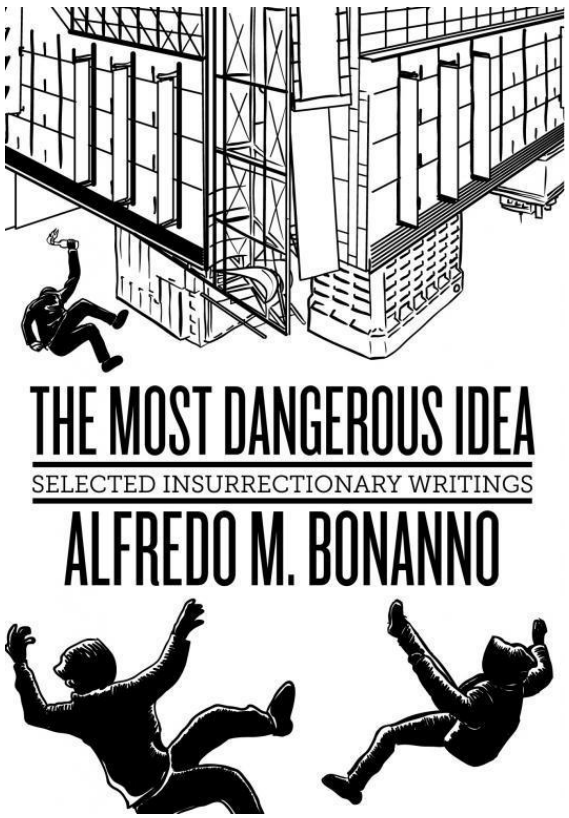
The Most Dangerous Idea

Selected Insurrectionary Writings

Alfredo M. Bonanno



2014

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There can be little doubt left anywhere on the planet that a fundamental change is taking place in the organisation of production. This change is most obvious and most felt in the centres of advanced capitalism, but the logic of information technology and decentralised production is now reaching what were once remote peripheral areas, drawing them into an artificial communitarianism whose only real common element is exploitation.

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Up until now, when anarchists have had need of some theoretical content in their publications, they have either resorted to personal opinion, or given a summary of some of the Marxist analyses, critically, but often underlining that there are some points in Marxism that are relevant to anarchist ideas. This gives a "serious" content to a periodical, shows that we are not against theoretical discussions, but leaves the field for anarchist action barren. Without analysis, even at the most basic, rudimentary level, we cannot hope to be in touch with reality. Intuition is not enough. We cannot hope to act, pushing contradictions towards a revolutionary outlet, by simply responding to events as they arise, no matter how violent these events may be.

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From Riot to Insurrection

Analysis for an anarchist perspective against post-industrial capitalism

Spoken contribution to anarchist conference held in Milan on October 13 1985, on the theme

"Anarchism and The Insurrectional Project"

Translated by Jean Weir

Introduction

There can be little doubt left anywhere on the planet that a fundamental change is taking place in the organisation of production. This change is most obvious and most felt in the centres of advanced capitalism, but the logic of information technology and decentralised production is now reaching what were once remote peripheral areas, drawing them into an artificial communitarianism whose only real common element is exploitation.

In the western world the traditional worker, cornerstone of the authoritarian revolutionary thesis and still a principle element in many anarchist ones, is being tossed out of the grey graveyards of docks, factories and mines, into the coloured graveyards of home-videos, brightly lit job-centres, community centres, multi-ethnic creches, etc., in the muraled ghettos.

As unemployment is coming to be accepted as a perspective of non-employment, capital continues to refine its instruments and direct investment to areas more befitting to its perennial need for expansion. Production of consumer goods is now realised by an intercontinental team of robots, small self-exploiting industries, and domestic labour, in many cases that of children.

The trade unions are at an ebb, and the parties of the left are creeping further to the right as areas for wage claims and social reform are disappearing from the electoral map. What is emerging instead are wide areas of progressive "democratic dissent" in political, social, and religious terms: pacifism, ecologism, vegetarianism, mysticism, etc. This dissenting consensus sees its most extreme expression in the proposals of delegitimisation and deregulation by a privileged intellectual strata that reasons exclusively in terms of its own rights.

An ideal society, it might seem, from capital's point of view, with social peace as one of its prime objectives today; or so it would be, this "self-managed" capitalist

utopia, were it not for the threat coming from outside the landscaped garden. From the ghetto areas, no longer confined to the Brixton, Toxteth model, but which take many forms: the mining village of the north, the gigantic, gloomy labyrinths of council estates in urban complexes, many of them already no-go areas to police and other forces of repression, and other ever widening areas which until recently housed secure well-paid skilled and white collar workers, are on their way to becoming new ghettos. The ghettos of the future, however, will not necessarily be geographically circumscribed, as the hotbeds of unrest are farmed out to bleak and manageable dimensions, but will be culturally defined, through their lack of means of communication with the rest of capitalist society.

The presence of these ever widening ghettos and the message that is crying out from them is the main flaw in the new capitalist perspective. There are no mediators. There is no space for the reformist politicians of the past, just as there is none for the essentially reformist revolutionaries of the old workerist structures, real or imaginary. The cry is a violent one that asks for nothing. The mini riots or explosions that are now common occurrences, especially in this country, do not have rational demands to make. They are not the means to an end like the bread riots of the past. They have become something in themselves, an irrational thrusting out, often striking easily identifiable targets of repression (police stations, vehicles, schools, government offices, etc.), but not necessarily so. Violence in the football stadiums cannot be excluded from this logic.

Anarchists, since the first major riots—Bristol, Brixton, Toxteth, Broadwater Farm—have seen these events in a positive light, often joining in and contributing a number of extra bricks in the direction of police lines. Anarchist journals exalt these moments of mass insurgence, yet at the same time (the same papers) provide organisational proposals which, if they might have been valid at the beginning of the century or in the 'thirties, certainly bear no resemblance to the needs of the present day. The best the most updated ones can offer, using the riots as their point of reference, is to create a specific movement of anarchists with the aim of instilling some revolutionary morality into these patently amoral events. Once again the poverty of our analytical capacity comes to bear.

Up until now, when anarchists have had need of some theoretical content in their publications, they have either resorted to personal opinion, or given a summary of some of the Marxist analyses, critically, but often underlining that there are some points in Marxism that are relevant to anarchist ideas. This gives a "serious" content to a periodical, shows that we are not against theoretical discussions, but leaves the field for anarchist action barren. Without analysis, even at the most basic, rudimentary level, we cannot hope to be in touch with reality. Intuition is not enough. We cannot hope to act, pushing contradictions towards a revolutionary outlet, by simply responding to events as they arise, no matter how violent these events may be.

The Marxist analyses are now nothing but obsolete relics of the dark ages of industrialism. What must be done is to develop our own theses, using as a foundation

the wealth of our anarchist methodological heritage. The great strength of anarchism is the fact that it does not rely on one fundamental analysis anchored in time. The living part of anarchism is as alive today as it was four decades ago, or a century ago. What we need to do is to develop instruments that take what is relevant from the past, uniting it with what is required to make it relevant to the present. This can only be done if we have a clear idea of what this reality is. Not what we would like it to be, but what it is, of what is emerging as the real battleground of exploitation today, for battleground it is, even though the dead and wounded have a different aspect to those of yesterday, and the just response of the exploited takes new, less explicit forms. The need to act gets pressing as the ghettos become encapsulated and segregated from the mainstream language and communication of the privileged.

The analysis we are presenting here opens a door in that direction, gives a glimpse of what is happening around and stimulous to develop further investigation and seek to formulate new forms of anarchist intervention that relate to this reality, trying to push it towards our goal of social revolution. The first text was originally written and presented as the theme of an anarchist conference in Milan in October 1985, held by the comrades of the Italian anarchist bimonthly Anarchismo. The second part is a spoken contribution by the same comrade. This explains the concise nature of the text. The author has in fact dedicated many more pages to the insurrectional thesis, work that he has developed through his active involvement in struggles in Italy over the past two decades.

Jean Weir

For an analysis of a period of change

From post-industrial illusions to post-revolutionary ones

Changes in society

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

The structure of domination has shifted 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 such traditional demands as durable consumer goods. The results have been an increase in those aspects of production based on information technology, the robotisation of the productive sector, and the preeminence 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 agriculture, 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 that is cut and dried, but as a trend. There is no distinct separation between the industrial and post-industrial periods. The phase we are passing through is clearly one of surpassing 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 within the industrial sector this will be accompanied by such slow adjustments, using traditional means, as are expedient to the cautious strategies of capital.

This argument relates more to the British and Italian situations which remain far behind their Japanese and American models.

Islands of lost men

Torn from the factories in a slow and perhaps irreversible process, yesterday's workers are being thrown into a highly competitive atmosphere. 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 extinguish 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 so-called 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.

Two reservoirs of the revolution

The excluded and the included.

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 participate. 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 situated if one is prepared to give credit to man and his real need for freedom. Almost certainly it is the "homecomers" from this sector who will be among the most merciless executants of the attack on capital in its new form. We are going 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 it butchered 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 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 (within the barbed wire fences) into a virtual prison.

State precautions

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, opening its arms to the great hotchpotch of environmentalists and becoming a champion of the safeguarding of natural resources, so 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 off any effective confrontation through a sugarcoated progressive development based on 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, if they come from within the sphere of the production process, who turn their goals in a revolutionary direction, 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 into serious difficulty.

The end of irrational competition

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 larger volumes of production in order to spread the 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 post-industrial—makes low production costs possible even for small quantities of goods; can obtain considerable modifications in production with only modest capital injections; makes hitherto unseen changes to products possible. This opens up undreamt of horizons of "freedom" to the middle classes, to the productive cadres, and within the golden isolation of the managerial classes. But this is rather like the freedom of the castle for those Teutonic knights of the Nazi kind. Encircled by the mansion walls, armed to the teeth, only the peace of the graveyard reigns within.

None of the makers of the ideologies of postindustrial capitalism have asked themselves what to do about the danger that will come from the other side of the walls.

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

Consciousness and ghettoisation

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

The new model of production will of necessity 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 domination 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 coming of machines caused a reduction in the capacity for self-determination during the industrial revolution, trooping the mass of workers into factories, destroying peasant culture and giving capital a work force 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 process of adjustment of capitalist contradictions by the State, is about to deliver the factory proletariat into the hands of a new kind of machinery that is armed with a language that will be comprehensible to only a privileged few. The remainder will be chased back and obliged to share the sort of the ghetto. The old knowledge, even that filtered from the intellectuals through the deforming mirror of ideology, will be coded in a machine language and rendered compatible with the new needs. This will be one of the historic occasions for discovering, among other things, the scarcity of real content in the ideological gibberish that has been administered to us over the past two centuries.

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

In the place of language new canons of behaviour 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.

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.

Generalised impoverishment

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 exclusivness 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 change and development in technology only with considerable difficulty and cost. Instead there will be flexible, articulated processes that are interchangeable. It will be possible to put the new forms of control to use at low cost, to influence demand by guiding it and thus create the essential conditions for the production of social peace.

Such apparent simplification of life, both for included and excluded, such technological "freedom" has led sociologists and economists—as the good people they have

always been—to let go 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 removal of any reformist significance they might have had in the past—having become mere transmission belts for the bosses' orders—has come to be seen as the proof of the end of the class struggle and the coming of the post-industrial society. This does not make sense for a variety of reasons that we shall see further on. Trade unionism of any kind has lost its reformist significance, not because the class struggle is over, but because the conditions of the clash have changed profoundly.

Basically, we are faced with the continuation of contradictions which are greater than ever and remain unresolved.

Two phases

To be schematic, two phases can be identified. In the industrial period capitalist competition and production based on manufacturing, prevailed. The most significant economic sector was the secondary one (manufacturing), which used the energy produced as the transformative resource, and financial capital as the strategic resource. The technology of this period was essentially mechanical and the producer who stood out most was the worker. The methodology used in the projects was empirical, based on experiment, while the organisation of the productive process as a whole was based on unlimited growth.

In the post-industrial period that we are approaching, but have not completely entered, the State prevails over capitalist competition and imposes its systems of maintaining consensus and production, with the essential aim of promoting social peace. The elaboration of data and the transformation of services will take the place of the technical mode of manufacturing. The predominant economic sectors become the tertiary (services), the quaternary (specialised finance), the quinary (research, leisure, edu cation, public administration). The main transformative resource is information, which is composed of a complex system of transmission of data, 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 itself on its intellectual one. The typical element employed by this new technology is no longer the worker but the technician, the professional, the scientist. The method used in the project is based on abstract theory, not experiment as it once was, while the organisation of the productive process is based on the coding of theoretical knowledge.

The sunset of the worker's leading role

Directing our attention to the productive industrial phase, marxism considered the contribution of the working class to be fundamental to the revolutionary solution of

social contradictions. This resulted in the strategies of the workers' movement being greatly conditioned by the objective of conquering power.

Hegelian ambiguity, 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 the reinforcement of capital and the State. So each victory by repression was seen as the antichamber of the future victory of the proletariat. The whole was set in a progressive vision—typically of the enlightenment—of the possibility of building the "spirit" in a world of matter.

With a few undoubtedly interesting modifications, this old conception of the class struggle still persists today, at least in some of the nightmarish dreams that arise occasionally from the old projects of glory and conquest. A serious analysis has never been made of this purely imaginary conception.

There is only more or less unanimous agreement that workers have been displaced from their central position. First, timidly, in the sense of a move out of the factory into the whole social terrain. Then, more decisively, in the sense of a progressive substitution of the secondary manufacturing sector by the tertiary services sector.

The sunset of some of the anarchists' illusions

Anarchists have also had illusions and these have also faded. Strictly speaking, while these illusions were never about 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. It was anarcho-syndicalism that fueled these illusions.

Even in recent times there has been much enthusiasm for the CNT's rise from the ashes, particularly from those who seem to be the most radical entrepre neurs 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. To this day it is an organisation of synthesis. It is based on a program, its periodical Congresses are the central focus for its activity, and it looks to 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.

Of course, some comrades would object that these remarks are too general, but they cannot deny that the mentality that sustains the relation of synthesis that a specific anarchist organisation establishes with the reality outside the movement, is one that is very close to the "party" mentality.

Good intentions are not enough.

Well, this mentality has faded. Not only among younger comrades who want an open and informal relationship with the revolutionary movement, but, more important, it

has faded in social reality itself. If industrial conditions of production made the syndicalist struggle reasonable, as it did the marxist methods and those of the libertarian organisations of synthesis, today, in a post-industrial perspective, in a reality that has changed profoundly, 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 constructing 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 made recently by the social ecologists who speak of the death of anarchism, I realise it is a question of language, as well as a lack of ability to examine problems inside the anarchist movement; a limitation, moreover, that is pointed out by these comrades themselves. What is dead for them—and also for me—is the anarchism that thought it could be 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, based on claiming better conditions, and having quantitative goals. The idea that social revolu tion 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 with it. The revolutionary means we employ, including insurrection, do not necessarily lead to social revolution. The casual model so dear to the positivists of the last century does not in reality exist.

The revolution becomes possible precisely for that reason.

Speed and multiplicity

The reduction of time in data-transmission means the acceleration of 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.

End of reformism, end of the party

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 is aimed at breaking up this community. Not with the walls of special prisons, ghettoes, 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.

The dumb excluded

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 men, 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 towards 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 world of the latter. And it is a short step from incomprehension to disinterest and mental closure.

Reformism is therefore in its death throes. It will no longer be possible to make claims, because no one will know what to ask for 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 new technology. Perhaps they will live in a better, more desirable world, with less danger of apocalyptic conflicts, and eventually, less economically caused 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 geographical 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.

For example in Britain, 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 regularly break out there 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."

From irrational riot to conscious insurrection

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.

A great deal of material is now available on techniques of conscious insurrection—to which I myself have made a contribution—from which comrades may realise the superficiality and inconclusiveness of certain preconceived ideas that tend to confuse instead of clarify.

Briefly, we reaffirm that the insurrectionary method can only be applied by informal anarchist organisations. These must be capable of establishing, and participating in the functioning of, base structures (mass organisms) whose clear aim is to attack and destroy the objectives set by power, by applying the principles of self-management, permanent struggle and direct action.

Anarchism and the Insurrectional Project

presentation to an anarchist conference in Milan, October 13 1985

In organising a conference like this there's a strange contradiction between its formal aspect—such a beautiful hall (though that's a matter of taste), finding ourselves like this, with me up here and so many comrades down there, some I know well, others less so—and the substantial aspect of discussing a problem, or rather a project, that foresees the destruction of all this. It's like someone wanting to do two things at once.

This is the contradiction of life itself. We are obliged to use the instruments of the ruling class for a project that is subversive and destructive. We are facing a real situation that is quite terrible, and in our heads we have a project of dreams.

Anarchists have many projects. They are usually very creative, but at the centre of this creativity lies a destructive project that isn't just a dream, a nightmarish dream, but is something based upon, and verified in, the social process around us.

In reality we must presume that this society, lacerated and divided by oppositions and contradictions, is moving, if not exactly towards one final destructive explosion, at least towards a series of small destructive eruptions.

In his nightmares this is what the man in the street imagines insurrection to be. People armed, cars burned, buildings destroyed, babies crying, mothers looking for lost children. The great problem is that on this subject the thinking of many anarchists is also not very clear. I have often spoken to comrades about the problems of insurrectional and revolutionary struggle, and I realise that the same models exist in their minds. What is often visualised are the barricades of the eighteenth century, the Paris Commune, or scenes from the French Revolution.

Certainly, insurrection involves this, but not this alone. The insurrectional and revolutionary process is this but also something more. We are here today precisely to try to understand this a little better. Let's leave the external aspects of the problem, look one another in the eye, and try thinking about this for a few minutes. Let us get rid of the idea of insurrection as barricades and instead see in what way the instrument "insurrection" can be observed in reality today, that is, in a reality which is undergoing a rapid and profound transformation.

Today we are not in 1871, nor 1830, nor '48. Nor are we at the end of the eighteenth century. We are in a situation where industrial production is in transformation, a situation usually described by a phrase, which for convenience we can also use, a "post-industrial" situation.

Some comrades who have reached this analysis, and have thought about the profound changes taking place in the productive situation today, have reached the conclusion that certain old revolutionary models are no longer valid, and that it is necessary to find new ways with which to not only replace these models, but to substantially deny them, and they are proposing new forms of intervention.

Put this way, things seem more logical, fascinating in fact. Why should one endorse a cheque that expired 100 years ago? Who would ever think that the models of revolutionary intervention of 150 or even 200 years ago, could still be valid? Of course we are all easily impressed by new roads and new ways of intervening in reality, by creativity and by the new directions that the objective situation today puts at our disposal. But wait a moment.

We don't intend to use literary quotations here. But someone once said that the capacity of the revolutionary was to grasp as much of the future as possible with what still exists from the past. To combine the knife of our ancestors with the computer of the future. How does this come about?

Not because we are nostalgic for a world where man went to attack his enemy with a knife between his teeth, but quite the contrary, because we consider the revolutionary instruments of the past to be still valid today. Not because of any decision by a minority who takes them up and establishes this validity demagogically without caring what people might think; but because the capacity of the people to find simple means readily at hand, to support any explosion of reaction to repression, represents the traditional strength of every popular uprising.

Let's try to take things in order. There was always something that did not work right with the capitalist project. All those who have ever had anything to do with economic or political analysis have been forced to admit this. Capital's utopia contains something technically mistaken, that is, it wants to do three things that contradict one another: to assure the wellbeing of a minority, exploit the majority to the limits of survival, and prevent insurgence by the latter in the name of their rights.

Throughout the history of capitalism various solutions have been found, but there have been critical moments when capital has been obliged to find other solutions. The American crisis between the two wars, to give a fairly recent example: a great crisis of capitalist overproduction, a tragic moment linked to other marginal problems that capital had to face. How did it manage to solve the problem? By entering the phase of mass consumerism, in other words by proposing a project of integration and participation that led—after the experience of the second world war—to an extension of consumerism and thus to an increase in production.

But why did that crisis raise such serious problems for capital? Because until recently capital could not bring about production without recourse to massive investment. Let us underline the word "until recently," when capital had to introduce what are known as economies of scale, and invest considerable amounts of financial capital in order to realise necessary changes in production. If a new type of domestic appliance or a new model of car was required, investment was in the order of hundreds of millions.

This situation confronted capital with the spectre of overproduction and with the need to co-opt more and more of the popular strata into massive acquisition. Anyone can see that this could not go on for ever, for sooner or later the game had to end in social violence. In fact the myriad of interventions by capital and State in their attempts to co-opt turned out to be short-lived. Many will remember how ten or fifteen years ago the economists called for economic planning and the possibility of finding work for everyone. That all went up in smoke. The fact is that they were then—note the past tense—moving towards situations of increasing tension. The next stage proposed by capital was to have State structures intervene in capitalist management, that is, to transform the State from simple armed custodian of capital's interests into a productive element within capitalism itself. In other words from cashier to banker. In this way, a considerable transformation took place, because the contradictions of economic competition that were beginning to show themselves to be fatal could be overcome by the introduction of consumerism into the strata of the proletariat.

Today we are faced with a different situation, and I ask you to reflect on the importance of this, comrades, because it is precisely the new perspective that is now opening up in the face of repression and capital's new techniques for maintaining consensus, that makes a new revolutionary project possible.

What has changed? What is it that characterises post industrial reality?

What I am about to describe must be understood as a "line of development". It is not a question of capital suddenly deciding to engineer a transformation from the decision making centres of the productive process, and doing so in a very short space of time. Such a project would be fantastic, unreal. In fact, something like a halfway solution is taking place.

We must bear this in mind when speaking of post-industrial reality because we don't want—as has already happened—some comrade to say: wait a moment, I come from the most backward part of Sicily where still today labourers are taken on every Sunday by foremen who appear in the piazza offering them work at 5000 Lire per day (about two pounds and fifty pence). Certainly, this happens, and worse. But the revolutionary must bear these things in mind and at the same time be aware of the most advanced points of reference in the capitalist project. Because, if we were only to take account of the most backward situations we would not be revolutionaries, but simply recuperators and reformists capable only of pushing the power structure towards perfecting the capitalist project.

To return to our theme, what is it that distinguishes post-industrial from industrial reality? Industrial reality was obviously based on capital, on the concept that at the centre of production there was investment, and that that investment had to be considerable. Today, with new programming techniques, a change in the aim of capitalist production is quite simple. It is merely a question of changing computer programs.

Let's examine this question carefully. Two robots in an industry can take the place of 100 workers. Once, the whole production line had to be changed in order to alter production. The 100 workers were not able to grasp the new productive project instantly.

Today the line is modified through one important element alone. A simple operation in computer programming can change the robots of today into those of tomorrow at low cost. From the productive point of view capital's capacity is no longer based on the resources of financial capital, on investment in other words, but is essentially based on intellectual capital, on the enormous accumulation of productive capacity that is being realised in the field of computer science, the new development in technology that allows such changes to take place.

Capital no longer needs to rely on the traditional worker as an element in carrying out production. This element becomes secondary in that the principal factor in production becomes intellectual capital's capacity for change. So capital no longer needs to make huge investments or to store considerable stocks in order to regain its initial outlay. It does not need to put pressure on the market and can distribute productive units over wide areas, so avoiding the great industrial centres of the past. It can prevent pollution. We will be able to have clean seas, clean air, better distribution of resources. Think, comrades, reflect on how much of the material that has been supplied to the capitalists by ecologists will be used against us in the future. What a lot of work has been done for the benefit of capital's future plans. We will probably see industry spread over whole territories without the great centres like Gela, Syracuse, Genoa, Milan, etc. These will cease to exist.

Computer programing in some skyscraper in Milan, for example, will put production into effect in Melbourne, Detroit, or anywhere else. What will this make possible? On the one hand, capital will be able to create a better world, one that is qualitatively different, a better life. But who for? That is the problem. Certainly not for everybody. If capital was really capable of achieving this qualitatively better world for everyone, then we could all go home—we would all be supporters of the capitalist ideology. The fact is that it can only be realised for some, and that this privileged strata will become more restricted in the future than it was in the past. The privileged of the future will find themselves in a similar situation to the Teutonic knights of mediaeval times, supporting an ideology aimed at founding a minority of "equals"—of "equally" privileged—inside the castle, surrounded by walls and by the poor, who will obviously try continually to get inside.

Now this group of privileged will not just be the big capitalists, but a social strata that extends down to the upper middle cadres. A very broad strata, even if it is restricted when compared to the great number of the exploited. However, let's not forget that we are speaking of a project that exists only in tendency. This strata can be defined as the "included", composed of those who will close themselves inside this castle. Do you think they will surround themselves with walls, barbed wire, armies, guards or police? I don't think so.

Because the prison walls, the ghetto, the dormitory suburb and repression as a whole: police and torture—all of those things that are quite visible today, where comrades and proletarians all over the world continue to die under torture—well, all this could undergo considerable changes in the next few years. It is important to realise that five

or ten years today corresponds to 100 years not long ago. The capitalist project is travelling at such speed that it has a geometric progression unequalled to anything that has happened before. The kind of change that took place between the beginning of the 60's and 1968 takes place in only a few months today.

So what will the privileged try to do? They will try to cut the excluded off from the included. Cut off in what way? By cutting off communication.

This is a central concept of the repression of the future, a concept which, in my opinion, should be examined as deeply as possible. To cut off communication means two things. To construct a reduced language that is modest and has an absolutely elementary code to supply to the excluded so that they can use the computer terminals. Something extremely simple that will keep them quiet. And to provide the included, on the other hand, with a language of "the included", so that their world will go towards that utopia of privilege and capital that is sought more or less everywhere. This will be the real wall: the lack of a common language. This will be the real prison wall, one that is not easily scaled.

