

El movimiento

A critique of tactical formalism in anarchist organization

I-5AF

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In the history of anarchism, tactical and strategic lines have often been confused for ideological lines. However, there is a difference between strategic divergence and ideological opposition. Nevertheless, even in tendencies that have relatively high ideological affinity, such as social anarchism, this misunderstanding can be found and has consistently led to splits in both anarchism and in popular movements. Some in these tendencies are not concerned with unifying strategically or holding an explicitly revolutionary line. In other words, they do not aim to organize on the political level, and in our current context, it makes sense to elaborate on the particular organizational and strategic problems with this kind of anarchist politics.

Anglophone anarchist-communists have progressed these polemics, but the tactical and strategic aspects of their critiques are often overlooked due to misplaced ideological defensiveness. Our position is that organizational dualism must be practiced in order to maintain and develop an anarchist strategy and political line that is applicable to a variety of situations and can adapt as contexts change. Militancy like this requires the grouping together of an active minority that is interested in developing a common political program, a program built on trust, ethics, and revolutionary objectives. It is about putting everyone on the same page strategically in order to progress the political line.

The social level is more popular and massive than the political level. It is a pluralistic environment that can wash out, dilute, and co-opt revolutionary movements. On the social level, only the most organized and well defined political tendencies are distinct. Everything else can start to seem the same. Taking this into account, Tommy Lawson lays out the main problems that organizational dualism attempts to address, explaining that the:

“concept of the ‘social’ and ‘political levels’ aims at clarifying confusion and mistakes in previous anarchist theory. The conflation of the two has led to not only theoretical, but organisational errors amongst other currents of anarchism, in particular anarcho-sindicalism [...] The social level is where basic class struggle occurs. Struggles at this level are popular, wide ranging and mobilise significant numbers of not only the working class, but periphery and intermediate classes around immediate demands [...] In contrast the political level is where individuals, organisations and parties operate with particular frameworks and ideologies, aiming to achieve

particular goals.” (from “Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization”)

In a Brazilian context, the Anarchist Federation of Rio de Janeiro (FARJ) also mentions syndicalism when addressing an absence or lack of organizational dualism among anarchists:

“Even the concept of anarcho-syndicalism, at various times, sought to suppress [the] difference between levels of activity, blending anarchist ideology with trade unionism. These and other attempts to ideologise social movements, in our understanding, weaken both the social movements – which no longer operate around concrete issues like land, housing, employment etc. – as well as anarchism itself, since it does not allow for the deepening of ideological struggles, which occur in the midst of the social movement. It also weakens, since the goal of these anarchists to turn all the militants of the social movements into anarchists is impossible, unless they significantly reduce and weaken the movements. In this way, or even on seeing that it is natural to find people of different ideologies in social movements that will never be anarchists, these anarchists get frustrated, and often shy away from struggles. As a consequence of this anarchism is often confined to itself.” (from Social Anarchism and Organisation)

What is needed is a specific anarchist organization, something distinctly different from an affinity group or unique squadron of tactical specialists engaged in fronts of struggle on their own. Without political organization, anarchists allow sectarians to perpetuate virtue signaling and divisiveness in pluralistic spaces. This drains the capacity of the people who make up the movement:

“a mutual aid project – perhaps as part of a general strategy of “base” or simply party building – grants [a] sect a positive reputation, as well as a means to recruit. Well-meaning people get sucked into front groups, and the sect has a ready-made defense against all critics: unlike you who are all talk, we’re actually out there, serving the people! The masses are hungry, and the party is here to help.” (from “Socialism is not charity: why we’re against “mutual aid””)

These organizations are satisfied by mere affiliation or association, amassing members and supporters but never cultivating militancy. While it is certainly true that militancy means “getting your hands dirty” and “doing the real work”, it also means opening yourself up to explicit culpability when plans are not executed correctly and have unanticipated consequences. Militancy requires being responsible for mistakes and committing to continue working them out. In our own context, we also see that:

“there are anarchists who conceive of the anarchist organisation as a broad grouping that federates all those who call themselves anarchists, serving as a convergence space for the realisation of actions with complete autonomy. In anarchism, broadly speaking, this division between the social and political levels is also not accepted by all the currents, which understand the anarchist organisation in a diffuse manner, it being able to be a social movement, an organisation, an affinity group, a study group, a community, a co-operative etc.” (from Social Anarchism and Organisation)

A real weakness of politically strategizing around large parties and organizations is that they require the one organizational space to serve for social debate and for political unification. Often, the minimal amount of formal unity around “anarchistic” tactics is considered a political movement and begins down the one-way road of seeking popular recognition while at the same time carrying a lot of ideological baggage into popular spaces. This spectacle is not what we mean when we talk about anarchist militancy.

Because anarchism is a politics of direct action aimed at transforming society through class struggle and self-management, we understand the specific anarchist organization, not the popular assembly or the union, to be the primary factor for revolutionary strategy and orientation. Mass organizations and social movements are terrains of struggle, not concentrations of ideological unity. Still, it is not uncommon for already-existing groupings to act as blockades to both political organizing and popular organizing. They alienate people from revolutionary movements and prevent politics from getting specific enough. On the political level, this happens by limiting the debate and mistaking tactical agreement for ideological unity. All of this usually occurs without ever explicitly discussing strategy, some people even taking offense when certain militants attempt to take up the task. For this reason, we think that:

“[tactical] allegiance is insufficient for organizing revolutionaries because there must also be a place, in addition to the activism, for revolutionaries to cultivate militancy [...] This avoids confusion and debate about fundamental positions in the future, making the established line easier to hold over time, something which is necessary when collaborating and compromising with a popular coalition.” (from “How do you say especificismo in English”)

Here, it is important to point out that we do not take issue with the forms of struggle advocated by different anarchist groups and activists. Participating in different places in the struggle is not necessarily a critique of other forms of radical engagement; it is a positive program of direct action. For us, their tactics are not problematic in and of themselves. We agree with FARJ that:

“Although we never question whether these organisations are anarchist (for us, they all are), they do not, in most cases, converge with our way of conceiving anarchist organisation.” (from Social Anarchism and Organisation)

We also see strategic and theoretical problems with their political practice and its revolutionary potential:

“It should go without saying that providing meals for the homeless is never itself a bad thing to do, whether you’re a Catholic or a Stalinist [...] The basic mistake in our view is to approach improvements in conditions as ends in themselves, nullifying any serious strategy. They’re only strategically valuable insofar as they strengthen the working-class and allow it to move forward in the fight against capitalism.” (from “Socialism is not charity: why we’re against “mutual aid””)

In North America, anarchism is not stuck in the “affinity group” model; it’s more like our affinity groups are isolated in tactical stations. When we use terms such as “tactical anarchism”,

“stations”, and “forms”, we are referring to the practices of anarchists who are firmly rooted in their own projects and either don’t want to or don’t know how to get out. They continue to force their particular form of engagement in spite of its limitations:

“To make an organization mutual is not an easy task, particularly when most people only approach such organisations in order to solve a problem that they are currently experiencing, whether it’s a lack of food, unpaid wages, or whatever. Once the problem is solved — or if the group is unable to help — people have a tendency to withdraw.” (from “Socialism is not charity: why we’re against “mutual aid””)

The people who don’t withdraw remain stuck but wrongfully pride themselves in their unquestioning commitment to their station, but resisting movement does not bode well for revolutionaries who are supposedly working toward social transformation on a massive scale.

