organisational point of reference for the next revolution, that saw itself as a structure of synthesis aimed at generating the multiple forms of human creativity directed at breaking up State structures of consensus and repression. What is dead is the static anarchism of the traditional organisations with quantitative aims, based on claiming better conditions. The idea that social revolution is something that must necessarily result from our struggles has proved to be unfounded. It might, but then again it might not.

Determinism is dead, and the blind law of cause and effect along with it. The revolutionary means we use, including insurrection, do not necessarily lead to social revolution. The causal model so dear to the positivists of the last century does not exist in reality.

And precisely for that reason, the revolution becomes possible.

The reduction of time in data-transmission means an acceleration in programmed decision-making. If this time is reduced to zero (as happens in electronic “real time”), programmed decisions are not only accelerated but are also transformed. They become something different.

By modifying projects, elements of productive investments are also modified, transferring themselves from traditional capital (mainly financial) to the capital of the future (mainly intellectual).

The management of the different is one of the fundamental elements of reality.

By perfecting the relationship between politics and economy, putting an end to the contradictions produced by competition, by organising consensus and, more importantly, by programming all this in a perspective of real time, the power structure cuts off a large part of society: the part of the excluded.

The greatly increased speed of productive operations will more than anything else give rise to a cultural and linguistic modification. Here lies the greatest danger for the ghettoised.

The party is based on the reformist hypothesis. This requires a community of language, if not of interest. That happened with parties and also with trade unions. Community of language translated itself into a fictitious class opposition that was characterised by a request for improvements on the one hand, and resistance to conceding them on the other.

To ask for something requires a language “in common” with whoever has what we are asking for.

Now the global repressive project aims at breaking up this community. Not with the walls of special prisons, ghettos, satellite cities or big industrial centres, but, on the contrary, by decentralising production, improving services, applying ecological principles to production, all with the most absolute segregation of the excluded.

And this segregation will be obtained by progressively depriving them of the language that they possessed in common with the rest of society.

There will be nothing left to ask.

opportunities offered by the State and capital and the possibility of exploiting them. The rest, the vast majority, will have to find a place in separation, in the “dirty” work that old liberals like Mandeville likened to that of slaves. Not “dirty” in the sense of physical brutality, but “dirty” in the true sense of the word, in that it dirties intelligence, brutalising it, lowering it, reducing it to the level of the machine, distorting it from the most characteristic quality of man, unpredictability.

In this context ideological modernisation is moving hand in hand with profound changes in the structures of production. Now, in a coordinated system of real and imagined processes based on flexibility, adaptability and the rejection of an authority no longer interested in efficiency, the old function of the State as the centralising element of management and repression is bound to diminish.

This weakening is in the order of things, it is the spirit of the times, if you like.

Here the question arises: is this weakening a good thing? The answer, at least for anarchists, should be that it is. And it would have been, had it not run into ideas in recent times that we think should be stressed here.

Let’s start with the positive aspects. Any reduction in State power is a positive move that opens up new spaces of freedom, more solid defence movements, an expectation of better times; survival if you like, but also organisational forms of struggle that the great repressive giants were easily able to destroy. It is therefore a positive move to participate in struggles that move towards breaking up States. Unfortunately, national liberation struggles have not always been opportunities to undermine the monolithic nature of power and propose possible lines of social conflict that could indicate various feasible paths in this sphere. This has often been overtaken by a sudden arrival of larger movements, capitalist restructuring in the lead, imperialist interference in the distribution of global power, mechanisms of uneven development, etc.

At the present time, other considerations are being imposed on already existing ones. Not so much to make us see national liberation struggles and all the movements involved in breaking up the centralised States of the past negatively, but to raise the question on grounds that are more suited to the present time.