This problem presents various interesting aspects. Above all there is the situation of the included themselves. Let us not forget that in this world of privilege there will be people who in the past have had extensive revolutionary-ideological experience, and they may not enjoy their situation of privilege tomorrow, feeling themselves asphyxiated inside the Teutonic castle. They will be the first thorn in the side of the capitalist project. The class homecomers, that is, those who abandon their class. Who were the homecomers of the class of yesterday? I, myself, once belonged to the class of the privileged. I abandoned it to become "a comrade among comrades", from privileged of yesterday to revolutionary of today. But what have I brought with me? I have brought my Humanistic culture, my ideological culture. I can only give you words. But the homecomer of tomorrow, the revolutionary who abandons tomorrow's privileged class, will bring technology with him, because one of the characteristics of tomorrow's capitalist project and one of the essential conditions for it to remain standing, will be a distribution of knowledge that is no longer pyramidal but horizontal. Capital will need to distribute knowledge in a more reasonable and equal way—but always within the class of the included. Therefore the deserters of the future will bring with them a considerable number of usable elements from a revolutionary point of view.

And the excluded? Will they continue to keep quiet? In fact, what will they be able to ask for once communication has been cut off? To ask for something, it is necessary to know what to ask for. I cannot have an idea based on suffering and the lack of something of whose existence I know nothing, which means absolutely nothing to me and which does not stimulate my desires. The severing of a common language will make the reformism of yesterday—the piecemeal demand for better conditions and the reduction of repression and exploitation—completely outdated. Reformism was based on the common language that existed between exploited and exploiter. If the languages are different, nothing more can be asked for. Nothing interests me about something I do not understand, which I know nothing about. So, the realisation of

the capitalist project of the future of this post-industrial project as it is commonly imagined— will essentially be based on keeping the exploited quiet. It will give them a code of behaviour based on very simple elements so as to allow them to use the telephone, television, computer terminals, and all the other objects that will satisfy the basic, primary, tertiary and other needs of the excluded and at the same time ensure that they are kept under control. This will be a painless rather than a bloody procedure. Torture will come to an end. No more bloodstains on the wall. That will stop—up to a certain point, of course. There will be situations where it will continue. But, in general, a cloak of silence will fall over the excluded.

However, there is one flaw in all this. Rebellion in man is not tied to need alone, to being aware of the lack of something and struggling against it. If you think about it this is a concept from the Enlightenment, which was later developed by English philosophical ideology—Bentham and co.—who spoke from a Utilitarian perspective. For the past 150 years our ideological propaganda has been based on these rational foundations, asking why it is that we lack something, and why it is right that we should have something because we are all equal; but, comrades, what they are going to cut along with language is the concept of equality, humanity, fraternity. The included of tomorrow will not feel himself humanly and fraternally similar to the excluded but will see him as something other. The excluded of tomorrow will be outside the Teutonic castle and will not see the included as his possible post revolutionary brother of tomorrow. They will be two different things. In the same way that today I consider my dog "different" because it does not "speak" to me but barks. Of course I love my dog, I like him, he is useful to me, he guards me, is friendly, wags his tail; but I cannot imagine struggling for equality between the human and the canine races. All that is far beyond my imagination, is other. Tragically, this separation of languages could also be possible in the future. And, indeed, what will be supplied to the excluded, what will make up that limited code, if not what is already becoming visible: sounds, images, colours. Nothing of that traditional code that was based on the word, on analysis and common language. Bear in mind that this traditional code was the foundation upon which the illuminist and progressive analysis of the transformation of reality was made, an analysis which still today constitutes the basis of revolutionary ideology, whether authoritarian or anarchist (there is no difference as far as the point of departure is concerned). We anarchists are still tied to the progressive concept of being able to bring about change with words. But if capital cuts out the word, things will be very different. We all have experience of the fact that many young people today do not read at all. They can be reached through music and images (television, cinema, comics). But these techniques, as those more competent than myself could explain, have one notable possibility—in the hands of power—which is to reach the irrational feelings that exist inside all of us. In other words, the value of rationality as a means of persuasion and in developing self-awareness that could lead us to attack the class enemy will decline, I don't say completely, but significantly.

So, on what basis will the excluded act? (Because, of course, they will continue to act). They will act on strong irrational impulses.

Comrades, I urge you to think about certain phenomena that are already happening today, especially in Great Britain, a country which from the capitalist point of view has always been the vanguard and still holds that position today. The phenomena of spontaneous, irrational riots.

At this point we must fully understand the difference between riot and insurrection, something that many comrades do not do. A riot is a movement of people which contains strong irrational characteristics. It could start for any reason at all: because some bloke in the street gets arrested, because the police kill someone in a raid, or even because of a fight between football fans. There is no point in being afraid of this phenomenon. Do you know why we are afraid? Because we are the carriers of the ideology of progress and illuminism. Because we believe the certainties we hold are capable of guaranteeing that we are right, and that these people are irrational—even fascist—provocateurs, people whom it is necessary to keep silent at all costs.

Things are quite different. In the future there will be more and more of these situations of subversive riots that are irrational and unmotivated. I feel fear spreading among comrades in the face of this reality, a desire to go back to methods based on the values of the past and the rational capacity to clarify. But I don't believe it will be possible to carry on using such methods for very long. Certainly we will continue to bring out our papers, our books, our written analyses, but those with the linguistic means to read and understand them will be fewer in number.

What is causing this situation? A series of realities that are potentially insurrectional or objectively anything but insurrectional. And what should our task be? To continue arguing with the methods of the past? Or to try moving these spontaneous riot situations in an effective insurrectional direction capable of attacking not just the included, who remain with in their Teutonic castle, but also the actual mechanism that is cutting out language. In future we shall have to work towards instruments in a revolutionary and insurrectional vein that can be read by the excluded.

Let us speak clearly. We cannot accomplish the immense task of building an alternative school capable of supplying rational instruments to people no longer able to use them. We cannot, that is, replace the work that was once done by the opposition when what it required was a common language. Now that the owners and dispensers of the capacity to rationalise have cut communication, we cannot construct an alternative. That would be identical to many illusions of the past. We can simply use the same instruments (images, sounds, etc.) in such a way as to transmit concepts capable of contributing to turning situations of riot into insurrection. This is work that we can do, that we must begin today. This is the way we intend insurrection.

Contrary to what many comrades imagine—that we belong to the eighteenth century and are obsolete—I believe that we are truly capable of establishing this slender air-bridge between the tools of the past and the dimensions of the future. Certainly it will not be easy to build. The first enemy to be defeated, that within ourselves, comes

from our aversion to situations that scare us, attitudes we do not understand, and discourses that are incomprehensible to an old rationalist like myself.

Yet it is necessary to make an effort. Many comrades have called for an attack in the footsteps of the Luddites 150 years ago. Certainly it is always a great thing to attack, but Luddism has seen its day. The Luddites had a common language with those who owned the machines. There was a common language between the owners of the first factories and the proletariat who refused and resisted inside them. One side ate and the other did not, but apart from this by no means negligible difference, they had a common language. Reality today is tragically different. And it will become increasingly different in the future. It will therefore be necessary to develop conditions so that these riots do not find themselves unprepared. Because, comrades, let us be clear about this, it is not true that we can only prepare ourselves psychologically; go through spiritual exercises, then present ourselves in real situations with our flags. That is impossible. The proletariat, or whatever you want to call them, the excluded who are rioting, will push us away as peculiar and suspect external visitors. Suspicious. What on earth can we have in common with those acting anonymously against the absolute uselessness of their own lives and not because of need and scarcity? With those who react even though they have colour TV at home, video, telephone and many other consumer objects; who are able to eat, yet still react? What can we say to them? Perhaps what the anarchist organisations of synthesis said in the last century? Malatesta's insurrectionalist discourse? This is what is obsolete. That kind of insurrectional argument is obsolete. We must therefore find a different way, very quickly.

And a different way has first of all to be found within ourselves, through an effort to overcome the old habits inside us and our incapacity to understand the new. Be certain that Power understands this perfectly and is educating the new generations to accept submission through a series of subliminal messages. But this submission is an illusion.

When riots break out we should not be there as visitors to a spectacular event, and because in any case, we are anarchists and the event fills us with satisfaction. We must be there as the realisers of a project that has been examined and gone into in detail beforehand.

What can this project be? That of organising with the excluded, no longer on an ideological basis, no longer through reasoning exclusively based on the old concepts of the class struggle, but on the basis of something immediate and capable of connecting with reality, with different realities. There must be areas in your own situations where tensions are being generated. Contact with these situations, if it continues on an ideological basis, will end up having you pushed out. Contact must be on a different basis, organised but different. This cannot be done by any large organisation with its traditionally illuministic or romantic claim to serve as a point of reference and synthesis in a host of different situations; it can only be done by an organisation that is agile, flexible and able to adapt. An informal organisation of anarchist comrades—a specific organisation composed of comrades having an anarchist class consciousness,

but who recognise the limits of the old models and propose different, more flexible models instead. They must touch reality, develop a clear analysis and make it known, perhaps using the instruments of the future, not just the instruments of the past. Let us remember that the difference between the instruments of the future and those of the past does not lie in putting a few extra photographs in our papers. It is not simply a matter of giving a different, more humorous or less pedantic edge to our writing, but of truly understanding what the instruments of the future are, of studying and going into them, because it is this that will make it possible to construct the insurrectional instruments of the future, to put alongside the knife that our predecessors carried between their teeth. In this way the air-bridge we mentioned earlier can be built.

Informal organisation, therefore, that establishes a simple discourse presented without grand objectives, and without claiming, as many do, that every intervention must lead to social revolution, otherwise what sort of anarchists would we be? Be sure comrades, that social revolution is not just around the corner, that the road has many corners, and is very long. Agile interventions, therefore, even with limited objectives, capable of striking in anticipation the same objectives that are established by the excluded. An organisation that is capable of being "inside" the reality of the subversive riot at the moment it happens to transform it into an objectively insurrectional reality by indicating objectives, means and constructive conclusions. This is the insurrectional task. Other roads are impassable today.

Certainly, it is still possible to go along the road of the organisation of synthesis, of propaganda, anarchist educationism and debate—as we are doing just now of course—because, as we said, this is a question of a project in tendency, of attempting to understand something about a capitalist project that is in development. But, as anarchist revolutionaries, we are obliged to bear this line of development in mind, and prepare ourselves from this moment on to transform irrational situations of riot into an insurrectional and revolutionary reality.

The Insurrectional Project

Translated by Jean Weir in collaboration with

John Moore and Leigh Stracross, 2000

Preface

If we refuse to let our lives be organised by others we must have the capacity to organise ourselves, that is, we must be able to 'put together the elements necessary to act as a coherent functioning whole'. For anarchists, individuals who ardently desire the elimination of every trace of tyranny and domestication, this has been experimented in a myriad of forms according to prevailing social and economic conditions, and marked by each one's particular concept of wholeness. If this could once be interpreted—by some—to mean a big organisation to oppose big industry, today social disintegration and uncertainty have gone further than any critique in relegating such undertakings to the pages of history. We are left with the exquisite dilemma: if my freedom depends on the freedom of all, does not the freedom of all depend on my acting to free myself? And if all the exploited are not acting to free themselves—as a tangible composite whole—how can I function, i.e. organise myself, to destroy the reality that oppresses me without delay? In other words, how can I act as a whole that seeks to expand and enhance itself to infinity? Having refused the sop of participation, voluntary work and progressive change with which the democratic ideology seeks to satiate its bloated subjects, I am left with myself and my unmediated strength. I seek my accomplices: two or three, hundreds or hundreds of thousands, to upset and attack the present social order right now—in the tiny act that gives immediate joy, indicating that sabotage is possible for everyone; or in great moments of mass destruction where creativity and anger combine in unpredictable collusion. I am therefore faced with the problem of creating a project whose immediate aim is destruction, which in turn creates space for the new. What holds things together and puts my actions in context cannot therefore be a fixed formal organisation, but the development of the capacity to organise myself, alone and with others, where numbers are not an aim, but are always potentially present. In other words, I must create an insurrectional project which already contains all the elements of a revolutionary perspective: the decision to act now; analysis of the present time taking account of the profound transformations capital is undergoing globally and which have had an effect on the whole concept of struggle; choice of

objectives, means, ideas, desires; the means of making these known to others in my search for affinity; the creation of occasions for confrontation and debate, and much more besides. Projectuality becomes force in movement, a propelling element within the whole insurrectional flux. The following texts come to us from a series of meetings that took place in Greece some years ago. A subheading of one of the sections has since reached notoriety after being chosen by the Italian carabinieri in 1996 to name the phantom armed organisation they subsequently accused dozens of anarchists of belonging to. This should not divert us from our understanding of the text, which could be seen as a starting point, an invitation to consider and experiment in the insurrectional adventure.

Jean Weir

Introduction

In January 1993 I was invited to Greece along with another comrade to hold a number of talks at the Athens Polytechnic and the Law Faculty of Salonika. The texts published here are a) an outline of the talks I intended to give, b) a transcription of the tapes of the Salonika conference and c) a transcription of an interview with the Athens daily *Eleftherotipia*. As the first of these texts was intended to be a guide to the conferences, I worked it out in detail along with the Greek comrades in time for it to be translated and handed out to those present. This was necessary due to the difficulties of on-the-spot interpretation. I published the texts in May 1993 in number 72 of *Anarchismo*, with the title "Recent Developments in Capitalism."

The three pieces have a homogeneity that still makes them worth publishing together, as they all concern capitalist restructuring and the forms of insurrectionalist struggle that anarchists are proposing against it.

A curious thing happened. The penultimate section of the first piece published here is still entitled "Revolutionary Anarchist Insurrectionalist Organisation." The origin of this now infamous heading is rather strange and deserves comment. In fact I had originally entitled the subsection "Informal Anarchist Insurrectionalist Organisation," but we came up against difficulties when trying to translate the term *informal*. It was impossible to solve them before my arrival in Greece, so the comrades suggested replacing the term *informal* with the more generic one, *revolutionary*.

I forgot to restore the word *informal* when I published the text in Italy, although it is nearer to what I am talking about in that particular section.

I do not feel I can make such a correction now given all the nonsense that the specialists of the Attorney General's office in the courts of Rome, led by Public Prosecutor Marini, have come out with.

I think it might be useful to give a brief description of the way the minds of the Italian judiciary and Carabinieri have laboured on this text.

On September 17, 1997, dozens of anarchists were arrested in Italy on charges of kidnapping, robbery, murder, possession of arms, etc., initiating what came to be known as the Marini Frame-up. These separate charges were transformed into one combined charge, i.e. that of belonging to a clandestine armed organisation entitled the ORAI. The name had been taken from the paragraph mentioned above: Revolutionary anarchist insurrectionalist organisation.

This trial is still going on, and could drag on for years to come given the various legal stages which make up the process. We were freed from prison fourteen months after being arrested thanks to a simple procedural error: the Attorney's Office genius in Rome had been so busy trying to justify a phantom 'armed gang' that they forgot to follow their own rules. The result is that although still facing charges that carry life imprisonment those who, like myself, did not have sentences pending are now all at liberty.

As the enthralled reader will discover, the following texts contain no theory relative to a specific armed organisation, but are an examination of the insurrectionalist method of organising. This is based on affinity groups composed of anarchists, the elaboration of a common revolutionary project, their linking together in an informal organisation, the constitution of base nuclei in a situation of mass struggle and, finally, the way these structures could be linked together.

I realise that for the obtuse mentality of a Carabinieri educated to seeing the enemy as a negative copy of himself and his organisation, nothing under the sun could exist that is not equipped with an organisation chart, leaders, strategies and objectives. And up to this point I can even understand a tendentious reading of the text in question. But what I cannot understand, and what no reader will surely be able to either, is how such a text came to be given the task of constituting the foundations of a clandestine armed organisation. This is still simmering away in the mind of the Public Prosecutor, who will stop at nothing to demonstrate our guilt.

Stop at nothing. Precisely, even to the point of denying all the evidence to the contrary. And in fact, as appears from the trial documents and even from the succinct phrasing of the arrest warrants, they must have had a few doubts on the subject. However, these were evidently cast aside due to the greater precedence of their need to justify the unjustifiable: If it is true that Bonanno is theorising a specific armed clandestine organisation (ORAI) in this piece ("Recent Developments in Capitalism"), then we, the Prosecution and Carabinieri, declare that he cannot have gone to Greece to talk about it publicly in a university auditorium. That would be illogical. And as the text in question must mean what we, Prosecution and Carabinieri, say it means, then we must conclude that Bonanno did not go to Greece, did not give these conferences, and did not write this text as an outline and memorandum for what he was about to say in public... A logical conclusion! Only it ignores one thing: that in both Athens and Salonika hundreds of people were present at these conferences. There are tape recordings not just of the conferences but of the whole debate. Both the conferences and the Salonika debate have been transcribed and presented in a book published in

Greece. And, finally, there are even photographs published along with my interview (the third of the pieces published here) on February 28, 1993, in the Athens daily *Eleftherotipia*.

But why do the prosecution want to read something—the theorisation of a nonexistent armed band complete with name—into this text, even at the risk of making themselves ridiculous? There is a simple answer: because they would not otherwise be able to sentence dozens of anarchists for conspiracy—a conspiracy that clearly does not exist. It would then remain for them to prove only individual charges which would have to be dealt with separately, according to the rules of the penal code, etc.

The accusers know perfectly well that the second alternative would not be easy for them. They are well aware that most of the charges are based on the spurious accusations of a young girl bribed by them, that is why they are so persistent in wanting to read something into this text that is not there.

In fact, the concept of informal organisation proposed in the text in question does not in any way resemble that of an armed clandestine organisation. We are in two different worlds. The closed organisation (necessarily so if we are talking of clandestinity), is an instrument like any other, and in certain conditions of the class clash it might even be useful as defensive or offensive means if one finds oneself in dire straits. The economic and social structure would have to change profoundly in order for it to become useful as a means today. Capital would have to turn back on its steps to the conditions of production that existed in the eighties when there was a strong, centralised working class and a fixed transmission belt of left wing unions and parties—all things which clearly no longer exist. The closed organisational model, which only indirectly wants the struggle to generalise and does nothing in that direction other than make its actions known through the media—and we know how that functions—corresponds in many respects to the ideological conditions that sum up the union and the party. If we refuse to be likened to political parties, we must also refuse to be compared to organisations whose aim is numerical growth, increasing the number of its actions and setting itself up as the mainstay of the class struggle.

Of course, if anarchists were to get involved in constituting a specific, closed organisation, they would do it in quite a different way from the classic sclerotic one of the Marxist-Leninists. And there is no doubt that, in its time, Azione Rivoluzionaria was an attempt in that direction. But it soon moved away from its initial tragectory in the direction of a generalisation of the struggle, and closed itself up in the logic of recruiting and joining arms with the other combatant organisations on the scene at the time. I am not saying that they did not make any interesting proposals, especially in their early documents. What I am saying is that, not only did these proposals not stand up to criticism but by withdrawing into a position of defence they ended up annihilating themselves by becoming more and more clandestine, that's all. The best comrades, it was said at the time, are those in prison. One simply had to end up in prison to become a better comrade.

The problem is simple. When we work out an analysis we cannot put our own personal positions aside. These inevitably come to permeate the analysis without our meaning it to. And when the latter is written in prison, it is obvious that that is where it has come from. Moreover, when a comrade sees his immediate reality to be radically compromised he conveys this in the analyses he is working on, as well as in the kind of intervention and methods he proposes. By imprisoning himself in the stifling viewpoint of a clandestine organisation his way of thinking becomes clandestine even to himself, almost without realizing it.

It has been said that if one were to find oneself in a pre-revolutionary phase (although no one could explain how we were to recognise this phase), the only road possible would be that of the more or less closed armed organisation. It was later seen that all attempts at 'being different' simply ended up aborting themselves in the classic condition of closure. It does not occur to anyone today that we are in a pre-revolutionary phase, so if we were to accept the idea of a specific armed organisation it would simply be a question of our own personal decision, nothing more. A choice like any other. And I say that with no expectations concerning the accusations in the trial in Rome.

At this point I could quote something I wrote years ago, in an article published in *Anarchismo*—in 1979 to be exact—entitled 'On Clandestine Organisation', which is also available in my book *The Illogical Revolution* (pages 88–90), but it seems pointless to me. While many might simply have forgotten these words from the past, I myself do not know what to do with them. I do not even want to read them again, because they belong to a period that is quite different to the present. As far as I can remember, they referred to the fact that the critique of the closed clandestine organisation is not simply an affirmation of individualism. Criticism does not have a weakening effect, it strengthens. But something strange occurs when those under criticism are comrades who participate in, or support, a closed form of organisation, even in theory. The critique is taken as a personal attack or something aimed at weakening one's conditions. And when you are critical of a comrade with years of prison hanging over them, you run the risk of being lynched. I do not think that the concept of the generalisation of the struggle, including armed struggle, is the refusal of organisation. Nor do I think that to criticise the closed clandestine organisation means to "expose oneself to massacre." Such generalisations do not interest me.

The informal organisation of affinity groups and the consequent development of base nuclei in specific mass struggles, are the organisational forms I consider most useful today for the generalisation of the struggle, armed or otherwise.

Alfredo M. Bonanno

Catania, 10 October 1998

Recent Developments in Capitalism

From the late seventies until the early eighties, industry in the leading capitalist countries was in crisis. The relationship between plant and productivity had never been worse. Struggles led by the trades unions, as well as those of the proletariat in general (especially in their more violent manifestations under the leadership of the various revolutionary working class structures), had led to a rise in labour costs quite out of proportion to capital's income. Incapable of adjusting, lacking the strength to reduce labour and employment costs drastically, it seemed as though the whole system was moving towards its natural collapse.

But by the first half of the Eighties rapid change had set in, with industrial restructuring taking an electronic direction. The primary and secondary productive sectors (industry and agriculture) were in decline, with consequent reductions in employment. The tertiary (services) sector had expanded out of all proportion, absorbing some of the laid-off work force, thus attenuating the social backlash that the capitalists had feared more than anything else.

In short, the much-feared riots and revolutions did not take place. There was no intolerable pressure from the reserve army of the proletariat. Instead, everything quietly adapted to changes in the structures of production.

Heavy industry replaced old factories with robotised ones capable of reaching hitherto undreamed of levels of flexibility and low levels of investment. Labour costs decreased without this leading to any fall in demand because the services sector held well, assuring levels of income that were sufficient to inflate the capitalist system as a whole. Most of the sacked workers managed to find some way of getting by in the new flexible and permissive capitalist world.

The new productive and democratic mentality

None of this would have been possible without the emergence of a new flexible mentality at the work place: a reduction in the need for professional qualifications and an increase in the demand for small, auxiliary jobs. This coincided with a consolidation of the democratic mentality.

The middle classes' myths of careers and improvements in workers' wages disappeared for good. All this was possible thanks to articulated interventions at every level: a) In the schools, in the adoption of less rigid teaching methods better suited to building a 'malleable' personality in young people. This was to enable them to adapt to an uncertain future of the kind that would have filled their parents with horror; b) In the political management of the most advanced capitalist countries. Authoritarianism gave way to democratisation, involving people in fictitious electoral and referenda procedures; c) In production where, as we have said, the disappearance of professional qualifications has made producers tame and flexible.

This all took place according to the spirit of the times. Dreams of philosophical and scientific certainty gave way to a 'weak' model, based not on risk and courage but on adjustment in the short-term, on the principle that nothing is certain but anything can be fixed.

As well as contributing to the disappearance of the old and in many aspects out-of-date, authoritarianism, the democratic mentality also led to a tendency to compromise at every level. This resulted in a moral degradation where the dignity of the oppressed was exchanged for a guaranteed but uncomfortable survival. Struggles receded and weakened.

Obstacles faced by the insurrectional struggle against post-industrial capitalism and the State Undoubtedly one obstacle to be faced is precisely this amorphous, flexible mentality outlined above. This cannot be compared to the old-style reliance on social security; it is simply a desire to find a niche in which to survive, work as little as possible, accept all the rules of the system and disdain ideals and projects, dreams and utopias. The laboratories of capital have done an exemplary job in this sense. School, factory, culture and sport have united to produce individuals who are domesticated in every respect, incapable of suffering or knowing their enemies, unable to dream, desire, struggle or act to transform reality.

Another obstacle, which is related to the first, consists of pushing production to the margins of the post-industrial complex as a whole. The dismembering of the class of producers is no longer a nebulous project, it has become a reality. And the division into numerous small sectors which often work against each other is increasing this marginalisation.

This is fast making the traditional structures of worker resistance, such as workers' parties and trades unions, obsolete. Recent years have witnessed a progressive disappearance of the old-style trade-unionism, including that which once aspired to revolution and self-management. But, more importantly, we have witnessed the collapse of the communism which claimed to have built a socialist State—realised through police control and ideological repression. It cannot be said that any organisational strategy capable of responding to the new conditions of capitalist productive and social reality in general has emerged.

Developments that might have arisen from proposals made by insurrectionalist anarchists, especially those moving in the direction of informal relations between individuals and groups based on affinity, have not yet been fully taken on board. They have often received a tepid welcome by comrades due to a certain, in some ways understandable, reluctance to abandon the old ways of thinking and apply new methods of organisation.

We will say something about this further on, as it is central to the struggle against the new structures of repression and total control produced by Capital and the State.

