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Stop the City? – From Information to Attack

Alfredo M. Bonanno

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Stop the City was an informative action. Such actions are interesting and useful, though limited, and cannot just be written off as worthless because some comrades don't agree with the methods they use. The problem is deeper than that and is worth going into.

An informative demonstration can conceal itself under some pretty impressive slogans—often to mobilize more people, especially the young marginal fringes—but it remains a demonstration with the aim of making certain facts known. It might call itself *Stop the City* or *Burn the City*, but the aim is to draw people's attention to certain things, nothing else. As such it remains a useful but limited action.

To participate in this kind of demonstration in order to push it, from within, towards more violent, revolutionary objectives is a mistake. It becomes the mythical vanguardist *entrism* of which Lenin and in particular Trotsky were masters. We well know today that anarchists have no interest in entrism. If one doesn't agree with an informative type of demonstration, it is better to stay at home.

It is quite logical for comrades in that kind of demonstration to remain sitting in the road while police charge, not moving to prevent themselves being arrested or offering any other kind of resistance. It is one of the main methods participants in that kind of demonstration can use, unless an unlikely spontaneous popular participation occurs, transforming it into an insurrectional situation of street fighting.

Those who don't agree with such methods as sitting and waiting to be charged by police should not participate in such a demonstration, but organize with other like-minded comrades to prepare one of a different kind.

But what should these different demonstrations be like?

We find ourselves faced with a basic problem of method. The demonstrations should be in a logic of *attack*, the informative part where people are told of the reasons for the demonstration, the State's projects, the aims of militarism, etc, are planned beforehand. Next a precise program of drawing people into a structure for attacking, organized in advance, carefully prepared with the means adequate to the kind of attack that is desired.

Comrades therefore not only take on the task of *informing* but also that of *getting people involved*, something which cannot be done using the same means as the former. For example, if a leaflet or poster is enough to transmit the main point of the information, they are not adequate for providing people with operational proposals. It is far more important that these be given with sudden graffiti, banners and placards shown at a particular moment, or with a brief speech or mobile talks with loud-hailers. Involving people is an emotive and immediate fact linked to the content of the information and analyses, but has its own requirements in order to come about.

Involvement might not happen immediately, making a third stage in the action necessary: an exemplary minority attack on a precise objective which has been studied beforehand with care taken to ensure that this objective is not super-protected

by the police. In this perspective an attack against the police itself is significant and can be a moment of going towards wider involvement.

But this phase must not become an end in itself, nor detached from the way the demonstration as a whole is going. In other words, it should not be programmed in such a way that it *must* take place at any cost because anyway everything is ready for the action in question. Nor must it be a way to show off how brave, extremist, violent and courageous we are. All that is unimportant.

The direct attack is a step forward in the project of general involvement. It should not be forgotten that the demonstration is aimed at the transformation of a minority attack into a *generalized attack*, i.e. an attack that has succeeded in involving other people.

If it is observed that participation is limited and separate, if it is seen that people are bewildered by the informative content, the whole thing can be blocked even before the minority attack. Basically anarchists have no interest in bringing about mini-revolts which are nothing but a storm in a teacup.

The aim of every clash is its generalization. This is certainly never foreseeable in absolute, and for this reason attacks by the minority often end up being defeated. But it is always possible to study the conditions for their realization. When these conditions are absolutely negative, then it is better to desist.

To sum up this brief piece: it isn't possible to make an abstract criticism of a demonstration like *Stop the City*. Whoever doesn't agree with it should set to work to organize another kind of demonstration where the problem of sitting down in front of the police doesn't arise. This second kind of demonstration is structured in four phases: a) information; b) popular involvement; c) minority attack; d) generalized attack. The last two stages do not necessarily follow on from the first, and might not happen, but it's indispensable that comrades prepare everything as if the latter are absolutely certain.