

The Autism of the Insurrectionists

Alfredo Cospito

July 2018

In recent times, the anarchists of action have put the individual and his group at the centre of their actions, leaving the assemblies and speaking directly to each other through their claims [of responsibility]. The very concept of "claim" has undergone a radical transformation, it has gone from being an instrument "open to the outside" to being an instrument "closed in on itself", aimed mainly at those with similar interests, at the community itself at war. Although it may seem a paradox, in this "introspection" is the death of politics, the search for power, for consensus, ceases. No recruits are sought, no "counter-power" to the state is sought. In this perspective, the contrast that some comrades make between "anonymous action" and the "claim" becomes instrumental, a false dilemma. Anonymous action and claiming with or without acronyms, if they are understood as opposing practices, however distant they may seem, become symptoms of a kind of anarchic "autism". Even if they are lived exclusively and dogmatically, they are nothing but two sides of the same coin, that of politics and that of ideology, in which you do not find communities at war but indoctrination and proselytism. We should not have any preconceived ideas about the different practices of anarchy (especially when talking about armed actions): whoever claims with an acronym in one context can avoid doing so in another, sometimes the actions speak for themselves, I do not see any contradiction in this.

Something has changed, now there are many concrete examples of a less dogmatic, more dynamic vision with more evident qualities than insurrectionism. Not a "by-product" of it, but a kind of "evolution" that seems not to stop in the face of condemnation, isolation and, incommunication. An insurrectionism that is certainly more disorderly but with the great virtue of not having preconceived formulas, because it is absolutely chaotic. It produces few publications, little academia, those who speak do so in total anonymity through their claims; from outside -anonymity- only the prisoners who proudly claim their own path speak. We are talking about a vision of the most dangerous anarchic practice because it is in continuous experimentation, it tries to intuit power to strike it where it hurts most. And this is how we can explain so many reprisals that are scattered everywhere in the world: Italy, Greece, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Spain... It is undeniable that in the last few years the repression against the anarchist movement has intensified. The States speak of international anarchist conspiracies, in Italy the anarchists of the FAI-FRI continue to be singled out by the secret services themselves as the highest subversive danger from within the country.

At this point I think the time has come to ask some questions: does this "new" anarchy really bother power? And if so, what is it that bothers it to the extent that there are so many reprisals that, in my opinion, go beyond the usual repressive management of these countries? In short, to what do we owe all this attention? Of all the anarchic practices, destructive action is the one that immediately concerns governments the most. If this practice then spreads through a "common language" (communication through demands/claims of responsibility), and which then tends to concentrate its own forces on common, concrete, immediate objectives, the attention of power clearly increases. If, in addition, this way of speaking through communiqués spreads beyond national borders, alarm grows and power is unleashed through chain reactions. This "common language" has been used by the informal FAI in Italy and by the CCF in Greece, and then with the FAI-FRI it definitely started the journey around the world evolving towards something more "essential", more dynamic, which no longer revolves exclusively around an acronym. It has never been an acronym (whatever it was) that has built this "common language", but the effective weapon of the "international campaigns" called not by committees, organizations, assemblies, but by actions, by the anarchists of praxis without any intermediary. We have seen this also in recent times with the thousands of actions that have taken place after the G20 in Germany, France, Greece... in the actions in revenge for the murder of Santiago Maldonado in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Italy, Greece, France, Germany, in solidarity with the anarchist prisoner Konstantinos Giagstoglou in Greece, in solidarity with the anarchist comrade Lisa who is accused of expropriation in France, Germany... in the attacks on Turkey in solidarity with the Kurdish people who are fighting for their survival and in the persistence of the actions of the FAI-FRI in Italy, Greece, Spain, Chile, Germany...