Restructuring technology

The present technological revolution based on information technology, lasers, the atom, subatomic particles, new materials such as optic fibres which allow energy transportation and consumption at speeds and over distances once unthinkable, genetic modification concerning not only agriculture and animals but also man, etc., has not stopped at changing the world. It has done more. It has produced conditions that make it seem impossible to plan or make plans for the foreseeable future, not only as far as those who intend to maintain the present state of affairs are concerned, but also by those who intend to destroy them.

The main reason for this is that the new technologies, which are now interacting and becoming part of the context that has been developing over at least the past two thousand years, could produce unpredictable results. And some of these results could be totally destructive, far beyond the devastating effects of an atomic explosion.

Hence the need for a project aimed at the de struction of technology as a whole in its first, essential phase, and which bases all its political and social approaches on this imperative.

Political, economic and military restructuring

Profound changes are also taking place in the economic sector. These changes are affecting the political situation in advanced capitalist countries, with consequent effects on the military sector.

New frontiers in post-industrial capitalism are emerging from widespread processes and re-arrangements that are continually in flux. The static concept of production tied to heavy machinery in huge factories capable of producing a multiplicity of consumer goods has been surpassed by the ingenious idea of swift change and increasing competition in specialised production with stylish, individual, personalised products. The post-industrial product does not require skilled labour but is set up on the production line directly, simply by reprogramming the robots to produce it. This has meant incredible reduction in storage and distribution costs and eliminated obsolescence and stockpiling of unsold products.

This development created great new possibilities for capital around the beginning of the eighties, and by the end of the decade it had become the norm. So the political situation had to change to correspond with the new economic one.

This explains the considerable changes that took place at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties. There has been a move towards careful selection of the managerial strata, which must be able to see to the requirements of this new form of production. That explains why advanced industrial countries such as the US and Great Britain went through a period of increased authoritarianism in government, then moved on to a more versatile, flexible form of political management corresponding to the economic necessities of various countries which are now all coordinated globally.

The collapse of actual socialism and the rebirth of various forms of nationalism

Any advance from the countries of actual socialism beyond cautious, reciprocal suspicion was unthinkable in the old capitalist reality. But the birth of the new computerised, automated capitalism has not only made advances possible but has forced these countries to change radically, pushing them to an irreversible as it was indecent collapse.

Rigid authoritarian regimes based on ideological calembours such as proletarian internationalism and the like are finding it difficult to comply with the needs imposed by a production structure that is now coordinated globally.

If they do not want to get stuck in a precarious, marginal situation, the few remaining authoritarian regimes will have to resolutely democratise their political management. Inflexibility forces the great international partners of industrial development to stiffen and declare war one way or the other. It is in this sense that the role of the army has also changed considerably. It has intensified internal repression, and at the same time taken on the role of global policeman that was first developed by the US. This will probably continue for a number of years until other crises interrupt and require new yet equally precarious and dangerous forms of equilibrium.

Accordingly, the resurgence of nationalism is bringing with it one positive albeit limited element, and one that is extremely dangerous. Its immediate and specific effect consists in the overturning and dismemberment of the big States. Any movement that goes in this direction is to be hailed as positive, even if on the surface it presents itself as being a carrier of traditional, conservative values.

The other factor, the one that is extremely dangerous, is the risk of wars spreading between the small States, declared and fought with unprecedented ferocity and causing tremendous suffering in the name of miserable principles and just as miserable alternatives.

Many of these wars will lead to a more efficient and structured form of post-industrial capitalism. Many will be controlled and piloted by the multinational giants themselves. But basically they represent a transitory condition, a kind of epileptic fit, following which social conditions could evolve in the direction of the elimination of any trace of the old State organisms.

At the moment we can only guess how this might happen, starting off from an examination of conditions today.

Possible developments of the insurrectional mass struggle in the direction of anarchist communism

The end of the great trades union organisations' function of resistance and defence—corresponding with the collapse of the working class—has allowed us to see another possibility for the organisation of the struggle. This could start from the real capacity

of the excluded, i.e., of the great mass of exploited, producers and non-producers, who already find themselves beyond the area of guaranteed wages, or who will in the near future.

The proposal of a kind of intervention based on affinity groups and their coordination and aimed at creating the best conditions for mass insurrection often comes up against a brick wall even amongst the comrades who are interested in it. Many consider it to be out of date, valid at the end of the last century but decidedly out of fashion today. And that would be the case had the conditions of production, in par ticular the structure of the factory, stayed as they were a hundred and fifty years ago. The insurrectionalist project would undoubtedly be inappropriate were such structures and their corresponding organisations for trade union resistance still in existence. But these no longer exist, and the mentality that went with them has also disappeared. This mentality could be summed up by respect for one's job, taking a pride in one's work, having a career. This, along with the sense of belonging to a producer's group in which to associate and resist and form trade union links which could even become the means for addressing more problematic forms of struggle such as sabotage, antifascist activity and so on, are all things of the past.

All these conditions have disappeared for good. Everything has changed radically. What we could call the factory mentality has ceased to exist.

The trade union has become a gymnasium for careerists and politicians. Wage bargaining has become a filter for facilitating the adaptation of the cost of labour to the new structures of capital. Disintegration is extending rapidly beyond the factory to the whole social fabric, breaking bonds of solidarity and all significant human relationships, turning people into faceless strangers, automata immersed in the unliveable confusion of the big cities or in the deathly silence of the provinces. Real interests have been substituted by virtual images created for the purpose of guaranteeing the minimum cohesion necessary to hold the social mechanism as a whole together. Television, sport, concerts, art and cultural activities constitute a network for those who passively wait for things to happen, such as the next riot, the next crisis, the next civil war, or whatever.

This is the situation we need to bear in mind when talking of insurrection. We insurrectionalist and revolutionary anarchists are not referring to something that is still to come about, but to something that is already happening. We are not referring to a remote, far-off model, which, like dreamers, we are trying to bring back to life, unaware of the massive transformations that are taking place at the present moment. We live in our time. We are the children of the end of the millennium, actors taking part in the radical transformation of the society we see before us.

Not only do we consider insurrectionalist struggle to be possible but, faced with the complete disintegration of traditional forms of resistance, we think that it is the condition towards which we should be moving if we do not want to end up accepting the terms imposed by the enemy and becoming lobotomised slaves, insignificant pawns

of the mechanisms of the information technology that will be our master in the near future.

Wider and wider strata of the excluded are moving away from consensus, and consequently from accepting reality or having any hope of a better future. Social strata who once considered themselves to be stable and not at risk are now living in a precariousness they will never be able to escape from by dedication to work and moderation in consumerism.

Revolutionary anarchist insurrectionalist organisation

We believe that instead of federations and groups organised in the traditional sense—part of the economic and social structures of a reality that no longer exists—we should be forming affinity groups based on the strength of mutual personal knowledge. These groups should be capable of carrying out specific coordinated actions against the enemy.

As far as the practical aspects are concerned, we imagine there would be collaboration between groups and individuals to find the means, documentation and everything else necessary for carrying out such actions. As far as analyses are concerned, we are attempting to circulate as many as possible in our publications and through meetings and debates on specific questions. An insurrectionalist organisational structure does not rotate around the central idea of the periodic congress typical of the big syndicalist organisations or the official movement federations. Its points of reference are supplied by the entirety of the situations in the struggle, whether they be attacks on the class enemy or moments of reflection and theoretical quest.

Affinity groups could then contribute to the forming of base nuclei. The aim of these structures is to take the place of the old trades unions resistance organisations—including those who insist on the anarcho-syndicalist ideology—in the ambit of intermediate struggles. The base nuclei's field of action would be any situation where class domination enacts a separation between included and excluded. Base nuclei are nearly always formed as a consequence of the propulsive actions of insurrectionalist anarchists, but they are not composed of anarchists alone. At meetings, anarchists should undertake their task of outlining class objectives to the utmost.

A number of base nuclei could form coordinating structures with the same aim. These specific organisational structures are based on the principles of permanent conflictuality, self-management and attack.

By permanent conflictuality we mean uninterrupted struggle against class domination and those responsible for bringing it about.

By self-management we mean independence from all parties, trades unions or patronage, as well as finding the means necessary for organising and carrying out the struggle on the basis of spontaneous contributions alone.

By attack we mean the refusal of any negotiation, mediation, reconciliation or compromise with the enemy.

The field of action of affinity groups and base nuclei is that of mass struggles.

These struggles are nearly always intermediary, which means they do not have a direct, immediately destructive effect. They often propose simple objectives, but have the aim of gaining more strength in order to better develop the struggle towards wider objectives.

Nevertheless, the final aim of these intermediate struggles is always attack. It is however obviously possible for individual comrades or affinity groups to strike at individuals or organisations of Capital and the State independently of any more complex relationship.

Sabotage has become the main weapon of the exploited in their struggle in the scenario we see extending before our very eyes. Capitalism is creating conditions of control and domination at levels never seen before through information technology which could never be used for anything other than maintaining power.

Why we are insurrectionalist anarchists

—Because we are struggling along with the excluded to alleviate and ultimately abolish the conditions of exploitation imposed by the included.

—Because we consider it possible to contribute to the development of struggles that are appearing spontaneously everywhere, turning them into mass insurrections, that is to say, actual revolutions.

—Because we want to destroy the capitalist order of the world which, thanks to computer science restructuring, has become technologically useful to no one but the managers of class domination.

—Because we are for the immediate, destructive attack against the structures, individuals and organisations of Capital and the State.

—Because we constructively criticise all those who are in situations of compromise with power in their belief that the revolutionary struggle is impossible at the present time.

—Because rather than wait, we have decided to proceed to action, even if the time is not ripe.

—Because we want to put an end to this state of affairs right away, rather than wait until conditions make its transformation possible.

These are the reasons why we are anarchists, revolutionaries and insurrectionalists.

New Capitalist Order

Comrades, before starting this talk, a couple of words in order to get to know each other better. In conferences a barrier is nearly always created between whoever is talking and those who are listening. So, in order to overcome this obstacle we must try to come to some agreement because we are here to do something together, not simply to talk on the one hand and listen on the other. And this common interest

needs to be clearer than ever given the questions about to be discussed this evening. Often the complexity of the analyses and the difficulty of the problems that are being tackled separate the person who is talking from those who are listening, pushing many comrades into a passive dimension. The same thing happens when we read a difficult book which only interests us up to a point, a book with a title such as Anarchism and Post-industrial Society, for example. I must confess that if I were to see such a book in a shop window, I'm not sure I'd buy it.

That is why we need to come to some agreement. I think that behind the facade of the problem under discussion, undoubtedly a complex one, the fact that we are anarchists and revolutionary comrades means we should be able to find some common ground. This should permit us to acquire certain analytical instruments with which to better understand reality, so be able to act upon it more effectively than before. As a revolutionary anarchist I refuse to inhabit two separate worlds: one of theory and another of practice. As an anarchist revolutionary, my theory is my practice, and my practice my theory.

Such an introduction might not go down well, and it will certainly not please those who support the old theories. But the world has changed. We are faced with a new human condition today, a new and painful reality. This can leave no room for intellectual closure or analytical aristocracies. Action is no longer something that is separate from theory, and this will continue to be the case. That is why it is important to talk about the transformation of capitalism yet again. Because the situation we see before us has already undergone rapid restructuring.

When we find ourselves in a situation like this, we tend to let ourselves be seduced by words. And we all know anarchists' vocation for words. Of course we are for action too. But tonight it is a question of words alone, so we run the risk of getting drunk on them. Revolution, insurrection, destruction, are all words. Sabotage—there, another word. Over the past few days spent here among you I have heard various questions asked. Sometimes they were asked in bad faith, as far as I could tell. But translation from one language to another comes into it, and I don't want to be malevolent. I just want to say that it is important not to deceive oneself that my analysis provides the solution to the social problem. I do not believe any of the comrades I have spoken to over the past few days have the solution either. Nor does the anarchosyndicalist comrade with his analyses based on the centrality of the working class, or the other comrades who as far as I can understand do not seem to agree with him and are proposing an intervention of an insurrectionalist nature. No, none of these hypotheses can claim to possess the truth. If anarchism teaches anything it teaches us to be wary of anyone who claims to hold the truth. Anyone who does so, even if they call themselves an anarchist, is always a priest as far as I am concerned. Any discourse must simply aim to formulate a critique of the existent, and if we sometimes get carried away with words, it is the desire to act that gets the better of us. Let us stop here and start thinking again. The destruction of the existent that oppresses us will be a long road. Our analyses are no more than a small contribution so that we can continue our

destructive revolutionary activity together in ways that make any small talk simply a waste of time.

So, what can we do? Anarchists have been asking themselves this for a long time: how can we come into contact with the masses? to use a term which often comes up in this kind of discussion, and which I have also heard on various occasions over the past few days. Now, this problem has been faced in two different ways. In the past, throughout the history of anarchism, it has been faced by using the concept of propaganda, that is, by explaining who we are to the masses. This, as we can easily see, is the method used by political parties the world over. Such a method, the use of traditional anarchist propaganda, is in difficulty today in my opinion, just as the spreading of any other ideology is. It is not so much that people don't want to have anything to do with ideology any longer as that capitalist restructuring is making it pointless. And I must say here publicly that anarchists are having difficulty in understanding this new reality, and that it is the subject of an ongoing debate within the international anarchist movement. The end of ideology is leading to a situation where traditional anarchist propaganda is becoming pointless. As the effectiveness (or illusion, we do not know which) of propaganda disappears, the road of direct contact with people is opening up. This is a road of concrete struggles, struggles we have already mentioned, everyday questions, but of course one can't exceed one's limitations. Anarchists are a very small minority. It is not by making a lot of noise, or by using advertising techniques that they will be able to make themselves heard by the people. So it is not a question of choosing the most suitable means of communication—because this would take us back to the problem of propaganda, and therefore ideology, again—but rather of choosing the most suitable means of struggle. Many anarchists believe this to be direct attack, obviously within the limits of their possibilities, without imagining themselves to be anyone's fly coachman.

I ask you to reflect for a moment on the state of Capitalism at the beginning of the Eighties. Capitalism was in difficulty. It was facing increased labour expenditure, a restructuring of fixed plants at astronomically high costs, a rigid market, and the possibility of social struggles developing in response to this. And then, think about the conditions six or seven years later. How quickly Capitalism changed. It overcame all its difficulties in a way that could never have been predicted, achieving an unprecedented programme of economic and imperialist management of the world. Perhaps it does not seem so at the moment, but this programme aimed at closing the circle of power is well underway. What has happened? How was a situation so wrought with difficulties able to pick up so quickly and radically?

We all know what happened, it is not the technical side of it that surprises us. Basically, a new technology has been inserted into the productive process. Labour costs have been reduced, productive programmes replaced, new forces used in production: we know all this. That is not the aspect of capitalist restructuring that surprises us. No, what astounds us is the latter's ingenious use of the working class. Because this has always formed the main difficulty for capitalism. Capitalist geniality has succeeded

in attacking and dismantling the working class, spreading them all over the country, impoverishing, demoralising and nullifying them. Of course it was afraid to do this at first. Capital was always afraid to venture along that road, because reductions in the price of labour have always marked the outbreak of social struggles. But, as its academic representatives had been insisting for some time, the danger no longer exists, or at least it is disappearing. It is now even possible to lay people off, so long as you do it by changing production sectors, so long as others are being prepared to develop an open mentality and are beginning to discuss things. And all the social forces: parties, unions, social workers, the forces of repression, all levels of school, culture, the world of the spectacle, the media, have been rallied to tackle Capitalism's new task. This constitutes a worldwide crusade such as has never been seen before, aimed at modelling the new man, the new worker.

What is the main characteristic of this new man? He is not violent, because he is democratic. He discusses things with others, is open to other people's opinions, seeks to associate with others, joins unions, goes on strike (symbolic ones, of course). But what has happened to him? He has lost his identity. He does not know who he really is any longer. He has lost his identity as one of the exploited. Not because exploitation has disappeared, but because he has been presented with a new image of things in which he is made to feel he is a participant. Moreover, he feels a sense of responsibility. And in the name of this social solidarity he is ready to make new sacrifices: adapt, change his job, lose his skills, disqualify himself as a man and a worker. And that is what Capitalism has systematically been asking of him over the past ten years, because with the new capitalist restructuring there is no need for qualifications, but simply for a mere aptitude for work, flexibility and speed. The eye must be faster than the mind, decisions limited and rapid: restricted choices, few buttons to be pressed, maximum speed in execution. Think of the importance that video games have in this project, to give but one example. So we see that worker centrality has disappeared miserably. Capital is capable of separating the included from the excluded, that is, of distinguishing those who are involved in power from those who will be excluded forever. By *power* we mean not only State management, but also the possibility of gaining access to better living conditions.

But what supports this divide? What guarantees the separation? This lies in the different ways that needs are perceived. Because, if you think about it for a moment, under the old-style form of exploitation, exploited and exploiter both desired the same thing. Only the one had, and the other did not. If the construction of this divide were to be fully realised, there will be two different kinds of desire, a desire for completely different things. The excluded will only desire what they know, what is comprehensible to them and not what belongs to the included whose desires and needs they will no longer be able to comprehend because the cultural equipment necessary to do so will have been taken from them for ever.

This is what Capitalism is building: an automaton in flesh and bone, constructed in the laboratories of power. Today's world, based on information technology, knows

perfectly well that it will never be able to take the machine to the level of man, because no machine will ever be able to do what a man can. So they are lowering man to the level of the machine. They are reducing his capacity to understand, gradually levelling his cultural heritage to the absolute minimum, and creating uniform desires in him. So when did the technological process we are talking about begin? Did it begin with cybernetics as has been suggested? Anyone who has any experience of such things knows that if poor Norbert Wiener has any responsibility at all, it lies in the fact that he started to play around with electronic tortoises. In actual fact, modern technology was born a hundred years ago when an innocent English mathematician started toying with arithmetic and developed binary calculus. Now, following on from that it is possible to identify the various steps in modern technology. But there is one precise moment in which a qualitative leap takes place: when electronics came to be used as the basis upon which the new technology (and consequently the technology for perfecting electronics) was built. And it is impossible to predict how things will evolve, because no one can foresee what the consequences of this entry into a new technological phase will be. We must understand that it is not possible to think in terms of cause and effect. For example, it is naive to say that the great powers have the atomic potential to blow up the world, even though this is so. This idea, so terrifying and apocalyptic, belongs to the old concept of technology based on the hypothesis of cause and effect: the bombs explode, the world is destroyed. The problem we are talking about here opens up the prospect of a far more dangerous situation because it is no longer a matter of speculation but something that already exists and is developing further. And this development is not based on the principle of cause and effect but on the weaving of unpredictable relations. Just one simple technological discovery, such as a new substance for energy conservation for example, could lead to a series of destructive technological relations which no one in all conscience, no scientist, would be able to predict. It might cause a series of destructive relations which would not only affect the new technologies, but also the old ones, putting the whole world in chaos. This is what is different, and it has nothing to do with cybernetics, which is only the distant relative of the present nightmare.

In the light of all this we have been asking ourselves for a long time now: how can we attack the enemy if we do not know it in depth? But, if you think about it, the answer is not all that difficult. We very much enjoy attacking the police, for example, but no one becomes a policeman in order to do so. One informs oneself: how do the police operate? What kind of truncheons do they use? We put together the small amount of knowledge required for us to roughly understand how the police work. In other words, if we decide to attack the police, we simply limit ourselves to obtaining a certain amount of knowledge about them. In the same way, it is not necessary to become engineers in order to attack the new technology, we can simply acquire some basic knowledge, a few practical indications that make it possible for us to attack it. And from this consideration another, far more important one, emerges: that the new technology is not abstract, it is something concrete. For instance, the international communication

system is a concrete fact. In order to build abstract images in our heads it needs to spread itself throughout the country. This is the way the new materials are being used, let us say in the construction of cables for data transmission. And it is here that it is important to know technology, not how it works in the productive aspect, but how it is spread throughout the country. That is to say, where the directing centres (which are multiple) are to be found and where the communication channels are. These, comrades, are not abstract ideas but physical things, objects that occupy space and guarantee control. It is quite simple to intervene with sabotage in this instance. What is difficult is finding out where the cables are.

We have seen the problem of finding the documentation and research required to attack: at some point this becomes indispensable. At some point, knowledge of technology becomes essential. In our opinion this will be the greatest problem that revolutionaries will have to face over the next few years. I do not know if any use will be made of the computer in the society of the future, the self-managed society many comrades refer to, just as it is impossible to know whether any use will be made of a considerable number of the new technologies. In fact, it is impossible to know anything about what will happen in this hypothetical society of the future. The only thing I can know, up to a point, concerns the present, and the effects of the use of the new technologies. But we have already gone into this, so there is no point in repeating ourselves. The task of anarchists is to attack, but not on behalf of their own organisational interests or quantitative growth. Anarchists have no social or organisational identity to defend. Their structures are always of an informal character so their attack, when it takes place, is not to defend themselves (or worse still to propagandise themselves), but to destroy an enemy who is striking everyone. And it is in this decision to attack that theory and practice weld together.

An historically unprecedented kind of capitalism is appearing on the horizon. When we hear of neoliberalism, this is in fact what is meant. When we hear talk of global dominion, this is the project that is being referred to, not the old concept of power, not the old imperialism. It was in the face of this project and its immense capacity to dominate that real socialism collapsed. No such thing would ever have happened in the context of the old capitalism. There is no longer any need for the world to be divided into two opposing blocs. The new capitalist imperialism is of an administrative kind. Its project is to manage the world for a small nucleus of included, at the cost of the great mass of excluded. And with these projects in mind, all possible means are already being used—the new ones we have mentioned, along with the old ones, as old as the world, such as war, repression, barbarity, according to the situation. In this way, in the former Yugoslavia for example, a ferocious war is being waged aimed at reducing a people's capacities as far as possible. Then there will be an intervention in this situation of absolute destruction in the form of a little humanitarian aid which will seem like an enormous amount of help in such conditions of absolute and total misery.

Think of what the state of countries like the former Yugoslavia would be like without the war. A great powder-keg at the gates of western Europe, on our borders, alongside the European Community. A powder-keg ready to explode, social contradictions which no economic intervention would ever be able to raise to the level of western consumerism. The only solution was war, the oldest device in the world, and that has been applied. American and world imperialism are intervening in Somalia and Iraq, but there is little doubt that they will intervene in the former Yugoslavia because the probability of rebellion in this area must be reduced to zero. So, old means are being used along with new ones, according to the situation, according to the economic and social context involved.

And one of the oldest weapons in the great arsenal of horrors is racism. On the question of racism and all the misdeeds related to it (neo-nazism, fascism, etc.), let's look for a moment at the differentiated development of capitalist restructuring. In order to understand the problem it is necessary to see how capitalist restructuring cannot solve all its problems just by waving a magic wand. It is faced with many different situations all over the world, each with various levels of social tension. Now, these situations of social tension are making what is lurking in the depths of each one of us rise to the surface, things that we have always put aside, exorcised. Essential factors such as racism, nationalism, the fear of the different, the new, Aids, the homosexual, are all latent impulses in us. Our cultural superstructure, our revolutionary consciousness, when it puts on its Sunday clothes, obliterates them, hides them all. Then, when we take off our Sunday best, all these things start to reappear. The beast of racism is always present, and Capitalism is always ready to use it. In situations such as that which exists in Germany where social tensions have developed rapidly over the past few years, this phenomenon is in constant development. Capital controls racism and uses certain aspects of it, but it is also afraid of it in that the overall management of world power is of a democratic, tolerant and possibilist nature. From the point of view of utilisation, anything (e.g., ideology, fear) can exist—it is all part of capital's project. We cannot say with certainty that post-industrial capitalism is against racism. We can see a few of its main characteristics, such as its democratic nature, then suddenly discover that in the context of one specific country the same technologically advanced capitalism is using methods that were used a hundred years ago: racism, persecution of Jews, nationalism, attacks on cemeteries, the most hateful and abominable things man can devise. Capital is manifold, its ideology always Machiavellian: it uses both the strength of the lion and the cunning of the fox.

But the main instrument of capitalism the world over are the new technologies. We must think about this a little, comrades, in order to dispel so much confusion. And in doing so we must also consider the possible use of such technology on our part, in changed social conditions, in a post-revolutionary situation. We have already seen how there has been a great qualitative leap from the old technologies to the new—by new technologies we mean those based on computers, lasers, the atom, subatomic particles, new materials, human, animal and vegetable genetic manipulation. These technologies

are quite different from, and have little to do with, the old ones. The latter limited themselves to transforming material, to modifying reality. On the contrary, the new technologies have penetrated reality. They do not simply transform it, they create it, instigating not just molecular changes, possible molecular transformation, but above all creating a mental transformation. Think of the use that is normally made of television. This instrument of communication has got inside us, into our brains. It is modifying our very capacity to see, to understand reality. It is modifying relations in time and space. It is modifying the possibility to step out of ourselves and change reality. In fact, the vast majority of anarchists do not think it possible to make use of this assemblage of modern technologies.

