

On the “Proposal For a New Anarchist Manifesto”

Alfredo Cospito

April 19, 2021

Let me preface this by saying that living in a “bubble” (a high security section) it was only today, April 19, 2021, that I received the “Reflections on the contemporary informal, insurrectional and internationalist anarchist substrate. For a new anarchist manifesto“, written back in February–April 2020.

Although I don’t know how this has evolved, I would still like to have my say, by giving my contribution on what I believe is the real and concrete essence of what is sometimes called “the new anarchy”, sometimes “the black international”. I would like this writing of mine to circulate as much as possible outside the Italian borders and so I hope that some comrade will translate these words of mine into the various languages. My intention is simply to clarify a few points, I hope I’m not stepping on anyone’s toes, mine are just slightly different points of view... The first thing I noticed in this document is that the Federazione Anarchica Informale — Fronte Rivoluzionario Internazionale (Informal Anarchist Federation — International Revolutionary Front) and the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire are never mentioned. This lack from my point of view is quite surprising and indicative because we are talking about experiences of armed struggle that, with all their limitations, gave the start to this phenomenon. These two experiences have bequeathed to us a concreteness that we only dreamed of before, a concreteness that was the product of a real “international”. An international that has allowed anarchists to communicate through actions without organizations and coordination of any kind. A force that has made itself recognisable by presenting itself to the world through acronyms. Acronyms behind which there were nothing but anarchists of action who related to each other through the words that followed the actions. Comrades who had only one aim in that specific field: the concrete and factual destruction of the existing and not recognition or self-representation within an assembly. In your writing (which, if I understand correctly, would have among many other beneficial purpose to “mitigate the discrepancies” between the so-called “social” and “anti-social” struggles) the real essence of this “new” anarchy is brought back on the tracks of traditional insurrectionalism. I say this because basic concepts that are foundational to this “new” anarchy in your words are distorted if not overturned. Words that would seem an attempt to give an organic, a structure to a phenomenon that by its nature is ethereal, unstructured and that finds its strength precisely in this its intangibility and unpredictability.

In Europe in past years, among more or less informal anarchists, attempts similar to yours were tried. Attempts of more or less successful international assemblies. Attempts that beyond the initial intentions did not lead to anything but books, documents prepared in common and various posters, reducing in fact to the usual scene for the usual known comrades. At this point I must reiterate what are (according to my lonely point of view) the founding concepts at the base of the new informal anarchist practices:

- Overcoming the assembly “instrument”, only the actions speak, only the anarchists who risk their lives by striking hard; communication takes place through the claims.
- Exclusion of any kind of organisation, even of coordinations; the writings that follow the actions in some way invite the other groups to act accordingly; there is no need to know each other because this would give rise to leaders or coordinations.
- Exclusion of pure theorists, who have no say in the matter, I am talking about those comrades who through their “lucidity” and theoretical ability manage (even though they do not want it to happen) to impose themselves in the assemblies.

These, in my opinion, are the founding characteristics of all those myriad actions that have communicated around the world in recent years, often bouncing from one continent to another, giving rise to campaigns of struggle. It does not matter whether the actions are accompanied by an acronym or not, the important thing is the communication that takes place through the claim texts.¹

In your analysis you support the opposite of what (in my opinion) transpires clearly and with all evidence from the concrete and real dynamics of the so-called “anarchist, insurrectional and internationalist contemporaneity”. In several places you state that we should not limit ourselves to destructive action because this would not be enough to bring down the whole system, then adumbrate the risk that limiting oneself to destructive action would lead to the birth of “groups of specialists of action”; in short, the usual bogeyman of the vanguard. Arriving then, from logic to logic, at the surprising affirmation that this “new” anarchy should not be limited to those who carry out the actions. All respectable concepts but that distort the true essence of this phenomenon, taking us back to the much more concrete and timely risk of creating specialists in theory (not action) who, giving “power” to the assemblies, impose (although not wanting this to happen) their strategy because they are better at writing and speaking and perhaps because they are charismatic comrades and better known to others. In your paper you speak of “organizational informality” and “permanent insurrectional praxis”, this vision of yours does not seem to me to fully reflect the “contemporaneity” of anarchism of action. At this point, I venture to attempt, in brief, the “genesis” of this new way of understanding insurrectionalism, at least as far as Italy is concerned. Here in Italy, everything started as a criticism of the social insurrectionalism and its assembly dynamics. At the assemblies it was always the usual ones who spoke because they had more experience, because they had clearer ideas. It was a pity that the ideas, being the product of the enlightened few, remained stagnant. The words of those who spoke better, wrote better

¹ It must be noted, however, that claimed actions have a disadvantage over unclaimed actions: they involve a greater risk from the point of view of repression. On the other hand, unclaimed actions also have a drawback: invisibility and dispersion. The message that (from a social point of view) unclaimed actions would like to convey often does not arrive or is greatly obscured or distorted.

and perhaps had more charisma carried more weight than those of the others who, intimidated, remained silent. The majority followed suit, sometimes someone tried to intervene, but their words carried little weight. In short, the usual, I fear inevitable, assembly dynamics. Let it be clear that I am not blaming anyone, simply that one enters certain social mechanisms without even realising it, we all fall into them sooner or later. It was a short step from criticising more experienced comrades to experimenting with “new” paths. It started with the questioning of the coordination of the assembly dynamics, and then came the questioning of some “dogmas”. One dogma in particular was that the only valid actions were those with “reproducibility” (the “small” actions). A formula that demonised as “spectacular” and “vanguardist” any action whose violence could go a little further. I allow myself to say that in your writing this “dogma” risks being resurrected when you make the distinction between the right targets to hit, “bases of the system”, and obsolete targets, “symbols of the system”. The words change but the gist remains the same. Who should decide which are the right targets to hit? This simple question is enough to highlight the contradictions of such an approach. In time, the last “taboo” to be broken was that of claims and acronyms, and there was general panic, also because of the repressive consequences that such a practice would have entailed, and indeed did entail. For some years, the majority of the Italian-speaking anarchist insurrectionalist movement ignored these “new” practices. But the increased impact, also in the media, caused by increasingly violent actions made any attitude of snobbery and superiority laughable. Then, with the propagation of the FAI–FRI throughout the world, it became crazy to insist with that attitude. In a critical or hypercritical manner, with due distinctions, all or almost all took note that something new had been born.

Now, I have the impression that the moment of “recovery” has arrived and, once again, coordinations, assemblies, manifestos emerge. I am sure of your good will, but I fear that with these presuppositions, what will be born will only be able to trace (and I say this without any irony) the “old” and glorious social insurrectionalism. In my opinion, it is the methodology you have used that is wrong. It should be the groups and the anarchist individualities, through their actions, to talk about it. Only from their analyses, conveyed through actions, the new anarchist perspective can be strengthened. Only in this way we can make the necessary and indispensable selection that can exclude a priori the “professional ideologists”, those who do not act in the real world and therefore do not have the sharp tools and a concrete and realistic vision to affect reality. This is not an accusation, I am sure that there are no “professional ideologists” among you, it is simply a question of method.

It is the method that makes the difference between the different visions of anarchy. In this kind of context, strategic analyses cannot fall from above. However elaborate and well-written they may be, words must be conveyed by action, otherwise the analysis will inevitably lack realism and concreteness. Having said that, mine is only a point of view. The point of view of an imprisoned comrade who has a limited view of reality.

Precisely because of the speech just made, my opinion is worth what it is worth, very little. Mine is only a contribution, and I hope very much that my criticisms turn out to be constructive.

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