This is, in my opinion, the practice of the anarchists that today most bothers power. How much does it bother them? We cannot say, but surely some problem is caused by these international campaigns, even if only in perspective. The beautiful thing about a practice that works is that it is contagious, little or nothing can make us submit to repression when anonymity envelops this impalpable fabric of actions woven by anonymous hands. As is always the case when something new is glimpsed, it is not only the enemy who is disturbed, but also those who refer to "tradition," to the ideological "purity" of "sacred" texts. It may be that we anarchists also cry out heresy. Comrades who in the past we have acted side-by-side with treat the "heretics" as stupid and foolish people who have not understood anything of the "initial project", of the "real" insurrectionary project. But does this contrast make sense? And if we recognise in both informal "tendencies" a strategic and methodological unity, what are the differences between the "old" and the "new" perspective?

Apparently these differences would seem to exist, at least from the point of view of power. To name one example, in the trial process of "Scripta Manent" the writings of the "historical" insurrectionists are taken as an example of a "good anarchism" as opposed to that of the defendants defined as "bad". The usual game of good and bad. Much has happened since the "Marini" trial, when the part of the good, necessary for power, was awarded to the anarchists of the Italian FAI [Federazione Anarchica Italiana]. Don't get me wrong, I still think that, however much judges, prosecutors and other nasty things may say, anarchists are all unworthy of power, any power. I am the first to say that these manoeuvres are only instrumentalizations, but they indicate what repression seeks to do, they reveal not only the true essence of power, but also and above all of what it fears at a given moment, it is compass that indicates the most effective practice, because it is the most feared. And observe well that repression is not only limited to repressing those who

strike materially but also those who propose a different strategy of attack with words and ideas; simpler, more dynamic and impalpable to power. It would be enough to listen to some audience of the "tragic" clowning that is going on in Turin at the court to realise this. It is stupid to write evaluations, what it is wise to do is to ask yourself some questions.

Let's leave aside this point of view that belongs to repression and try to answer the question about the differences between the "old" and the "new" anarchy. It is "coordination" that is the first difference that pops out between the "inclusive", "social" insurrectionism and then those -who like the FAI-FRI- relate only through action, giving life to calls for attack, through attacks. In the insurrectionalist strategy linked to intermediate struggles on a specific territory (for example in Val Susa [struggle against High Speed Rail in the mountains]), coordination is indispensable to guarantee that constancy over time that allows adaptation to the continuous changes of the "popular" struggle. Moreover, this "coordination" must operate without leaving a trace, because it has to "direct itself" without revealing its own insurrectionary objectives, because the "real movement" (the people) would not understand a perspective of radical confrontation without mediation and would interpret it as suicidal. The "pieces" of this strategy can have many names: "self-managed organizations", "grassroots committees", "people's assemblies"... And they must move with wisdom and prudence as in a game of checkers.

A "game" of strategy that risks falling into "politics" and "mediation", but which, if successful, would lead to an insurrection, even if only in small territories. Coordination implies a risk in common with the specific organisation, that of generating an elite of professionals in insurrection, who, thanks to their ability and will, decide and control everything or almost everything. This risk does not exist between groups, individuals, informal organisations that are part of the so-called "new anarchy". In this "anarchic international" there is no "coordination" between the groups that make it up... these are limited to concentrating their own forces on similar objectives through international campaigns, promoted by the claims of responsibility. There is no common, even minimal, structure outside the group itself... The FAI-FRI archipelago is one of the components of this "international" which is itself equally "unstructured".

Another difference that stands out is the "communique". The insurrectionists (old style) abhor it, as they abhor acronyms and abbreviations, for them claims of responsibility serve only to assert their own existence by dragging themselves into a sterile mechanism of self-representation and reducing the "oppressed", the "excluded"... to the role of mere spectators. This discourse would have its logic, if it were not for the fact that "claiming" in our case is a means of communicating with each other. In my opinion, acritique of this kind is out of place since we are talking about an internal communication of the "movement", therefore directed at the forces that already exist, at conscious anarchists and rebels who are already practicing destructive action. This kind of "anarchist international" cannot aim at "proselytizing", let alone leading the oppressed into anarchy like sheep in search of a shepherd. We ourselves are oppressed and use the communiques to simplify our lives and avoid complex structures and cumbersome coordination that would stifle our action by slowing us down. This form of communication allows us to be more operative, if there is someone who just applauds, it is not our problem. As for acronyms and abbreviations, they are not indispensable, but when they are (for example the FAI, the CCF...) they serve "only" to give continuity to a discourse, a way of "uniting" while remaining separate. The following fragments of two communiques, one from Italy and one from Germany, are the concrete example of this continuous dialogue through actions that go beyond the borders of the nation states, "uniting"

without being organized. In my opinion, they are a real, living, latent example of one of the many forms that "informal organisation" can take now and immediately:

- **Rome, Santiago Maldonado Cell / FAI-FRI claims the explosive attack on the Carabinieri barracks (07/12/2017):** *"Each individual and affinity group develops and increases its own experiences in fraternal bonding... The structured hierarchical organisation not only kills the freedom of individuals, but also exposes them more to the reaction of oppression. The informal anarchist organisation is the instrument that we have considered most appropriate at this time, for this specific action, because it allows us to hold together our irreducible individuality, the dialogue through the communique with the other rebels and finally the propaganda conveyed by the echo of the explosion. It is not and does not want to be an absolute and definitive instrument. An action group is born and develops on knowledge, on trust. But other groups and individuals can share, even temporarily, a project, a debate, without knowing each other personally. It communicates directly through action... With this action we are launching an international campaign of attack against men, structures and means of repression. Each individual with the methods they consider most appropriate and if they wish to contribute to the debate..."*

- **Berlin, "Violent Minority" Cell / FAI claims the arson of a vehicle of a security company (06/03/2018):** *"The burning of vehicles of security companies in Berlin as a useful means of communication. Citing other claims, we follow the proposal to relate to each other in order to develop both a wider mobilisation of militant groups in Europe, and to develop our theoretical base. We recognize the words and solidarity and we share them, when Rouvi Konas writes about the attack against the Saudi Arabian embassy in Athens, 19-12-2017... Some people in Rome express our same thoughts when they claim as Santiago Maldonado Cell – FAI/FRI, the explosive attack against the carabinieri barracks in San Giovanni... Sometimes it is necessary to define the context in which we act, as the anarchists have done in Bar Le-Duc, when they have poured a lot of anger and some flames in the car park of Enedis... Although we are few, we can organise ourselves instead of waiting for the approval of the so-called "movement organisers" and react to the attack of the authorities. We can act and choose our own time, on our own..."*

To end the quotations, a contribution from the other side: An "insurrectionary" text taken from "Avis des Tempêtes - Anarchist bulletin for the social war" n. 1 (15/01/2018); the title of the article "Ricominciare": *"...The informal organization or, rather, a self-organization without a name, without delegations, without representations... To be clear: there are many informal organizations, depending on their objectives. The informal method does not aim to bring all anarchists together in the same constellation, but allows for a multiplication of coordinations, informal organizations, affinity groups. Their meeting can take place in the context of a concrete proposal, a hypothesis or a precise plan. This is the difference between an informal organisation, which is surrounded by the irredeemably "lazy and mischievous" (not looking for followers), and other types of organisations in struggle, for which the important thing is almost always to affirm their own existence in the hope of having some influence on the facts, to give indications about the paths to follow, and to be a force in the balance of power. Informal organisation is projected elsewhere, avoiding the attention of the dogs of domination, it exists only in the deeds it carries out. In short, it does not have a name to defend or affirm, it only has a project to carry out. An insurrectionary project..."*

The companions who in the 80's and 90's in Italy lived in their own skins the so-called "insurrectionary project" should have understood that nice words and splendid theories are not enough to avoid "...the attention of the dogs of the domain...". The "Marini" process is a school with its

decades of scattered years and broken lives. The lack of claims and acronyms is not enough to be "...lazy and mischievous..." when we are forced, so as not to remain isolated from the "social" context, to participate in assemblies where everyone knows everything before or after and where gregariousness, authority and power make their appearance punctually and inexorably. Nothing, in my opinion, is further from anonymity than the "insurrectionary project" understood in an inclusive, "social" way. It is not enough to want to "...not seek followers..." when the social struggles in which we participate make us actors and extras of media phenomena like the Val Susa struggle, or even further back Comiso, "laboratory" where this project has been experienced in practice, at least here in Italy. The insurrectionary perspective carries with it these risks, whether we can face them or not, it is a question of character and perspective and perhaps also of results... I cannot forget the silences in the assemblies in which they always spoke, "in fact" decided. I blame the immense majority of those silences, I was also among them. Too much conditioned by the authority (surely not sought after) of comrades with more experience, with more knowledge, better at talking, explaining themselves, better at doing, perhaps...