I know that there is an ongoing debate about this. However, this debate is based on a misunderstanding. That is, it is trying to treat two things that are radically different in the same way. The old revolutionary dream, let us say of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, was that of attacking and defeating power so that the working class could take over the instruments of production and use them in the future society in a way that was more just and free. Now it would be impossible to make a fairer and more free use of these new technologies, because they do not stand passively before us like the old technologies of yesterday, but are dynamic. They move, penetrate deep inside us, have already penetrated us. If we do not hurry to attack, we will no longer be able to understand what we need in order to do so, and rather than us taking the technologies over, it will be the technologies that take us over. It will not be a case of social revolution but of the technological revolution of capital. This is why a revolutionary use of these new technologies is impossible. The misconception is similar to the old one concerning the possible revolutionary use of war, which many well-known anarchists fell prey to when the first world war broke out. A revolutionary use of war is impossible, because war is always an instrument of death. A revolutionary use of the new technologies is impossible, because the new technologies will always be instruments of death. So all that is left to do is to destroy them—to attack, now, not in the future, not when the project has been completed, not when those who are deceiving themselves stop doing so, but sabotage now, attack now. This is the conclusion we have reached. It is at the moment of the destructive attack that one clarifies what we said to begin with. It is at this point that theory conjoins with practice, and the analysis of post-industrial capitalism becomes an instrument with which to attack capitalism. It becomes an instrument for insurrectionalist and revolutionary anarchism in order to direct one's attention to what—the men and the things—makes this project of restructuring of Capitalism possible, and whose responsibilities are clear.

Today as never before, striking at the root of inequality means attacking that which makes the unequal distribution of knowledge possible directly. And that is because, for the first time, reality itself is knowledge, for the first time Capitalism is knowledge. Whereas the centres where knowledge was elaborated, the universities, for example, were once cloistered places to be consulted at specific times of need, today they are at the centre of capitalist restructuring, the centre of repressive restructuring. So, a

distribution of knowledge is possible. I insist on saying that this is an urgent problem, because it is possible to grasp any difference when one sees it. But when a net separation between two different kinds of knowledge which have no communication between them occurs—the knowledge of the included and that of the excluded—it will be too late. Think of the project of lowering the quality of schooling. Think how mass schooling, once an instrument for gaining knowledge, has been transformed over the past twenty years into an instrument of disqualification. The level of knowledge has been lowered, whereas a restricted minority of privileged continue to acquire other knowledge, in specialised masters degrees organised by Capital.

This, in my opinion, demonstrates the need and urgency for attack yet again. Attack, yes. But not blind attack. Not desperate, illogical attack. Projectual, revolutionary attack, with eyes wide open in order to understand and to act. For example, the situations where capital exists, and is being realised in time and space, are not all the same. There are some contexts in which insurrection is more advanced than others, yet there is still a great possibility for mass struggles to take place internationally. It is still possible to intervene in intermediate struggles, that is, in struggles that are circumscribed, even locally, with precise objectives that are born from some specific problem. These should not be considered to be of secondary importance. Such kinds of struggle also disturb Capitalism's universal project, and our intervention in them could be considered an element of resistance, putting a brake on the fragmentation of the class structure. I know that many comrades here this evening have experienced such things, and have participated directly in specific struggles.

So, we need to invent new instruments. These instruments must be capable of affecting the reality of the struggles without the mediation of trade union or party leadership. They must propose clear, even though limited, objectives, ones that are specific, not universal, so in themselves are not revolutionary. We must point to specific objectives because people need to feed their children. We cannot expect everyone to sacrifice themselves in the name of universal anarchism. Limited objectives, then, where our presence as anarchists has the precise task of urging people to struggle directly in their own interests because it is only through direct, autonomous struggle that these objectives can be reached. And once the aim has been reached the nucleus withers and disappears. The comrades then start again, under different conditions.

What comrades are we talking about? What anarchists are we talking about? Many of us are anarchists, but how many of us are available for real, concrete activity? How many of us here today stop short at the threshold of the issue and say: we are present in the struggle, we suggest our project, then the workers, the exploited, do what they like. Our task is done. We have put our conscience at rest. Basically, what is the task of the anarchist if it is not propaganda? As anarchists, we have the solution to all social problems. So we present ourselves to the people who suffer the consequences of the problem, suggest our solution, and go home. No, this kind of anarchism is about to disappear out for good. The last remaining mummies belong to history. Comrades must take the responsibility for struggles upon themselves directly and personally because

the objective against which the exploited need to struggle in certain situations, and against which they often do not, is a common one because we are exploited just as they are. We are not privileged. We do not live in two different worlds. There is no serious reason as to why they (the socalled masses) should attack before we do. Nor do I see any reason why we should only feel ourselves authorised to attack in their presence. The ideal, certainly, is mass struggle. But in the face of the project of capitalist restructuring anarchists should feel responsible and decide to attack personally, directly, not wait for signs of mass struggle. Because this might never happen. So this is where the destructive act takes place. It is at this point that the circle closes. What are we waiting for?

So, individual acts of destruction too. But here an important objection has been raised: what does one gain by smashing a computer? Does that perhaps solve the problem of technology? This question, an important one, was presented to us when we worked out the hypothesis of social sabotage. It was said: what result is obtained by destroying a pylon? First of all, the question of sabotage is not aimed so much at the terminal points of technology as at the communications network. So, we are back to the problem of knowledge of the way technology is distributed over the country, and, if you allow me to digress for a moment, I want to point to a serious problem that arises here. I allow myself to use the term 'serious problem' because a comparison has been made between what a clandestine armed organisation thinks they are doing by striking a specific person, and what, instead, an anarchist insurrectionalist structure thinks it is doing by striking a technological realisation, maintaining that, all said and done, there is not much difference. There is a difference, and it is a very important one. But it is not a question of the difference between people and things. It is an even more important difference, because the aims of the clandestine armed organisation contain the error of centrism. By striking the person, the organisation believes it is striking the centre of Capital. This kind of error is impossible in an anarchist insurrectionalist organisation, because when it strikes a technological realisation (or someone responsible for this realisation), it is fully aware that it is not striking any centre of Capitalism.

During the first half of the Eighties, huge mass struggles took place against nuclear power plants in Italy. One of the most important of these was the struggle against the missile base in Comiso. In this context we realised 'base nuclei'. For three years we struggled alongside the local people. This was a mass struggle, which for various reasons did not succeed in preventing the construction of the base. But that is not the only kind of struggle we consider, it is just one of the possible ones we participate in as insurrectionalist anarchists, one of the many intermediary struggles possible. In another direction, in the years that followed, over four hundred attacks took place against structures connected to the electric power supply in Italy. Sabotage against coal-fired electric power stations, the destruction of high-voltage pylons, some of them huge ones that supplied a whole region. Some of these struggles transformed themselves into mass struggles; there was mass intervention in some of the projects of sabotage, in others there was not. On a dark night in the countryside, anonymous comrades

would blow up a pylon. These attacks were spread over the whole country, and in my opinion possessed two essential characteristics: they constituted an easily realisable attack against Capital, in that they did not use highly destructive technology and, secondly, they are easily copied. Anyone can take a walk in the night. And then, it is also healthy. So anarchists have not passively waited for the masses to awaken, they have considered doing something themselves. In addition to the four hundred attacks we know about, one could guess that at least another four hundred could have taken place as the State conceals these actions because it is afraid of them. It would be impossible to control a capillary-style spreading of sabotage all over the country. No army in the world is capable of controlling such activity. As far as I know, not one comrade has been arrested in connection with the known four hundred attacks.

I would like to wind up here because I think I have been talking long enough. Our insurrectionalist choice is anarchist. As well as being (let us say) a characterological choice, a choice of the heart, it is also a choice of reason, a result of analytical reflection. What we know about global capitalist restructuring today tells us that there is no other way open to anarchists but that of immediate, destructive intervention. That is why we are insurrectionalists and against all ideology and chatter. That is why we are against any ideology of anarchism, and all chatter about anarchism. The time for pub talk is over. The enemy is right outside this great hall, visible for all to see. It is simply a question of deciding to attack it. I am certain that insurrectionalist anarchist comrades will know how to choose the timing and the means for doing so, because with the destruction of this enemy, comrades, it is possible to realise anarchy.

Anarchists and History

What is your identity and that of anarchism?

Today, particularly following the collapse of actual socialism, wide perspectives are opening up for revolutionary anarchism. This should be intended both as an analytical instrument, a means for understanding reality, and as an organisational point of reference for people carrying out social struggles in everyday practice.

What is the position of the Italian anarchist movement in today's society?

The Italian situation is very different from the Greek, partly because Italy has witnessed twenty years of authoritarian revolutionism, i.e., Marxist-Leninist armed groups. The failure of this authoritarian strategy, the aim of which was the conquest of power, has led people to think that all revolutionary struggle is doomed to failure. So anarchists in Italy are faced with a very difficult task today, because on the one hand this problem needs to be clarified, and on the other it is necessary to explain to people what one means by revolutionary struggle, which for anarchists is the destruction of power. And they cannot limit themselves to explaining all this merely in words. It also needs to be done by means of the concrete practice of social struggles, something that is still to happen.

What image do Italian people have of anarchists?

When Italian society has an image of anarchism and anarchists—I say when it has, because often they do not even know what anarchists are—it is either an image that dates back about 100 years or one supplied by the media. Media images often confuse anarchists, autonomists and other marginal components of society such as the lumpen-proletariat in revolt, even to the point of sometimes calling hooligans anarchists.

This happens in spite of the fact that the anarchist movement has a long history in Italy?

It is also due to a certain incapacity on the part of anarchists themselves. But it should be said that it is not easy to destroy an opinion that television constructs in a day, in one single programme. You must understand that the historical inheritance of the Italian anarchist movement is hardly known, as it is confined to the anarchist minority and academic study. The information that most people receive is limited to the mass media. Due to such conditions, which are the same in Greece, it is not possible to modify the situation from one day to the next, a lot of work is required here.

Is a use of the media considered to be part of the insurrectional project?

This is a very important question, and demonstrates the radical difference between two revolutionary strategies. On the one hand the authoritarian one, that of the old Marxists whose aim was to realise spectacular actions—the case which caused the greatest stir being the Moro kidnapping—using the media and, through this instrument of sensationalism, make mass propaganda. According to insurrectionalist anarchists this is definitely a losing strategy. Anarchists do not think it is possible to use the media. A limited, subtle dialogue can only be held at a theoretical level, as we are doing now. It cannot exist at a practical level during social struggles, because then, more than at any other time, the media merely carry out the role of supporting the enemy. Insurrectionalist anarchists do not believe it is possible for objective, neutral information to exist.

But are all people prey to the media? Could these means of information not play an important role in making anarchists better known?

I don't believe anything is absolute. In revolutionary activity choices are made that naturally have both positive and negative aspects. When they find themselves in social struggles, insurrectionalist anarchists have chosen to refuse this means of communication. Of course that has its price in terms of transmission of the image, but I think that there are more important issues involved such as keeping the media away from the social struggle, although that does not prevent them from carrying out their job of mystification. But here it is a question of revolutionary responsibility, and in Italy more than a few journalists have been attacked personally as a result. So, there is nothing absolute about making such judgements, only practical choices to be made.

It has been argued that Europe is presently moving through a cultural Middle Ages. What is your opinion on this?

This is a complex question, which in order to answer requires at least a couple of words of introduction of a cultural nature. The very concept of a 'cultural Middle Ages'

shows the limitations of certain information. The Middle Ages is seen negatively, as the 'dark ages', which was not the case. The crisis of ideology has also led to a crisis in the idea of progress, upon which the Marxist analysis in particular was based. It is sufficient to think of Lukacs and his theory that reality is proceeding in a determinist and historicist way towards a better future. In the past this ideological concept was also shared by various anarchists, and it was in error. Reality is not moving in a progressive direction, and the conditions of barbarity are always present. There is not one thing in history that can guarantee otherwise. We cannot look at any specific period and say: barbarity is over, fascism is finished with for good. We live with fascism, we can see this better thanks to the crisis in ideology that has opened our eyes a little, but only a little. So, as far as this question is concerned I am of the opinion that we find ourselves, not in the Middle Ages, because the Middle Ages were not barbarian, but in a situation where barbarity is currently possible. So, no, I don't agree with the idea that we are going through a historical period similar to the Middle Ages. We are constantly living in a condition of possible barbarity, but also of possible freedom. It is up to us to choose which road we want to take, and this is the aim of revolutionary activity: understanding which road is the road to freedom, and finding the means to take it.

Concerning the crisis in ideology and the position of Fukuyama re the end of history, the end of ideas—have we reached the end of history or do we have any ideas that are capable of giving us information? And if so, what do we then mean by the concept "the end of history"?

That is a very articulate question. We need to determine what we mean by history. Not by chance is there a relationship between neo-liberalism and history, because the old liberalism was historicist, that is, it supported the ideology of history. That kind of history is finished. No matter what the philosophers say, the crisis in the idea of progress concerned a single line proceeding forward through reality and time, necessarily leads to a crisis in the ideology of history, not merely a crisis of history. So, it is not just a matter of a crisis in ideas, because the new liberalism is afraid of a future lack of social control and is circulating the fear of 'the end of history' at the level of public opinion. Their aim is to limit people through an ideology of history which, like any ideology, is an instrument of control. So, we have not reached any end historically at all. The fact that we are reaching the end of the millennium just increases the confusion. A neomillenarianism is being put into circulation for irrational reasons. This is a very dangerous social terrain where we can see a development of all the religious integralisms, including the Christian version, in the name of an abstract need to save man. So, it is not a question of "the end of history", but rather of the end of historicism which, like any new ideology of world domination does not know what to do yet. It realises that it does not yet have the ideally adapted theoretical instruments necessary, whereas academia, i.e. the world—Japanese and American—university has nothing better to do than produce amenities of this kind.

Does history have a cyclical or a linear pattern?

This is also a difficult question. But are all your readers philosophers? I do not know how much depth analysis could be useful, however I will start by establishing that we cannot separate the idea of history from the idea of progress. The idea of progress comes from the revolutionary bourgeoisie who lent themselves to the conquest of power. We need to understand that the idea of progress is an idea of power, of the management of power. Now, the idea of progress requires a linear conception of history, something that was expressed very well by Marx. He thought that the revolutionary clash between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would necessarily end up with the victory of the proletariat, because the latter were destined to realise history. In this he applied the idea of his philosophical mentor, Hegel, who said that the objective idea of the world would realise philosophy and would render it useless, so people would no longer need to think. And we have seen how the State did think in place of people in the countries of actual socialism. And these apparently innocent philosophical ideas still lurk amongst small university groups and are discussed by very serious people, savants worried about people's destiny. Then they come out of the universities, move about in reality and contribute to building the concentration camps, determining fullscale massacres, historical tragedies of vast proportions, wars and genocide.

Now, having established this we can return to the problem of the linear concept of history. What do anarchists put in its place? They suggest inverting Marx's sentiment, that the sleep of reason breeds monsters. On the contrary, anarchists maintain that it is in fact reason that breeds monsters. That is to say the reason of the philosophers, the politicians, the programmers of power, dominion, and also of historical ideology. So, as long as it is possible to build States and support exploitation, war and social death, a concept of linear history will be possible. When all that changes, or begins to change, we will finally realise that there is no such thing as linear history but that, according to the intuition of your ancient Greek philosophers (who remain unchallenged today), reality is of a circular movement wherein the barbarity of the past can present itself at any time. In this circular movement nothing is ever old or new, but rather everything is always different—which does not mean that it is more, or less, progressive. That is why it is necessary to begin again each time, identify the enemy, the class enemy, the social enemy, power, and attack it, always with new means. It is something of the work of Sisyphus, and anarchists have this quality of Sisyphus, of always starting at the beginning again, because, like him, they never give up. And with this moral strength of theirs they are superior to the gods, just like Sisyphus.

What do you think of the reappearance of nationalism?

There is not only a reappearance of nationalism, but a reappearance of the most ferocious barbarity of the past. For instance, at least according to what the newspapers report, twenty thousand women have been raped in Bosnia. But not in the same way as with all the other armies in the world (because rape is a normal practice of any army) but rather as a deliberate means of fathering Serbians, i.e. as a kind of genetic programming. Such an idea really goes back to the beginning of time and confronts us with tragic considerations. For example, it could be that we (including anarchists)

made a mistake concerning man's original goodness and the notion that it was society that made him become bad. We will probably all have to reconsider these concepts. We need to become more intellectually acute, and not be amazed each time these events re-occur in history, and stop placing our hopes in peoples' goodness. Nationalism rises up again because it exists in each one of us, because racism is inside every one of us. The fear of the black man is inside us, in those obscure regions that we are afraid to penetrate, where there is the fear of the different, the foreigner, the Aids sufferer, the homosexual. These fears exist inside all of us, anarchists included, and we need to talk about them, not hide them under ideology, under great words such as revolution, insurrection, freedom. Because all these beautiful words, if they are developed and brought about in reality by men who are afraid of the different, run the risk of becoming the instruments of the power of the future, not instruments of liberation.

What do the American ghetto riots such as the one in Los Angeles signify?

The collapse of actual socialism has brought the apparent universal domination of the Americans to the fore. I say apparent because it is not just the Americans. If we make the mistake, as I seem to see being made during the course of these talks in various towns in Greece over the past few days, of aiming all our criticism at the Americans, we will not be able to understand the general character of the new imperialism. Yes, we have American domination, but also that of the European Community and the Japanese economic colossus. But this triumvirate is different to the power structures of the past. They do not relate to each other in terms of the competition that existed before the collapse of the Soviet empire, but share economic relations of imperialist administration, that is, the construction and maintenance of world domination.

For example, the situation in the former Yugoslavia is only comprehensible through an analysis of the new world imperialism—not only Yankee, but also European. Just think, west Germany has planned to invest thousands of billions of marks over the next ten years to raise east Germany to the level of western consumerism. And that concerns just 17 million people. Now, if such a project were to be made for the whole of the East, from Russia to the former Yugoslavia, an impossible sum would be required. No world power in existence is capable of bringing about such an operation, and world imperialism is aware of this.

What is the solution then? War. That is why there is no American intervention in the former Yugoslavia, because a ferocious, destructive war such as the one now taking place will throw the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian people into conditions of such acute poverty that even the slightest intervention, any tiny act of humanitarian aid, will be seen as something positive. Think of such a situation existing without the war. Combative peoples at the gates of Eastern Europe, on the border with Greece. Combative peoples in extreme poverty, with a great capacity for revolutionary social action: what a danger for the European Community! Unfortunately I believe the use of war as an instrument of imperialist management could well be extended, and other examples of this can be seen.

The question of the riots within the American empire is quite different. We must bear in mind that it is not just a question of America, because similar events have also taken place in other countries. More than ten years ago there were riots in Brixton. Then in Switzerland, there was the revolt in Zurich, and in Germany, in Hamburg. Under the conditions of advanced capitalism and precisely due to the process of expulsion of the old proletariat from the factory, there is an increasingly wide strata of new poor who have nothing to lose, and who constitute a threat that is ready to explode at any moment.

It should be said however that the significance of these explosions should not be overestimated. It is true that anarchists have always been in favour of such revolts. Whenever possible, they have participated in them, anywhere—in society or in prison, and always on the side of the weakest. But today they must avoid the theoretical risk of putting the social rebels of the future in the place of the worker centrality of yesterday. Society is a complex problem, which has nothing in its centre. There is not one small part of society that is capable of realising the revolution, not even the Los Angeles rioters. Even if we sympathise with them, even if we are alongside them. But we must admit that they are just one element, a sort of involuntary anticipation of possible future mass insurrections, not the main element. And this needs to be said clearly, against all those who deliberately accuse us of forgetting the roles of the other social strata.

What relationship is there between the recent scandals in Italy and Greece, and the new management of power?

The problem of the Italian and Greek scandals is important, and it is no coincidence that these have come to light at the present time, because they correspond to profound changes in the management of power. The new global capitalism, more obvious in some places than others—for example it is more evident in the United States, less so in Greece—needs a political managerial class, not one characterised by ideological agreement, but one technically suited to the managerial needs of global imperialism.

For example, a management of power similar to that of the ex-USSR, or a kind of national socialism, would of necessity have had recourse to mass arrests, mass executions, and would have resolved the problem of a revolt in a few days. A democratic management must use other means. Replacing the head of government is a difficult thing to do, and scandals are an excellent means of achieving the replacement of the old social leadership by the new technocratic one.

Can you tell us anything about the Gladio in Italy?

As Machiavelli once wrote, anything is legitimate in the political arena. In Italy the Gladio scandal is the Christian Democrats' response to the denunciation of their clandestine activity after the war, which came to light in the Soviet archives years later. Yes, I said it was the Christian Democrats' response... Contrary to what is believed, it was not the Communist Party that denounced the armed activity of the USA and the Christian Democrats. It was the Christian Democrats themselves who justified their activities in terms of the defence of capitalist ideals, in a desperate attempt to save

the old political leadership by building a 'revolutionary' purity to show that people who had taken up arms in the past should not be made to pay by Capital. Contrary to the logic of other economic scandals, the Gladio is an exercise in inverse logic. Whereas the economic scandals are aimed at destroying the old leadership, the Gladio operation tried to save it. Nevertheless this proved impossible, because the needs of world imperialism are greater, and end up by taking over.

In a Greek anarchist paper of 1896 there is an interesting article on ecology. What do you think about the fact that today Capital itself uses ecology as a means of restructuring?

First we need to put this into context, given that you've made reference to a paper from the nineteenth century. Anarchism is not a political movement and never has been. It is a social movement, a carrier of social ideas, and so has always, right from its birth, dealt with the entirety of social problems. If one looks at anarchist papers of the last century, one can find not only the question of ecology addressed but also any other problem that concerns man. The anarchists were the first to talk about free love, eroticism, homosexuality, about all the aspects that concern daily life. This is one of the strengths of anarchism, and has led to the anarchist movement being considered, today as in the past, a great reservoir of ideas into which everyone can dip, and from which Capital itself has derived many concepts. But anarchists are aware of this. They have always put their ideas at the disposal of others, because, as Proudhon said, the worst kind of property is intellectual property. Anarchists have never been afraid that Capital might steal their ideas, because they have always known that they are capable of moving beyond them. So, if at the end of the last century anarchists were ecologists in a particular way, in that they were the only ones to be ecologists, now that Power has 'become ecologically-minded' and ecology has become a leading industry, anarchists are no longer ecologists the same as before. They no longer say that it is necessary to save nature, but rather that in order to save nature it is necessary to destroy both those who are polluting it, and those who want to save it using State means.

How do you see yourself?

That is a question that I was asked before many years ago here in Greece, in a very different political situation. The physical conditions were also very different then. At the time I replied: a comrade among comrades. Now that I am older my reply is the same: a comrade among comrades.

Revolution, Violence, Anti-authoritarianism a few notes

Original titles
"Rivoluzione, violenza, anti-autoritarismo" *La dimensione anarchica*, Catania 1974, pp. 276–281.
"Nuclei autonomi di base," *Teoria e partica dell'insurrezione*, Catania, 1984, pp. 112–117.
"Dibattito sull'autogestione," *Movimento e progetto rivoluzionario*, Catania 1977, pp. 162–168.

Translated by Jean Weir

Introduction

The rationalisation of exploitation at global levels and the illumination among all those with a glimmer of dignity and passion that reformism is not the way to fight it, is leading to explosions of rebellion in many parts of the world. Anarchists are close to these moments, at least in spirit, but do we have anything to give this reality beyond causing immediate damage or attacking police lines? Must we continue to leave everything to chance, believing that organisational clarity will spring forth out of the blue? If we do, the great potential for new qualitative relations risks becoming reabsorbed into extremely pragmatic and convincing reformist programmes which apparently appear from nowhere. Some are not sleeping. The organisers of tomorrow's misery lie constantly in wait for such opportunities to ride the tiger in order to harness and redomesticate it, possibly under slogans of freedom and selfmanagement.

If we want to go beyond critique (even violent) of social and economic reality and enter the realm of transformation (including the necessary destruction) we must immediately move on to quite a different terrain. The protagonists of the struggle must have our active complicity in putting together the elements necessary to intensify the attack on the enemy and extend the struggle informally, horizontally. Action must encompass the aims that are to be achieved, i.e. always be in the logic of the destruction of power of all colours, in both its formal and relational manifestations. In such a reality what is required are minimal structures that turn the organisational question upside down. It is only from such elementary organisms born within the struggle itself that the latter

will be able to go forward and develop its latent self-organising capacity. These forms could be referred to as base nuclei which are not a gymnasium of the revolution... perhaps not even an adequate instrument of struggle...but could become the grain of sand that jams the machinery of capital.(p.23)

One of the great problematics of any liberatory moment is that the protagonists of the struggle grasp the reality of the situation in order to make ethical choices without hesitation when required. The single elements of the eternal triangle rebellion, repression, reform, are not always easily distinguishable the one from the other, the boundaries between them never being absolutely clear and distinct.

The texts we are presenting here have been uprooted from the context of struggle in Italy in the seventies and eighties, a time where these realities were all present. Capitalist restructuring had led to widespread social discomfort, and the movement which ensued had a wide 'mass' composition along with the presence of highly politicised, predominantly Leninist extraparliamentary organisations. Various insurrectional situations developed where there was a conscious presence of anarchists. Their aim was not to convince the exploited to become anarchists like them, but to contribute insurrectional anarchist methods to intermediate struggles. At times, however, it was necessary to give people a brief outline of what anarchists want, hence the origins of the final sketch "What are anarchists?" given out by Catania anarchist group Rivolta e Liberta in a specific situation. In those days revolution sometimes seemed just around the corner...

However, we are still here, proposing a different reading of these texts. The old structures have disappeared into oblivion, the new ones are less easily distinguishable, but not for that mean less danger for the spirit of freedom. The question is not to turn to the past but to reflect on age-old problems with a new, revolutionary imagination and creativity projected into the future, which in many ways is far more complex than those far off days only a few decades ago.

Jean Weir

The Revolutionary Struggle

To study methods of revolutionary struggle without first having a clear idea of what we mean by revolution can be extremely dangerous and could lead to quite disconcerting consequences.

