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But this fact is also a problem of 'mentality', i.e. of a way of seeing things. Often we are too attached to the immediately perceivable, to the socialist realism of the ghetto, city, nation, etc. We say we are internationalist but in reality we prefer other things, things we know better. We refuse real international relations, relations of reciprocal comprehension, of overcoming barriers (also linguistic ones), of collaboration through mutual exchange. One even refuses specific local relations, their myths and difficulties. The funny thing is that the first are refused in the name of the second, and the second in the name of the first.

The same thing happens concerning the specific preparatory activity of finding revolutionary means (instruments). Again, this decision is often automatically delegated to other comrades. This is due to fear or remorse which, if gone into carefully, have little to say for themselves. The professionalism that is flaunted elsewhere is not welcome in anarchist methodology, but neither is downright refusal or preconceived ideas. The same goes for what is happening concerning the present mania for experience as a thing in itself, the urgency of 'doing', personal satisfaction, the 'thrill'. The two extremes touch and interpenetrate.

The project sweeps these problems aside because it sees things in their globality. For the same reason the work of the revolutionary is necessarily linked to the project, identifies with it, cannot limit itself to its single aspects. A partial project is not a revolutionary one, it might be an excellent work project, could even involve comrades and resources for long periods of time, but sooner or later it will end up being penalised by the reality of the class struggle.

ular individual. I know comrades who do not feel inclined to take up certain kinds of activity — let us say the national liberation struggle — or certain revolutionary practices such as small specific actions. The reasons vary, but they all lead to the (mistaken) idea that one should only do the things one enjoys. This is mistaken, not because it is wrong that one of the sources of action must be joy and personal satisfaction, but because the search for individual motivations can preclude a wider and more significant kind of research, that based on the totality of the intervention. To set off with preconceived ideas about certain practices or theories means to hide — due to 'fear' — behind the idea, nearly always mistaken, that these practices and theories do not 'please' us. But all pre-conceived refusal is based on scarce knowledge of what one is refusing, on not getting close to it. The satisfaction and joy of the moment comes to be seen as the only thing that matters, so we shut ourselves off from the perspective of the future. Often without wanting to, we become fearful and dogmatic, resentful of those who do manage to overcome these obstacles, suspicious of everybody, discontented and unhappy. The only acceptable limits are those of our capabilities. But these limits should always be seen during the course of the event, not as something that exists beforehand. I have always started off from the idea (obviously fantasy, but good operatively) of having no limits, of having immense capabilities. Then day to day practice has taken on the task of pointing out my actual limits to me and the things that I can and can't do. But these limits have never stopped me beforehand, they have always emerged as insurmountable obstacles later on. No undertaking, however incredible or gigantic, has prevented me from starting. Only afterwards, during the course of particular practices, has the modesty of my capabilities come to light, but this has not prevented me from obtaining partia1 results, the only things that are humanly attainable.

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of better living conditions in the short term, a higher level of satisfaction of primary needs in the East, work for everybody in the West. These are the new rules of the course. No matter how strange it might seem, however, the general crisis in politics will necessarily bring with it a crisis in hierarchical relations, the delegate, etc., all the relations that have tended to put the terms of class opposition in a mythical dimension. It will not be possible for this to go on for much longer without consequences, many people are starting to see that the struggle must not pass through the mythical dimension of politics but enter the concrete dimension of the immediate destruction of the enemy.

There are also those who, basically not wanting to know what the work of the revolutionary should be in the light of the above social changes, come to support 'soft' methods of opposition, claiming that they can obstruct the spreading of the new power through passive resistance, 'delegitimation' and such like. In my opinion this is a misunderstanding caused by the fact that they consider modern power, precisely because it is more permissive and based on wider consensus, to be less 'strong' than that of the past based on hierarchy and absolute centralisation. This is a mistake like any other, deriving from the fact that in each one of us there is a residual of the equation 'power equals strength' whereas the modern structures of dominion are dismantling themselves piece by piece in favour of a weak but efficient form, perhaps even worse still than a strong, boorish one. The new power penetrates the psychological fabric of society right to the individual, drawing him into it, whereas the latter remained external. It made a lot of noise, could bite, but basically only built a prison wall that can be climbed sooner or later.

The many aspects of the project also make the perspective of the revolutionary task multiple. No field of activity can be excluded in advance. For the same reason there cannot be privileged fields of intervention that are 'congenial' to one partic-

In due proportion, it is the world as a whole that is refusing the political model. Traditional structures with 'strong' political connotations have disappeared, or are about to. The parties of the left are aligning themselves with those of the centre and the parties of the right are also moving in that direction, so as not to remain isolated. The democracies of the West are moving closer to the dictatorships of the East. This yielding of the political structure corresponds to profound changes in the economic and social field. Those who have a mind to manage the subversive potential of the great masses are finding themselves facing new necessities. The myths of the past, also that of the 'controlled class struggle' are finished. The great mass of exploited have been drawn into mechanisms that clash with the clear but superficial ideologies of the past. That is why the parties of the left are moving close to the centre, which basically corresponds to a zeroing of political distinctions and a possible management of consensus, at least from the administrative point of view.

It is in things to be done, short term programmes such as the management of public welfare, that distinctions are arising. Ideal (therefore ideological) political projects have disappeared. No one (or hardly anyone) is prepared to struggle for a communist society, but they could be regimented into structures that claim to safeguard their immediate interests once again. Hence the increasing appearance of wider struggles and structures, national and supranational parliaments. The end of politics is not in itself an element that could lead one to believe there has been 'anarchist' turning in society in opposition to attempts at indirect political management. Not at all. It is a question of profound changes in the modern structure of capital that are also taking place on an international level, precisely because of the greater interdependence of the various peripheral situations. In turn, these changes mean that the political myths of the past are finished as a means of control, resulting in a passage to methods better suited to the present time: the offer

Introduction

The following ideas have emerged from a long itinerary of struggle and reflection. They represent a tormented, complex thesis, which is not only difficult to set out — which would simply be due a defect of the author — but even to expose clearly and definitively.

In conflict with my whole being, I am about to set out the fundamental elements of insurrectionalist anarchism anatomically. Will it be possible? I don't know. I shall try. If the reading of these notes begins to suffocate, then just skip through them and leave it at that. A mass insurrection, or that of a whole people, can at any given moment lead to the State's incapacity to maintain order and respect for the law and even lead to the disintegration of social and economic conditions. This also implies the presence of individuals and groups that are capable of grasping this disintegration beyond its immediate manifestations. They must be able to see beyond the often chance and secondary reasons for the initial insurrectional outburst. In order to give their contribution to the struggle, they must look beyond the first clashes and skirmishes, not put a brake on them or underestimate them as mere incoherent insufference towards those in power.

But who is prepared to take on this task? It could be anarchists, not so much because of their basic ideological choice and declared denial of all authority, as for their capacity to evaluate methods of struggle and organisational projects.