Beginning from the premise that tactics lead to other tactics, we can understand any use of a single tactic as the result of a distinction from a previous tactic and a move toward another tactic. For us, acting with strategy means connecting the movements from one tactic to another in a way that makes this movement as intentional as possible. A collective action could be a repetition of a previous tactic, or it could be drastically different from it. Either way, none of these small units of action serves as a strategy on its own. If only a single tactic is needed to successfully accomplish an objective, then the strategy would be to repeat the tactic a certain number of times, or to execute the tactic and wait for the eventual result, or even to wait and only employ the tactic if the situation does not develop the desired way on its own. This means that even the most simplistic and minimal conception of tactics requires strategy to inform the temporal aspect of action. When do we employ a tactic? When do we stop?

Anarchists have developed and employed many tactics to achieve short and long term goals. It is not this diversity of tactics that is the problem. In the workplace, we are without a doubt part of the syndicalist project, supporting the worker’s organizations in the class struggle. And during uprisings, let us take part in the insurrections. In struggles for the neighborhood and the city, let us assemble as members of our communities. We want anarchist ideas to be influential in worker’s cooperatives, schools, militias, the military, prisons, and mutual aid collectives. We consider direct action an absolutely fundamental aspect of anarchist militancy. However, direct action occurs on the social level, and:

“is at its core both strategic and tactical. It attempts to link the means and ends of struggle. [It] is working class people taking action to achieve a particular goal by themselves, bypassing bourgeois representational and legal means. [...] Anarchist-Communists seek to avoid the fetishisation of small scale and individual actions as ‘direct action.’ This is not to say that we do not support individuals fighting against oppressive circumstances, but that direct action should be understood [...] as a transformative practice of mass, collective and class based action.” (from Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization)

So, above all, we need to foster these values and liberatory practices among the people themselves. Let us not hold on to our favorite, most cherished and familiar tactical forms, as the closely guarded jewels of anarchism. The purpose of the specific anarchist organization is:

“[resolving] the contradictions between the need for unified militancy and the need for pluralism in mass movements [...] It must meet anarchists at the political level, with a unified strategy. And it must meet oppressed peoples, in their struggles on the social level, with liberatory political practices that meet the immediate needs of the community.” (from “How do you say especificismo in English”)

We do not consider it our task to lay foundations for tactical stations, attract other people to fill them, and then, eventually, lead these same people to revolution proper. This kind of politics, practiced without respect to context, is vanguardist, and can easily slip into sectarianism. Anarchism comes from, and is meant to be, where the people are. It evolves out of their struggles. Therefore, it has to be able to articulate itself in multiple forms, attempting to connect instances of struggle, by organizing as an active minority inside of a larger Popular Power. This requires federalism, which:

“is one of the most distinguishing features of anarchist politics. It is at the same time a theory of how anarchist organisations ought to be structured, and a model for revolutionary social organisation.” (from “Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization”)

We have to organize ourselves. And we have to federate with each other. It is not the task of anarchists to build the new world within the shell of the old; that would be the task of the people themselves, through struggle and self-management. As for the political organization, its role is to act as a small motor that nurtures revolutionary momentum toward the new society, through its innumerable gestational stages and forms.

Anarchism in North America does not currently reflect this intention. Much of what are considered anarchist and libertarian currents, today, position themselves somewhere along rigid tactical lines. Each camp holds a position that, implicitly or explicitly, requires allegiance to their chosen tactical form, persistently and dogmatically upholding it as the most effective method, the most appropriate site, the most prefigurative model of a free society:

“At times, loyalty can be so dependent on employing and defending the use of a single tactic that questioning the strategy behind it seems like a political attack. But truly revolutionary politics must be based on deeper and more developed interpretations of current events and situations. Tactics alone cannot define political lines.” (from “How do you say especificismo in English?”)

Questions of strategy cannot be answered from the perspective of a single, fixed position in the struggle. Tactics themselves are rigid, sharp, and situated, whereas their employment can, and must, be dynamic. The political organization must persist through the complex multiplicity of crises and specific struggles that exist on the social level, and this must happen regardless of:

“[the] challenging reality [...] that different sectors of society have vastly different needs. If a political organization aims to engage in different movements within society, these movements will require their own knowledge, study, theory, and strategy [...] giving them the full respect and genuine effort that they deserve and require

to become effective social forces. By organizing their activities into “fronts” of engagement, a specific group can stay acutely aware of its organizational capacity and its positionality within popular struggles.” (from “How do you say *especificismo* in English?”)

