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Especifismo

A US anarchist group explains what Especifismo is

Furious Five Collective

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the daily fights of the oppressed and working classes, not single issue activist campaigns, but the movements of people struggling to better their own condition, to resist the attacks of the state and capitalism; such as rank and file led workers movements, immigrant communities demanding legalized status, neighborhood organizations resisting the brutality and killings of police, working class students fighting budget cuts and tuition increases or the poor and unemployed opposing eviction and service cuts.

Examples of social insertion that the FAG cites are their work with neighborhood committees in urban villages and slums (called Popular Resistance Committees), building alliances with rank and file members of the rural landless workers movement of the MST and among trash and recyclables collectors. Due to high levels of temporary employment, underemployment and unemployment in Brazil, a significant portion of the working class does not survive primarily through wage labor, but rather by subsistence work and the informal economy, such casual construction workers, street vendors and trash and recyclables collectors. Through several years of work, the FAG has built a strong relationship with urban trash collectors, called catadores. Members of the FAG have supported them in forming their own organization that is working to mobilize trash collectors around their interests nationally and raise money toward building a collectively operated recycling operation.

Especifista interaction of ideas seeks not to impose ideas or move movements into 'anarchist' but to preserve their anarchist thrust, that is their natural tendency to be self-organized and to militantly fight for its own interests. Assumes view that social movements will reach their own logic of creating revolution, not as when they as a whole necessarily reach the point of being conscious anarchists, but when as a whole or at least an overwhelming majority reach the consciousness of their own power and the exercising of this power in their daily lives; and in a way consciously adopt the ideas of anarchism.

Throughout the world anarchist involvement within mass movements as well [as] the development of specifically anarchist organizations is on the upsurge. This trend is helping anarchism regain legitimacy as a dynamic political force within movements. In this light, Especificismo, a concept born out of nearly 50 years of anarchist experiences in South America, is gaining currency world-wide. Though many anarchists may be familiar with some of Especificismo's ideas, it is an original contribution to anarchist thought.

While more of a practice than a developed ideology, the first organization to promote the concept of Especificismo was the Uruguayan Federacion Anarquista Uruguaya (FAU) founded in 1956 by anarchist militants who embraced the idea of an organization which was specifically anarchist. Surviving the dictatorship in Uruguay, the FAU emerged in the mid 80's to establish contact and influence other South American anarchist revolutionaries. The FAU's work helped support the founding of the Federacao Anarquista Gaucha (FAG), the Federacao Anarquista Cabocla (FACA), and the Federacao Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro (FARJ) in their respective regions of Brazil and the Argentinean organization Auca (Rebel).

While the key concepts of Especificismo will be expanded upon further in this article, it can be summarized in three succinct points:

1. The need for specifically anarchist organization built around a unity of ideas and praxis.
2. The use of the specifically anarchist organization to theorize and develop strategic political and organizing work.
3. Active involvement and building of autonomous and popular social movements, called "social insertion."

Historical Perspective

While only coming onto the stage of Latin American anarchism within the last few decades, the ideas inherent within Especificismo touch on a historic thread running within the anarchist movement internationally. The most well known would be the Platformist current, which was started with the publishing of the “Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists” document written in 1926 by former peasant army leader Nestor Makhno, Ida Mett and other militants of the Dielo Trouda (Workers Cause) group based around a newspaper of the same name. Exiles of the Russian revolution, Dielo Trouda criticized the anarchist movement for lack of organization which allowed the Bolshevik’s to turn the workers soviets into instruments of one-party rule. The alternative they proposed was a ‘General Union of Anarchists’ based on Anarchist-Communism and “theoretical and tactical unity.”

Other similar occurrences of ideas includes “Organizational Dualism,” which is mentioned in historical documents of the 1920’s Italian anarchist movement. This term refers the organization of anarchists both within anarchist political organization and as militants within the labor movement. In Spain, the Friends of Durruti group emerged to oppose the gradual reversal of the Spanish Revolution of 1936. In “Towards a Fresh New Revolution” they emulated some of the ideas of the Platform in critiques of CNT-FAI gradual reformism and collaboration. Influential organizations in the Chinese anarchist movement of the 1910’s like the Wuzhengfu-Gongchan Zhuyi Tongshi Che (Society of Anarchist-Communist Comrades) advocated similar ideas. While these different currents all have specific characteristics that developed from the movements and countries in which they originated, they all share a common thread that crosses eras and continents.

Especificismo Elaborated

By raising the need for specifically anarchist organization built around a unity of ideas and praxis, the Especificists inherently state their objection to the idea of a synthesis organization of revolutionaries or multiple currents of anarchists loosely united. While these critiques have not been elaborated by the South American Especificistas to our knowledge, North American anarchists has offered their experiences of synthesis organization as lacking any cohesiveness due to multiple, contradictory political tendencies. Often the basic agreement of the group boils down to a vague, least common denominator of politics, which leaves little room for united action or developed political discussion among comrades.

Without a strategy that stems from common political agreement, revolutionary organizations are bound to be an affair of reactivism against the continual manifestations of oppression and injustice and/or a cycle of fruitless actions to be repeated over and over again, without little analysis or understanding of the consequences.

A particular stress of the Especificismo current is the role of anarchist organization, (or federation generally) formed on the basis of shared politics, as a space for the development of common strategy and reflection on the groups organizing work. Sustained by collective responsibility to the organizations plans and work, a trust within the members and groups is built that allows for a deep, high level discussion of their actions. This allows the organization to create collective analysis and be continually reflecting on and changing their work based on the lessons gained and circumstances of the times.

The last key point of Especificism is the idea of “social insertion.” It first stems from the belief that the oppressed are the most revolutionary sector of society and that the seed of the future revolutionary transformation of society lies already in these classes and groups. Social insertion is seen as anarchist involvement in