First of all there are the international measures that balance out the repressive and productive apparatuses of individual States in agreements that provide for the circulation of data upon which all the internal structures of control are based. In the years to come these superstructures will spread to the point of reconstituting world divisions similar to those that we used to see in the past. For all that these new forms will present themselves in quite a different ideological wrapping, they will perform the task of taking the old State power back to the forms that are in the process of disintegrating. It could be argued, and rightly so, that the development of nationalism as an ideological element in some processes of disintegration is not just a stupid tool deliberately put in the field to permit structural changes that would otherwise be impossible.

There can be no doubt that the global productive system cannot tolerate large centralised States today as they are too elephantine in their relations with a capitalism that is forever speeding up its productive processes.

Secondly, the need to adapt the democratic tool of consensus to the changing conditions of production needs to be taken into account. If the latter are producing individuals that are underqualified, rendered unstable not just in their capacity to work but mentally in the widest sense of the term due to precarious wage-earning; if these individuals, as elements of society, family, work, leisure—in other words social elements—are constantly kept in unstable conditions, they cannot relate to a monolithic State bureaucracy that seems more and more obsolete. So, as the cultural instruments that were supposed to transform him from subject into citizen of a democratic State are taken away from the individual, especially through school, the State apparatus has become democratized, beckoning the subject—that so-called citizen of constitutional rights and freedom—to maximum collaboration. On the other hand, a democratic restructuring of modern States would not have been possible without a flattening of the individual, the breaking up of the proletariat's traditional forms of organisation and, mainly, destroying the class unity that once often made itself heard in movements which, even if not exactly revolutionary, were still able to hinder and disrupt the process of capital accumulation.

Finally, it is necessary to consider the fact that these disruptive movements operate at two levels, only the second interesting from the revolutionary point of view. The first level is the official one promoted by the middle classes of the more advanced countries, whose aim is to rebuild the old monolithic State structures on more acceptable bases in relation to capital's new productive processes. And these bases appear to be breaking up in comparison with preceding administrations, because they must necessarily become more shrewd in terms of ideology. This movement's official breakdown of States is planting its roots very deeply, moving away from the regionalist argument that made administrative, and also political in some aspects, decentralisation the cornerstone of a regenerated and more efficient State system. The substantial failure of regionalism in countries like Italy, a good example in this field, must not lead us to believe there has been a turnaround. The ruling classes need to give the dominated the illusion of participation in the management of public affairs. This need is as old as the hills, but in recent decades it has become not just a blatantly and continuously violated facade, but a necessity.

The Italian Leagues, a phenomenon of so much interest today and not only in Italy, must be traced back to the collapse of the monolithic State of the past, and can be seen as heir and ultimate streamlining of the old regionalism. The transition between these two ways of managing public affairs is not continuous however, in the sense that there is a fracture, perhaps not very important from the point of view of those who see States as the enemy to strike down anyway, without being too subtle, but important for anyone trying to understand the composition of the enemy in order to identify its weak points.

deposited from their central position. First, timidly, in the direction of a move from the factory into the whole of the social terrain. Then, more decisively, in the sense of a progressive substitution of the secondary manufacturing sector by the tertiary services one.

Anarchists have also had their illusions and these have also faded. Strictly speaking, although these illusions never concerned the central role of workers, they often saw the world of work as being of fundamental importance, giving precedence to industry over the primary (agricultural) sector. Anarcho-syndicalism fuelled these illusions.

Even in recent times there has been great enthusiasm for the CNT's rise from the ashes, particularly among those who seem to be the most radical trailblazers of the new "roads" of reformist anarchism today.

The main concept of this worker centrality (different from that of the marxists, but less so than is commonly believed), was the shadow of the Party.

For a long time the anarchist movement has acted as an organisation of synthesis, that is, like a party.

Not the whole of the anarchist movement, but certainly its organised forms.

Let us take the Italian FAI (Federazione Anarchica Italiana) for example. It is an organisation of synthesis to this day. It is based on a program, its periodical Congresses are the central focus for its activity, and it looks at reality outside from the point of view of a "connecting" centre, i.e., as being the synthesis between the reality outside the movement (revolutionary reality), and that within the specific anarchist movement.

