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Class Struggle and Social Struggle

Teodoro Antilli

1924

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Editor's Note: Teodoro Antilli was active in the Argentine anarchist movement during a period of severe repression. In late 1909 a state of siege was imposed, many anarchists were imprisoned and their presses, offices and cultural centres were ransacked and closed. Antilli was involved in the publication of the anarchist paper, *La Battala*, but was arrested in May 1910 along with hundreds of others amid renewed attacks on the anarcho-syndicalist FORA (Selectiol1 58). In 1913, Alltilli was imprisoned for publishing an article accusing all assistant prison governor of raping an anarchist prisoner. He was involved in the general strike of January 1919, which was ruthlessly suppressed. Over 700 workers were killed, thousands more wounded, and over 50,000 imprisoned in what came to be known as the "Tragic Week." All anarchist papers, including Antilli's, were banned. In 1921, another 1,100 workers were massacred during the anarchist rebellion in Patagonia. Antilli and his next paper, *La Antorcha*, supported the actions of Severino Di Giovanni, a militant Italian anarchist refugee from fascism who began a campaign of illegal

actions, including bank robberies and assassinations, in face of this brutal reaction. The following extracts, translated by Paul Sharkey, are taken from Antilli's *Salud a la Anarquia!* [*Here's to Anarchy!*] (Buenos Aires: La Antorcha, 1924, reprinted in *El Anarquismo en America Latina*, Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1990)

WE SHOULD, IT OCCURS TO US, OFFER a full explanation of our notion of "social struggle" as opposed to "class struggle." As we see it, they are as different as an arrow is from wide and the eternal from the ephemeral. Suggesting actions of differing scopes. In fact, someone locked into the class struggle is ill equipped to understand comprehensive social struggle... If I accept that there is only class struggle, success for me will be enough. My quarrel is with the propertied and the capitalists. If I join forces with other workers like myself and set up, say, a cooperative, the class struggle will be over as far as we are concerned; we shall have won, as indeed the cooperators and socialists contend. Yet the state of society will not have been changed and the class struggle will be over as far as we are concerned because we have made ourselves capitalists, the inner circle of a business that visits its exploitation on outsiders, making every one of us, in equal measure, an exploiter, instead of our being split into exploiters and exploited ... If I extend this to thinking about the entire social system as a "class struggle," then all that is required is that my class should dictate to the other class, in which case I too shall have emerged the victor.

"Social struggle," as we understand it, is not just setting a course for revolution and extinguishing the existence of the bourgeoisie; it is also, since we hold that the social also means the sociable, the elimination of all imposition, especially political imposition, by one man upon another; we see humanity as having fought for countless centuries past to achieve

a genuinely free society; we plunge into these raging waters and, let there be no mistake about this, we accept all the consequences and, chiefly, the Revolution. Social struggle, therefore, is something humane and all-embracing; the aim is not merely to change society, but that society should be hospitable for men, and every source of oppression or tyranny banished, which is to say, a genuinely free society...

The term "social struggle," as we employ it, is that all-encompassing. And we want this borne in mind lest it be confused with class struggle carried through to Revolution. We bring into the Revolution a social struggle as well ... Class struggle carried through to Revolution has as its aim a "proletarian dictatorship." Social struggle carried through to Revolution has as its object the freedom of Humanity and the ennobling of all of its members.