

Building International Solidarity

Human Relations for Global Struggle

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We have entered a new age of communications over the past 30 years. Our anarchic forbearers could have only dreamed of our ability to rapidly communicate with like minded anarchic people across the world but it is important to remember that effective and historically important international networks of solidarity and communication have existed as long as anarchic organizing has. When the Haymarket Martyrs were killed, the working people of the world spoke out in anger as news spread through communications networks. When Ricardo Flores Magon languished in a prison cell in the Yuma Territorial Prison, it was people like Mother Jones and Emma Goldman who used their networks to speak out and advocate for his release. Communications is a force multiplier for radical struggle. It enables us to join efforts and create more trouble for those in power than we could do as isolated groups of people.

Despite the advances in technology, radical communications has not kept pace. Sure, many anarchics are aware of other struggles through communiques, news reports, or social media posts, but there is a deep rift between these casual interactions and meaningful relation building needed for resilient, effective, and meaningful struggle.

In this brief article, I hope to outline some basic organizational networks, communications methods, and essential skills needed to build deeper relations with fellow anarchic people in struggle against colonialism, capitalism, and domination. Remember, this is only the suggestions of one person. Building relations is a deeply complex and often personal affair (when done well). The only way you will learn how to do this is by trying.

Regional, Continental, International Networks

1. Home Region

Home region communications should be the most regular form of communications. This involves people of a mutually agreed region coming together with regularity to share upcoming events, discuss regional issues, strategize on ways to combine efforts when appropriate, and to socialize as people to build bonds. These can follow strict rules for security, with only member selected representatives forming sub-groups discussing sensitive items when needed. There are guides out there discussing methods of organizing sensitive conversations to minimize the risk of damage from leaks or informants. Broader social events should minimize the sensitivity of the topics to be discussed and should work towards building relationships through shared activities (some might want a regional skype reading group, some might want to organize field trips, some might want to go bar hopping, etc.).

2. Continental & Archipelagic Organizing

Continental and Archipelagic organizing really takes place between regional/island based networks of cells, collectives, crews, and organizations, with continental/archipelagic organizations acting to facilitate these regional networks communications into a broader continental/archipelagic context. Regions can either select a delegation from the region at large or a delegation of representatives from each organization to participate in this continental/archipelagic communications network. This is used to call for material aid (especially when a certain region is undergoing unrest or catastrophe), to call for advice, to call for reinforcement, or to announce new projects of continental interest. Continental networks also act to ensure that the many var-

ied regions, cultures, and political situations have a fast and effective means of reaching every other group on the continent, without relying on word-of-mouth, algorithms, or news releases.

Physical meetings and movements of material aid in a continental setting will naturally be easier due to the connectedness of roads, rail, and land borders. Archipelagic meetings and movements of material aid will be much more difficult, due to compounding struggles to provide affordable ocean-going or aviation based transportation, evading state naval/marine patrols, port costs, customs, etc., and making the time for these more effort and temporal intensive efforts. One of the most important tasks is to build strong communications infrastructure and robust networks or relations. These human relationships can be developed and nurtured, all while we start to figure out how to bring back the vital oceangoing networks of our ancestors.

3. International Solidarity and Action

International networks are really vital for ensuring that our politics do not become blind to the tremendously important political developments in other continents. So much can be learned from our Indigenous comrades all over the colonized world. Too often we let our vision of political thought and our ancestral experience in struggle be limited by the horizon. Over the horizon is a world of Indigenous people who have been struggling, learning, philosophizing, creating, and fighting. To not be connected to them is to allow us all to make the same mistakes over and over again. It can not be understated how much we can avoid stumbling blocks by learning from those who have been there and done that. International networks are also keenly important for ensuring that the relative wealth of even poorer comrades in the industrialized regions of the global north, gets shared with comrades in dire struggle with access to almost no monetary/material resources. We must find ways to ensure that we are getting funds and materials to the most dire struggles. This can only be done when we have developed resilient relationships with comrades across the globe.