Some comrades would object that this is a generalisation, of course, but they cannot deny that the mentality behind the relation of synthesis of a specific anarchist organisation concerning the reality beyond the movement, is very close to the "party" mentality.

Good intentions are not enough.

Well, this mentality has diminished. Not only among younger comrades who want an open informal relationship with the revolutionary movement, but, more important, it has diminished in the social reality itself.

If syndicalist struggle, as well as marxist methods and those of the libertarian organisations of synthesis, might have seemed reasonable under industrial conditions of production, today, in a profoundly different post-industrial perspective, the only possible strategy for anarchists is an informal one. By this we mean groups of comrades who come together with precise objectives, on the basis of affinity, and contribute to creating mass structures that set themselves intermediate aims, while creating the minimal conditions for transforming situations of simple riot into those of insurrection.

The party of marxism is dead. That of the anarchists too. When I read criticisms such as those recently made by social ecologists where they speak of the death of anarchism, I realise that it is a question of language as well as the incapacity to examine problems within the anarchist movement, a limitation pointed out by these comrades themselves. What is dead for them—and also

its reformist significance, not because the class struggle is over, but because the conditions of the clash have changed profoundly.

Basically, we are now faced with contradictions that are greater than ever and remain unresolved.

To be schematic, two phases can be identified.

In the industrial period capitalist competition and production based on manufacturing was prevalent. The most significant economic sector was the secondary (manufacturing) one, which used the energy produced as the transformative resource, and financial capital as the strategic one. The technology of this period was for the greater part mechanical and the most prominent producer was the worker. The methodology applied was empirical, based on experimentation, while the organisation of the productive process as a whole was based on limitless growth.

In the post-industrial period, which we are approaching but have not fully entered, the State prevails over capitalist competition and imposes its methods of maintaining consensus and production aimed at promoting social peace. The elaboration of data and the modification of services will replace the technical mode of manufacturing. The predominant economic sectors have become the tertiary (services), the quaternary (specialised finance) and the quinary (research, leisure, education, public administration). The principal transformational resource is information composed of a complex system of data transmission, while the strategic resource is provided by the knowledge that is slowly taking the place of financial capital. Technology is abandoning its mechanical component and focussing on the intellectual one. The typical requisite employed by this new technology is no longer the worker but the technician, the professional, the scientist. The method used in the project depends on theory, not experimentation as in the past, whereas the organisation of the productive process is based on the systematization of theoretical knowledge.

Looking back to the productive industrial phase, Marxism considered that the working class's contribution was fundamental to the revolutionary solving of social contradictions. As a result the strategies of the workers' movement were greatly conditioned by the aim of seizing power.

Hegelian mystification, nourished by Marx, lay at the heart of this reasoning: that the dialectical opposition between proletariat and bourgeoisie could be exacerbated by reinforcing the proletariat indirectly through reinforcing capital and the State. So each victory by the repression was seen as the anteroom of the future victory of the proletariat. Everything was set within a progressive delusion—typical of the enlightenment—of it being possible to forge the “spirit” in a world of matter.

With a few undeniably interesting modifications, this old conception of the class struggle still persists today in some of the nightmarish aspirations that occasionally spring up from the old projects of glory and conquest. This purely imaginary conception has never been seriously analysed.

There is only the fairly concordant acceptance that the workers have been

And this fracture is located precisely in the ideological graft attached to the simple and obvious fact that the upper classes of the richest regions would stand to gain economically by managing their own miniature State. On the other hand, this ideological graft has, as always, proved essential for involving the people on an emotional level, releasing the frustrations of the masses—who in any case are far from the wellbeing of the narrow ruling classes—based on the classic symbols of diversity: the black person, the jew, the immigrant, the thief, the violent, or building nationalistic myths bordering on the ridiculous at times. But the ridiculous, far from being a negative element in these things, in the general absence of critical illumination, becomes a cohesive and strong connective tissue within the masses.