Moreover, only those who have rebelled and faced the consequences of this rebellion and lived it to the full, be it only within the microcosm of their own lives, can have the sensitivity and intuition necessary to grasp the signs of the insurrectional movement in course. Not all anarchists are rebels, just as not all rebels are anarchists. To complicate things, it is not enough to be a rebel to understand the rebellion of others. It is also necessary to be willing to understand. We need

to look at the economic and social conditions around us. We must not let ourselves be swept away like a river in full swell by the resounding demonstrations of the popular movement, even when it is moving full steam ahead and its initial triumphs lead us to hoist banners of illusion. Critique is always the first instrument, the starting point. But this must not merely be a surly taking sides. It must be a participatory critique, one that involves the heart, feels the excitement of the clash against the same enemy, now with its face finally stamped in the dust. It is not enough simply to rebel. Even if a hundred rebels were to get together it would still not be sufficient, they would merely be a hundred crazed molecules writhing in destructive agony as the struggle spreads, wildly sweeping everything away. Important as an example and stimulus, rebels end up succumbing to the needs of the moment. No matter how effective and radical they are, the more their conscience carries them to attack — often blindly — the more they become aware of an insurmountable limit due to their failure to see any organisational outlet. They wait for suggestions from the mass in revolt, a word here, a word there, in the quick of the clash or during moments of calm when everyone wants to talk before taking up the struggle again. And they are not aware that even during these exciting moments there are always politicians waiting in ambush. The masses do not possess the virtues we often attribute to them. The assembly is certainly not the place put one's life at risk, but one's life can be put at risk by decisions made in assemblies. And the political animals that raise their heads in these collective moments always have clear ideas concerning what to suggest, with fine programmes of recuperation and a call to order already in their pockets. Of course, they will not say anything that is not absolutely correct, politically, I mean, so will be taken to be revolutionaries. But they are always the same, the same old political animals laying the foundations for the power of the future, the kind that recuperates the revolutionary thrust and addresses it towards pacification. We must limit

ing structures in a positive light, as though they had purely social functions that are indispensable to life. Given our incapacity to expose them, it effectively conceals the connections that pass from these peripheral structures to repression, then to consensus. This is the not inconsiderable task that awaits the revolutionary, who should also expect incomprehension concerning actions when they begin to strike, hence the need for 'clarification'. And herein lies another trap. To make these clarifications in ideological terms would reproduce concentration and centrality exactly. Anarchist methods cannot be explained through an ideological filter. Any time that this has happened it has simply been a juxtaposition of our methods on to practices and projects that are far from libertarian.

The concept of delegating is criticised because it is a practice which, aside from being authoritarian, leads to increasing processes of aggregation. Refusal to delegate could lead to building indirect aggregation, a free organisational form. Separate groups then, united by the methods employed, not by hierarchical relations. Common objective, common choices, but indirect. Not feeling the need to propose aggregational relationships that sooner or later end up producing hierarchical organisation charts (even if they are horizontal, claiming to adhere to anarchist methods), which turn out to be vulnerable to any increase in the winds of repression, where each does their own thing. It is the myth of the quantitative that needs to fall. The myth that numbers 'impress' the enemy, the myth of 'strength' before coming out into the struggle, the myth of the 'liberation army' and other such things.

So, without wanting it, old things are transforming themselves. Models, objectives and practices of the past are revolutionising themselves. Without a shadow of doubt the final crisis of the 'political' method is emerging . We believe that all attempts to impose ideological models on to subversive practices have disappeared for ever.

oretical evaluation. The fact that some of these things actually do go on for a long time as though they cannot change, does not mean that this is so. For example, the fact that there is a need to organise in order to strike the class enemy necessarily signifies extension in time. Means and organisation tend to crystallise. And in some respects it is well that this should be so. That is not to say that it is necessary to re-invent everything each time one re-organises, even after being hit by repression. But it does mean that this 'resumption' should not be an exact repetition. Preceding models can be submitted to criticism, even if basically they remain valid and constitute a considerable starting point. At this point one often feels attacked by misinformed critics and preconceived ideas, and at all costs wanting to avoid being accused of being an 'irreducible', which actually sounds quite positive, but implies an incapacity to understand the evolution of social conditions as a whole.

So it is possible to use old organisational models, so long as they are submitted to a radical critique. But what could this critique be? In a word, pointing out the uselessness and danger of centralised structures, the mentality of delegating, the myth of the quantitative, the symbolic, the grandiose, the use of the media, etc. As we can see, it is a question of a critique aimed at showing the other side of the revolutionary horizon, the anarchist and libertarian side. To refuse centralised structures, organisation charts, delegates, quantity, symbolism, entrism, etc., means to fully adopt anarchist methods. And an anarchist proposition requires a few preliminary conditions.

The latter might seem (and in certain aspects is) less effective at first. Results are more modest, not so obvious, have all the aspects of dispersion and that cannot be reduced to one single project. They are pulverised, diffused, i.e. they concern minimal objectives that cannot be related to one central enemy immediately, at least as this comes to be presented in the descriptive iconography that power itself has invented. Power has every interest in showing its peripheral ramifications and support-

destruction, comrades. Please, after all, what we are destroying belongs to us…and so on.

To shoot before — and more quickly than — others, is a virtue of the Far West: it's good for a day or two, then you need to use your head. And using your head means you need a project. So the anarchist cannot simply be a rebel, he or she must be a rebel equipped with a project. He or she must, that is, unite courage and heart with the knowledge and foresight of action. Their decisions will still always be illuminated with the flames of destruction, but sustained with the fuel of critical analysis.

Now, if we think about it for a moment, a project cannot just turn up out of the blue in the middle of the fray. It is silly to think that everything must come forth from the insurgent people. That would be blind determinism and would consign us gagged into the hands of the first politician that stood up on a chair and made a few organisational and programmatical proposals, throwing smoke in everyone's eyes with a few words strung one after the other. Although insurrection is a revolutionary moment of great collective creativity, one which can produce analytical suggestions of considerable intensity (think of the insurgent workers of the Paris Comune who shot at the clocks), it is not the only source of theoretical and projectual wealth. The highest moments of the people in arms undoubtedly eliminate obstacles and uncertainties, clearly showing what had only been hazy until then, but they cannot illuminate what is not already there. These moments are the potent reflector that make it possible to bring about a revolutionary and anarchist project, but this project must already exist, even if only in terms of method. It must have been elaborated and experimented to some degree, although obviously not in every detail.

On the other hand, when we intervene in mass struggles, clashes with intermediate claims, is that not almost exclusively so as to propose our methods? Workers in a particular factory demanding jobs and trying to avoid being laid off, a group of

homeless people trying to get shelter, prisoners on strike for better conditions in jail, students rebelling against a cultureless school are all things that interest us, up to a point. We know perfectly well that when we participate in these struggles as anarchists, no matter how they end up there will not be any corresponding growth in our movement, and this is quite irrelevant. The excluded often forget who we even are, and there is no reason in the world why they should remember us, least of all one based on gratitude. We have asked ourselves more than once, in fact, what we are doing in the midst of such struggles for claims, we anarchists and revolutionaries who are against work, against school, against any concession to the State, against property and also against any kind of negotiation that graciously concedes a better life in the prisons. The answer is simple. We are there because we can introduce different methods. And our methods take shape in a project. We are with the excluded in these intermediate struggles because we have a different model to propose, one based on self-organised struggles, attack and permanent conflictuality. This is our point of strength, and we are only prepared to struggle along with the excluded if they adopt such methods of attack, even concerning objectives that remain within the realm of claiming.