Communication Methods

1. Digital

Social media, email, and websites are a good basic way to make contact. Often, you will find one or two people from any given region that have a digital presence that is in one of the major lingua francas (widely spoken language of common communication). Finding one person's blog, an article with their contact email, or a social media account that posts anarchic or anti-colonial content, is an opportunity to reach out. They may not be aware of anyone else in their region that is also anarchic, but chances are they will. Building a relationship with even one person will help your organization better understand the political situation in the region and the needs of people who are organizing there.

2. Phone/Ham Radio

Using phone is usually a backup and sometimes more challenging than digital, because of the need to speak each others language well enough to communicate the topics needing to be

discussed. Additionally, phones/amateur radios can be a big security risk in some places, so be mindful.

3. In-Person

Organizing trips to build in person relationships can be extremely effective and can build lasting bonds. Every effective revolutionary movement has made use of these types of trips, from American wobblies visiting Magonistas in Mexico, to the Zapatistas recent voyage of messengers around the world. Make sure that these types of trips are planned to be reciprocal if at all possible. This ensures that the relationship building is truly on an even playing field and not a replication of European missionary saviorship that is so disgusting.

Essential Skills

1. Language

The primary skill that you can start to develop now is language. If you have a dozen comrades in your group, you have enough people to learn lingua-francas for most of the colonized world. Monolingualism is an ethnonationalist project, multilingualism is an internationalist goal. Immigrants will tell you, knowing three to five languages at a conversational level is common. You can develop this skill.

(With respect to English speaking & European revolutionaries): It is an absolute fact, that developing this skill is a fundamental effort for developing meaningful solidarity. Is it acceptable that your comrades abroad speak to you in English, yet you can not return this effort to speak in their language? Is it acceptable that you place the burden of entire translation efforts onto the comrades who not only speak your language, but also the language of the people you wish to build solidarity with? The business of learning a new language is hard work, make no mistake, but it is work that your international comrades have already been doing.

Overlapping languages in a friend group has benefits for networking internationally and for mutual learning. It ensures language redundancy, while also covering enough language bases to have meaningful international networks. Here is an example of a small group language overlapping arrangement:

Translation of texts is also an incredibly important task for sharing revolutionary thought. Translation into and out of a language ensures that there is intellectual cross pollination, keeping us from getting stale or replicating efforts. Even a poorly translated text is better than no translation at all. Having a group of people work on a translation will also dramatically increase the quality of the translation. Tools like google translate can be used to get the bulk of text translated, with volunteers reading each and making corrections as they go. This saves time and increases productivity in getting materials into multiple languages. Overlapping languages also allows a group to perform a multitude of translations in relatively short time, making information sharing much more timely.

2. Cultural Knowledge

Knowledge of culture is an important part of building a relationship. This doesn't mean coming into international communications with preconceived cultural expectations, but it does mean that you are observant, you ask before assuming, and you are adaptive to cultural needs on both sides of the conversation. Politically we may not yet be at the same stage of development or we may not agree on all of the same political objectives. Ensuring that you are respectful of other peoples right to self-determination means that you don't dictate the standards of other peoples struggle or organizing. If something is egregious, yes speak up. Make it clear why you do not agree with something. If this is something you can work through, good, try. If not, there is no need to communicate further with that particular individual or group.

3. Mutual Understanding of Boundaries

Boundaries, as within all relationships, should be communicated from the start. Ensure both parties know and agree to what topics & tactics will and won't be discussed. Ensure both parties agree to mutually beneficial security culture. Ensure both parties understand what the forms of communication and language will be used.

In Conclusion: Reaching Out

Everything you have in life starts with reaching. A toe dipped in the water before you learn to swim, your hand reaching out to grasp a rope you are about to climb, the raised hand in greeting of a new face. You take the first step by reaching out. Communications and solidarity is no different. Making connections is an act of revolutionary faith and solidarity. Take your first language lesson. Send a DM to a comrade you respect who doesn't live in your political geography. Sign up for a language exchange. Go to a regional meet-up. Read an anarchic/decolonial news blog that isn't published in English. Start making time to become more meaningfully connected in true revolutionary solidarity.

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