

The January Document

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Center for Especifismo Studies

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The anarchist conception of class society is NOT ONLY economic (i.e., income, wealth, etc.); it's ALSO political/juridical/military (i.e., bureaucrats, politicians, judges, etc.) AND cultural/ideological (i.e., language, race, gender, etc.). This is why we speak of oppressed classes in the plural. Exploitation and domination are manifested differently depending on the context, but in all cases, anarchists seek an egalitarian society that would mark the end of class divisions.

Today, society does not have a revolutionary character. Everything is organized around capitalist interests and state violence. In many radical spaces, people are using individualist methods without identifying with individualism. For some, the term “revolutionary” is worn as a badge of honor or status symbol. But revolutionary militancy, as conceived of in *especifismo*, refers to committed and ethical engagement. This means interacting with radicalized and radicalizing people, as well as apolitical and depoliticized participants in social movements and large organizations. This complicated, multi-layered interaction requires a relevant theory that clarifies the relationship between specific organizations and mass organizations. *Especifismo* distinguishes these different tracks of engagement with the terms “political” and “social”. And to accomplish strategic and tactical unity, the political organization needs ideological and theoretical unity. This is different from mass movements which are characterized by the number of people that they mobilize, as well as the plurality of ideological forces at play. While the political level does not take priority over the social level, the political organization does make decisions from its own perspective, for its own membership. And not everything that the political organization does will be supported by people outside of the org.

Especifismo advocates “a model of performance” that progresses a revolutionary strategy through militant ethics and militant commitment, establishing a degree of trust between the political organization (in the form of the specific anarchist organization) and the popular organization (in the form of the class struggle). Progressing with this strategy means evaluating our actions. And whether referring to real, actual practices or ideal, best-case-scenario practices, the political organization is the source of these standards and critiques.

How does the political organization collectively integrate and spread new information? In *especifismo*, the specific anarchist organization determines collectively whether a new piece of information is relevant or not. These analyses, practices, and values are reinforced through polit-

ical education, not only in its content but also its form, meaning its (lower-case “o”) organization and its methodology.

Since, the political level of anarchism cannot itself remain relevant if it is divorced from the social level of popular movements, organizational dualism is a strategic conception of revolutionary development in two complementary and collaborative directions. With this understanding of organization, anarchism can stay in contact with what is called “the social vector”, meaning the large, mass movements of its time and place. Social insertion is specifically about being present in these broader social movements, sharing skills, analyses, and knowledge, but not forcing a political agenda into a pluralistic space. This also implies being willing to learn from others who are equally committed to the revolutionary character of the movement. During a social movement or inside of a popular organization, when an active minority shares practical affinity and agrees to work together, anarchists should consider it essential to also show up in a dependable, helpful, and organized way.

On the social level, insisting on spontaneous actions can be authoritarian in the way that it leads people, willingly or not, to be disorganized. This is against the principles of self-managed freedom conceived of by anarchism. Organization is fundamental for collective action. This is equally true for revolutionary militants, for mass movements, and for the defense of direct action against the reactionary forces of the ruling class.

The militants of a specific anarchist organization are not participating in politics as a hobby and are not depending on revolutionary work to be fun. Militancy is about doing what it takes to progress a program of direct action. From an individual perspective, even in an organization where the decisions are made collectively, it can seem problematic that certain people may find themselves in the minority of a vote. However, the perspective of the specific organization is different since it only progresses in the way that its participants decide. Its only path is one of collective action, not pledges of allegiance, individualistic acts, or forced coercion. Following this relationship of militants to their own degree of commitment, it is not random individuals who have to “perform tasks they do not like very much” because when the political organization says “we”, it is in reference to the political level. This political-level “we” is distinct from the social-level “we”. And organizational dualism is a tool for understanding who we are.