A method would be no more than an agglomeration of meaningless words if were we unable to articulate it within a projectual dimension. Had they paid some attention to this aspect in the first place, many anxious critics of anarchist insurrectionalism would just have gone back to their momentarily disturbed slumber. What is the point of accusing us of being stuck in methods that are a hundred years out of date without taking a look at what we are talking about? The insurrectionalism we are talking about is quite different to the glorious days on the barricades, even if it might contain elements of a struggle that moves in such a direction at times. But as simple revolutionary theory and analysis, a method that comes to life in a project, it does not necessarily take this apocalyptic moment

of justification in this sense. If correctly intended, the project itself is action, whereas the latter is itself a project, becomes fully part of it, makes it grow, enriches and transforms it.

A lack of awareness of these fundamental premises of the work of the revolutionary often leads to confusion and frustration. Many comrades who remain tied to what we could call reflex interventions often suffer backlashes such as demotivation and discouragement. An external event, (often repression) gives the stimulous to act. This often ends or burns itself out and the intervention has no more reason to exist. Hence the frustrating realisation that one has to begin all over again. It is like digging away at a mountain with a spoon. People do not remember. They forget quickly. Aggregation does not occur. Numbers decline. Nearly always the same people. The comrade who can only act by 'reflex' often survives by going from radical refusal, to shutting himself away in disdainful silence, to having fantasies of destroying the world (human beings included). On the other hand, many comrades remain attached to what we might call routine interventions, i.e. those involving periodicals (papers, reviews, books) or meetings (congresses, conferences, debates, etc.). Here again the human tragedy does not fail to present itself. It is not usually so much a question of personal frustration (which also exists, and you can see it), as the comrade's transformation into a congressual bureaucrat or editor of barely readable pages that try to hide their inconsistency by going into daily events, explaining them according to their own point of view. As we can see, it is always the same story.

So, the project must be propositional. It must take the initiative. First operatively, concerning things to be seen or done in a certain way. Then organisationally: how to go about doing these things.Many people do not realise that the things to be done (in the context of the class clash) are not set down once and for all, but take on different meanings throughout time and in changing social relations. That leads to the need for their the-

after day. Perhaps in hope of a particular day that will see an end to this putting off to infinity. Meanwhile no search for a moment's reflection that is not exclusively linked to things be done, or very little at least. Devoting all one's time to doing kills in the same way as devoting it all to thinking does. The contradictions of the individual are not resolved by action as an end in itself. For the revolutionary things are even worse. The classic flattery that individuals use to convince themselves of the validity and importance of the action they wish to undertake is not enough for the revolutionary. The only expedient one can have recourse to is to put things off to infinity, to better days when it will no longer be necessary to dedicate oneself 'exclusively' to doing and there will be time to think. But how can one think without the means to do so? Perhaps thought is automatic activity that one slips into when one stops doing? Certainly not. In the same way as doing is not automatic activity that one slips into when one stops thinking. The possession of a few things then, courage, constancy, creativity, materiality, can allow the revolutionary to bring the means they possess to fruition and build their project. And this concerns both the analytical and practical aspects. Once again a dichotomy appears that needs to be seen in its inconsistency, i.e. as it is usually intended by the dominant logic. No project can be just one or other of these aspects. Each analysis has a different angle and development according to the organisational proposal, which needs to be assisted by other, similar analyses.

The revolutionary who is unable to master the analytical and organisational part of his project will always be at the mercy of events, constantly turning up after things have happened, never before.

The aim of the project, in fact, is to see in order to foresee. The project is a prosthesis like any other of man's intellectual elaborations. It allows action, makes it possible, prevents it from being extinguished in pointless discussions and improvisation. But it is not the 'cause' of action, it contains no element

into account, but develops and intensifies far from any waving of banners or glittering of guns.

Many comrades are fully aware of the need to attack and are doing what they can to bring it about. They perceive the beauty of the clash and the confrontation with the class enemy hazily, but do not want to spend much time thinking about it. They want to hear nothing of revolutionary projects, so carry on wasting the enthusiasm of rebellion which, moving into a thousand rivulets, ends up extinguishing itself in small isolated manifestations of insufference. These comrades are obviously not all the same, you could say that each one constitutes a universe of his or her own, but all, or nearly all of them, feel irritated by any attempt to clarify ideas. They don't like to make distinctions. What is the point of talking about affinity groups, informal organisation, base nuclei or coordinations, they say? Don't things speak for themselves? Are not tyranny and injustice, exploitation and the ferocity of power, quite visible there in front of us? Don't they exist in the form of things, and men basking in the sun as though they had nothing to worry about? What is the point of wasting time in pointless discussions? Why not attack now? Indeed, why not turn on the first uniform we come across? Even a 'sensible' person like Malatesta was of this opinion, in a way, when he said that he preferred individual rebellion to waiting to see the world upturned before doing anything.

Personally I have never had anything against this. On the contrary. Rebellion is the first step. It is the essential condition for burning our bridges behind us, and even if it does not cut the bonds that tie us to society and power with a thousand thick ropes in the form of family, morals, work, obeying the law, at least it weakens them. But I am convinced that this is not enough. I believe it is necessary to go further and think about the possibilities of giving more organisational strength to one's actions, so that rebellion can transform itself into a project aimed at generalised insurrection.

This second step obviously does not appeal to many comrades. And, feeling such efforts to be beyond them, they underestimate the problem or, worse still, criticise those who do spend time and effort on the question of organisation.

Here we will try to provide a few elements to enable us to examine the organisational aspect of insurrectionalist anarchism in some depth. In particular, the problem of the affinity group, informality, self-organisation of struggles, base nuclei and the co-ordination of these nuclei (anarchists and non-anarchists) with affinity groups (of anarchists), through informal organisation. As you can see, the question implies complex problems of method, and this means understanding certain concepts that are often distorted within the context of insurrectionalism. We must therefore give them our full attention in order to get rid of some of the preconceived ideas that often limit our vision without our realising it.

This introductory note will become more schmetic as it takes a look at these key concepts. The text itself will be more articulate, but would probably be difficult to follow without first becoming familiar with these concepts.

An anarchist group can be composed of perfect strangers. I have often gone into anarchist meeting rooms in Italy and elsewhere and hardly known anybody. One's mere presence in such a place, the attitudes, the jargon and the way one presents oneself, the level of discussion and statements impregnated with basic orthodox anarchist ideology, are such that any anarchist feels at ease within a short space of time and communicates with the other comrades as well as possible, to their reciprocal satisfaction.

It is not my intention to speak of the ways that an anarchist group can be organised here. There are many, and each chooses their own comrades as they think best. But there is a particular way of forming an anarchist group that puts real or presumed affinity among all the participants before anything else. Now, this affinity is not something that can be found in

In the arc of the possible ways of being, including personal tendencies and cultural acquisitions, two extreme kinds of behaviour polarise, each of which is limited and penalising. On the one hand there are those who accentuate the theoretical aspect, on the other, those who immerse themselves up in the practical one. These two poles hardly ever exist in the 'pure state', but are often accentuated enough to become obstacles and impediments.