This level of disaggregation, controlled and managed by the ruling classes who have every interest in building privileged zones for themselves within their Teutonic castles, cling to administering their privileged status as included, keeping a distance and managing, mainly through the tool of ignorance, the constant pressure of the excluded that is manifesting itself in Europe today and could take global dimensions in the future.

The breaking up of the Soviet empire has resulted in a massive thrust towards this kind of particularism, accentuated in regions where ethnic specificity had not been eliminated in forty years of forced communality. And it is this particularity that has nearly always taken over the developing and adapting of the conditions of the class conflict in course, the ideological element, until it reached the exacerbation of ferocity and brutality that can be seen in former Yugoslavia. Despite the vast variety of behaviour in individual States, a clear enough trend can be seen in the hypothesis of a piloted breakdown or smooth transition to another kind of public management. The recipe for this step is complex and in any case, without getting too specific, contains both an administrative and an ideological element. These two elements interpenetrate and are mutually supportive, generating from each other, and neither the one nor the other excludes recourse to instruments of repression and staging of power that could be seen as a return to the old ways. Political pragmatism will never retreat before such petty things.

But there is another level of disaggregation, that which penetrates people's minds, operates at an individual level and which the State, unable to offer the behaviour patterns and values of the past, cannot avoid dealing with. The only demarcation capable of opposing itself to this failure of the State is cultural segregation, far more rigid and effective than the physical one that we saw in the past. An unprecedented apartheid, insurmountable because it is based on the absence of desire, because you cannot desire what you do not know. But for now, and it is not foreseeable until this disruption is actually taking place, runs parallel to the lack of ideological interconnection and is positive for Eastern European countries and bad for the so-called anti-communist Western bloc. The function that proletarian internationalism had in the USSR or China acted as a counterbalance to the fear of communism, fuelled by the bosses'

interests, in the West. With all that out of the way, grand illusions were replaced by small ones, ghosts on a small scale that were promptly set to work in some cases, as the various nationalisms that are operating on the European scene, and in some other cases are still under construction.

Some reflection on the importance of elements within this disruptive erosion from below, now operating not only in advanced capitalist States, is important. Let's start with the decline of the idea of progress. According to liberal babble this concept, originating from the Enlightenment, was supposed to establish the constitutional State, then the democratic one, allowing everyone to contribute to the improvement of public affairs. But these illusions of progress, to use the title of a famous book by Sorel, served only to bolster hopes of improvement, whether reformist in the short-term, or long-term revolutionary ones.

Locked in the same fantasy, revolutionaries and reformist politicians shared the expectation of a better future, guaranteed by the objective progression of history. This idea, far from being a vacuous exercise of layabout spirits, fed millions of people with dreams of universal abundance, of taking everything, putting utopia and managerial pragmatism in the same basket. This is now over, and has added piece by piece to the breakdown in progress.

The Marxist and liberal ideologies were identical on this point. Both promised abundance and work for all, popular consumerism, although differentiated, and exponential economic growth. Then it was realized that the demand could not sustain itself indefinitely and that consumers were divided into two groups, one with access to consumerism and one with a progressive reduction in needs to the point of survival. This, at the global level, reaches hallucinatory clarity under conditions in underdeveloped countries where people are dying of hunger, disease, medieval pestilence, all in contrast with the privileged living conditions of the ruling class. And these differences are not only far away in space, surrounded by the desert or the swamps, but exist side by side in the great metropoli, which represent perhaps the clearest evidence of the failure of the progressive ideology.

In the evolution of social contradictions over the past few years, certain tendencies have become so pronounced that they can now be considered real changes.

The structure of power has moved from straightforward arbitrary rule to a relationship based on adjustment and compromise. This has led to a considerable increase in demand for services compared to traditional demands such as durable consumer goods. The results have been an increase in the aspects of production based on information technology, the robotisation of the productive sector, and the pre-dominance of the services sector (commerce, tourism, transport, credit, insurance, public administration, etc.) over industry and agriculture.