Yet, certain tactical forms, which verge on the sectarian, are often held up by their adherents, including anarchists, as sufficient revolutionary strategies in themselves. Black Flag Sydney criticizes what they call “service-provision approaches”:

“a sort of practice whereby small groups of volunteers gather together to provide some kind of philanthropic service [...] The rise of this sort of tactics forces us — organisationalist, social anarchists — to critically reflect. Whilst we are sympathetic with the desire to break out of lefty bubbles and “do something more”, our concern is that the gradual rise in enthusiasm for these approaches may not be sustainable, precisely because they function as a kind of political dead end — particularly when they are taken in isolation from broader social politics.” (from “Socialism is not charity: why we’re against “mutual aid””)

In our own North American context, these forms include: syndicalism (revolutionary and trade unionism), insurrectionism (activism, spontaneism), communalism (autonomism, utopian socialism, and libertarian municipalism), mutualism (cooperatives and libertarian socialist reformism), philanthropy (rhetorically referred to as mutual aid), educationalism (infotainment, homeschooling and unschooling), religious anarchism, as well as military and anti-fascist formations (anarchist gun clubs, proto-militias, antifa). This list could no doubt be extended, but as Matt Crossin writes, the staunch sectarians who are exclusively focused on these tactics:

“believe that anarchists — being opposed to bosses and governments — should, as our primary strategy, create parallel, self-managed institutions, such as worker cooperatives, community assemblies, mutual aid groups and so on. The argument goes that as such organisations proliferate, they will constitute a form of a Popular Power which not only provides an attractive vision of another world, but leaves the capitalists without workers and the State irrelevant.” (from “Anarchists and Dual Power: Situation or Strategy?”)

While these strategic arguments are commonly accepted, we see three distinct problems with being too focused on formalistic approaches and overlooking the risks of anarchist sectarianism.

First, these projects are driven by minoritarian ideological beliefs and therefore risk ideologizing social level struggles, mass organizations, and popular movements. This will inevitably deprive the social level of a mass base:

“It is not uncommon, particularly in North America, to see anarchism defined as an ideology rooted in ‘direct democracy’, consensus decision making, and the maintenance of ‘horizontal’ (i.e. ‘non-hierarchical’) social relations, particularly in autonomous zones or public spaces [...] it places at the centre of its definition an adherence to very specific forms of procedure and interpersonal behaviour while downplaying the political ends a ‘horizontal’ movement should be trying to establish.” (from “Anarchists and Neo anarchists: Horizontalism and Autonomous Spaces”)

This does little to advance social movements. Instead, it produces an intermediate, third rail objective, discarding strategy in favor of expedient, politically correct tactics and the development of a level of organization which is neither wholly political nor social. This creates an organization whose only function is to emit a strict set of tactical practices, in defense of a “movement” that is lacking dynamism. For dissidents and activists, the objective may be the creation of a network, a general assembly, a counterculture, or a protest movement. For socialists, it may mean “building the Left”, growing a politically compliant base for the Party. Radical liberals funnel efforts into coalitions of socially progressive capitalists and reformist NGOs. In each case, this ideologically-minded construction diverts energy away from the formation of Popular Power, resulting in an opposition which, whether it wants to or not, mirrors the system it aims to overthrow.

Second, these tactics commit to a course of action which may or may not be appropriate for a particular time and place, unnecessarily limiting the engagements of a political organization. We agree with the Federación Anarquista de Rosario (FAR) who describe their own organizational method as something that:

“respects the specificity and the dynamics of each space of struggle, making it so that social spaces stay open to compañerxs of different ideologies, combined with the fact that the political organization can function cohesively by not staying tied to the dynamic of the social struggle.” (translated from “Qué es el anarquismo?”)