When exasperated to infinity the great possibilities that theoretical study gives the revolutionary remain dead letters, becoming elements of contradiction and impediment. Some people can only see life in theoretical terms. They are not necessarily men of letters or scholars (for the latter this would be quite normal), but could be any proletarian, an emarginated person that grew up in the streets coming to blows. This search for a resolution through the subtlety of reason transforms itself into disorganic anxiety, a tumultuous desire to understand that invariably turns into pure confusion, lowering the primacy of the brain that they are trying to hold on to at any cost. This exasperation reduces their critical capacity to put order in their ideas, widening their creativity but only in the pure, one might say wild, state, supplying images and judgement devoid of any organisational method that might make them utilizable. This person lives constantly in a kind of 'trance', eats badly, relates to others with difficulty. They become easily suspicious, when not anxious to be 'understood', and for this reason tend to accumulate an incredible hotchpotch of contradictory thoughts with no guiding thread. The solution for getting out of the labyrinth would be action. But according to the model of polarisation we are looking at, this would have to be submitted to the dominion of the brain, to the 'logic' of reason. So, the action is killed, put off to infinity or lived badly because not 'understood', not brought back to the pre-eminence of thought.

On the other hand, there is endless doing, the passing of one's life away in things to be done. Today, tomorrow. Day

old concepts, ideas and tensions, that had not fully been understood become clear. An incredible mixture, itself a creative event, which must be submitted to the discipline of method in order for us to produce something, limited if you like, but immediately perceivable. Unfortunately the destiny of creativity is that its immense initial explosive potential (which becomes something miserable in the absence of the basic means mentioned above) must be returned to the realm of technique in the narrow sense of word. It must go back to becoming word, pages, figures, sounds, form, objects. Otherwise, outside the scheme of this prison of communication, it would be dispersive and abandoned, lost in an immense fathomless sea.

And now one last thing, materiality. The capacity, that is, to grasp the real material foundations of what surrounds us. For example, we require suitable means in order to understand and act, and that is not so simple. The question of means seems clear, but always leads to misunderstanding. The question of money, for example. It is obvious that without money one cannot do what one wants. A revolutionary cannot ask for State financing to develop projects aimed at its destruction. They cannot for both ethical reasons and a logical one (that the State would not give it to them). Nor can they seriously believe that with small personal subscriptions they will be able to do everything they want (and consider necessary). Nor can they simply continue to complain about lack of money or resign themselves to the fact that some things just can't be done for that reason. Even less can they adopt the stance of those who, being penniless, feel their conscience to be at rest and, stating they have no money, do not participate in the common effort but wait for others to do so in their place. Of course, it is clear that if a comrade does not have any money they cannot be held to pay for what they cannot afford. But have they really done everything they can to procure some for themselves? Or is there only one way to get hold of money: go begging for it, letting oneself be exploited by a boss? I don't think so.

a declaration of principles, a glorious past, or a history of 'militancy', no matter how far back this goes in time. Affinity is acquired by having knowledge of each other. That is why one sometimes believes one has affinity with a comrade, then discovers that that is not actually so, and vice versa. An affinity group is therefore a melting pot in which such relations can mature and consolidate. But because perfection is a thing of angels, even affinity needs to be considered with a certain mental acumen and not be accepted supinely as the panacea for all our weaknesses. I can only discover that I have affinity with someone if I reveal myself to that person, do away with all the affectations that normally protect me like a second skin, harder and tougher than the first. And this cannot simply come about through small talk, me chattering about myself then listening to the other's tales, but must come about in things that are done together. In other words, it must come about in action. When we do things, we unconsciously send out tiny signals that are far more revealing than words. It is from these exchanges that we create the conditions that are necessary in order for us to gain knowledge of each other.

If the group's activity is not doing for the sake of it so as to grow numerically, but has the qualitative aim of comrades being aware of each other and feeling at one with each other, sharing the tension towards action and the desire to transform the world, then this is an affinity group. If it is not, the search for affinity will be no more than the search for a shoulder to lean on. Affinity is therefore the knowledge that comrades acquire of each other, which is gained through action in the realisation of one's ideas. A glance backwards to allow my comrades to see who I am is reabsorbed by looking forward together into a future in which we build our common project. In other words, we decide to intervene in specific struggles and see what we are capable of. These two moments, the first, let us say, of the knowledge of the individual, and the second, the projectual one of the knowledge of the group intertwine and constitute affin-

ity, allowing the group to be considered to all effects an 'affinity group'.

The resulting condition is not fixed in time once and for all. It moves, develops, regresses and modifies during the course of the various struggles, drawing from them so as to grow both theoretically and practically. It is not a monolithic entity. Decisions are not made vertically. There is no faith to be sworn upon nor commandments to believe in, in times of doubt or fear. Everything is discussed within the group throughout the course of the struggle, everything is reconsidered from the start, even if solid, eternal points might seem to exist already.

The affinity group's task is to elaborate a particular project, the best place to study and examine the conditions one decides to operate in. It might seem that organisations of synthesis are better instruments for intervening in struggles than affinity groups, but the vast range of interests held by anarchist structures of synthesis is only apparent. In fact, in an organisation of synthesis, groups are allocated tasks at congresses, and although they are free to interest themselves in all the problems that characterise this society divided into classes, basically only operate according to what has been dictated by the congress. Moreover, being linked to programmes and principles that have been accepted once and for all, they are unable to make independent decisions and end up complying to the rigid limitations fixed by the organisation in congress. The latter's role is to safeguard the organisation itself, in other words to 'disturb' power as little as possible and avoid being 'outlawed'. The affinity group avoids such limitations, sometimes easily, sometimes only thanks to the courage and decision of the comrades that make it up. Of course, such structures cannot give courage to those who lack it. It cannot suggest attack unless each individual is already a rebel in his or her soul. It cannot go into action if people are only prepared to think at the level of an afternoon chat.

It is impossible to procure the means one requires without constancy. The revolutionary needs cultural means, i.e. analyses and basic common knowledge. But studies that seem very far from revolutionary practice are also indispensable to action. Languages, economy, philosophy, mathematics, the natural sciences, chemistry, social science and so on. This knowledge should not be seen as sectarian specialisation, nor should it be the dilettante exercises of an eccentric spirit dipping into this and that, desirous of knowledge but forever ignorant due to the failure to possess a method of learning. And then the technics: writing correctly, (in a way that reaches one's objective), speaking to others (using all the techniques on the subject), which are not easy to learn and are very important, studying (this is also a technique), remembering (memory can be improved, it does not have to be left to our more or less natural disposition), the manipulation of objects (which many consider a mysterious gift but instead is technique and can be learned and perfected) and others still.

The search to acquire these means is unending. It is the revolutionary's task to work continually to perfect these means and extend them to other fields.

Then there is a third thing, creativity. There can be no doubt that all of the above means would be useless, simply specialisation as an end in itself, were they not to produce new experiences, continual modification in the means as a whole and the possibility of putting them to use. And it is here that it becomes possible to grasp the great force of creativity, i.e. the fruit of all the preceding efforts. Logical processes become no more than a basic, unimportant element, whereas a different, total new one emerges: intuition.

So now the problem comes to be seen differently. Nothing will be as it was before. Numerous connections and comparisons, inferences and deductions are made without our realising it. All the means in our possession begin to vibrate and come alive. Things of the past along with new understanding,

the attacker, transferred into something quite ideological. Few things are as hateful to me as this way of proceeding.The place for the conversion of theory into practice and vice versa, is the project. It is the project as an articulated whole that gives practical action a different significance, makes it a critique of the ideas of the enemy. It derives from this that the work of the revolutionary is essentially the elaboration and realisation of a project.