Unfortunately this mistake has often been made. The Leninists in particular have repeatedly come out with concepts that are applicable to war in general, often influenced by reading Clausewitz, or a Lenin who read Napoleon, Clausewitz, Moltke, von der Goltz, Frederick the Great, etc. Hence all the conclusions relative to a dialectic of war and peace, which in the best of cases is very far-fetched. What is even more

serious, this leads to an eminently authoritarian concept of revolution, seen as the coming out of a particularly gifted personality or an elite of particularly gifted people with a strategic plan similar to that of traditional warfare, which they carry through to victory. Those who have ended up on this road are men such as Caesar, Napoleon, Trotsky, MaoTseTung, all fabricators of victories which came to nothing in their need for results at any cost.

In this way the revolution becomes a theoretical problem, and the revolutionary struggle a question of strategy. In a recent book Cesare Milanese saw Lenin and Trotsky studying the origins of the 'revolutionary ideas of Bolshevism' together at the British museum in the years between 1900–1903 as though they were somehow sowing the seeds of future victories.

It is clear, at least for us, that with such prospects a methodology of revolutionary struggle becomes no more than a military manual whereas, if anything, it should be a manual for militants. There is a considerable difference between the two. The military man in the traditional sense of the term is merely an object who must obey orders and die, the militant in revolutionary terms is a subject who must think and, if necessary, also die. It is therefore impossible to suggest or impose on the latter precepts which would be acceptable only to the first.

Now the fundamental error is lack of faith in the constructive capacity of the masses, hence the revolutionary individual believes in having to work, albeit in the depths of the British museum, not in the latter's interests but in place of them, independently of any consideration of their presence. They don't realise that revolution is not just a warlike event, it is also, and principally, a human and social one. All this inevitably leads to new and more terrifying authoritarian structures.

It is quite true that an active minority can carry out preventive clarification. But to go from this to considering their action as something separate from the social context, from the effective situation of the masses—as in the case of a science of revolutionary war that is valid in absolute—seems quite absurd to me.

It is not at all true that methods of revolutionary struggle can grow from an abstract conception of the latter. To think in this way is misleading concerning the real significance of revolutionary methodology. That is why, before examining methods, it is necessary to clarify a few points: the concept of revolution, the alternative (only apparent) between violence and nonviolence, and the (concrete) alternative between authority and freedom.

The concept of revolution

Never has any term been more controversial. Even fascists have spoken of revolution. The climb to power by the Bolsheviks in Russia is considered revolution, and the French revolution is considered to be that of the Rights of Man. Different and contrasting situations, different periods, different problems but persistence in the use of the same word with all the consequences that this entails. The revolution is a change of values,

not a banal modification of norms. With the revolution new situations, new institutions are born and past conditions and privileges are destroyed as a climate of justice and equality comes to take the place of the preceding one of tyranny and social division. But this schema corresponds little to an effective analysis of the elements necessary to determine a modification in the situation of privilege following the revolutionary event.

Here a disturbing component appears on the scene making a linear application of the revolutionary principle, which everyone agrees is of a libertarian nature, impossible. A look at this component reveals two defective situations, one that is typical of the active minority, the other that is typical of the masses. The first is determined by the fact that the active minority, who should be the first to have clear ideas, do not have them at all and often get tangled up in immediate prospects, easy solutions and come to agreements with elements that are only revolutionary in appearance and in fact are fundamentally counterrevolutionary. The second is determined by the fact that the masses have submitted to the constrictions of authority for too long so are not able to accept the new anti-authoritarian structure like a bolt from the blue. If we add to this the forces of the residual reaction and the inability to foresee the construction of a truly revolutionary organisation with essentially functional and not structural or pyramidal concepts, we should have some idea of the problems involved.

That is why the task of the active minority must be to transform the atmosphere and prepare it for the struggle against authoritarian ideologies. In other words, to prepare for revolution. In order to do this it is necessary to fight a violent system with means that are violent. There is no alternative. Our fighting must not be a blind writhing of exasperation, but a rational blow with a cold precise look at our enemy. Without hesitation but without hatred, which would not only cause more damage than good, but undermine the whole revolutionary process on a moral level.

The alternative between violence and nonviolence

As we have said, these alternatives are illusory as the doctrine of nonviolence does not exist in reality. The latter is merely a degeneration of the principle of defensive violence or a simple play of words as there is merely recourse to violence with a banal sophism. When the Indian disciples of the great theoretician of nonviolence surrounded a reactionary who wanted to force them to accept his demands, let us say following a strike, and enclosed him in a circle leaving him bareheaded in the midday sun, they were using one of the techniques of nonviolence. So we are sure that there is no alternative whatsoever to the theory of revolutionary violence intended as defensive violence for anyone who wants to fight and destroy a system of infamy and shame.

We are convinced that only a violent revolution will be able to solve the social problem at the stage in which countries in various parts of the world today have been determined or at least influenced by the acute phase of bourgeois or State capitalism.

But there is no need to believe that revolutionary violence, simply because we define it 'defensive' must necessarily be used after the forces of reaction have unleashed their offensive, have attacked the revolutionary forces or, even worse, put a preventive counter-revolution in to effect. It would be pure suicide to think this.

Revolutionary violence is preventive organisation and preventive attack on the bourgeois forces. It is the struggle against State institutions, it is the specific search for confrontation, aimed at the surrender of the State superstructure. Revolutionary violence is initiative, the preparation of guerrilla organisations, the formation of the forces of resistance, and the thinking out of new programmes of attack. Nevertheless revolutionary violence is still defensive violence. In fact the institutions, the State, the bourgeois structure, the military repressive forces, the police and every other expedient put into effect by the shrewd pillage organised by the bosses, is in itself a provocation, an attack, a sentence, a systematic blow. Even when all these repressive forms take on the loose aspect of dialogue and tolerance, even when we feel a familiar hand on the shoulder, precisely then is the moment to strike harder, more deeply.

The generating strength of revolutionary violence must be considered at the base of every attempt to liberate the oppressed, it being unthinkable for the authentic mechanisms of economic and political factors to determine the maturity of the revolutionary situation on their own. It needs the will of men, their predetermined conscious actions, their violent actions directed against institutions.

The alternative between authority and freedom

But the breaking up of values caused by the revolution can go in two directions. The first is the authoritarian one, favoured by the fact that the revolutionary moment is more chaotic than anything, giving little time for reflection. It is a moment in which situations strengthened by men's will intersect with situations created by the power of things and the economic and political structures. The presence of the old authoritarian ideological structure, most often the fruit of the bourgeois organisational and productive structures, cannot be eliminated easily. If to this situation is added the presence of people who are unprepared for anti-authoritarian solutions, people with little faith in the possibility of the self-determination of the masses, one can understand why the possibilities of an authoritarian development of the revolution are many.

There remains the other direction, the anti-authoritarian one. A more conscious, difficult direction. Not so much because the objective situations determined by prevalently economic factors are in contrast with this kind of solution as because the active minority may not have the necessary faith in the masses that this solution requires, making them feel entitled, for the superior aims of the revolution, to put themselves in their place. It is here that the great incomprehension that we took up at the beginning of these pages lies. The superior aims of the revolution no longer exist when it is betrayed by the authoritarians, when the initial anti-authoritarian vision becomes com-

promise with governmental structures under the vestiges, let us say, of a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Unfortunately today in the present state of antibourgeois libertarian development with its flourishing of doctrines and pseudo-revolutionary tendencies, expectations of an immediate anti-authoritarian revolution do not appear favourable. In any case the conscious participation of forces within the liberation movement, their constant and documented actions in favour of an education to freedom, and their increasing opening towards the elimination of sectarianism, are all elements which will open the way to a libertarian presence and action within future anti-authoritarian revolutionary solutions. The post-revolutionary struggle of tomorrow will be even harder than that of today, but that must not scare us. The road to the real revolution could also pass through the authoritarian or pseudo-revolutionary one.

Violence and Nonviolence

The question of the difference between violence and nonviolence is usually posed wrongly because of the class interests and emotive reactions it triggers off.

State violence and the terrorism of the bosses knows no limits or moral obstacle. Revolutionaries, and anarchists in particular, are quite justified in responding to this violence with revolutionary violence. Complications arise when we examine the positions of those who support nonviolence. In appearance only do they choose peaceful methods, which when seen in isolation are not violent, i.e. do not physically attack the adversary. When seen within the general framework of the struggle, their interventions (apart from those of organisations who use nonviolence as an alibi to leave things as they are) turn out to be just as violent as those carried out by the supporters of 'violence'. A march of 'pacifist' demonstrators is itself a violent event which upsets the order of exploitation. It is a demonstration of strength, a show of force. It does not differ from the 'violent' demonstration, at least in the choice of objective. From the strategic and revolutionary point of view, the idea of a violent demonstration capable of winning and holding a military victory is unthinkable today. In so saying, we do not mean that we should refuse revolutionary violence. We only mean we must be clear so as to avoid sanctifying the machine gun on the one hand or becoming the policeman of the situation on the other.

A purely verbal distinction between violence and nonviolence is a false one. A well-fed bourgeois can easily 'theorise' the most unchained violence against the boss class but only with difficulty will he put it into effect in conditions requiring total dedication to the revolutionary task. Most often his violence is purely verbal. In practice he prefers things to remain as they are because, among other things, that allows him to continue to exercise his fiery rhetoric.

Another equally well-fed bourgeois might feel himself transported to an exaltation of nonviolence, but still as something theoretical, something condemning the negative so-

called instincts of struggle and violence and sanctifying the positive so-called instincts of peace and brotherhood. Only with difficulty however will this bourgeois put his nonviolent principles into practice in a total daily involvement in the social struggle. He will prefer the comfort of the situation as it is, where he can carry on with his reflections on peace and brotherhood.

Before speaking of violence and nonviolence a distinction should be made as to whether the question is being applied to a real situation, or whether it is simply an abstract theory and there is no intention of actually applying it. Only in the case of the former is it possible to discuss the strategic and military conditions that render nonviolent methods less effective and more easily overcome by power. But this discussion is one which comes afterwards, it is a question of method and never an abstract one. We are not interested in philosophical discussions on violence that lead to theories of the hereditary biological violence of the species, etc., which stink of theology. What is important is to approach the struggle in its reality. The rest is a question of choice of means and the best way to put them into effect. If we are personally convinced that nonviolent methods are unsuitable in the social struggle today, not for this are we against the comrades who see their own dimension of struggle in nonviolent methods. What is important is that the struggle be engaged in seriously, that it not be limited to speaking of 'nonviolent struggle' as an alibi so that the police will leave us alone.

Abstract discussions on violence (nearly always fiery and bloody) and just as abstract discussions on nonviolence (nearly always idiotic and paradisiacal) are equally disgusting. We can only respond effectively to the historic crime of exploitation, terrorism, and institutionalised violence with struggle, using any means we choose. The violence (or nonviolence) of words and speeches will change nothing.

Autonomous Base Nuclei

Analysis of instruments of struggle cannot leave out of consideration an evaluation of the conditions under which the struggle is taking place. To prepare an instrument that is capable of attacking and defeating the project of the bosses therefore requires an analytical effort that goes beyond what the mere technicalities of the instrument might lead one to suppose.

Autonomous base nuclei are minimal instruments of intervention in the reality of the struggle. They are the smallest organisational form, which allow one to reconstruct—at the level of the revolutionary—individual tissue which always runs the risk of tearing on contact with daily solicitations. An old or a new instrument of struggle? The answer is not simple. The long history of exploitation sees the stubborn reappearance of forms which often come to be rejected at certain phases in the struggle, only to re-emerge then be rejected once again. Only an outsider would see these 'returns' as mere revarnished trophies of the past. In substance, an instrument of struggle takes on a meaning (not just a 'new' meaning) when it establishes a meaningful relationship with the level of the

clash in course. In the case of the contrary not only will it not be a 'new instrument', it will not be an instrument at all, merely a conditioned reflux of power itself.

The spectacular phase of capitalist dominion is tending to recede today. The element of representation which allowed for the transferral of life to within preestablished limits of the rhythms of exchange, transforming man and his things into symbolic abstractions, has taken the form of repetitiveness. Relations of exchange in which a presumed harmony was reached have now become repetition, changing not only the relationship of man and his things within the process of production, but also that of man and time. With the coming about of the dominion of repetitiveness time is stored, packaged.

Let us take two borderline cases. The organisation of production was aimed at the 'make believe' of a world where violence entered the spectacle of the elimination of violence within the harmony of production. The factory was a miniature model of the harmonious society where social conflicts were resolved in the approximate (but always satisfactory) resolution of the bosses' technical problems. Production took on fideistic aspects. Commercial exchange came to be lived through the rationalisation of scientific knowledge. The spectacle of production became the spectacle of harmony. Not only did it serve to create the conditions of established order, it became possible to 'believe' in the existence of the latter, and its universal value. The typical worker complied with these conditions of existence perfectly and, in exchange for a part of the social product, accepted the defence of his own state of servitude. Those who were excluded by the process of differentiation which capital renders indispensable, summed up their rage in terms of 'lack of acceptation', leading to violent destructive explosions and progressive englobing to within the area of wage earning.

Another minority proclaimed itself within this spectacle: the seekers of fire, forefathers of the present day negators of any condition of exchange. Reference to the drug addict is obligatory. The seeker of fire, as well as belonging to a restricted minority, constituted the most coherent response to the formal dominion of capital and its representative spectacular order (dominion). Like the factory, the consumption of drugs required a very closed framework, an obligatory place where wealth was produced or destroyed (which is the same thing). To drug oneself openly would have been unthinkable, just as production 'islands' or working days organised as one wanted was. Money was the maximum form of the meaningful, either in the abstract form of actual wealth or as an instrument of spectacular exchange.

The factory and the opium den both required the spectacle of the exorcizing of violence. The mythical sacrifice was consumed (and in many ways is still consumed in more backward conditions of capital) to prevent real explosions of violence.

Let us look at the second borderline case. Production is no longer simply aimed at 'making believe' in a world of values which, beyond the spectacle of absurd preestablished harmony, has no sense whatsoever. A more immediate, measurable aim is being programmed, that of repetitiveness. No longer the reassembling of qualitative contrasts in a fictitious global harmony, but a summing up of uniformities. If once one was pushed to buy a TV, now one is pushed to buy whole TV programmes, the stock

of sports, cultural, culinary, musical, etc., programmes. The model of value is precisely this accumulation. The equivalent of consumerism will be drowned in this generalised need for unity of product. Clothes will all be the same, cars all the same, films all the same, sexual acts all the same, gestures, words all the same. The very capacity to grasp differences will weaken to the point of disappearing. Comic strips educated us a long time ago concerning the magic of reiteration. We do not enjoy a strip of Charlie Brown for its novelty but for the way its novelty dialogues within an absolute, mortifying repetitiveness. The same goes for Diabolik. Special prisons apply this technique to the full: they are no longer places where blood spatters the walls, but where the obsessional repetition of gestures has almost completely taken the place of the blood-curdling representation of the torture of the past. Repetition is an incredible factor in the scale of integration between production and consumption. Once separate moments from within the representative cycle of exchange, today the latter unite to the point of confusing themselves the one with the other. In this way power normalises the different, centralises the specific, homogenises the dissociated.

The majority of them (again the drug addict cannot be left out) are no longer seekers of fire. The will to penetrate the unknown is spent. There is no longer a search to open up levels of experimentation: repetitiveness has taken the place of representation. Capital no longer needs to make believe, now it can simply keep quiet, pushing people to produce/consume to be "like the others" and not "to distinguish themselves from others." By consuming the consumer reproduces himself as such, belonging to a social group of consumerism/production, no longer isolated individual/consumer/producer. Identity only renders intelligible the differences between social groups, not those within the group itself. There is no longer any shame attached to wearing, in thousands, the same pair of jeans. On the contrary, acceptation of this uniformity— which has been programmed by capital—is sought after and considered with a kind of fascination which the search for the different never had in the past.

Now let us face the second part of this text, that aimed at looking into the operative conditions of the instrument of struggle we have referred to as autonomous base nuclei. The spirit of revolutionary syndicalism always present somewhere in these autonomous organisational forms seems, in the face the changing conditions of capital, destined to disappear. A struggle at the level of claims takes for granted a dialogue with the bosses on the basis of a possible readjustment of wage contrasts. The mistake made in the past was to consider engagement in that direction positive, because a positive outcome gave a wider field of action to the producers themselves. This has now been channelled by capital first towards the sacrificial representation of the negation of violence, then towards the homogenisation of the behaviour of consumer/producer.

That does not mean denying the validity of permanent conflict. The class clash marks the drastic limit beyond which lies the bloody mist of reactionary interclass collaboration. It is just that our enemy has mined the road with traps and it is important not to fall into them. One of these traps is the nullification of the increase in real wages. It is not true that it is possible to buy more with a wage increase, the same

things are simply bought at a higher price. But the trap is that one buys the 'same things'. Moreover, the greatest trap is that we are happy and content to buy the same things that others buy.

The unification of the equation production/consumption allows for the realisation of a struggle front as never before. Today the figure of the 'privileged producer', the worker who saw himself as different to the disinherited or lumpenproletarian no longer exists. At the technical level of production such distinctions are still operative but they are disappearing. Hammering on the need for repetition, power has obtained the great result of detaching privileged producers from consumer goods which were 'luxuries' compared to the increasingly large minorities, resulting in outbreaks of social conflict that are increasingly difficult to control. It has also had to pay the price of opening the road to a recomposition of the class front. The decomposition of production (and therefore of consumerism), the so-called crises, should have far more serious effects now than in the phase of formal dominion where the process of representation was able to keep productive strata separate from those excluded from wage earning. A sudden break up of uniformity could produce phenomena of mass rebellion compared to the little hysterical crises which came about in the opium dens of the past.

Claims for real wage increases are coming to be made in a different way however, obliging the institutions of class dominion to give in on the question of nominal increases. From individual appropriation to collective expropriation, from bad work to techniques of absenteeism, from collective reduction to collective destruction, from sabotage to public denunciation, from counter-information to the search for one's capacity to self-organise: everything must be used in an anti-boss dimension. But the vital element of transformation must be in the attempt to destroy the grandiose apparatus of repetitiveness, the homogenisation of the individual. In breaking up this repressive apparatus one endangers the very relationship consumption/production and the minimal conditions for attack are realised, allowing one to safeguard the creativity of the struggle.

The mythology of the past: the logo, the slogans, the 'analyses that explained everything', sacred monsters of a time which seemed close to the revolution, must be substituted with inventiveness, simplicity, modesty, awareness of one's limitations and one's possibilities. A nucleus is not a gymnasium of the revolution, it is not the point of reference which will overcome the order of capitalism, perhaps it is not even an adequate instrument of struggle, but it could become all this and far far more: it could become the small grain of sand that jams the machinery of capital.

Looking Forward to Self-Management

1. The problem of self-management is not just the technical problem of how to ensure the functioning of production before, during and after the revolution. It is a more complex problem that involves the very dynamic of the revolutionary process.

To study possible models of self-management without putting them in a revolutionary context means nothing at all as far as liberation is concerned.

To ask the meaning of self-management is to ask how a society entrusted into the hands of the producers would function. But at the same time it means asking if it is possible to self-manage the struggle at the present time, in the face of exploitation and genocide.

Self-management of the struggle comes first, followed by self-management of work and society. If self-management is to serve State production, then we are against it. If it is to serve as an instrument for deceiving the workers yet again, we are against it. If it is to serve as an alibi for some party to come to power on the backs of the masses, we are also against it.

2. The exploited will bring about the revolution because they are trapped and suffer the progressive loss of every positive aspect of social life. The mass movement is developing on the deterioration of the economic, social and cultural conditions which rendered the preceding State administration possible. The work of stimulus and clarification which the revolutionary minority is carrying out is part of this contradictory structure, soliciting the autonomous strength that exists within the masses, pushing them to construct the rudiments of self-managed organisation which, starting off from the struggle, can extend to the formation of generalised self-management through the self-managed revolutionary event.

3. In the waning phase of consumerism world economic power tried to use the Yugoslavian type model of self-management on a large scale. Such a solution would have been of very great danger to the workers' movement. If they had fallen into the trap they would have accepted the management of the places of production (only those most easily controllable, never the fundamental ones such as the banks, finance companies, railways or shipping lines), controlled by a bureaucratic political centre or in the hands of party leaders—technocrats in the service of a capitalism that has been rendered absolutely anonymous— or under some new kind of charismatic leader.

There would have been self-management in name alone. The workers, under the imperatives of a programming centre, would merely be self-managing their own exploitation. Strikes, for example, would be unthinkable when not specifically forbidden. This self-management would be equivalent to the militarisation of production.

4. In order to give themselves a perspective of selfmanagement workers must first oppose themselves to the present structure of collaboration between the various elements involved in their exploitation. These are: a) the political parties, including those who define themselves 'left-wing' and consider themselves the carriers of the revolutionary tradition; b.) the unions, including those who refer to revolutionary syndicalist doctrines and to anarcho-syndicalism.

The presence of this triple alliance, bosses, parties and unions, is pushing workers to build the bases of their own autonomy and conquer the essential elements necessary for taking the first steps towards self-management. This does not so much mean an advance in the level of the struggle as a qualitative leap which is attempting to attack

the anti-worker alliance brought about by the forces of reaction and their collaborators. It is the class situation in its complexity which is being put in question and examined in a new light. Workers' autonomy is the first step towards self-management.

5. Another essential phase in the perspective of self-management is workers' reappropriation of their creative capacity. The capitalist system, basing itself on the private ownership of the means of production, does not allow for the creative employment of those means by the worker. The activity of production is distorted and produces the phenomenon of alienation: production escapes the worker. His work is well and truly forced labour.

But the creative capacity of the working man or woman can only be recovered through the availability of the product, that is through a revolutionary process of reappropriation when a reactionary process of exploitation is in force. Revolution of work is therefore the self-managed organisation of these first elements of the future society, base production nuclei which grow from the autonomy of the struggle.

6. Information is a key element in the model of future exploitation. Moments of crisis in imperialist consumerism can be overcome by allowing comanagement carried out while maintaining absolute control over information. Any form of counter-information, any deviation from the data supplied by the central direction would be carefully excluded. What is known as preventive censure is a means of globalizing the process and of causing the fragmentation of the working class, thereby eliminating the nonproductive strata (controls, timekeepers, etc.), and reducing the importance of some of the intermediate strata (civil servants, etc.).

In this reactionary situation the element of struggle which fits in perfectly within the perspective of workers' self-management is the conquest of information. The workers organise information themselves, from the base, taking over its elaboration and interpretation, refusing the participation of any intermediary whatsoever to act as a filter—in the first place, of course, the unions.

7. The project of self-management begins to take form through the essential points we have listed: a) workers' autonomy, b.) recovery of the creative capacity, c) the conquest of information. It remains to be seen how this will come about, i.e. if by spontaneous germination within the workers' movement (due to the effect of certain structural changes), or by an intervention prepared by a precise minority. In our opinion the action of an anarchist minority within the mass fits in very well with the perspective of self-management. This does mean the hypothesis of a guide who, in any case would end up repeating social democracy's programme. It means action within the workers' movement itself, seeking to coordinate autonomous organisations in accordance with the interests of the workers, and aimed at safeguarding individual autonomy in the dimension of class autonomy.

8. The presence of an anarchist minority within the mass considers the problem of the choice of instruments in the struggle. We attack the interclassist and reformist parties, but not for this do we fall into a stale supporting of spontaneity. The points of reference are the workers' interests which they must recognise as such. A change

in structure, when based entirely on economic factors, does not necessarily mean an 'automatic recognition' of the latter. For example, a struggle for an increase in wages led by the unions is not always in the interests of the workers. It may be in their 'apparent' interests. On the contrary it may be in the 'effective' interests of their exploiters. Understanding this is the necessary foundation for the selfmanagement of the struggle and therefore for the firm establishment of the prospect of self-management.

The choice of means for the struggle, for example direct action, sabotage, the destruction of work, carries a need for clarification and an identification of the 'real interests' of the working class. The need for this work cannot be denied by an unfounded voluntaristic view of the phenomenon. Recognition of one's own interests is the most important condition for the realisation of the social revolution.

9. Past forms of struggle such as cooperatives, factory councils, rank and file committees, sectorial committees, etc., that have been tried out in different historical situations and under other types production relations, must undergo severe analysis.

In substance, the limitations of these forms are demonstrated in the fact that capitalist society still exists. The workers must analyse with precision the negative effect which this alienating situation has on instruments which in themselves contain valid elements of cooperation and self-management. For example, cooperatives can only produce—as they are organised today—an autarchic and corporative spirit, a spirit that denies the class struggle and every sentiment of solidarity. Whoever thinks differently, and believes that from cooperatives can grow the seeds of a future society, mutual aid for the benefit of all, is illuding themselves in that they are attributing to capitalism not only a utilizable technological component, but also a psychological component of selfmanagement which, in our opinion, does not exist.

10. The passage from the pre-revolutionary period to the revolution, and therefore to the construction of a new society, cannot come about in a sudden brusque way, unless care has been taken to construct the essential elements of a self-managed structure of the struggle. Self-management precedes the revolution, it is not a consequence of it.

If self-management were to be considered in its productive aspect alone, there would be a temptation to bring it about separately from the self-management of the struggle, resulting in the delegation of the struggle to a specific body (armed wing of the proletariat), to a specific party (workers' party), or to a precise minority in government (democracy in general). Capitalism is extremely interested in this choice being made by the workers' movement and it is exactly in this direction that it has been pushing it with all the means at its disposal, in particular by a massive use of the media. We must not fall into the trap

By placing the organisation of the struggle alongside the organisation of production in the perspective of self-management, reactionary and capitalist forces are automatically expelled from the field of action of the workers' movement. In fact, capital could never manage a struggle led by the workers autonomously, the instruments usually employed (parties and unions) would become useless in such a situation.