If (or when) a particular struggle wanes (assuming the choice of tactical form is appropriate) without insertion into multiple fronts, organizations focused on the perpetuation of a single tactical station will lose the social vector of their anarchism and will have to start over from scratch. Avoiding this dilemma is the reason for emphasizing the social vector of anarchist practice:

“All of our actual reflection aims to think of a strategic model of organisation that enables a recovery of the social vector, in that this points to our objective of overcoming capitalism, the state and for the establishment of libertarian socialism. What we seek, in this context, is only a station in the struggle: as we emphasised at our foundation: “Here we present the FARJ, without asking for anything other than a fighting station, lest righteous and profoundly beautiful dreams die.” (From Social Anarchism and Organization)

The social vector is fundamental for revolutionary transformation, but it is made up of multiple stations that are not always strategically oriented. The political organization is a unified station in the struggle. It is a “fighting station”, specifically aimed at progressing toward libertarian socialism in a strategic way. This means adapting to the demands of a given situation while staying independent of social movements.

Third and finally, by devoting all anarchist militancy to isolated tactical stations, there is an insufficient political organization of anarchists, leaving people to assume ideological and theoretical unity when there has been no work put into developing them. This, again, is insufficient since, for anarchists, organization:

“is both socially and politically necessary for revolutionary action and for the building of a communist society.” (from Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization)

An absence of political organization leads to what may seem practical but are, in fact, overly simplified conclusions about how strategy and theory don't really need to be discussed. According to critics of specific anarchist organizing:

“ideas should arise spontaneously. They denounce discussion, persuasion, convincing, exchange, influence as external to social movements and, therefore, authoritarian.” (from *Social Anarchism and Organisation*)

This usually means that the people who appear most committed hold a powerful sway when new questions are raised. Never talking about strategy has the unintended effect of creating a soft-power hierarchy within an organization since:

“[the] establishment of such ‘centralism’, usually in the name of efficiency, has a tendency to stifle initiative and freedom. It can often exaggerate inequalities in an organisation by granting privileges to small minorities.” (from “Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization”)

For us, it is correct to use the terms “authoritarian” and “centralist” to refer to anarchist organizations that refuse to question the course of action so long as it remains committed to the primary, foundational tactic of the group. As we have already said, tactical unity is necessary but insufficient, and it too often serves as the basis for every kind of organizing work, even on the political level.

It is in this way that tactics are mistakenly understood as strategic positions. For people defending their own lowest common denominator forms of organization, critiques of tactics are wrongfully interpreted as ideological threats. But strategically speaking:

“there is no way to fully ‘prefigure’ anarchy and communism through ‘directly democratic’ spaces of ‘autonomy’. Anarchism requires a specific anarchist movement and anarchist practice. Though we must certainly organise ourselves from the bottom up, with a consistent federalist structure, we can not simply bring about our ideal by ‘living anarchistically’ or relating to one another as ‘horizontally’ as possible. Similarly, the content of anarchism can not be limited to the structure of our movement — its content of revolutionary class struggle must be maintained.” (from “Anarchists and Neo-anarchists: Horizontalism and Autonomous Spaces”)

So, from a revolutionary perspective, we are critiquing the “constructionism” of anarchists who unquestionably and constantly insist on these tactical forms. Similarly to FARJ, in discussing:

“the “specific anarchist organisation” from this particular perspective, we are not speaking about any anarchist organisation.” (from *Social Anarchism and Organisation*)

The political organization necessary for revolutionary militancy must be engaged in multiple fronts, not limited to a single station in the struggle. The specific anarchist organization has to be responsive and agile enough to meaningfully work toward a revolutionary point of rupture. By insisting on prefiguring the ends, anarchist stations can become too focused on the perfection

of their own tactic, preventing the possibility for collective strategy which is the link between means and ends. Failing to effectively federate leads tactical expertise to become cumbersome, dogmatic, and idealistic. Federalism serves to prevent:

“the growth of domination in social relations and the creation of a leadership clique separate from the mass of members. [...] formal structures and accountability actually do more to prevent degeneration than to create it.” (from “Foundational Concepts of the Specific Anarchist Organization”)

Additionally, persistent tactical forms often require too much militant effort to sustain in the long term. They drain organizations and reproduce a cycle of burnout. Most of all, they prioritize prefiguration at the expense of building up Popular Power. This relates to FAR’s point that:

“[the] objective of Federalism is a new institutionality, where there is no place for any kind of privileges, whether economic, social, or political.” (translated from “¿Qué es el Anarquismo?”)

Here, we could make a distinction between a dynamic “institutionality” that could be applied, practiced, and spread to many different fronts as opposed to a more fixed, ideological institution which has an uncompromising character and an evangelizing outlook. In a more concrete sense, a situation composed of multiple dual powers is likely to create regional privileges, so organizing federally through (and beyond) these different forms is not only ideal but necessary for the abolition of the world-wide system of domination.

We are not making a simple argument about local versus international focus. Rather, we see the focus on prefigurative, tactically inflexible forms and the details of their construction as a flaw in what is often referred to as a “dual power strategy”. This is the course of action proposed by multiple libertarian socialist currents today, especially in the US:

“the proponents of Dual Power argue that we can improve our position under capitalism, and ultimately achieve anarchy, by cobbling together whatever resources we can muster and managing them in an autonomous, cooperative manner. In practice, this would mean the better off among us providing goods and services to those of us who are worse off (a form of service provision often confused with the concept of ‘mutual aid’) and cooperative businesses competing with traditional firms on the market.” (from “Anarchists and Dual Power: Situation or Strategy?”)

This problem could be avoided relatively simply, but it would require greater strategic understanding from anarchists, both in their social analysis and in their militancy:

“[...] through actively encouraging people with common affinity to organize themselves, the strategy of *especificismo*, which is based on unity on the political level, becomes a tool that can be used by a political grouping within a mass movement. And through mobilizing week after week to define a political program, an ideologically unified group can simultaneously provide safe social space for people who are not accepted by contemporary popular culture. These people could be outcasted politically, culturally, racially, etc. and for them, ideological and theoretical unity may

provide a continuity of support that is not possible in other groups. This has value for the individuals as well as the political agenda since continuity will make the flow of militants and radical ideas as obvious and as open as possible.” (from “How do you say especificismo in English?”)

This flow of political militants complements and interacts with social movements, but anarchist political movements cannot allow their own organizing objectives to be dissolved inside of the social level. Betting everything on the revolutionary potential of a single sector of society is a mistake.

Organizational dualism is different than communalism and syndicalism, which sometimes refer to a “third sector”, arguing that a dual power institution, built outside of the system, would be capable of overthrowing other institutions, inside of the system. But theoretically, where can we locate this potential dual power if not on the social or political levels? This is a theoretical and strategic flaw of these kinds of projects and an example of the constant need for the production and dissemination of theory by a political organization. If a dual power project is an intermediate level of organizing, then a strategy for social transformation would have to encourage movement outward, developing from the dual power center, in two distinct but complementary tracks: toward political organization and toward popular organization.

Since social revolution depends on the development of a mass movement, the development of a single dual power might make sense tactically, but it will always need to fit inside of a larger strategy involving multiple dual power centers and anticipating the challenges created by such a situation.

Again, any strategy attempting to build power must emphasize federalism. It must be practiced at every level of organization, even locally, in the present not the future. Self-managed power, without federalism on the local, regional, national, and international levels and without federalism across different sectors of society, will only mean more work for the people of the community. This could even be to the benefit of the State and capitalism since without strong federations, alternative powers built outside of the system will simplify the tasks of the State. This means that dual power and self-management are not revolutionary forces, on their own. They need federalism and its “new institutionalality” to give the alternative power a revolutionary potential.