But before discovering what a revolutionary project might be, it is necessary to agree on what the revolutionary must possess in order to be able to elaborate this project of theirs. First of all courage. Not the banal courage of the physical clash and attack on the enemy trenches, but the more difficult one, the courage of one's ideas. Once you think in a certain way, once you see things and people, the world and its affairs in a certain way, you m u s t have the courage to carry this through without compromise or half measures, without pity or illusion. To stop half way would be a crime or, if you like, is absolutely normal. But revolutionaries are not 'normal' people. They must go beyond. Beyond normality, but also beyond exceptionally, which is an aristocratic way of considering diversity Beyond good, but also beyond evil, as someone would have said.

They cannot wait for others to do what needs to be done. They cannot delegate to others what their conscience dictates to them. They cannot wait peacefully to do what others itching to destroy what oppresses them like themselves would do if only they decided, if only they were to awake from their torpor and from allowing themselves to be swindled, far away from the chatter and confusion. So they must set to work, and work hard. Work to supply themselves with the means necessary to give some basis to their convictions.

And here we come to the second thing: constancy. The strength to continue, persevere, insist, even when others are discouraged and everything seems difficult.

Once the problems concerning what is to be acted upon have been gone into, the necessary documentation has been found and analyses worked out, the affinity group goes into action. This is one of the fundamental characteristics of this kind of anarchist structure. It does not wait for problems to appear like a spider in the middle of a web. It looks for them and seeks a solution, which must obviously be accepted by the excluded who are bearing the brunt of the problem. But in order to make a proposition to a social reality that is suffering some specific form of aggression by power in a given area, it is necessary to be physically present among the excluded of that area and have a real awareness of the problems involved.

The affinity group therefore moves in the direction of local intervention, facing one particular problem and creating all the necessary psychological and practical conditions, both individually and collectively. The problem can then be faced with the characteristics and methods of insurrectionalism which are self-organisation, permanent conflictuality and attack.

One single affinity group cannot necessarily carry out such an intervention on its own. Often, at least according to the (few and controversial) experiences to date, the nature of the problem and complexity of intervention, including the extent of the area as well as the means required to develop the project and the ideas and needs of the people involved, require something more. Hence the need to keep in contact with other affinity groups so as to increase the number of comrades and find the means and ideas suited to the complexity and dimension of the problem that is being faced. That is how informal organisation originates.

Various anarchist affinity groups can come together to give life to an informal organisation aimed at facing a problem that is too complex for one group alone. Of course, all the groups participating in the informal organisation must more or less agree with the intervention and participate in both the actions and ideas.

Affinity groups often develop informal relations that become constant as they meet regularly to prepare for specific struggles or — better still — during the course of these struggles. This facilitates the circulation of information about the latter and the projects that are in preparation, as well as signs from certain areas of the world of the excluded.

An informal organisation 'functions' quite simply. It has no name as it does not aim to grow numerically. There are no fixed structures (apart from the single affinity groups, each one of which operates quite autonomously), otherwise the term 'informal' would be meaningless. It is not formally 'constituted', there are no congresses but only simple meetings from time to time (preferably during the course of the struggles themselves). There are no programmes, only the common experience of insurrectional struggles and the methods that distinguish them: self-organisation, permanent conflictuality and attack.

The aims of the informal organisation are conferred on it by the individual affinity groups that make it up. In the few experiences that have materialised it has been a question of one specific objective, for example the destruction of the Cruise missile base in Comiso in 1982–1983. But there could also be more than one intervention and the informal organisation would make it possible for single groups to intervene in these different situations. For example they could alternate when it became necessary to be in one place for a considerable length of time (in Comiso groups stayed in the area for two years). Another aim could be to provide both analytical and practical means, and provide the financial support that the individual group might require.

The primary function of the informal organisation is to make known the various affinity groups and the comrades that make them up. If you think about it, this is still a question of a search for affinity, this time at a different level. Here the search for affinity is intensified by the project — which does not exclude the ever-increasing knowledge of the single individual — and

about in isolation, cut off from direct intervention on the things and men of the State (and capital of course). So, in relation to what we said earlier, attack not only with ideas but also with weapons. I see no other way out. To limit oneself to an ideological duel would merely increase the enemy's strength.

Theoretical examination therefore, alongside and at the same time as practical attack. Moreover, it is precisely in the attack that theory transforms itself and practice expresses its theoretical foundations. To limit oneself to theory would be to remain in the field of idealism typical of the bourgeois philosophy that has been feeding the coffers of the dominant class for hundreds of years, as well as the concentration camps of the experimenters of both Right and Left. It makes no difference if this disguises itself as historical materialism, it is still a question of the old phagocytic idealism. Libertarian materialism must necessarily overcome the separation between idea and deed. If you identify the enemy you must strike, and strike adequately. Not so much in the sense of an optimal level of destruction, as that of the general situation of the enemy's defence, its possibilities of survival and the increasing danger it represents.

If you strike it is necessary to destroy part of their structure, thus making their functioning as a whole more difficult. All this, if considered in isolation, runs the risk of seeming insignificant. It does not manage, that is, to convert itself into something real. For this transformation to come about it is necessary for the attack to be accompanied by a critical examination of the enemy's ideas, ideas that are part of its repressive and oppressive action. But does this reciprocal conversion of practical action into theoretical and theoretical into practical come about as something imposed artificially? For example, in the sense of carrying out an action then printing a fine document claiming it. The ideas of the enemy are not criticised or gone into in this way. They are crystallised within the ideological process, appearing to be massively in opposition to the ideas of

seeing the enemy inside the uniform, behind the factory, at the ministry, school, the church, etc., is considered suspect. There is a desire to substitute harsh reality with abstract relations and relativity. So the State ends up becoming a way of seeing things and individuals, with the result that, being an idea, it cannot be fought. The desire to fight it in abstract in the hope that its material reality, men and institutions will precipitate into the abyss of logical contradiction, is a tragic illusion. This is what usually happens at times like this when there is a lull both in the struggle and in proposals for action.

No one with any self respect would admit to the State's having any positive function. Hence the logical conclusion that it has a negative one, i.e. that it damages some to the benefit of others. But the State is not simply the idea State, it is also the 'thing State', and this 'thing' is composed of the policeman and the police station, the minister and the ministry (including the building where the ministry has its offices), the priest and the church (including the actual place where the cult of lies and swindling takes place), the banker and the bank, the speculator and his premises, right down to the individual spy and his more or less comfortable flat in the suburbs. Either the State is this articulated whole or it is nothing, a mere abstraction, a theoretical model that it would be absolutely impossible to attack and defeat.

Of course, the State also exists inside us. It is therefore also idea. But this being an idea is subordinate to the physical places and persons that realise it. An attack on the idea of State (including that which we harbour inside us, often without realising it) is only possible if we attack it physically, in its historical realisation standing there before us in flesh and blood. What do we mean by attack? Things are solid. Men defend themselves, take measures. And the choice of the means of attack is also open to confusion. We can (or rather must) attack with ideas, oppose critique to critique, logic to logic, analysis to analysis. But that would be a pointless exercise if it were to come

comes about at the level of more than one group. One deduces from this that the informal organisation is also an affinity group, based on all the affinity groups that make it up.