This does not mean that the industrial sector has disappeared or become insignificant, only that it will employ fewer and fewer workers while levels of production remain the same, or even improve. The same is true of agricul-

The computerised society of tomorrow could even have clean seas and an "almost" perfect safeguarding of the limited resources of the environment, but it will be a jungle of prohibitions and rules, of nightmare in the form of deep personal decisions about participating in the common good. Deprived of a language of common reference, the ghettoised will no longer be able to read between the lines of the messages of power, and will end up having no other outlet than spontaneous riot, irrational and destructive, an end in itself.

The collaboration of those members of the included, disgusted with the artificial freedom of capital, who become revolutionary carriers of an albeit small part of this technology which they have managed to snatch from capital, will not be enough to build a bridge or supply a language on which to base knowledge and accurate counter-information.

The organised work of future insurrections must solve this problem, must build—perhaps starting from scratch—the basic terms of a communication that is about to be closed off; and which, precisely in the moment of closure, could give life, through spontaneous and uncontrolled reactions, to such manifestations of violence as to make past experiences pale into insignificance.

One should not see the new ghetto as the shanty town of the past, a patchwork of refuse forced on to suffering and deprivation. The new ghetto, codified by the rules of the new language, will be the passive beneficiary of the technology of the future. It will also be allowed to possess the rudimentary manual skills required to permit the functioning of objects which, rather than satisfy needs, are in themselves a colossal need.

These skills will be quite sufficient for the impoverished quality of life in the ghetto.

It will even be possible to produce objects of considerable complexity at a reasonable cost, and advertise them with that aura of exclusiveness that traps the purchaser, now a prey to capital's projects. Moreover, with the new productive conditions we will no longer have repetitions of the same objects in series, or changes and development in technology only with great difficulty and cost. Instead there will be flexible, articulated processes that are interchangeable. It will be possible to apply the new forms of control at a low cost, to influence demand by guiding it and thereby create the essential conditions for the production of social peace.

Such an apparent simplification of life, for both the included and the excluded, such technological "freedom", has led sociologists and economists—like the good people they have always been—to go wild and sketch the outlines of an interclassist society capable of living "well" without re-awakening the monsters of the class struggle, communism or anarchy.

The decline of interest in the unions and the absence of any of the reformist character they might have had in the past—now mere transmission belts for the orders of the bosses—has come to be seen as proof of the end of the class struggle and the advent of the post-industrial society. This does not make sense for a number of reasons that we shall see further on. Trade unionism has lost

obtain considerable modifications in production with only modest injections of capital and makes hitherto unseen changes to products possible. This opens up undreamed horizons of “freedom” to the middle classes, the productive cadres, and within the golden isolation of the managerial classes. But this is rather like the freedom of the castle for the Teutonic knights of the Nazi kind. Surrounded by the walls of the mansion, armed to the teeth, only the peace of the graveyard reigns within.

None of the makers of the ideologies of post-industrial capitalism have asked themselves what must be done about the danger that will come from the other side of the walls.

The riots of the future will be ever more bloody and terrible. Even more so when we know how to transform them into mass insurrections.

It will not be unemployment as such to negatively define those excluded from the castle of Teutonic knights, but mainly the lack of real access to information.

The new model of production will necessarily reduce the availability of information. This is only partly due to the computerisation of society. It is one of the basic conditions of the new dominion and as such has been developing for at least twenty years, finding its climax in a mass schooling that is already devoid of any concrete operative content.

Just as the advent of machinery led to a reduction in the capacity for self-determination during the industrial revolution by trooping the mass of workers into factories, destroying peasant culture and giving capital a workforce who were practically incapable of “understanding” the contents of the new mechanised world that was beginning to loom up. So now the computer revolution, grafted to the State’s process of adjusting capitalist contradictions, is about to deliver the factory proletariat into the hands of a new kind of machinery armed with a language that is only comprehensible to a privileged few. The rest will be chased back and forced into the ghetto.

