

The May Document

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Center for Especifismo Studies

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If we want our collective actions to have effects on the real world, we must reflect on them, and we must concern ourselves with what it means to develop theory strategically. This means determining which theory to begin with for understanding our context, while continuing to develop a more specifically contextualized theory that is a product of this process. Strategy determines what an organization should focus on when interacting with different practical elements in a given moment. So, strategically developed theory helps an organization understand a particular problem from a particular perspective by establishing a connection between a given situation and the analysis of it.

The politics of the specific anarchist organization are intentional, not reactionary. As the FARJ says, “each militant has a well-defined function and clear objectives to be achieved”. However, within the broader program of the organization, roles cannot be too narrowly defined because specific actions will need to be determined situationally, based on context. In *especifismo*, effective action has nothing to do with the typical “wins” of a political party or reformist movement. A common problem for mutual aid organizations is that it is difficult to consider what a “win” would look like since mutual aid is as much a part of daily survival as it is revolutionary action. There is no inherent way to win at mutual aid. For this reason, efforts like this demand strategy, or else they can retreat into counter-cultural aesthetics.

Strategy is as much about what an organization intentionally does NOT do as it is about what an organization does. The collective force of an organization is also found in its ability to say that it will not do something for strategic reasons, making clear that not all decisions are made based on ideology alone. This is especially necessary in mutual aid efforts which are easily motivated by a sense of guilt rather than a practical, collective strategy. We think that the force of strategic action can help us overcome the force of moral guilt.

From a political perspective, everything can be thought of strategically. This could be something simple. An organization could ask itself about possible ways to have a meeting (more) strategically. Or a group of militants could meet before a larger assembly to prepare and ensure that everyone knows their roles and how to successfully realize them. In *Social Anarchism and Organisation*, the FARJ adds that “it is important to set deadlines for the accomplishment of actions, with assessments of the results at the end of each period or cycle”. So, for a meeting, political strategy could consist of a list of goals to achieve as well as a sequence of tactics that will lead

toward an end that fits within a specific timeframe. This allows the militants of the political organization to have a strategically determined line that prevents unintended deviations from the group's objective.

When anarchists speak of solidarity with each other and their communities, this too could be done strategically from a political perspective, connecting immediately necessary actions and practical relationships to long-term objectives built on deeper foundations of trust. We agree with the FARJ that acting strategically involves an organization answering these three questions:

1. Where is the organization right now?
2. Where does it want to go?
3. How is it going to get there?

When an organization responds to these questions, the answers have a "shelf-life" forcing the regular reproduction of both the (more contextualized and responsive) "micro" forms of strategy and the (more general and permanent) "macro" strategy.

The importance of strategizing on the political level implies the parallel need to strategize on the social level, but unlike the political strategy that comes from ideological and theoretical unity, the strategy of social movements and mass organizations must be based on popular recognition of a shared need which can be addressed collectively. Social work should be done in an effort to continue working toward popular "wins". It is an opportunity for the political organization to seek feedback from other organizations and militants from the social level. This input should be factored into the evaluative processes of the political organization as an integral part of the reflections that aim to shape ethical interactions.

Some ideological tendencies will always be less open to certain parts of the specific anarchist organization's program, many of which may be sectarian. But the anti-organizational tendency to reject currents like *especificismo* may also be related to reoccurring patterns amongst marginalized groups. Within organizations of the oppressed, centers and peripheries are often re-established. Just participating in groups of marginalized people doesn't eliminate the possibility of marginalization. Since the political organization aims to be self-reflective and ethical, it needs to acknowledge that peripheries can continue to be peripheries, even within anarchist spaces. To defend against this occurrence, it is important to do social work that supports rank-and-file participants who are placed on the peripheries of power both by leadership and by dominant ideological forces. Nevertheless, as we have said, longer-term strategizing necessarily happens at the political level and requires ideological and theoretical unity. This means that, politically speaking, "checking-in" consists, not of assuming unity, but instead, of doing the real work to form it. In this way, splits can occur on a political basis and not on a personal basis.

We should not confuse a problem of cultural unity with a problem of political or ideological unity. The specific anarchist organization should not assume unity with other anarchists or leftists on everything; nor should it assume disunity with liberals, progressives, reformists, and Marxists in every context either. These overlapping political lines can be difficult to discuss with some people and organizations, but the militant drive to do so is the political force behind *especificismo*. By presenting a well-articulated political line, people can learn about anarchist political strategy and determine their relationship to it as individuals isolated in struggle or as members of

their own political organizations with their own strategically determined criteria for cooperating with others.

The freedom to join a specific organization should be equal to the freedom to leave it. As has been stated before: the organization owes satisfaction to the militants and the militants owe satisfaction to the organization. It should not serve as a body that pushes people out over time. It should struggle, on the political level, to make accommodations for the needs of anyone who wants to commit to the organization and put in the necessary work to militantly defend the political line. In *especificismo*, this is addressed through a high degree of trust established during the long process of integrating oneself and of being integrated into the specific anarchist organization.

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