The above considerations, which we have been developing over the past fifteen years, should have been of some use to comrades in their understanding the nature of informal organisation. This does not seem to be the case. In my opinion, the most serious misunderstanding comes from the latent desire of many of us to flex our muscles. We want to give ourselves a strong organisational structure because that seems to be the only way to fight a power structure that is strong and muscular. According to these comrades the first characteristic that such a structure should have is that it be specific and robust, must last in time and be clearly visible so as to constitute a kind of light amidst the struggles of the excluded — a light, a guide, a point of reference.

Alas! We do not share this opinion. All the economic and social analyses of post-industrial capitalism show how power would swallow up such a strong, visible structure in one gulp. The disappearance of the centrality of the working class (at least what was once considered such) means that an attack carried out by a rigid, visible structure would be impracticable. If such structures are not simply destroyed on impact, they would just be co-opted into the ambit of power in order to recuperate and recycle the most irreducible elements.

So long as the affinity group continues to look inwards, it will be no more than a few comrades giving themselves their own rules and respecting them. By looking inwards I do not just mean staying inside one's anarchist place, limiting oneself to the usual discussions among the initiated, but also responding to the various deadlines of power and repression with declarations and documents. In that case the affinity group would only differ from other anarchist groups superficially: 'political' choices, ways of interpreting the various responses to the

power structure's claim to regulate our lives and those of all the excluded.

The profound sense of being a 'different' structure, i.e. one based on a way of organising that is quite different to all other anarchist groups — in a word, on affinity — only becomes operative when it sets out a project of specific struggle. And what characterises this project more than anything is the presence of a considerable number of excluded, of people — in a word, the mass — bearing the brunt of repression that the project is addressing with recourse to insurrectionalist methods.

The essential element in the insurrectional project is therefore mass participation. And, as we started off from the condition of affinity among the single anarchist groups participating in it, it is also an essential element of this affinity itself. It would be no more than mere camaraderie d'elite if it were to remain circumscribed to the reciprocal search for deeper personal knowledge between comrades.

But it would be nonsense to consider trying to make other people become anarchists and suggest that they enter our groups during the struggle. Not only would it be nonsense, it would be a horrible ideological forcing of things that would upturn the whole meaning of affinity groups and the eventual informal organisation that might ensue in order to face the specific repressive attack. But here we are faced with the need to create organisational structures that are capable of regrouping the excluded in such a way as to begin the attack on repression. So we come to the need to give life to autonomous base nuclei, which can obviously give themselves any other name that indicates the concept of self-organisation.

We have now reached the crucial point of the insurrectional project: the constitution of autonomous base nuclei (we are using this term here to simplify things).

The essential, visible and immediately comprehensible characteristic of the latter is that they are composed of both anarchists and non-anarchists.

In an informal organisation there is no question of synthesis. There is no desire to be present in all the different situations and even less to formulate a project that takes the struggles into the depths of a programme that has been approved in advance.

The only constant points of reference are insurrectional methods: in other words self-organisation of struggles, permanent conflictuality and attack.

The Revolutionary Project

It is not easy to grasp the various aspects of revolutionary activity. It is even more difficult to grasp everything in terms of a complex project that has its own intrinsic logic and operative articulation. That is what I mean by revolutionary work.

We all, or nearly all, agree as to who the enemy is. In the vagueness of the definition we include elements from our personal experience (joy and suffering) as well as our social situation and our culture. We are convinced that we know everything that is required in order to draw up a map of enemy territory and identify objectives and responsibility. Times change of course, but we don't take any notice. We make the necessary adjustments and carry on. Obscure in our way of proceeding, our surroundings also obscure, we light up our path with the miserable candle of ideology and stride forward.

The tragic fact is that things around us change, and often rapidly. The terms of the class relationship are constantly widening and narrowing in a contradictory situation. They reveal themselves one day only to conceal themselves the next, as the certainties of yesteryear precipitate into the darkness of the present.

Anyone who maintains a constant if not immobile pole is not seen as what they are: honest navigators in the sea of class confusion, but are often taken to be stubborn chanters of out of date, abstract, ideological slogans. Anyone who persists in

Now, an organisation that has growth in members as its main aim must use instruments that guarantee proselytism and pluralism. It cannot take a clear position concerning any specific problem, but must always find a middle way, a political road that upsets the smallest number and turns out to be acceptable to most.

The correct position concerning some problems, particularly repression and prisons, is often the most dangerous, and no group can put the organisation they belong to at risk without first agreeing with the other member groups. But that can only happen in congress, or at least at an extraordinary meeting, and we all know that on such occasions it is always the most moderate opinion that prevails, certainly not the most advanced.

So, ineluctably, the presence of the organisation of synthesis in actual struggles, struggles that reach the essence of the class struggle, turns into a brake and control (often involuntarily, but it is still a question of control).

The informal organisation does not present such problems. Affinity groups and comrades that see themselves in an informal kind of projectuality come together in action, certainly not by adhering to a program that has been fixed at a congress. They realise the project themselves, in their analyses and actions. It can occasionally have a point of reference in a paper or a series of meetings, but only in order to facilitate things, whereas it has nothing to do with congresses and such like.

The comrades who recognise themselves in an informal organisation are automatically a part of it. They keep in contact with the other comrades through a paper or by other means, but, more important, they do so by participating in the various actions, demonstrations, encounters, etc., that take place from time to time. The main verification and analysis therefore comes about during moments of struggle. To begin with these might simply be moments of theoretical verification, turning into something more later on.

The more difficult points reside elsewhere however, and on the few occasions of experimentation these have turned out to be a source of considerable misunderstanding. First of all, the fact that they are structures in the quantitative sense. If they are such — and in fact they are — then this characteristic needs to be clarified. They are actually points of reference, not fixed structures where people can count themselves through all the procedures of established membership (card-carrying, payment of dues, supplying services, etc). The only aim of the base nuclei is struggle. They operate like lungs in the respiratory system, swelling when the struggle intensifies and reducing in size when it weakens, to swell again when the next clash occurs. During quiet spells, between one involvement and another — and here by involvement we mean any aspect of struggle, even simply handing out a leaflet, participating in a public meeting, but also squatting a building or sabotaging one of the instruments of power — the nucleus acts as a zonal reference, a sign of the presence of an informal organisational structure.

To see autonomous base nuclei as needing to grow quantitatively would be to turn them into union-style organisms, i.e. something like the Cobas in Italy, who defend workers' rights in the various productive sectors through a wide range of activities such as claiming and defence of those they represent. The more delegates there are, the louder the voice of the claimant. The autnonomous base nucleus does not have delegates, it does not propose struggles based on wide objectives such as the defence of jobs, wage increases, or safeguarding health in the factory, etc. The base nucleus exists for the one objective that was decided upon at the start. This can also be a claim of some kind, not made through the representative method of delegation, but faced using direct methods of immediate struggle such as constant unannounced attacks and the blunt refusal of all the political forces that claim to represent anyone or anything.

Those who form the base nuclei should therefore not expect some complex level of support to cover a wide range of needs.