The old knowledge, even that filtered down from the intellectuals through the deforming mirror of ideology, will be coded in a machine language and made compatible with the new requirements. This will be one of the historic occasions for discovering, among other things, the scarcity of any real content in the ideological gibberish that has been administered to us over the past two centuries.

Capital will tend to abandon everything that is not immediately translatable into this new generalised language. Traditional educative processes will be devalued and will diminish in content, unveiling their real (and selective) substance as merchandise.

In the place of language new behavioural canons will be supplied, formed from fairly precise rules, and mainly developed from the old processes of democratisation and assembly, which capital has learned to control perfectly. This will be doubly useful as it will also give the excluded the impression that they are “participating” in public affairs.

ture, which will be greatly affected by the process of industrialisation, and distinguishable from industry in statistical rather than social terms.

This situation is developing more as a “transition”, not something cut and dried, but a trend. There is no distinct separation between the industrial and post-industrial periods. The phase we are passing through is clearly that of eclipsing the obsolete institutions that are being restructured; but it has not yet reached the closure of all factories and the establishment of a reign of computerised production.

The tendency to break up units of production and the demand for small self-exploiting nuclei within a centralised productive project will predominate in the next few years. But in the industrial sector this will be accompanied by slow adjustments using traditional means expedient to the cautious strategies of capital.

This discourse relates more to the British and Italian situations, still far behind their Japanese and American models.

Torn from the factories in a slow and perhaps irreversible process, yesterday’s workers are being thrown into a highly competitive environment. The aim is to increase productive capacity, the only consumable product according to the computerised logic of the centres of production. The atomised (and even more deadly) conflicts within capital itself will erase the alternative, revolutionary struggle, with the intention of exacerbating class differences and rendering them unbridgeable.

The most important gains for the inhabitants of the productive “islands”, their seemingly greater “freedom”, the flexible working hours, the qualitative changes (always within the competitive logic of the market as directed by the order-giving centres) reinforce the belief that they have reached the promised land: the reign of happiness and well-being. Ever increased profits and ever more exacerbated “creativity”.

These islands of death are surrounded by ideological and physical barriers, to force those who have no place on them back into a tempestuous sea where no one survives.

So the problem revealing itself is precisely that of the excluded.

The first are those who will remain marginalised. Expelled from the productive process and penalised for their incapacity to insert themselves into the new competitive logic of capital, they are often not prepared to accept the minimum levels of survival assigned to them by State assistance (increasingly seen as a relic of the past in a situation that tends to extol the virtues of the “self-made man”). These will not just be the social strata condemned to this role through their ethnic origin—today, for example, the West Indians in British society, catalysts of the recent riots in that country—but with the development of the social change we are talking about, social strata which in the past were lulled by secure salaries and now find themselves in a situation of rapid and radical change, will also be among them. Even the residual supports that these social strata benefit from (early pensions, unemployment benefit, various kinds

of social security, etc.) will not make them accept a situation of growing discrimination. And let us not forget that the degree of consumerism of these expelled social strata cannot be compared to that of the ethnic groups who have never been brought into the sphere of salaried security. This will surely lead to explosions of “social ill-being” of a different kind, and it will be up to revolutionaries to unite these with the more elementary outbreaks of rebellion.

Then there are the included, those who will remain suffocating on the islands of privilege. Here the argument threatens to become more complicated and can only be clearly laid out if one is prepared to give credit to man and his real need for freedom. Almost certainly those who turn back from this sector will be amongst the most merciless executants of the attack on capital in its new form. We are moving towards a period of bloody clashes and very harsh repression. Social peace, dreamt of on one side and feared by the other, remains the most inaccessible myth of this new capitalist utopia, heir to the “pacific” logic of liberalism which dusted the drawing room while butchering in the kitchen, giving welfare at home and massacring in the colonies.