Today, outside this cell, I don't know what is left of this project. After the disillusionment in the Val Susa struggle, many comrades should perhaps reflect on the need to better calculate one's action and not lower it, but aim higher and realise that following "people" at all costs becomes counter-productive. The "intermediate" struggle runs the risk of pushing us backwards rather than forwards, making us lose the sense of who we are, a bit like what happened in the last century with anarcho-syndicalism. Those who were not there in those years can be told a lot of stories, but more often we end up telling them to ourselves in order to keep alive comforting illusions or our own garden within the movement. And precisely in order not to tell those stories too, I have to be clear (especially to myself): there is no "pure" practice that does not involve some commitment or risk. "Purity" does not exist, and even less so when we have to throw ourselves into a desperate struggle where the "enemy" is all around us. Nor is there an "indestructible", "absolute" affinity (disillusionment may always be around the corner), so it is not certain that it will survive all the obstacles that power puts in front of us.

When we do not organise ourselves through a formal organisation, everything is based on friendship, loyalty, respect for words, affection, love and courage, things that we are wrong to call "eternal". Even more than a classic organization, in informality we must always be prepared to remain alone. Our destiny is entirely in our hands; there are no delegations of any kind. The degree of independence, of autonomy, must always be the maximum. I think it is healthy, deep down, "what doesn't kill us makes us stronger", let's hope...

To conclude, I think I can say that we are facing two different strategies based on informality that act on two totally different levels: the first has as its reference the social, the "real movement", and has the ambitious objective of triggering a generalised insurrection in the long term based on conflicts that are restricted to a specific territory. The other has the more "modest" objective of doing as much damage as possible, without delaying, with the real forces (however "scarce" they may be) that anarchists have at their disposal today. The two strategies do not have to be in opposition; they can coexist peacefully, well separated, in the same time, place and specific struggle. Another thing I think I can say with certainty is that any practice carries risks: in the "open" informal organisation that seeks a relationship with the "social", there is the risk that we will dilute and reach out to the mediation of politics. In informal organisation, "an instrument of war" (e.g. FAI/FRI), there is the risk of ending up in "sectarianism", in total closure with the rest of the world. In time we can forget that it is only an instrument among with many others and not

an end in itself, running the risk of becoming "fans" of an acronym and not simply participants in a common "instrument" for the time being. To avoid falling into this kind of "autism" and endlessly repeating the same mistakes, it would be enough to never be satisfied with the results achieved to continually sharpen our weapons and above all not to forget the usefulness of self-criticism, because nobody has "truth" in their pocket, if there is any "truth" at all.

In recent years, with this "international" of action, many brothers and sisters have begun a new journey, opening up perspectives that were unthinkable yesterday. Let us not be carried away by the "autism of the insurrectionists", it would be unforgivable...

Long live international campaigns!

Long live the CCF! Long live the FAI/FRI!

Long live Anarchy!!!

Paola*, Anna** may the earth be light to you...

Alfredo Cospito

December 5, 2018

*Paola, an active companion in animal liberation struggles, into radical ecology and against all prisons, *"even in the affirmation of an ethic that is being lost"*

**Anna Campbell, comrade of the Bristol Anarchist Black Cross, killed in Afrin while fighting with the YPG.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Alfredo Cospito
The Autism of the Insurrectionists
July 2018

Retrieved on 20th October 2020 from <https://325.nostate.net/2020/10/17/pdf-incendiary-dialogues-for-the-propagation-of-anarchic-sedition-black-international-editions/>

Original article published in '*Fenrir*' #9, an eco-anarchist magazine published in Italy in the Italian language. This English language translation appears in the Black International Editions pamphlet '*Incendiary Dialogues: For the Propagation of Anarchic Sedition*' available from May 2020.

theanarchistlibrary.org