Inside of some organizations, nothing ever changes. They refuse to interact with people from different ideological backgrounds, and over time, this moves them further away from the class struggle. Eventually, this “my way or the highway anarchism” ends up focusing entirely on perfecting itself, polishing its ideology and growing its numbers. But these practices are sectarian regardless of their ideological character. The specific anarchist organization should not be a “bubble” that protects its members from change brought on by forces from the “outside”. It is not only concerned with its own organization but nurturing movement on the political and social levels, as parallel paths leading to the same ends. This means a firm commitment to pluralistic spaces and mass movements, defending the presence of political anarchism, organized and effective. But it also means not engaging with everyone on the premise of converting them to anarchism because the other people in our community are not passive pawns without the ability to think for themselves. Only through presenting the ideas of *especificismo* to the people will they have the opportunity to determine their own relationship to these ideas, on their own terms.

While some forms of action and organization replicate the social work of the state, in *especificismo*, “work” refers to the activities of the political organization, and “social” refers to the place of that work: the social level. *Especificismo* militants are rank-and-file members of various

social-level groups (i.e., unions, schools, neighborhood associations, etc.), and in these spaces, they participate in direct action and articulate emancipatory politics. However, social insertion is not the act of prefiguring (upper-case “O”) Organizations and leading them to certain beliefs and values. It refers to the entire process of developing relationships and interacting with other people in the community.

Contrary to some democratic socialist or Marxist tendencies, the *especificismo* conception of revolutionary strategy is not a project of leftist unity but one of popular power. From this perspective, the Left is a grouping of tendencies, a social-political level where a degree of unity is sometimes possible and practical. However, this unity is not ideologically specific since different groups “on the left” have different ideas and politics that stem from them, nor is it popular since it makes up a small minority of society. For some socialist tendencies, growing the Left through the means of amassing party membership and accumulating political power in the state are necessary steps in a revolutionary process. *Especificismo* rejects both of these strategies for revolution. The only way to create a revolutionary rupture that will transform society is through the organized development of a popular power capable of destroying the institutions of capitalism and the state.

Popular power must also be able to defend its own liberating character from reactionary forces. Mass movements must be autonomous to prevent cooptation and sustain their militant thrust. In context, this means that social-level unity must be based on a strict strategy of achieving short to medium-term objectives, whereas the political level, which is based on ideological affinity to anarchism, is able to remain focused on a longer-term general strategy. So, while narrowly defined objectives represent a form of gradualism, it is distinct from the sort of gradualism that employs the tool of the state or the party to act as an umbrella that covers various autonomous movements. These “big tent” efforts attempt to put a single brand on the plurality of localized and specific struggles that are already taking place in society today.

The answer to the question “what does ‘win’ mean?” varies depending on who you ask, where they live, the conditions of their life and those of the people in their community, the conditions of their work, their healthcare, their housing, etc. This multiplicity of struggles and self-emancipating actors is a kind of revolutionary gymnasium, and the direct actions we take to accomplish short term goals are the revolutionary gymnastics that the popular organization must do to develop its own popular power capable of finally bringing an end to the class struggle in all its forms.

Obviously, at this time, not everyone is on our side. And since social transformation is only possible through popular organization, today, this remains the work of the oppressed classes of the world as well as the project of all truly revolutionary socialist tendencies. This is why it is not possible to simply abolish the whole system and all its structures as soon as possible, even if this abolition is part of the long-term strategy. The liberation of the oppressed classes is only possible through their own organization and self-management, not by voting for a party or by being forced into societal collapse by vanguardist actors attempting to “accelerate” society’s move to self-emancipation.

Considering the verb form “to militate”, it is clear that this action needs objectives. You militate for something, toward something. Militancy is intentional action for particular objectives. The political organization has the final objective of libertarian socialism, a society free from class domination and capitalist exploitation, where people can decide for themselves how to accomplish the things they want in life. But for the popular organization, objectives are related to real,

materially relevant changes in the actual lives of everyone affected by struggle. This hyper- specificity of time and place must orient itself around need, not ideology. Sometimes, this may mean taking the lead from others who are the most affected by and have the most intimate knowledge of a particular site or form of struggle. Likewise, we must recognize that commitments are lived by individual militants, not abstractly. Everyone's capacities, abilities, and degrees of commitment change over time. This is why the political organization must act, not only as a station for the active minority to strategize and make decisions for themselves regarding their collective actions, but also as a source of revolutionary history so that the knowledge and progress of our struggles are not lost from one generation to the next.

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