11. The revolutionary project is based on the existing relationship between producer and product. In this relationship other elements exist which affirm and modify it at the same time without transforming it radically. Clearly this relationship must be egalitarian, that is each according to his needs and from each according to his possibilities. It must be organised from the base, otherwise it will not be egalitarian. And it must be simple and elementary, that is it must spread to the abolition of the market mechanism which deforms needs as well as the economic aspect of production.

With self-management of the struggle organised from the base in small nuclei of workers at the level of production attacking the centres of exploitation, a movement of cohesion for a development of the conflict through the conquest of information could reach the definitive expropriation of capital, i.e. the revolution. The self-management and independence of organisms of struggle means at the same time independence of the organisation of production. It is impossible to make a difference between the two.

12. The prospect of self-management must be built carefully today, avoiding all the errors inherent in a separation between self-management of the struggle and self-management of production. The first to be interested in this separation are precisely the capitalists. If self-management of the struggle is separated from its logical consequences (self-management of production) the conscious minority of the proletariat become tired and disheartened. It leaves them in a confrontation with no outlet and drives them to remain in the 'comfortable' perspective suggested by the parties and unions. Separating self-management of production from its logical premise (self-management of the struggle), another important result is obtained for capital—emptying self-management of its revolutionary meaning, increasing production and profits, safeguarding institutions, and having the working class once again in the hands of the parties and unions.

Unity of the workers in the autonomy of the struggle, unity in the perspective of self-management, unity in the process of revolution and production. These are, in our opinion, the essential points of a correct analysis of self-management.

What are Anarchists

Who do anarchists struggle against

- Against the State (seen as the centralised organisation of power in all spheres—administrative, financial, political, military, etc.)
- Against government, which is the political executive organ of the State and makes all decisions concerning repression, exploitation, control, etc.
- Against Capitalism, which can be considered both as the flux of productive relations in course and individual capitalists, their activity, their projects and their complicity in this form

- Against the individual parts that the State and capital are divided into. In other words the police, judiciary, army, schools, newspapers, television, trade unions, large multinational firms, etc.
- Against the family, which forms the essential nucleus upon which the State structure is based
- Against the world of politics, therefore against political parties (all of them) (Parliament is the expression of bourgeois democracy, and the political ideology which serves to mask real social problems)
- Against fascists and all the other instruments of repression used by the State and Capital
- Against religion and the Church, which constitute a potent ally to repression
- Against the army, which is an armed force that is used against the people
- Against prisons, which institutionalise the repression of the poorest of the exploited classes
- Against asylums, which repress the different

What false ideas do anarchists struggle against

- Against reformism, which wants to set social problems right by using laws, political parties, parliaments, referendums, votes, etc.
- Against efficientism, which wants to reduce man to an automat always capable of working and obeying
- Against humanitarianism, which calls for peace and safety of an abstract idea of man but does not act concretely to attack class enemies
- Against nonviolence which blocks the just violence of the exploited which is their only arm of liberation
- Against patriotism which feeds the absurd idea of the homeland in preference to other nations, whereas the exploited have no homeland but are brothers of the exploited of the whole world
- Against militarism which justifies the function of armies with the swindle that their role is the defence of the homeland
- Against racism which defines a part of the human race as inferior

- Against male chauvinism which reduces women to sex objects
- Against feminism which closes itself within an asphyxiating inverted male chauvinism
- Against the delegate which separates the exploited from direct action
- Against hierarchy which educates towards social stratification
- Against obedience which represses all individuality
- Against authority which prevents the autonomous development of the individual
- Against progressivism, a modern version of evolutionism which is the ideological covering of reformism
- Against economism which puts the economics at the centre of the history of class exploitation
- Against trade unionism which is the direct product of economism and which means to limit the class struggle to claiming at the level of the workplace. Anarcho-syndicalism, with all its revolutionary declarations does not escape this reformist limitation

What anarchists want

— Abolition of the State, Government, Capitalism, the family, religion, the army, prisons, asylums and every form of power which uses the law to force others to do something. Therefore refusal also of any kind of workers' or socialist State and of any form of dictatorship of the proletariat

— Elimination of the private property of land, the tools of labour, materials, machines, factories, the land and anything else required for the production of what is necessary in order to live

— Abolition of salaried work and reduction of work to a minimum organised by individual groups federated on the basis of their own aptitudes and sympathies as well as on the basis of their own needs

— Substitution of the traditional family with life in common based on love and reciprocal affinity and on the basis of real sexual equality

— Organisation of life, such as that of production, based on free associations differing according to the problems to be faced, interests to be defended and affinities to be developed. The whole of these organisations federated on a local basis, by groups of communes, then widening the relations to a larger federation until it reaches the maximum possible of the liberated areas of the revolution

— Education free and aimed at an awakening of individual aptitude which in a liberated society will be meaningful only in the limits in which this liberation is realised

— The spreading of atheism and anti-religious propaganda, always necessary because on these problems even the liberation that has come about cannot exercise more than a limited clarification

— Completion of the social revolution until all domination of man over man be abolished.

The means anarchists want to use

— The specific anarchist organisation which is an active minority of conscious individuals who share personal and political affinity and give themselves the aim of calling on the exploited to organise themselves with a view to revolution.

— A federation of different anarchist groups who while changing nothing of their particular specific structure, link with each other with informal, federative pacts in order to better coordinate their own action

— Propaganda to explain through books, pamphlets, newspapers, leaflets, graffiti, etc. what the intentions of the ruling structure are and the dangers facing the exploited. Also to supply indications of the anarchist struggle and show who anarchists are, or to urge the exploited to rebel, denouncing the consequences of obedience and resignation

— The struggle to claim better conditions — Although we are not reformists, the struggle to obtain improvements in one's immediate situation (wages, habitation, health, education, occupational, etc.) sees anarchists present although they do not see these moments as ends in themselves. They push the exploited towards this form of struggle so that they can develop the elements of self-organisation and refusal of the delegate which are indispensable in order to develop direct action at all other levels

— Violent struggle to realise the social revolution along with the exploited. The attack against the class enemy (State, government, capital, church, etc.) must necessarily be violent, in the case of the contrary it would only be a sterile protest and would determine a reinforcement of class dominion. This attack could be

a) isolated attacks against individual structures or people who are responsible for repression

b) an insurrectional attack by a specific minority

c) a mass insurrectional attack

d) a mass revolutionary attack

Each of these levels, starting from the first, may or may not create the conditions leading to the successive one to develop. Political and economic analyses can foresee this possibility within certain limits, but cannot give an absolute response: action itself is the only test for action. The moral foundation of violent struggle already exists in the fact of repression as it has been exercised by power for centuries.

Why a Vanguard?

Original title: "Avanguardia, perche?" published in *Movimento e progetto rivoluzionaria*
Edizioni Anarchismo — Nuovi contributi per una rivoluzione anarchica — 1 — 1977

Translated by Jean Weir

Introduction by Bonanno

The ideas that follow are aimed at the problem of relations between the movement of the exploited and the revolutionary anarchist movement.

The conclusion is very simple and constitutes the starting point of a reflection that we are proposing to all comrades: it is not within the enclosure of the specific anarchist movement that one works for the revolution, but outside in the reality of struggles, which at this moment do not see us present. In this sense the anarchist movement still has a long way to go. In the face of the urgency of the situation it has become imperative for all sincere revolutionary anarchist comrades to reflect on the ways and conditions of organising oneself to contribute to the widening, in the libertarian sense, of the present situation of crises and discomfort.

The time for hesitation and waiting is over. May whoever is available for the revolutionary struggle seek his or her comrades and not indulge in waiting for a sign or clarification on the part of the specific movement.

AMB

Why a vanguard?

The problem of the vanguard has been gone into by all conscious revolutionaries past and present. They fear its dangers and try to see what causes it and how to eliminate it or attenuate its effects. The problem is far more serious for anarchists. They do not accept the political expedients that other revolutionaries end up justifying in their haste to take power.

All the same, anarchists also end up producing vanguards but they are careful not to call them such, a word they detest. But we have no fig leaf with which to cover

up reality, and if this includes structures that are the same or similar to those of the authoritarians, it is pointless to try to conceal the fact simply by using different words.

Is a vanguard necessary then?

There is no simple answer to this. Anarchists have tended to bury their heads in the sand until now, hoping to solve the problem through the use of metaphors.

We feel we must take a step forward and risk upsetting those that are obstinately holding on to their positions like the same old octopus on the same old rock.

Many have cut the problem short by simply stating that there is a need for a vanguard. Pushing the underlying ideology—always present in anarchism— in an authoritarian direction, they pull their sleeves up and set to work. With the aid of some extremely distilled and refined theories, they start to build mysterious constructions that are maxims of control and selection.

Such a position does not differ much from those who, categorically denying that there is any such thing as a vanguard in anarchism, refuse to see reality as it is.

This tendency—usually wrapped up in humanistic rhetoric bordering on nebulous idealism—is the sworn enemy of the former which it accuses of being the most sinister Leninism camouflaged as anarchism. On the other hand, the more sharp-witted part of the movement, aware of the difficulties involved in trying to justify some of the leadership, replace the term "vanguard" with "active minority" and similar euphemisms.

However, the problem is not just a question of words. We are not interested in substituting one term with another and explaining why, but are trying to get to the root of the problems that such a concept leads to. And the question does not change if we call the "thing" a vanguard or an active minority.

What is this thing then? What is a revolutionary vanguard?

The answer looks simple: it is an organic whole composed of the individuals that make it up. This organisation tends to cut itself off from and impose itself upon the revolutionary movement that produced it.

Let us look at this in stages.

There are many ways to justify the need for a specific organisation to take on certain problems that mass organisations cannot solve. Obviously, those who make up this organisation must have three attributes: a) knowledge; b) commitment; c) time. Power establishes itself on the basis of authoritativeness rather than authority in the narrow sense of the word. We are talking of revolutionary organisations in general, but let us not lose sight of those we are particularly interested in examining, anarchist organisations. It is precisely in the latter that elements of authoritativeness predominate over authority, leaving the underlying problem intact: that of the growth and consolidation of an organisation (therefore of a group of people) that exerts control over the rest of the movement.

The revolution is eminently an organisational event, so it is no wonder that a process of organisational superstructuring comes about when base organisations multiply. This could quite well be limited (at least in the early stages) by pointing to the questions that such an organisation should concern itself with and controlling it through a recall

of its delegates. We shall see why such expedients (limitation of tasks and recall of delegates) constitute very fragile bulwarks, and how these are often simply used to solve consciences, i.e. as alibis, rather than as instruments with which to limit power as such.

When the counterrevolution lets loose, this group tends to close in on itself. Repression and clandestinity have the effect of making it turn into a militarised group which (suddenly or gradually) loses its relationship with the old base organisations, the first to succumb to the repression. At other times the predominant organisational group splits into a number of separate or coordinated groups that—still limited in number—carry on the struggle, often drawing in those from the base organisation who prefer to go into clandestinity. We are looking at an extreme situation here that reduces the value of the work done at other times when the counterrevolution leaves the revolutionary movement relatively in peace. But the problems arising from this radicalisation are none other than those that already existed, now in a more rarified, obvious, form.

The conditions leading to the formation of the vanguard are therefore linked to the development of revolutionary activity itself. An organisation formed of men and women—the best available—emerges, and along with it the danger of its beginning to reason independently in keeping with the logic of all organisations, their main priority becoming their own survival. Such a conclusion would seem to implicate the inevitability of a vanguard, yet, on the contrary, I believe that it is possible to go beyond a minority logic. However, in order for this to become clear a number of points need to be considered.

The organisational question

Nothing is possible without organisation. Human life would stop and everything would fall into chaos. Organisation is indispensable to man to such an extent that any improvement in the latter, even if carried out by tyrants, is to be considered something positive. The very idea of progress would never have come about had organisation not been essential to man. In this sense, if history is the development of anything it is the development of something organised.

The power structure is a fairly refined organisation aimed at attaining ends for the benefit of a minority. The majority are engaged in bringing about these ends. But we cannot deny that the interests of the minority also hold certain positive aspects for the majority. The latter would rebel or die otherwise and the former's aims would not be reached.

The power structure is full of expedients for obtaining the maximum whilst giving the minimum. It elaborates these expedients and puts them into effect, modifying them from time to time in relation to the struggle carried out by the majority, i.e. the exploited. The latter, as a result of various—all dramatic—experiences of struggle, have developed organisations of their own to make the clash more effective. These have gradually entered the logic of exploitation and become an integral part of it,

coinciding with power's discovery of the untenability of absolutism and the idiocy of fascist irrationalism.

This is how democratic power was born, an organisation that continues to exploit the majority to the benefit of the minority but does so using the majority's own organisations of defence.

Moreover, what has made this possible is the fact that the defence organisations of the majority have nearly always come into effect after becoming legalised.

But organisational activity should not necessarily be seen as something that is built from the outside by specialists who make decisions according to their own aims. This interpretation contains two basic errors: what we could call the biological error, and the functionalist one. According to this way of thinking an organisation must structure itself more or less like an organism (have a head and limbs, therefore a hierarchy) and fulfill the essential requirements of efficiency and functionality. If the exploited majority cannot defend themselves because they are dispersed in single units (like the cells of organic tissue), we must put these cells together and build a body with a precious structure (i.e. trades unions and unions in general) suited to the aims in view, to oppose the bosses in the process of exploitation and to defend the majority.

The justification for this is the concept that, because the bosses' structure is monolithic, the defence structure should also be so.

The biological and functionalist analogy also dominated in the field of political defence, as party structures increased in importance alongside the decline of absolutist States.

The justification, the monolithicity of the State.

This is all quite pathetic. The great irony of history lies in the fact that it was power itself to decide the terms of the huge defence organisations. These terms were produced on an organic and functional basis, often as the involuntary consequence of certain modifications within the power structure itself. Clearly an organism of defence is a product of a particular historical period, and nearly always consolidates in a precise relationship with the power structure that conditions it and renders it possible. An incredible number of comrades maintain that they are revolutionary yet insist on the validity of using the defence structures of the exploited. They see the latter as instruments of struggle, unaware of the intimate relationship of dependency that exists between them and the structures of power. But history has contributed to clarifying this question. Each time the exploited have moved from defence to attack and a revolutionary mechanism has sprung into effect, other kinds of organisational structure have arisen.

The problem of the great defence organisations of the exploited is not the fact that they exist—something that is natural and ineliminable— but precisely the defensive dimension that they have adopted. That is why they "copy" the organisations of the adversary and use the same logic. On the other hand, organisations of attack do not reproduce the biological functionalism of the defensive ones. These organisational forms have no intention of becoming a great monolithic structure, so allow the process of

breaking up to continue. They do not want to reproduce the model of the adversary by using the same logic. It is true that organisations of defence can also be mobilised to attack but this turns out to be a military-style clash that might look revolutionary but which can have no other outcome than the persistence of the old power or the birth of a new one, possibly more tyrannical than the first.

Organisations of attack, on the other hand, are born on the basis of a social logic that takes people's needs, the level of exploitation and the extent of radicalisation that the clash has reached into account. These organisations do not suffer from functionalist illusions. They cannot be improved upon, they do not hope to grow. Neither do they put themselves in the logic of a "dialogue" with power. They are for the destruction of all power from the moment they appear, so in their very logic they are already "complete" in themselves. They can of course perfect themselves from the point of view of tactics, the preparation of their individual components or aspects of the military clash. But as far as the organisational aspect is concerned there is nothing to be improved upon and vice versa. They are beyond the logic of power. They are outlaws.

Not seeking quantitative growth they have no need for a head or limbs. They orientate themselves towards the reality of exploitation, emerging in their organisational completeness at the moment in which they attack power. They do not have one function among others, but have the "definitive function" of destroying power.

It is not important to describe here what forms these organisations of attack have taken in the history of the exploited (councils, soviets, committees, etc.), or might take in the near future. Nor are we interested in discussing an important and immediately obvious characteristic of these organisations, autonomy.

On the contrary, we feel that it is necessary to reflect upon two things: a) that these organisations never lose sight of the individual (that is also an organisation); b) in the destructive moment they become a model for the construction of the future society.

Now we have acquired a new problem. The single individual is an organisation, or rather is the fundamental organisation. Here the confusion concerning an apparent contradiction between individualism and anarchist communism disappears. While the former sometimes adopts attitudes that are strangely absurd (the defence of small property, the will to power, a disdain for communist life, etc.), most of this is no more than isolated attitudes that have had little contact with the reality of the struggles of the exploited. A typical case is that of the humanists who recognise themselves in anarchism but, hindered by their idealistic interpretation of the vicissitudes of man, end up losing the essential foundation of the exploiter/ exploited relationship. They bring the attributes of the old God down to earth and turn them into a new myth, quite similar to the old one that only served the designs of power.

This kind of individualism is clearly a distortion of the more rational doctrines of egoism. It denies the concept of organisation and tends to see man as continually realising himself within an animalistic dimension of the struggle for life. It sees the communist dimension as the negation of human development, the sacrifice of the individual to the good society. It fights for the liberation of the individual outside a

communitarian perspective, avoiding the fundamental premise that the slavery of one single individual in the world is also my own.

On the contrary, when individualism is seen correctly it starts from the concept that, although simple and basic from the point of view of social dynamics, the individual is already a complex organisation. This organisation can establish precise relationships with other organisation-individuals and is capable of changing or regulating them. It can even realise itself in the absolute sacrifice, the conscious negation of itself— death— when this seems necessary in order to overturn the exploiter-exploited relationship that renders the organisation-individual incomplete and unhappy.

Supreme egoism, i.e. autonomy, is the organisational perfectionment of the individual, a precise relationship that does not infringe upon other organisation-individuals.

A proper exposition of this problem is extremely important for anarchism. It leads to a clearer vision of the struggle against exploitation, even when this comes about in situations that are confusing or in not quite orthodox organisational forms. When it comes to defence it should be said that anarchist structures often condemn any form of struggle that is produced independently of themselves, considering them to be individualist in the negative sense of the word and branding them "objectively provocatory".

For individualism, the essential point is that the individual is an autonomous organisation that usually reacts against what has been established by power, often by working out its own precepts, clarifying itself and taking the initiative. At that moment a precise moral event sets in motion: the individual, no longer an unconscious instrument in the hands of power, acquires an autonomous perspective that is of an essentially organisational character.

The other aspect of the organisational moment we have defined "attack" is its preparation as the destructive instrument to act upon the reality of exploitation, and as a model to build from once this relationship is abolished.

Objective conditions push the great mass of exploited to look for these organisational models, which are impeded by the power of the adversary. If the heavy power structure starts to show signs of weakness at some point, needs and problems must be faced differently. Usually, in building forms of attack, the mass also build forms to solve the problems of survival. The latter are very significant because they are based on communist relations.

The illusion of quantity

The main element of the organisational structuring of defence is quantitative growth. This has been conditioned by the logic of power.

The greater the numbers, the more an organisation is considered to be significant, strong, well known, important. In this sense, if the power structure is the stronger organisation, if it is at its peak and covers every manifestation of associated life, any

organisation that intends to contrast it and represent the rights of the great majority of exploited must aim to be as strong as possible.

At first glance such statements seem quite unexceptional. And so they are if one puts oneself in the logic of power. If we want to defend ourselves from an evil force we need to oppose it with a good force i.e., one that is, if not equally strong, at least strong enough to scare it. But in this way one is putting oneself in the logic of power, unaware that any significant growth in numbers simply shifts the class relationship without actually putting the latter in question. It does not abolish classes.

By channelling revolutionary and reformist organisations towards the quantitative illusion, power has obtained one great result. It has equalised the latter at the organisational level, reducing differences to whoever shouts loudest. And we well know how he that shouts loudest is often the one most easily disposed to stopping shouting all of a sudden, or to start shouting for the opposite side.

Revolutionary organisations cannot grow quantitatively. If they do, that being in the logic of power, the difference between revolutionaries and reformists becomes no more than a question of semantics, something that power does not fear.

Of course, quantity does not catch the reformists unaware. Betrayal is implicit in their discourse and so is their insertion into relations that are managed by power. Now dominated by the structures of exploitation, they act out the role assigned to them in the modern liberal-social setup. On the other hand, even revolutionaries in good faith fall prey to the quantitative illusion. That is the point that interests us most, which we want to go into here.

A revolutionary comrade must be considered to be in good faith until proved otherwise. Questions of clarification and criticism must never be at a personal level but must focus on the comrade's choices and the consequences that they have on the whole organisation. In this sense the comrade's good faith must be put to the test through a decisive action that gets to the root of things and does not stop at appearances, in other words through a penetrating action that is not limited to the field of abstract revolutionary ideology.

The quantitative illusion is very important for authoritarian comrades, but always within certain limits. They realise that they are starting off on the wrong foot and that it is not possible to go beyond something that would merely like to become part of real situations of struggle. Unfortunately, they often prefer to wait for that to come about (i.e. be facilitated) by the precipitation of events. They proceed to build strong organisations that are revolutionary in appearance alone, being in fact organisations of defence, therefore losers before they start. Numerical growth in the latter leads comrades to foster this illusion. It makes them feel strong and secure. So they grow steadfastly in that direction, which is precisely what power wants: the acceptance of an innocuous expression of revolution as something that is quantitative and nothing else, so it is easily pulled back into the logic of the power system.

The illusion of quantity is absolutely critical for anarchist organisations, which cannot become useless, sterile and counterproductive, their growth simply quantitative.

Nor would it be plausible for them to simply wait for events to precipitate. Anarchists would not be able to act in something that is structured as a defence organisation, as they would not be willing to transform it into a pyramidal structure. At a radical point in the struggle when events precipitate, they would be forced to put their organisation to the test, dismember it and take it back to the elementary form that it should have had at the start. Much of the history of anarchism can be seen from this optic: the failure of the Russian revolution, the authoritarian involution of the Spanish one.

Many anarchists are now playing the part of Penelope, weaving what they know they will have to unstitch, precisely at the moment when the aims they are struggling for come about. Apart from a few marginal efforts, the present organisational forms of the anarchist movement are no different from any other organisation that is far from the reality of the struggle. These organisations must accept the quantitative logic if they do not want to seem anachronistic (or elitist), even though they know that such a logic inevitably leads to their denying the basic principles of anarchism, or to the complete undoing of what they have just built.

If one holds on to the illusion of quantity, the role of the vanguard must unavoidably be accepted. Authoritarians have nothing against this. Anarchists, on the other hand, have a great deal against it. Unfortunately, this being-against-the-vanguard often turns into a sterile debate, the argument turning to the difference between authoritarian structures and libertarian ones. This point deserves to be gone into further.

Authoritarian group and libertarian one

At this point we want to go into the concept of the group. Up until now we have been speaking about organisation, comparing various organisations that are objectively different but which all borrow the logic of defence, therefore of power. These organisations are different in many aspects but share one fundamental one, their capacity to be used by power. Organisations for economic defence, political defence, reformist organisations and revolutionary organisations are all the same—words are meaningless—if they operate in forms that are outside the struggle.

However, within that uniformity there is a difference between a structure by groups and a structure by sections or other synonyms that usually characterise unions and parties. If we look closely we can find a semblance of reality, still external to the reality of the struggle but which claims to make a difference. The structure made up of groups considers itself to be libertarian and accuses the other of being authoritarian.

Basically, it is easy to make this accusation as it is welcomed by those responsible for the authoritarian parties and organisations themselves. In fact, central committees, hierarchies and other similar devices are not concealed but are justified by a series of discourses on the need for the leader, representation, a transitional period and other fantasies that are not worth mentioning here because they are as old as the hills.

On the other hand, a structure by groups is seen as the basis of every libertarian organisation. This is correct, but we need to know what kind of groups we are talking

about. Nothing prevents authoritarian organisations from being based on groups, or the existence of actual authoritarian groups. In fact the libertarian structure should not be considered a typical group structure but rather one that is characterised from within and distinguishes itself from the other kinds.

The authoritarian group has a leader and a hierarchical microstructure. The leader makes the most important decisions without consulting the group members, and makes them one at a time in such a way that the others never know what the next decision will be. This situation of uncertainty is what makes it possible for the leader's authority to become permanent, and from time to time the latter is called upon to set out tasks for all the others. Nothing prevents vanguardist organisations from structuring themselves this way. Moreover, this is often quite a normal state of affairs in situations of clandestinity.

The libertarian group does not have a leader and does not have an internal hierarchical structure. The distribution of tasks is decided upon collectively. The line of behaviour is decided by all of the components of the group and members can choose to carry out one task rather than another, always with common agreement. The state of uncertainty that exists in the face of a new event does not paralyse or traumatize anyone and does not require the intervention of a "specialist", in that each individual is already aware of the situation and is prepared to face it along with all the others.

If we are assuming that only authoritarian groups can constitute a vanguard, we must look at the conditions that would prevent a libertarian group from producing one.

Just because the libertarian group does not have a leader does not mean that it is not capable of producing a vanguard. In itself this simple fact is not alarming, it becomes serious when the group is operating in a situation outside the struggle. Let us see why.

Above all, let us see how leaders do emerge within such groups. We have said that decisions are worked out as openly as possible. Everybody participates. But not everybody has the same level of preparation. It therefore transpires that discussions move in the direction of one or more particular points that correspond to the ideas of those who are better prepared. In other words, the components of the group start to divide, not on the basis of their own ideas, which can often be quite vague or superficial, but on the basis of some interpretative lines supplied by the better prepared elements. Then there is a passage from polarisation to concentration, usually because the theses of the leaders (by now identifiable) reach some agreement, i.e. divergences are blunted in order to reach unanimity. In extreme cases, where a concentration of opinion is not possible, a fracture and consequent separation results.