They must understand that this is not a question of some union-style defence organisation, but is an instrument of struggle against one specific objective, and is only valid if the initial decision to have recourse to insurrectional methods stands firm. Participation in the nuclei is quite spontaneous, as there are no benefits other than the specific, exclusive one of strength and organisation concerning the objective that has been chosen together, and attacking it. So, it is quite logical not to expect such organisms to develop a high numerical or (even less) stable, composition. In the preparatory phase of the struggle those who identify with the objective, agree with it and are prepared to put themselves at risk, are few. When the struggle is underway and the first results begin to appear, the hesitant and weak will also join in and the nucleus will swell, only for these last-minute participants to disappear later on. This is quite natural and should not worry us or make us see this instrument of mass organisation in a negative light.

Another common area of incomprehension is the short lifespan of the autonomous base nucleus itself. It comes to an end upon reaching the objective that had been decided (or through common agreement concerning the impossibility of reaching it). Many ask themselves: if the nuclei 'also' function as a regrouping point of reference, why not keep them in place for possible use in some future struggle? Here we come back to the concept of 'informality' again. Any structure that carries on in time beyond its original aim, sooner or later turns into a stable structure whose original purpose is distorted into the new and apparently legitimate one of quantitative growth. It grows in strength in order to reach the multiplicity of goals — each one interesting enough in itself — that appear on the nebulous horizon of the exploited. As soon as the informal structure plants roots in a new, stable form, individuals suited to managing the latter will appear on the scene: always the same ones, the most capable, with plenty of time to spare. Sooner or later the circle will close around the so-called revolutionary anar-

olutionary forces. Everything must either go through the ideological filter of synthesis or comply with the conditions approved earlier during the congress.

This situation, which is not always as rigid as it might seem here, carries the ineliminable tendency of organisations of synthesis to drag struggles to the level of the base, proposing caution and using contrivances aimed at redimensioning any flight forward, any objective that is too open or means that might be dangerous.

For example, if a group belonging to this kind of organisation (of synthesis, but always anarchist and specific) were to adhere to a structure that is struggling, let us say, against repression, it would be forced to consider the actions proposed by this structure in the light of the analyses that had roughly been approved at the congress. The structure would either have to accept these analyses, or the group belonging to the organisation of synthesis would stop its collaboration (if it is in a minority) or impose the expulsion (in fact, even if not with a precise motion) of those proposing different methods of struggle.

Some people might not like it, but that is exactly how things work.

One might ask oneself why on earth the proposal of the group belonging to the organisation of synthesis must by definition always be more backward, i.e. in the rearguard, or more cautious than others concerning possible actions of attack against the structures of repression and social consensus.

Why is that? The answer is simple. The specific anarchist organisation of synthesis, which, as we have seen, culminates in periodic congresses has growth in numbers as its basic aim. It needs an operative force that must grow. Not to infinity exactly, but almost. In the case of the contrary it would not have the capacity to intervene in the various struggles, nor even be able to carry out its own principle task: proceding to synthesis in one single point of reference.

odical congresses. During these open meetings basic theoretical analyses are discussed, a program is prepared and tasks are shared out covering a whole range of interventions in the social field. The organisation thus sets itself up as a point of reference, like an entity that is capable of synthesizing the struggles that are going on in reality of the class clash. The various commissions of this organisational model intervene in different struggles (as single comrades or groups) and, by intervening, give their contribution in first person without however losing site of the theoretical and practical orientation of the organisation as a whole, as decided at the most recent congress.

When this kind of organisation develops itself fully (as happened in Spain in '36) it begins to dangerously resemble a party. Synthesis becomes control. Of course, in moments of slack, this involution is less visible and might even seem an insult, but at other times it turns out to be more evident.

In substance, in the organisation of synthesis (always specific and anarchist), a nucleus of specialists works out proposals at both the theoretical and ideological level, adapting them as far as possible to the program that is roughly decided upon at the periodic congresses. The shift away from this program can also be considerable (after all, anarchists would never admit to too slavish an adherence to anything), but when this occurs care is taken to return within the shortest possible time to the line previously decided upon.

This organisation's project is therefore that of being present in various situations: antimilitarism, nuclear power, unions, prisons, ecology, interventions in living areas, unemployment, schools, etc. This presence is either by direct intervention or through participaton in interventions managed by other comrades or organisations (anarchist or not).

It becomes clear that participation aimed at bringing the struggle to within the project of synthesis cannot be autonomous. It cannot really adapt to the conditions of the struggle or collaborate effectively in a clear plan with the other revchist structure, which by now will have found its sole aim, its own survival. This is precisely what we see happening when such an organisational structure, albeit anarchist and revolutionary, establishes itself: it becomes a rarefied form of power that attracts all the comrades who want to do good for the people and so on, etc, etc. — all with the best will in the world, of course.

One last organisational element, which is necessary at times, is the 'coordination' of autonomous base nuclei. The coordinating structure is also informal and is composed of various representatives of the base nuclei. Whereas the individual nuclei, given their function as 'lungs' can be informal to the point of not even having any fixed meeting place (because a nucleus can arrange to meet anywhere), this cannot be so for the coordinating body. If a struggle — still circumscribed to the specific question that started the project — lasts for a considerable length of time and covers a fairly wide area, it is necessary to find a place for the various activities of the base nuclei to coordinate themselves.

The presence of anarchist affinity groups is not directly visible in the coordination, and this can also be said concerning the informal organisation. Of course anarchists are present in all the various base nuclei, but this is not the ideal place for anarchist propaganda in the classic sense of the word. The first thing to be done, both within the coordination and the individual nuclei, is to analyse the problem, the objective to be reached, then look at the insurrectional means to be used in the struggle. The task of comrades is to participate in the project and go into the means and methods to be employed, along with everyone else involved. Although this might sound simple here, it turns out to be far more complicated in practice.

The function of the 'co-ordination of the autonomous base nuclei' is therefore that of linking up the struggles. Here we have only one thing to suggest (absolutely indigestable for anarchists, but quite simple for anyone who is not an anarchist):

the need, in the case of a mass attack against a given structure of power, to decide upon individual tasks before the attack takes place, i.e. to agree on what needs to be done down to the minutest detail. Many imagine such occasions of struggle to be an orgy of spontaneity: the objective is there in front of everyone, all you need to do is go ahead and rout out the forces protecting it and destroy them. I am putting things in these terms here, although I know that many will have a hundred different ways of seeing things, but the essence does not change. All of the participants must have a precise idea of what to do, it being a question of a struggle taking place in a given area that will have to overcome specific armed resistance. Now, if only a few people know what to do the resulting confusion will be the same, if not worse, than if no one does at all.

A plan is therefore necessary. There have been instances where it was necessary to have an armed military plan simply to hand out a leaflet (for example during the insurrection of Reggio Calabria). But can this plan really be made available to everybody, even just a few days before the attack? I do not think so. For reasons of security. On the other hand, details of the plan of attack must be available to all the participants. One deduces that not everybody can participate in drawing it up, but only those who in some way or other happen to be known either for their participation in the autonomous base nuclei, or because they belong to the affinity groups adhering to the coordination. This is to avoid infiltration by police and secret services, something that is more than likely on such occasions. People who are not known must be guaranteed by those who are. This might be unpleasant, but it is unavoidable.