A dual power is something potentially created outside of and away from the struggles produced by the dominant forces. In some cases, they may be entirely divorced from struggles. There is even the risk of a single dual power becoming too successful, breaking away towards full autonomy only to find itself isolated and without any leverage inside of the system it opposes. In this way, for example, a highly organized sector of workers could stand to benefit more from the threat of taking their workplace and its existing power relations hostage than from immediately transforming it into a self-managed cooperative. Class society reproduces inherently conflictual spaces, full of contradictions that cannot be avoided by alternatives attempting to position themselves “outside” of it. Capitalism can only be destroyed by engaging its contradictions.

Bolstered by the refrain that it’s “part of a dual power strategy”, the insistence on a single tactical form (by communalists, syndicalists, etc.) leaves the actual strategy ambiguous and open-ended. In the interest of our revolutionary objectives, we must be willing to talk about community assemblies, and other tactical forms as tools, instruments that have the potential to be used wrongly or badly, equipment that is not universally applicable and can be made to be redun-

dant. We have to be ready and willing to put a lot of work into stations for various durations of time and still be able to abandon them as the strategic situation requires. There is a significant difference between “creating assemblies” and “assembling”. The former is the prefigurative building of institutions, and the latter is the grouped mobilization of people for the purpose of decision-making.

We should be trying to develop Popular Power out of the struggles occurring in society today. Though this power comes from the exploitative, dominating conditions of the capitalist system, its objectives are for a new society, managed by the people themselves. A truly self-managed and federalized Popular Power is able to mobilize freely towards ends which no single group or individual can dictate or direct. Anarchists should not be concerned with a strategy for growing a political sect because anarchism is not the practice of prefiguring societal institutions. Our emphasis on being present in social struggles will sometimes mean that we choose to leave behind our preferred tactical stations and projects, ensuring that we proceed with strategy. For anarchists practicing organizational dualism, our focus should be on organizing our militancy so that people may move more easily and consistently between stations, and so that stations can find a suitable position within active fronts of struggle.

To reiterate, we are specifically critiquing a non-strategic employment of and dogmatic allegiance to tactics. When they are used with strategy, tactical stations are helpful and necessary, serving as entry points for social insertion and training grounds for militant formation.

Tactical stations can be groupings that organize the most active people at a particular site of struggle. In this way, a station could be a point of social insertion for the political organization and an opportunity for others to have contact with its political line. For example, in a struggle around housing, it could make sense to organize the most agitated residents of an apartment complex for self-education and information sharing purposes. And there could be lots of reasons to keep these sessions going, to “hold the station”.

The mutual aspect of mutual aid could be more frequently accomplished if we positioned aid stations at specific points of struggle. They could serve as sites of recovery and consistent support during struggles, especially if they are ongoing. But these sites should be additions to strategic engagement in more massive, popular movements on the social level. They cannot realistically help everyone, and they lose their revolutionary potential in moralism and indiscriminate application.

Between events in a struggle, there will always be times when debriefing and evaluating the course of action are required. Militants will depend on tactical stations being up and running for this exact purpose, but it is common to overlook their preparation and maintenance until they are needed in a crisis or uprising. It is wrong to assume that any place can effectively serve this impromptu function. For the successful longevity of the revolutionary movement, political organizations will need these specific kinds of outposts, and the militants of the organizations will need to know where to find them.

Finally, a strategic tactical station could also serve a training, regrouping, and preparation function. These kinds of stations are the farthest away from active struggle but are no less relevant to a successful long term strategy. Part of our role as a small engine within a growing Popular Power is to keep generating and dissipating liberatory theory and practices. Tactical stations for learning and development could be internal, serving members of an organization in order to train them for political militancy, or they could be external, serving as an educational resource

for radicalizing people coming from the social level. Afterall, this is the essence of organizational dualism: strategically and organizationally developing in two complementary directions.

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