The problem of the formation of a majority and minority, or the libertarian equivalent of the same, is not relevant here. What concerns us is that the polarisation of opinions comes about on the basis of interpretative lines that are supplied by some elements (a minority within the group) constituted by the leaders.

It should be added that these elements are usually the ones that frequent the group most assiduously, participate in all the work, engage themselves totally. That often coincides with a certain level of freedom from other kinds of work that are necessary in order to live. Without referring to the extreme case of revolutionary professionalism, we could say that the leaders of libertarian groups are usually comrades with a certain amount of time at their disposal, which they dedicate to the life of the group. The group unavoidably takes on their physiognomy, their cultural and social characteristics that involuntarily but consistently select themselves.

The other great problem is that, alongside the existence of leaders, it is often possible to identify the existence of "problematics" that are introduced to the group by the same, then submitted to the process of democratic scrutiny for discussion, etc. In this way the choice of methods of struggle, the theoretical foundations and various political positions are dealt with outside the group then, with a typically paternalistic process, everything is then discussed with all the comrades. The group thus becomes an objective, abstract entity for the individuals that make it up, as its relations only enter the reality of some of them. A formal difference in the style of command within the group turns out to be even more conditioned than the authoritarian one. In other words we are faced with an essentially authoritarian structure that is far more efficient than the authoritarian group itself. The latter always has the problem of how to overcome individual uncertainty in the case of having to act in the leader's absence. The libertarian group, on the other hand, reaches an envious homogeneity of decision by acting as we have just seen, although there is little to be envied at the subjective level.

The worst question they have to face is how to pilot problems instead of confronting the group with them directly. Now, such a situation is impossible if the group is acting directly within the struggle when, as we shall see further on, a whole series of other problematics arise. So, given that the group is acting in an external organisation, tied as we have said to the illusory perspective of quantity, it becomes indispensable for someone within the group to carry out the fundamental tasks. On the contrary, in the case where the group is acting within struggles, the function of the leader is quite simply that of orientation on the grounds of his wider preparation and availability of time, not that of choosing the problems to be discussed.

This distinction is of the greatest importance. It marks the watershed between the fictitious movement and the real movement.

The relationship between groups: the vertical structure and the horizontal one

A group, in that it is an elemental structure of a wider organisational reality, would be insignificant if it were to remain isolated from other groups. It would contain all the defects of an external organisation without managing to have any effect on a wider range of opinion.

If the group consolidates on the basis of affinity emerging from the ideas and opinions of some of the leaders, as well as its geographical situation, which also exerts an influence, that does not mean that it cannot develop a wider organisational base. It can establish relations with other groups—those not too far from its own positions—based on some of the theses put forward by the leaders.

These relations can come about vertically in the case of authoritarian groups, or horizontally in the case of libertarian ones. It is the horizontal structure that we are interested in looking at here, as this is characteristic of anarchist groups.

Various groups federate or keep in contact in one way or another, supporting each other in the minimum common intention that can be drawn from a few basic principles and theoretical points worked out in advance. Even a loose agreement concerning these ideas and principles is sufficient to guarantee the persistence of the horizontal structure. No one group predominates over any other, no group claims to carry out the function of leader, and no group makes a decision concerning the others without getting in touch with the rest of the federation or informal union, who then state what they want. They can also use common instruments such as papers or commissions. These are edited or compiled by various groups, or by one single group, following a discussion among delegates, using various procedures (ratification of the group, recall of delegates, etc.) in order to try to guarantee the structure as far as possible, keeping it horizontal.

Things are not quite like that in reality. Inevitable processes favour the formation of a group of leaders that take over the federation or union of groups, pushing them towards the basic interpretation of the underlying thesis which, according to them, is the only one that is valid for all the comrades. This is not reached directly. As we have seen, each group produces its leaders, usually one or two, maximum three. Very often their preparation and availability are greater than that of the others. In this way a true leader emerges. We know how the retrieval of opinion works, the process of decision-making within groups. The phenomenon of polarisation is overcome, often in order to try to give the group uniformity and cohesion but when taken to a wider level (geographically), these phenomena do not fail to reappear. It can be instructive to read accounts of debates or reports written by delegates from individual groups to see what we are talking about. The polarisation of ideas is quite evident. Usually only the leaders are present at wider meetings, each one of whom is more "inside" the problems of their own particular group. More often than not it is they who have worked out the ideas that the group has ended up attributing to itself. Hence a great divergence on whatever problem is being faced, with a strong possibility of never reaching any precise conclusions.

Usually a broad program is established, be it old or new, with propositions that are general enough for everyone to agree with. Care is taken to limit the program to general principles, otherwise the internal contradictions represented by the various interpretations would be irreconcilable.

Even if the structure remains horizontal, if the revocable delegate tries to avoid any form of professionalism, if the debate within the structure is always alive—in fact, the

further it finds itself from the various points of struggle the more virulent it gets—that does not mean that spontaneous formations acting along the lines of a vanguard do not appear.

So now we have a series of groups that organise in a structure that is outside the struggle. By this fact alone they see themselves as the conscious vanguard of something that is considered to be unconsciousness, therefore in need of being approached and receiving clarification. Propaganda and proselytism are important for this enlightened kind of vanguard. Within the latter, through an inevitable process of selection, an even more restricted vanguard is formed, a group of leaders that act starting from certain decisions concerning basic ideas and the interpretation of individual problems that do not always come from a wider base but are often elaborated in specific places, i.e. at meetings of the restricted vanguard.

One thus becomes aware of the extreme apex of an organised whole, that takes on the task of piloting an instrument for acting on the mass in one way or another.

As far as the organised structure as a whole is concerned, its reduction to a vanguard comes about because it is detached from the real struggle and because it is seen as an instrument by the leaders who want to use it as such.

At first glance it would seem that such things regard authoritarian structures rather than libertarian ones, because, as we said they go against the latter's aims and intentions. Each and every militant that enters a libertarian group is making a choice, not just on the basis of an abstract program but also because he or she wants to live differently, with a way of working together that is free from that absurd situation of authoritarian groups where only the leader or leaders know what is to be done and everyone else waits to take orders. When it actually comes to it, reality takes charge of changing opinions one way or another.

Authoritarian groups are finding it more and more difficult to hold on to the classic centralised structure. Leaders are conceding a certain freedom of action to their subalterns, even if processes of reification, i.e. the transformation of the organisational apparatus into a "thing" are always in act, considerably influencing the behaviour of the individual militants.

In libertarian groups, as we have seen, the idyllic situation of maximum freedom of expression is impeded by the lack of preparation and scarce availability of most of the members. For this reason a certain decision-making power ends up in the hands of a few leaders.

This situation is the same as the former in appearance alone. In reality we are looking at two very different forms of degeneration that lead to different consequences. In the first case, i.e. in the authoritarian structure, the process of reification is such that individual militants become so integrated with the organisation that it becomes inconceivable for them to imagine that the latter could make a mistake. Hence their failure to question orders from above. The structure must be right, precisely because of some of its internal, quite irrational, characteristics. Its reflection as an organised structure cannot be wrong, in that they live the same life as the organisation. They

personify it in a way, giving it a human semblance. The personality cult and all its consequences are a logical conclusion of this direction.

In the second case, i.e. in the horizontal, libertarian structure, methods of discussion, a minimum of decency and various other elements contribute to preventing a reification of the organisation. Even many elements of the base who have nothing to say on certain arguments do not accept the typically authoritarian principle that the organistion is always right. In this case the leaders' authority should more correctly be called authoritativeness, although the use of a different word does not alter the consequences of the phenomenon.

It should be added that there quite often exists what is know as an esprit de corps. Militants of a libertarian organisation should be free from such absurdities. Yet reality shows us how one often becomes a prisoner of them. The militant at the base of the organised structure sees the latter in a certain way, that usually coincides with the way the leader that influences it sees it. By simply accepting this situation, he cannot see his organisation at the same level as others do. He sees something better in it, something more fitting to the principles he vaguely feels are close to his "truth", which are codified succinctly for the noninitiated. The leader is even closer to identifying with the organisation. He feels there is something definitive in it, feels it is *his* to a much greater degree than the simple militant does. Whereas for the latter the intermediary of the leader was necessary, for him the relationship is direct. He feels the pulsations directly. All this leads to his being extremely indulgent towards his own organisation and extremely critical of others.

An irrational evaluation of the organisation one belongs to can lead to strange situations. A great deal of effort is made to expand, perfect and fortify a structure, without analysing whether it corresponds to the needs of the struggle that it is supposed to be involved in. All kinds of excuses are invented to camouflage the priority given to internal work compared to that beyond the organisation. It is said that it is not the right moment to do this or that, while it is always the time for the work of internal growth, in that it is always the moment for waiting and preparing to defend oneself from the attacks of the exploiters. The outside is no longer seen as a field of struggle, a specific situation that can be analysed, or as the necessary condition for preventing abnormal growth or sterile conformity to past models, but only for finding new militants. Proselytism is the most important part of the organisation's activities. In a few extreme cases the struggle, any struggle whatsoever, is not carried out on the basis of the positive consequences that it might determine in the exploited masses, but on the basis of the propaganda that it might create for the organisation. Hence a position of stalemate in the relation of the struggle between exploiter and exploited is reached. If the relation concerns the problem of abortion, for example, the latter is not faced in terms of how the problem concerns the mass of exploited, but only in view of an outcome in quantitative terms, and what the negative consequences of going in the opposite direction would be for the organisation.

Authoritarian boss and libertarian leader

The first sets himself up as a constant point of reference. He gets his authority from the position he occupies within the authoritarian structure, a position that has—usually—been gained through total dedication to the organisation itself, as well as his considerable competence and preparation. He comes to be considered the interpreter of the will of the organisation, therefore, indirectly, given that the latter is considered holder of the truth, he is considered interpreter and holder of the truth. The irrational relationship at the root of a militant's belonging to an authoritarian structure, consolidates itself in his relationship with the direct head. The indirect leader, the one who places himself at the top of the pyramid, then comes to be invested with those charismatic forms that have a very strong irrational content. Because there is no way to control the validity of his work, apart from through the action of the intermediate leaders, the supreme head becomes more a symbol than anything else, a symbol dispenser of charisma, i.e. the truth.

Here it is necessary to point out the great difference that there is between this situation and the counterrevolutionary authoritarian structure. This is a delicate question. Objectively speaking an authoritarian structure is always counterrevolutionary, because it always tries to put obstacles in the way of ultimate liberation. But it should be distinguished from the structures deliberately created by the bosses to reach their aims. In this sense, let's say, a fascist organisational structure gives rise to certain hierarchical relations that are flights from freedom, each single component grasps the charisma of the head because he is scared of the freedom that he could find elsewhere, because he has that special petit bourgeois vision of life that makes him take refuge and comfort in the fixed structures of authoritarianism. For the fascist, the acceptation of the authoritarian structure is not a concession, it is a point of stability: his interior conflict, typically existential, is resolved in the total and definitive delegation, in the flight. The other possibility, that he vaguely sees, the possibility of living free, scares him because the schema of tradition, family, honour, homeland, and other such rubbish, suffocate him, making him see freedom as chaos without rules, in which old the old ghosts, that he has always run away from, equality in the first place, would end up multiplying.

The authoritarian comrade is a comrade who intends to consciously make the choice of freedom. He is not afraid, in fact all of his action is aimed at breaking with the past, with tradition. Acceptance of the authoritarian structure is the lesser of two evils for the militant who naively convinces himself that nothing lasting can be obtained without sacrifice. For this reason he is ready for the extreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of his own freedom. Herein lies the tragedy. A person struggling for freedom ends up sacrificing the latter in the illusion that he is continuing to struggle for it. Even the acceptance of charisma is always a mediated fact that involves a process of "snobbery", self-importance, little moral blackmails with oneself. He usually starts off seeing the leader as a "comrade", accepting him as one who is more prepared and more aware. He

would never admit to a direct charismatic process. Then, as he is gradually absorbed into the authoritarian structure he realises that any possibility of control from the base is minimal. Next there is his accusation of superficial snobbery. He finally ends up taking orders and sacrificing himself to the structure itself which, as an indissoluble whole, he identifies with freedom and truth.

Now let us look at the situation of the libertarian leader. He should not become a point of reference. If he is, that has happened against his will, as a direct consequence of his having more free time and due to his greater involvement and preparation. As far as he is concerned, one could speak of authoritativeness rather than authority. He cannot be accused of interpreting the will of the organisation as the latter is composed of the wills of all the members. Finally, as the organisation itself is not considered the depository of truth, the leader towards whom some militants turn in no way interprets or spreads the truth.

In fact, considerable modifications do occur within this schema. The leader does end up becoming a point of reference, otherwise the diversity of opinions within the structure would be enormous and make it almost impossible to reach any decision. This organisation also ends up being seen by militants in a deformed, irrational way as "their organisation" due to the simple fact that they chose it as the organisation which, although not carrier of the truth, is almost certainly the one that gets closer to that than any other. Consequently, even if the leader is not the interpreter or holder of truth he can in a sense be considered something similar, a comrade to have faith in, so much so as to accept his conclusions even if one does not fully grasp them. All this comes about in the hope that we too will manage to see clearly in the future in order to put the comrade, who for the time being serves as a point of reference, into a proper critical dimension. This awaiting better moments when we will all have time, when our preparation is more accurate and detailed, also conceals renunciation and accommodation. It conceals the acceptance of a situation that it is very difficult to alter, which we are not really interested in going into as such.

Then there is the question of the relationship between leaders. Another delicate problem. If the clash between authoritarian leaders is taken for granted as a result of the ranks that are built within the vertical structure, one should not be able to say the same thing about libertarian leaders. They also have clashes of opinion, find themselves opposing those who diverge from their own point of view, have to overcome organisational obstacles caused by the different tendencies, but the means that they have recourse to should be different.

On the contrary, one often sees that the means employed are not so different at all. The libertarian leader cannot let predominance over the tendency he represents escape him, without risking the very negation of the tendency and a distortion of the relationship with the part of the base that he represents. There might be a hint of a relationship of exchange, or reciprocal influence, between base and leader within the wider organised structure. That does not alter the fact that the precise interest of the

leader, even a libertarian one, emerges to seal this relationship, protecting it from the influence of other tendencies that might threaten the clarity of his own position.

Hence the clash with other leaders. An idea of the intensity of the clash is given by the rush for commissions and tasks to be carried out within the organisation. Nothing changes because these commissions are unpaid and produce a considerable burden of work and fatigue: they are recompensed by influence and solidity. One could say that the more widely a leader's activity is developed within the organisation, the clearer and less attackable his point of reference becomes. One should not generalise however. In the libertarian organisational structure, the formation of militants makes it possible for there to be a constant exchange of ideas in circulation that ends up emarginating tendencies that become crystallized. Then the comrade or comrades who identify with that crystallized tendency, even when they keep in touch with certain instruments such as papers, reviews, commissions and other things, still end up creating a vacuum around themselves.

The libertarian organisation, even the one farthest from the struggle, cannot fail to face the problem of aims and methods. And the discussion of methods ends up creating relationships within the organisation that render possible a debate which, although sterile at times, often leads to unexpected results in other organisations.

It should be added that comrades in the libertarian organisation are there by their own free choice. Generally speaking, belonging to a libertarian organisation, even those with quite unclear perspectives, involves risk, sacrifice, awareness of these risks and sacrifices and a fairly clear evaluation of the reasons that determined such a choice. At any level whatsoever, anarchist militants are indisputably militants who can make decisions and question any doubts about positions or tendencies that are not quite tenable (at least in their opinion). This fact, which often gives rise to arguments, endless discussions, splits and conflict between tendencies and has been considered the weak point of anarchism, is actually one of its points of strength and vitality. Obtuse uniformity would kill any lively tendency in favour of the grey will of the winning side.

An attempt to examine the character structure of the libertarian militant

Anarchist methodology vaguely gives us a model of a certain kind of militant. More often than not this indication is not gained from the reality of intervention in struggle, but from an idealisation of the latter.

Moreover, it is possible to see the evolution of this model throughout the history of the libertarian movement and the profound transformations that have taken place from 1968 onwards. The definition has precise characteristics: a coherent choice of means for reaching the aims of justice, equality and freedom; intervention in the quick of social struggles; refusal to prioritize the economic factor in the evolving of the exploited/exploiter conflict; the elevation of a liberatory culture to oppose the bourgeois culture of

repression; optimism; faith in man and his innate gifts; an a priori refusal of doctrines; use of the empirical method "try and try again"; specific solicitations on the social conflict in act with means of every kind (insurrectional-violent or pacifist-educational).

This framework is not complete but it gives the rough contours of a perspective that cannot be brought about in practice. Offspring of social contradictions and the social struggle, anarchist militants are not only products of their time, they would be insignificant automata if they were to base their action on abstract principles without relating them to the requirements of their intervention in reality.

It should not be forgotten that one of the most important points of anarchism is precisely its ethical preoccupation, and this would disappear if one were to try to obliterate the contradictory vitality of the individual in favour of an idealism detached from history and its events. If the strong point of anarchism is its methodology, great freedom of action is possible within that framework. In fact, if one were to dictate the main rules of anarchism in Ten Commandments, throwing out anyone that failed to manifest the intention to follow them scrupulously down to the last detail, and there was an accentuation of internal norms and elaborate codes intended to confuse ideas or create conflict, one would end up with a minority of revolutionaries with very limited choices. This character model is marked by a net subordination of one's own happiness, interests and need for a private life to the aims of the organisation and the revolution. By making the model of reference rigid, people become rigid, personality falls into second place. The abstract ideals of justice, equality and freedom come to be considered important enough to justify selfoblivion, the nullification of any stimulus towards the different (which ends up being considered bourgeois, so is condemned).

Once they have conformed to the basic rigid model these comrades would no doubt be disposed to make any sacrifice imaginable for the ideal, even their own lives, but they would be throwing the cold veil of separation between themselves, the ideal (now "their ideal") and other comrades, i.e., they would come to deny the unitarian and collective process that the elaboration of the revolutionary model implies. Their aim would be to apply in the sphere of reality the model that they had crystallized in the sphere of analysis, without taking account of any possible individual or group differences. Phenomena such as the birth of a so-called "objective consciousness" would surface, leading to suspicion, intolerance, exclusivity.

We are looking at this extreme situation here simply to point out the dangers of a crystallisation of a model of anarchist intervention. In reality, such a model must, in our opinion, result from constant elaboration, verification and modification by all comrades, always within the basic methodological perspective, which is that of the correct choice of means for reaching the aims of justice, equality and freedom.

Specific historical transformation has produced different kinds of militants. There can be no doubt that the character of the French comrades engaged in the struggle against the reaction up until 1890 differed greatly from those of the anarcho-syndicalist comrades who later tried to address the struggle towards claiming better conditions, convinced that that was still within a revolutionary perspective. Just as there can

be no doubt that profound differences existed between the Spanish comrades of the FAI and the Italian comrades of similar organisations. The same goes for the German comrades that went to work in America and those who stayed at home, for the English comrades in London and the Scottish ones, etc. The 'model' proposed by Ravachol is not the same as that proposed by Henry, nor is it the same as that which Bonnot was to propose. While basically remaining within the realm of illegality, profoundly different characteristics emerge, leading to differences in analyses and tendencies.

It is also possible to see differences at the level of language. The language of anarchist writings from 1880 to 1895 in France is different from that between 1895 and 1914. Galleani's style differs from Malatesta's but is very similar to that of Cipriani and Ciancabilla.

The variety and flourishing of models since 1968 is even greater.

The development of cultural analysis, the widening of revolutionary reading, the French phenomenon of May, a faster circulation of ideas, the breakdown in traditional university structures, the crisis of the most sacred values of the bourgeois world (science, projectuality, salubrity, integrity), have all produced rapid changes. Anyone that fails to adapt to the new era ends up being out of date and inefficient. The persistence of old schema, even by very valid comrades, is the sign of a difficulty in making the model pliable, but one goes ahead in any case and new lines of intervention are developed. Amidst contrasts and colossal blunders, amidst intuition and attempts at internal repression, a profound cultural modification of the world anarchist movement comes about. Hence the emergence of a new kind of militant that is still in formation, one that flees rhetoric like the plague and only focuses on a few points, but does so clearly.

The new anarchist militant places himself or herself in the libertarian tradition but at the same time they try with all their might to sift through the cultural contribution of the revolutionary left, as well as cultural models of the bourgeoisie. This has opened up many contradictions from which deep theoretical splits have arisen, but these are very positive, breaking the circle of a cultural closure that had ended up with outdated analytical models. Basically, if one were to draw up a short inventory of the theoretical baggage of the anarchism of the 'fifties, especially in Italy, one would have to admit that some of the old models (revolutionary syndicalism, Malatestian critique, Gorian humanism, late-Bakuninist collectivism, Kropotkinian determinism) have become acritical rhetoric. Also models that are more directly influenced by action such as the ethical and strategic evaluation of armed struggle, have been influenced by this cultural atrophy. The actions of Sabate and Facerias were isolated acritically, often praised, often condemned, without the message they contain being able to emerge in the form of a concrete proposal to comrades beyond a mythisisation of armed action for the sake of it.

If we were to look at some of the examples that were fossilized by this cultural atrophying, we would have to point to the Sorel of the myth of the general strike (behind revolutionary syndicalism), the Malatesta of the final years (influenced by Gori's humanism), the Kropotkin of Ethics and Modern Science and Anarchy (as well as a

little of Mutual Aid). That would imply a direct intervention in the reality that is trying to revive syndical models, now decidedly oriented in a reformist and authoritarian direction, a logic of waiting and naturalist and determinist ethical discourses.

Revolutionary culture's sudden break (also the authoritarian strain) with certain schema of the past (for example the sudden refusal of Crocian historicism and the immediate—acritical—acceptance of Marxism), produced considerable reflexes, also within the anarchist movement that was debating themes and facing problems that had previously been hidden under the ashes of badly digested rhetoric. It is the ethical question that interests us here. Not that of text books but of the relationship with life, the question facing all militants that find themselves traumatically living the experience of being an anarchist in a society of exploiters and parvenus, exploited and acquiescent. And when anarchists refuse the bourgeois model at the same time as they refuse the authoritarian-collectivist model of the Marxists and Stalinists, they end up facing the problem of a socialised personality in a personalised society, a development of total self-management of the person in a society that does not crush man but exalts him and offers the possibility of living a coherent life.

So the project of a militant that does not hide difficulties from himself, does not have recourse to a huge apparatus of phrases and commonplaces, in fact is almost afraid to use slogans and uniform speech, forcing himself to work for the satisfaction of the global needs of society as well as that of individuals and groups. It is the problem of participation, of opening out and relating to others, refusing the party apparatus, refusing the bourgeois ideology of civic consciousness.

The debate has moved away from the clash between individual and organisation, the rights of the individual and those of the specific organisation (of the revolutionary syndicalist or simply revolutionary kind). It now concerns the autonomy of the militant's personality in a dimension of collective responsibility, within the process of the growth of social revolutionary consciousness that cannot be left to itself.

As the dominant ideology conformed to economic progress (between the fifties and sixties) an anticonformism that attempted to rethink some of the traditional models of political struggle appeared. Then, with the modifications in the very structure of power, the economic reflux and the entrance of the reformist forces of the Left into the dominant class, anticonformism becomes more responsible: quality of life opposes itself to the quantitative reduction in the class conflict. The stimulus of the individual, the ethical stimulus, is added to the material one with its partial analysis of a counterpower that had come to be conditioned by a certain culture of power (political science and its negation): politics starts living a new process of opening out.

This profound renewal is also part of a global crisis in the values of late capitalist society. It cannot be said with precision whether the fall of consumerist structures are a cause or effect of this crisis that has lead a great number of people to suspend their judgement and open up a kind of "parenthesis", a life that refuses what is offered by capital. In this world, which at the same time is out of this world, this "parenthesis"

is no longer restricted to an elite but is a mass phenomenon that is too great to be ignored.

Today the anarchist is also conditioned by all this. It is all very well to say that anarchists are not perfect, they are not strange beings from another planet, possessors of truth capable of finding the right answers and methods for intervening in any situation. Just as they are not the monsters of violence and terror that a certain press in the service of the bosses portrays them as. Nevertheless, they are not revealers of truth. And it is precisely for this reason that we can attempt, for the first time as far as we know, to outline the character of the anarchist militant of the past few years, at least within the limits of experiences in European countries where the movement has some significance today: Italy, France, Spain (Spanish emigration), Germany, England. If we were to consider anarchism a well-defined, crystallized doctrine, we would have to conclude that anarchists are born such and that anyone that "feels" for anarchy is either enrolled in some anarchist federation and shouts "Long live Bakunin," or reads no books at all and swears on the negativity of culture.

On the contrary, if we see anarchism as the theoretical and practical experience that emerges with a precise methodology in social struggles at certain times, we see anarchist militants as men and women of their time who are influenced by prevailing ideas—and the specific methods of anarchism—, and are involved in struggles against the class in power. The more the era is rich in contradictions, the more the crisis in the power structure becomes evident and the more the instruments that once belonged exclusively to the revolutionary forces come to be used by power for the repression. The more confusing reality becomes, the more anarchist methods become a relevant perspective. This is not absolute or taken for granted, we need to verify things so that the struggle against power can be organised correctly rather than resurge from the revolutionary cinders of the past.