The problem gets complicated when the project in course is known to many comrades who could be interested in participating in one of the actions of attack we are talking about. In this case, the influx would be considerable (in the case of Comiso, in the days of the attempted occupation, about 300 comrades came from all over Italy and beyond) and the need

to action, is in relation to the affinity reached and has nothing to do with more or less camouflaged monograms, programmes, platforms, flags or parties.

The affinity group is therefore a specific organisation that comes together around common affinities. These cannot be identical for all, but different comrades will have infinite affinity structures, all the more varied the wider the effort of analytical quest reached. It follows that all these comrades will also tend towards quantitative growth, which is however limited and not the main aim of the activity. Numerical development is indispensable for action and it is also a test of the breadth of the analyses that one is developing and its capacity to gradually discover affinity with a greater number of comrades.

It follows that the organism thus born will end up giving itself means of intervention in common. First, an instrument of debate necessary for analysis that is capable, as far as possible, of supplying indications on a wide range of problems and, at the same time, of constituting a point of reference for the verification — at a personal or collective level — of the affinities or divergencies that arise.

Lastly it should be said that although the element that holds a group of this kind together is undoubtedly affinity, its propulsive aspect is action. To limit oneself to the first element and leave the other in second place would result in relationships withering in Byzantian perfectionism.

Informal organisation

First let us distinguish the informal anarchist organisation from the anarchist organisation of synthesis. Considerable clarification will emerge from this distinction.

What is an anarchist organisation of synthesis? It is an organisation based on groups or individuals that are more or less in constant relation with each other, that culminates in peri-

often limit ourselves to questions that are close at hand because they are the ones that affect us most (repression, prison, etc.).

But it is precisely our capacity to examine the problem that we want to face that leads to the best way to create conditions for affinity. This can obviously never be absolute or total (except in very rare cases), but can be sufficient to create relations disposed to acting.

If we restrict our intervention to the most obvious and superficial aspects of what we consider the essential problems to be, we will never be able to discover the affinity we desire. We will constantly be wandering around at the mercy of sudden, unsuspected contradictions that could upset any project of intervention in reality. I insist on pointing out that affinity should not be confused with sentiment. We can recognise affinity with comrades that we do not particularly like and on the other hand like comrades with whom we do not have any affinity.

Among other things, it is important not to let oneself be hindered in one's action by false problems such as a presumed differentiation between feelings and political motivations. From what has been said above it might seem that feelings should be kept separate from political analysis, so we could, for example, love someone and not share their ideas at all and vice versa. That is roughly possible, no matter how lacerating it might be. The personal aspect (or that of feelings if you like) must be included in the above concept of going into the range of problems, as instinctively succumbing to our impulses often signifies a lack of reflection and analysis, or not being able to admit to simply being possessed by god.

From what we have said there now starts to emerge, even nebulously, a first approximation of our way of considering the anarchist group: a number of comrades linked by a common affinity. The more the project that these comrades build together is gone into, the greater their affinity will be. It follows that real organisation, the effective (and not fictitious) capacity to act together, i.e. to find each other, make analyses and pass

to avoid the presence of infiltrators becomes far more serious. Comrades turning up at the last minute might not know about the action in course, and will not be able to understand what is going on. In the same way, all those who decide not to accept the above verification will end up feeling left out. And finally two last points that merit a concise, linear explanation: why we consider the insurrectional methodology and projectuality to be the most suitable means in the revolutionary clash today, and what we think can come from the use of insurrectional methods in a situation that is not insurrection in act.

As far as the first question is concerned, an analysis of social and economic reality today shows how structures of synthesis reproduce all the defects of the political parties of the past, great or small, making them ineffective or only useful to the restructuring of power.

To the second question, one could reply that it is impossible to say in advance how the conditions leading to insurrection will develop. Any occasion might be the right one, even if it looks like an insignificant experiment. But there is more. To develop a project of insurrectional struggle starting from one specific problem, i.e. a precise manifestation of power to the detriment of a considerable mass of excluded, is more than a simple 'experiment'. It is insurrection in act, without wanting to exaggerate something that starts off as something small, and will probably remain so. What is important is the method, and anarchists still have a long way to go in that direction, otherwise we will remain unprepared in the case of the many insurrections of whole peoples that have taken place to date and continue to do so.

Basically this book is a contribution to the great problem 'What is to be done?'.

Catania, 21 November 1998.

Affinity

Anarchists have an ambivalent relationship with the question of organisation. On the one hand there are those who accept a permanent structure with a well-defined programme and means at their disposal (even if only a few), that is divided up into commissions, while on the other there is a refusal of any stable relationship, even in the short term.

Classical anarchist federations and individualists are the two extremes of an escape from the reality of the clash. The comrade that belongs to an organised structure hopes that a revolutionary transformation will result from a growth in numbers, so he holds the cheap illusion that the structure is capable of controlling any authoritarian involution or any concession to the logic of the party. The individualist comrade is solicitous of his own ego and fears any form of contamination, any concession to others or any active collaboration, believing such things to be giving in and compromising.

This turns out to be the natural consequence, even for comrades who consider the problem of specific organisation and the federation of groups critically.

The organisation is thus born before any struggles take place and ends up adapting to the perspective of a certain kind of struggle which — at least one supposes — is to make the organisation itself grow. In this way the structure has a vicarious relationship with the repressive decisions of power, which for various reasons dominate the scene of the class struggle. Resistance and the self-organisation of the exploited are seen as molecular elements to be grasped here and there, but only become meaningful on entering and becoming part of the specific structure or allow themselves to be regrouped into mass organisms under the (more or less direct) leadership of the latter. In this way, one is always waiting. It is as though we are all in provisional liberty. We scrutinise the attitudes of power and keep ready to react (always within the limits of the possible) against

the repression that strikes us, hardly ever taking the initiative, setting out our interventions in first person, overturning the logic of the loser. Anybody that recognises themselves in structured organisations expects to see their number of members increase. Anyone that works within mass structures (for example in the anarcho-syndicalist optic) is waiting for today's small demands to turn into great revolutionary results in the future. Those who deny all that but also spend their time waiting, who knows what for, are often stuck in resentment against all and everything, sure of their own ideas without realising that they are no more than the flip side of the organisational and programmatical stance.

We believe that it is possible to do something else.

We start off from the consideration that it is necessary to establish contact with other comrades in order to pass to action. We are not in a condition to act alone as long as our struggle is reduced to platonic protest, as bloody and terrible as you like, but still platonic. If we want to act on reality incisively there must be many of us.

How can we find our comrades? We have cast aside any question of programmes and platforms in advance, throwing them out once and for all. So what is left?

Affinity.

Affinities and divergence exist among anarchists. I am not talking about personal affinity here, i.e. sentimental aspects that often bring comrades together (in the first place love, friendship, sympathy, etc.), I am talking about a deepening of reciprocal knowledge. The more this deepening grows, the greater the affinity can become. In the case of the contrary, divergences can turn out to be so great as to make any action impossible. So the solution lies in a growth in reciprocal knowledge, developed through a projectual examination of the various problems that the class struggle presents us with.

There are a whole range of problems that we want to face, and usually care is taken not examine them in their entirety. We