The new opportunities for small, miserable, loathsome daily liberties will be paid for by profound, cruel and systematic discrimination against vast social strata. Sooner or later this will lead to the growth of a consciousness of exploitation inside the privileged strata, which cannot fail to cause rebellions, even if only limited to the best among them. Finally, it should be said that there is no longer a strong ideological support for the new capitalist perspective such as that which existed in the past, capable of giving support to the exploiters and, more important still, to the intermediate layers of cadres. Wellbeing for the sake of it is not enough, especially for the many groups of people who, in the more or less recent past, have experienced or simply read about liberatory utopias, revolutionary dreams and attempts, however limited, at insurrectional projects.

The latter will lose no time in reaching the others. Not all the included will live blissfully in the artificial happiness of capital. Many of them will realise that the misery of one part of society poisons the appearance of wellbeing of the rest, and turns freedom (behind the barbed wire fences) into a virtual prison.

Over the past few years the industrial project has also been modified by the fusion of State controls and methods linked with the political interest in controlling consensus.

Looking at things from the technical side, one can see how the organisation of production is being transformed. Production no longer has to take place in one single location, (the factory), but is more and more spread over a whole territory, even at considerable distances. This allows industrial projects to develop that take account of a better, more balanced distribution of productive centres within a territory, eradicating some of the aspects of social disorder that have existed in the past such as ghetto areas and industrial super-concentrations, areas of high pollution and systematic destruction of the eco-systems. Capital is now looking forward to an ecological future, embracing the great hotchpotch of

environmentalists and championing the protection of natural resources, thereby making the construction of cities of the future with a “human face”, socialist or not, seem possible.

The real motivation driving the capitalist project towards distant lands resembling the utopias of yesteryear, is very simple and in no way philanthropic: it is the need to reduce class discontent to a minimum, smoothing the edges of any effective confrontation through a sugar-coated progressive development based on a blind faith in the technology of the future.

It is obvious that the most attractive proposals will be made to the included, to try as far as possible to avoid defections, which will be the real thorn in the side of tomorrow’s capitalists. The individual subjects who turn their goals in a revolutionary direction, if they come from within the sphere of the production process, will have real weapons to put at the disposal of the revolution against the rule of exploitation.

So far the utopian hope of governing the world through “good” technology has shown itself to be impossible, because it has never taken into account the problem of the physical dimension to be assigned to the ghetto of the excluded. They could be recycled into the garden-project in an ungenerous mixture of happiness and sacrifice, but only up to a point.

Tension and repeated explosions of rage will put the fanciful utopia of the exploiters in serious difficulty.

It has long been evident. Competition and monopolism were threatening to draw the productive structures into a series of recurrent “crises”. Crises of production in most cases. For the old capitalist mentality it was essential to achieve so-called “economies of scale”, and this was only possible by working with ever greater volumes of production in order to spread fixed costs as far as possible. This led to a standardisation of production: the accumulation of productive units in particular locations, distributed haphazardly with a colonising logic (for example the classical Sicilian “cathedrals in the desert”: isolated industrial areas, petrol refineries, etc. that were to serve as points of aggregation); the uniformity of products; the division of capital and labour, etc.

The first adjustments to this came about through massive State intervention. The State’s presence has opened up various opportunities. It is no longer a passive spectator, simply capital’s “cashier”, but has become an active operator, “banker” and entrepreneur.

In essence, these adjustments have meant the diminution of use value, and an increase in the production of exchange value in the interests of maintaining social peace.

In bringing to an end its most competitive period, capital has found a partial solution to its problems. The State has lent a hand with the aim of completely transforming economic production into the production of social peace. This utopian project is clearly unreachable. Sooner or later the machine will shatter.

The new productive process—which has often been defined as post-industrial—makes low production costs possible even for small quantities of goods. It can