So, anarchists are also people that live the contradictions of their time. Their character cannot escape the consequences. Their personality will end up hosting a crucial conflict between the ascetic aspect of the revolutionary: abnegation, agreement, and the ethical aspect of the individual that opens up to autonomy and the organisation of society in the egalitarian sense, seeing the limits and the need for progressive approximation. It is much easier to intervene in reality and change it, however limited the action might be, than to intervene in reality, change it and in so doing, change oneself.

If more space is given to the first aspect of the conflict, we will have one kind of intervention in reality, that leading to the formation of a vanguard. In the second hypothesis we would see a growth in the anarchist movement directly, in the reality of the struggle, with the possible constitution of specific organisations that are expressions of this reality in struggles where it would be difficult for them to become vanguards.

This seems to us to be the most important problem that needs to be faced. It is a complex problem, as the passage from the dimension of the individual to the collective one is not just marked by the organisational forms but also by the aims that the

organisation gives itself, those of the people that make it up, etc. If the tendency we have defined "ascetic" can lead to the formation of a vanguard due to a rationalisation of the conflict, the tendency which, with equal caution, we have defined ethical can make the same mistake due to an abstraction of the conflict as a result of the quantitative illusion.

The conflict between total and partial

We should say right away that in making a distinction between the so-called ascetic tendency and the ethical one we are not implying that the moral aspect is absent from the former. This is a fundamental aspect of anarchist methodology (as we have said): the choice of means we use irremediably affects the ends we reach.

This said, it should be added that the problem of violence cannot be solved by discriminating between the two tendencies. A comparison such as ascetic = violence, ethic = nonviolence does not make sense. Always on the basis of the anarchist principle that refuses that "the end justifies the means," violence can legitimately be used for liberation without being seen as ambiguous moral relativism.

It goes without saying that in the clash with power, in the revolution, one is often forced to make choices between the greater or lesser evil. Debit and credit exists, even in ethics. But the contingent factors that explain some mistakes must never be raised to a moral justification of anarchist action.

Reality, with all its nuances, complications and contradictions, is reflected in the contradictory personality of man, and consequently also in the anarchist. So we can see that anarchist methodology is nourished and modified by analyses that use various instruments, from the intuition of individuals who decide to carry out a single action, to an organisation that acts upon the reality around it.

But the anarchist, employing his or her methodology with exactitude and recognising the contradictory aspects, causes modifications in reality that are both cause and the effect of the resulting contradictions. All the same, it is not easy to see where reality ends and appearances begin in the conflict. It is not easy to separate men from their ideologies, and this can lead to an attempt to isolate certain levels of intervention by separating them from the ideological processes that cover them. We often hear serenades to "doing" which, in the best hypothesis, are naive romanticism. *Doing* cannot be autonomous, i.e. it cannot justify itself alone.

To turn means into an end in themselves would correspond to the ascetic excess of the revolutionary, and if this is also quite a rational phenomenon (in the framework of the destructive process), as it cuts the conflict between total and partial in too net a fashion. It denies the latter, affirming the former, but camouflages both poles of the clash thus making the distinction problematical. This is the extreme case of an armed minority that have been radicalised by certain processes in the clash that are imputable to their strategy (on the one hand), but also and perhaps primarily to the decisions of power. Real motivations, specific tendencies between individuals and social

groups are disregarded in favour of an acritical exaltation of the clash, the value of the armed "deed", attack and univocity of will. The militant is deformed by objective consequences and as this is happening he thinks that he is in charge of the situation. He becomes a professional, enclosing the outside world into the asphyxiating framework of the frontal clash, and from this perspective claims to judge the rest of reality. Once again ideological alienation (always present), reflects fundamental alienation. Then, in concrete, the requirements of the clash itself necessitates these operative reductions. It reenters the logic of the division of labour, one that it cannot escape as it is not possible to flee such a dimension in the absence of a decisively revolutionary and globalising act of rupture. That does not alter the fact that radicalisation exists and is logically founded, we were about to say "necessary", just as it does not alter the fact that this should be supported when there are cops and all their variety of accomplices on the other side of the barricade. But that cannot deny us the right to reflect and criticise. And the restrictive dimension, the dimension which in restriction wants totality, that is, that can (theoretically) aspire to totality precisely because it has reduced the world and all its deeds to a pocket dimension, should be criticised. The vanguard that comes out of this is as ambitious as ever. The greater the risks run to procure means, the easier it is for them to become an end in themselves. In this way the vanguard moves in the direction of becoming independent of its own aims, even to the point of replacing them.

One obstacle to revolution is the fact that in coming up against reality the vanguard, rather than consider itself a means, ends up preferring its own aims. These in no way conform to the general aims of the revolution, i.e. the definitive liberation of man. We must distinguish between the model of the vanguard that we are looking at here and the classical one suggested by Marxism. For Marxists, the vanguard acts as mediator between the immediate and the historical interests of the working class. The paradox is that this vanguard must interpret the interests of the class whose conditions of development it must create. For the ascetic kind of revolutionary

vanguard the problem of "mediation" does not exist, only that of "action". Only once the clash has evolved due to the reaction of power is it possible to speak of a real coagulation of vanguardist forms, with all the ensuing consequences (transformation into a military wing, professional deformation, etc.). Yet, in our opinion, this is not the most delicate point of the conflict between totality and part. Far more radical is the underlying problem, the conflict within the militant as an individual.

The clash between totality and part is consistently present for the militant engaged in the struggle and, in the long run, this marks his character profoundly. It deforms his vision of life to the point of, at times—in the face of great delusions—making him refuse to accept reality. We see the extent of the problem in the anguished cry of Cafiero or in the painful writings of Coeurderoy.

The revolution is a globalising concept of human involvement. It is totality. It does not allow joint ownership, cohabitation or compromise. The anarchist struggle is the supreme recognition of the principle of realisable totality whilst safeguarding the value

of the individual, an addition of great complexity in that it refuses to see revolutionary means as ends in themselves. In this case totality becomes crystal clear, dazzling. Everything goes towards it, one's self, one's family, one's affections, one's habits, one's hopes.

But all that (which no matter how grand it might sound to the individual is still very small) soon burns out in the immense furnace of revolutionary totality. And so one wants to act quickly to speed up a process that takes its own time and goes at its own pace. We begin to feel it weighing on us as though we had to carry it upon our shoulders.

Then we are forced to stand before the inexorable tribunal of the part. To measure growth, estimate distances, consider relations, indicate perspectives. We start to pay more attention to the pace of events. We start to save ourselves, preparing for the long road ahead. We would like it to go on for ever, our revolution, but we realise that we cannot imprison totality within the limits of our desires, and we end up giving in to care and strategy. We note that we are not alone, that facing us and our project of liberation are the masses (who are not necessarily ready to free themselves) and power. In full evidence and revolutionary mystery, there before us stands a contradictory but constant relationship between totality and part, dream and reality, ideal and strategic project.

Some, enclosing totality inside a more restricted dimension, asceticise their intervention. They wrap themselves up in a microcosm that they recognise as such, which they intend to take to infinity, perfecting it, claiming that it is capable of reproducing all the conditions of revolutionary totality on a reduced scale. Through this reduction they are trying to propose a model, give an example, a point of reference so that many other little totalities will be formed, all together capable of forming such a vast totality as to get close to the final one. In one way or another this decision leads to the vanguard closing in on itself. Through the activity of criminalisation, power will do the rest.

Others, fully accepting the concept of partiality, dispose themselves favourably to long periods of time, i.e. quantitative measurement. For these comrades, basic doing turns into basic thinking. The relationship with the mass becomes educational and moves into the particular, the specific. The link with the totality that was made on the basis of a more or less globalising analysis becomes purely theoretical. In this way the quantitative degeneration of the ethical tendency is born, just as in the preceding case there was a qualitative degeneration of the ascetic tendency. Although different (the first open, the second closed), these positions are both open to criticism.

Revolutionary alienation

"Revolutionary alienation" is the awareness of the contrast between totality and part. It is disgust for the latter united with the possibility of the former, leading to

a form of extraneation that is experienced as extreme discomfort in the face of the transformation of the system.

In a way we are faced with a phenomenon similar to so-called "unhappy consciousness" resulting from an inadequate reaction to one's class situation. Only, while unhappy consciousness is above all a sense of discomfort before a class dislocation that one ends up feeling estranged to, revolutionary alienation is the final breaking point in the process. It is the awareness of not being able to realise totality, of losing something in an effort towards totality, which we feel is the only possible road to revolution.

We turn to a profound critique of the human significance of the revolutionary being because one feels oneself to be a thing. This process of reification comes about in the clash between the persistence of partiality and the continual return of the need for totality.

This is not the crisis of the bourgeois who crumbles because of the saturation of a life-style that has deliberately been built for him with fabricated needs and stimuli studied in the laboratories of power. It is not the crisis of consumerist well-being, boredom and remote-controlled action, a constant repetition of programmed change.

It is not the suspension of involvement or judgement, a taking refuge in an aristocratic dimension of reflection, or the power of the intellect regulating the universe of one's thoughts and illuding oneself that one is regulating the world. It is not a cutting off from the things of reality in order to go in search of the perfect utopian society, through numbers, verses or the preferred Icaria.

It is not a piloted upheaval in a reality that is held suspended with the help of some vehicle or other (drugs or whatever), that can correspond to, or actually be, the effect of the mass product, following fashion or a scale of values that the system itself can no longer uphold.

It is not alienation in the Marxist sense of the term, the loss of something that belongs to us, in the first place the social product, because it is through the product of our work alone that we recognise ourselves as human beings. It is not, that is, the alienation of the worker that reacts in a certain way before the forced perspective that the system of production is offering him.

The alienation we are talking about here is a lack of something, (a process of generic alienation) but is also a lack of oneself, the self that identifies with revolutionary totality. It is precisely this perspective (totality) that provides an outlet from the general form of alienation without, moreover, managing to completely avoid the danger of alienation reemerging through the frustration of the need for revolutionary totality.

When the alienated worker recognises his alienation, he becomes conscious of it and overcomes it. In this way he enters the revolutionary perspective. This can fall upon him like a ton of bricks if he is not able to fulfill what the absence of primitive alienation forces upon him: complete liberation and the realisation of revolutionary totality. In this way, the very perspective of liberation risks turning into a further form of alienation, that of lack of totality.

This situation is far more serious for anarchist revolutionaries. Having neither the charisma of the leader or the organisation, they have nothing to hold on to. Assessment of their own work is of little help; with one simple reflection they can put it into second place in the perspective of revolutionary totality. If they try to see something wrong with their situation, thus convincing themselves that a small enclosed portion of reality is the microcosm that produces totality, they transform themselves into a vanguardist mechanism and reify alienation to the point of not being able see it any more, just as happened in the phase of primitive alienation before the awakening of consciousness. They thus reify their own alienation, accepting the solution of partiality (analyses and long periods of intervention).

The fact is that revolutionary alienation is not simply a relationship that is lacking in something (totality), it is also consciousness of this lack. In other words, it is not just the recognition that something is missing, it is also a recognition of not being able to do without what the latter.

Do all anarchists engaged in the revolutionary struggle reach this conclusion? There is no simple answer to that.

One thing that is certain is that if anarchism is the refusal of authority, it is also a critical reflection on the basic conditions of life and all the ensuing contradictions. In a sense, one of the characteristics of anarchists is that they go into these contradictions as it would be strange for authoritarian revolutionaries to gain consciousness of this alienation through the tight mesh of the party structure that they find themselves operating in. But if this alienation is a consequence of a critical examination of reality, it should not be considered something negative but rather a necessary step, a difficult stage that needs to be overcome. To sum up, it is not the antechamber of revolutionary engagement, but is the result of it, the consequence of it. It is not even the ultimate solution, the final wall from which to recede and commit suicide, but the passage to a further phase of the deepening of one's knowledge and gaining maturity.

Before going any further it is necessary to look at the conditions of this particular kind of alienation. The process starts from the absolute value given to the individual. Any proposal to sacrifice the latter to revolutionary strategy, or even to revolutionary totality, is rejected. The engagement can be total, can go as far as complete dedication and death, but can never reach the annulling of the individual. Anarchists who die for the revolution do not reject the value of the individual, on the contrary they take the latter to the maximum degree, as the sacrifice that leads to a society where sacrifice will be impossible, a freed society. In all their opening towards the struggle, in all the collective action that they feel and make their own, they never lose the individual dimension.

Alienation comes to them when they realise that only by accepting a worse form of alienation (the primitive kind or that of centralised power) will they be able to escape the danger of seeing the project of the liberation of the individual disappear. In actual fact, the individual at least manages to partially realise himself under the conditions of primitive alienation, albeit in a deformed (alienated) way. But anarchists

want the complete realisation of the individual and want this in the social perspective of total liberation. They find themselves in a serious crisis that comes from the contrast between individual and totality. Entering a partial dimension would heal many aspects of this crisis but would reproduce another alienated form, the vanguard.

Alienation only becomes a crucial factor when one is aware that one is alienated. And this is an effect of the individual's will, of moving in a situation of stalemate with no way forward leading to a consideration of the other possibility, the conscious refusal of totality as the immediate aim. The greater this awareness, the more the individual will open up to other possibilities.

But simple awareness, recognising that one is in a state of "crisis" could push the individual to sacrifice everything in order to come through the latter in the shortest possible time. Intolerance of a situation of uncertainty can push someone that is accustomed to radicalising their action to extreme solutions. If totality leads to "crisis", if it is this aim that spoils the revolutionary project by upsetting the destructive order that one imagined was deterministically progressive, we must cut off this pole of contrast. In order to do so it becomes necessary to undervalue it, accuse it of being utopian, a fantasy, unfounded, deforming, petit bourgeois. The ultimate accusation is precisely this last one. Anything that annoys us becomes a product of bourgeois ideology and its shop-keeping accountancy. A product of commodities and their reification.

However, by acting in this way one realises that one is losing a lot. For a time one is convinced that one has solved the problem, then it reappears. The perspective of revolutionary totality is what contained the quality of the revolution, its liberatory essence. Quality is the only thing that can give us the feeling of the totality of liberation at any moment when we are acting progressively. Only quality can make us live the final moment that we will never see, but which we must nevertheless feel present, like a reflex that allows us to know where we are. And this quality is often fantastic, utopian. It is very difficult for it to relate with quantification. By struggling for revolutionary totality we grasp the quality of the revolution and relive it in our actions, in the small things that begin to acquire a progressive sense of liberation. But all that also brings us alienation, discomfort, suffering.

When we suffer, we remember the things of the past with a sense of loss. This could be seen as nostalgia for primitive alienation. The world of reification can be a nice little port in the storm and, with this going backwards the suffering goes full circle. In horror we realise that alienation consists of not wanting to be something one could be but is in itself meaningless, and not being able to be something one would like to be, that means everything.

Make no mistake, we are not looking for a detailed revision of individualism, personalism or voluntaristic rationalism here. Certainly what we know of the vicissitudes of the person (the transformation of the mask) is not worth mentioning and is the fruit of bourgeois irrationalism (existentialism, phenomenology, etc.). Much more would be necessary, and it is not possible to go into that here. It is important to understand that we are concerned with the relationship individual/collectivity. Painful contradictions

emerge in anarchist militants not because they are individuals, but because they are individuals who recognise their own value and that of the mass as two values that are in opposition to each other but which cannot be substituted the one for the other. If revolutionary tension comes from the fact that the revolution is a totalizing project, a project that revokes the quality of life and claims to transform the latter completely, particular contradictions arise from the need for the individual anarchist to establish a correct relationship with the mass in order to avoid carrying out one single aspect of their decision alone.

The revolutionary encompasses the totality of the life of the individual. Hence the possibility of the realisation of the totality of the revolution (therefore also the totality of life) that is reflected in quality. But revolutionary decision is not something abstract. It is not a "possibility" or a "necessity" according to the perspective of whoever brings it about. It is real, it leads to profound changes in the individual and in this sense is "necessary". But in order to be such it must go beyond "possibility", i.e. must be realised. If the latter is not realised, even through constant engagement, it will never become a necessity. Herein lies the drama: it is the struggle that leads to going from approximation to this necessary aspect of revolutionary decision, leading to all the alienating consequences.

But possibility and necessity do not go hand in hand. Possibility draws in personal involvement and can even reach necessity, but only as a move towards something, as the singling out of an objective. Necessity as such, as the conscious place of the profound modification of the quality of life, comes from the mass, from what the mass produce. In a word, necessity comes from the masses' self-organisation.

One can wrap oneself up in the plots of revolutionary possibility to infinity. One can dream of insurrectional clashes or fantasize about long-term educational projects to the point of exhaustion, even to the point of insufferance and annoyance. Not for this does one reach the dimension where possibility becomes necessity, i.e. the recognition of the need for this resolution, the acceptance of the only valid road, that of going towards the self-organisation of the mass.

When we catch a glimpse of this perspective, the myriad of possibilities, the very possibility of a probable solution of an approaching totality, become unbearable for us. Time is required to realise this possibility, and that is what we lack. We want to run. We want the totality we caught a glimpse of to materialise. We want the waiting to become reality. This situation has no outlet in the current aspect of suffering. It is an intimate laceration, a contradiction that—when you think about it—is the reflex of the class factor, with even greater awareness, more suffering. And, because the process of awareness is one-way, the suffering of class laceration cannot be eliminated.

Let us examine the other form of alienation for a moment, the better-known one. This is an objective fact, i.e. the result of being deprived of something (the social product of one's work). With the awakening of consciousness (increased awareness) one also gains an awareness of alienation. The mechanism for correcting the situation of suffering, so-called class consciousness, would not make sense or would be a mere

objective fact, if it did not include the possibilities that this creates. Religious residuals act at this level, pushing this class consciousness towards the search for mediated solutions such as looking for a guide. That obviously cannot be seen as a correction of the situation of suffering, but merely its "repression".

Other difficulties arise at different level of awareness. The refusal of the guide in some way corresponds to the refusal of the father. The self-organisation of the struggle necessitates the a priori refusal to discharge the responsibility of struggles on to someone or something. It is always the level of awareness that is growing.

The development of this awareness in the individual leads to what we have called revolutionary alienation under the conditions examined above. The developing of the self-organisation of struggles determines a transient feeling of discomfort, suffering, despondency in the mass that can be compared to that of revolutionary alienation at a different level.

But, whereas from the point of view of the individual there is only one sequence of possibilities and an unnerving need for revolutionary totality, from the point of view of the self-organising mass there is a progressive identification with a need that is becoming clear. In this case suffering and discomfort is the discovery of something that exists, no matter how small, not something that will become, because anything that is projected into the future (starting from the necessity of the present) is merely quantitative growth.

So the suffering of the individual comes from lack of quality (revolutionary totality), a lack that offers an infinite series of possibilities that project themselves on to the need for the self-organisation of the mass. On the other hand, the mass are experiencing a stirring-up, discomfort, real suffering, because they are beginning to discover the fact of self-organisation.

This dual situation of discomfort characterises the "human" field of the revolutionary clash and supplies us with the key for solving the problem of the vanguard. Before facing this final question it is necessary to clarify the structural relationship that exists between individual, minority and mass and examine the tension that emerges from it.

Revolutionary tension

Individual activity cannot be seen as something autonomous starting from which reality becomes thinkable through its organisation of the struggle. There is no such thing as a homogeneity of intent. In observing the attitudes and activities of the single individual one cannot reconstruct reality simply with an adjunctive action. The contradictoriness of the latter is far more complex than that of the individual and, moreover, is sustained by different structures. While the individual, through awareness of oneself, can reach revolutionary possibility and the need for revolutionary totality (hence alienation and its overcoming in revolutionary tension); the second, through self-organisation, reaches revolutionary necessity directly, so the growth of a first nucleus, no matter how small, is already the revolutionary totality at disposition.

We are faced with tendencies going in two different directions that might never meet, at least in the sense of eliminating differences and creating liberated reality beyond the reality of the struggles. In fact the other encounter, that of the guide and the party with the minority in the lead as memory and revolutionary reservoir of the mass, is not a real encounter but the denial of the very concept of encounter from the revolutionary point of view.

In fact, revolutionary totality, the new society, is not deterministically certain. Perhaps obscurantists will always manage to prevail and force the revolutionary project back, destroying progress and reestablishing barbarity. This note of precarity and instability is also to be found in revolutionary tension, rendering necessary a continual effort of assessment, verification, precision.

The presence and development of self-organised forms of struggle are not sufficient to guarantee the final resolution of theory in praxis, their unification in the liberated society. It is only a question of a tendency, including in this concept the profound sense of suffering derived from the gestation of new forms of struggle. All this produces a state of tension, of restlessness, in the movement of the exploited. New forces arise, new needs emerge, ideals and idols of the past are destroyed.

The tension of the movement of the exploited arises from the awareness of the discrepancy between one's being theory, and one's realisation in practice. This contradiction affects the movement deeply, often unleashing one part of it against the other, thus playing the game of the forces of power. But this tension is vital, it is the essential strength of coordination towards the future. It is from within it that the destructive and creative capacities of the revolution explode.

The anarchist minority also carry a profound laceration. The rigidity of the closed model seen as the reproduction of revolutionary totality risks depriving it of the quality of the revolution, that is of the new quality of life. Only by accepting this renunciation and falling victim to the quantitative illusion will it succeed in silencing the intimate tension that plagues it. But in so doing it also destroys the meaning of its own revolutionary anarchist project, cutting off any real contact with the masses. Not only that, its militants, as individuals conscious of revolutionary possibility in that they are (knowingly) cut out of the revolutionary totality, are personally living another tension that is felt all the more because it touches the life of each one. This other tension cannot be satisfied with quantitative games, globalising analyses or memories of the proletariat. It needs to identify itself in another, still wider, tension, that of the mass itself. Either the minority accepts living the tension of the single individuals that compose it while at the same time living the tension of the mass, or it is condemned to remain a vanguard and, as such, to become responsible for all the consequences that ensue.

Consciousness of revolutionary tension is the first sign of going beyond alienation.

For the movement of the exploited this consciousness expresses itself in a more organic search for the self-organisation of struggles. What was once lost in the individual behaviour of atomised defence against repression and exploitation, an individual reac-

tion in order to reevaluate the life extinguished by the integrative process of capitalism, now becomes a quantifying project. The movement of the exploited begins to give itself an autonomous structure, it starts seeking new internal relations and links. In this research and realisation tension becomes construction. Theory increasingly takes form and begins to resemble practice more and more.

For the anarchist minority, the awareness of revolutionary tension is a sign of maturity. It gradually rids itself of the quantitative illusion, of feeling itself to be carrier of truth, an external force, a memory. This is only possible on condition that the internal tension be lightened, that the single militants see the revolutionary relationship possibility-totality, have been struggling against alienation and been able to go beyond it in a personal tension. The latter now reappears at the level of a minority, to find its place within the wider tension of the movement of the exploited, the only dimension in which it is possible to find a constructive road towards quantitative growth.

The solution of the problem of the vanguard

To conclude, we can define the vanguard as an involution, a giving in in the face of the revolutionary anarchist project. Now we can see that the definition "an organic whole composed of individuals" that we made at the beginning is no longer sufficient. The actual composition of the vanguard becomes less important in the face of its significance within the complex framework of revolutionary relations. The vanguard is therefore an escape from the sensations of suffering and panic that are caused by revolutionary alienation; it is the refusal of tension towards the movement of the exploited, a tension that the latter develops in its contradictory relationship between self-organisation and delegation of the struggle. The vanguard takes the place of the quantitative task of the movement of the exploited, wanting to reproduce at a reduced level (either with edifying aims or with the aim of domination), the reality of the struggles as a whole. It is a desire to quantify the unquantifiable. It is a violent deformation of revolutionary possibility into fictitious necessity (totality). The vanguard is the acceptance of a globalising analysis that claims to "take account of everything" in an exclusively theoretical field, fictitiously doing what the movement of the exploited bring about in reality by becoming theory and praxis at the same time.

On the contrary, full knowledge of revolutionary alienation allows access to individual revolutionary tension, which would lose itself in a postponement to the infinity of the total project of the revolution, were it not to find its correct development within the tension of the minority. If this gives up in the face of obstacles, it transforms itself into a vanguard and acts accordingly. The tension of the minority extinguishes itself in the quantitative illusion and in the analytical project that claims to be global. The tension of the individual recedes into the suffering of alienation, finding comfort in a thousand little facets of the quantitative project cut off from the mass. In fact, the more pressing the suffering caused by revolutionary alienation; the greater the detachment, loss of totality and the quality of revolution, the more paltry the engagement

in quantitative daily praxis will be in solving a guilty conscience. If the tension of the minority is inserted within the wider tension of the movement of the exploited a point of contact is made between self-organisation and delegation of struggles. It develops a solicitation for self-organisation, adding one's own revolutionary tension to that of the movement of the exploited, developing the anarchist revolutionary project fully in harmony with this movement's theory.

The more detail and clarification this theory acquires; the more it becomes conscious of itself, advances in the self-organisation of the struggle, gives itself an autonomous structure, connects internal relations and establishes links, the more it will renounce the false perspective of the delegate (parties and unions). The traditional function of the anarchist minority will diminish, and, losing its value, its revolutionary tension will increase. In fact, the aim of the anarchist movement is to contribute to the construction of a society in which there will no longer be exploitation. And exploitation no longer existing, there will no longer be a need for the political struggle, movements and consequently not even the anarchist movement.

The final negation of the anarchist minority as such will not be the decision of a group or something that happens outside the minority. It will be the realisation of revolutionary tension in revolutionary totality, the liberated society. In this final phase, the movement of the exploited will realise its own theory (that will no longer differ from its practice), and through this realisation the vicissitudes of the anarchist minority will come to an end.

The Ted K Archive

Alfredo M. Bonanno
The Most Dangerous Idea
Selected Insurrectionary Writings
2014

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