

Basic Strategy up to the Transitional Period

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Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

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I — Introduction

Our Theory examines the history of the class struggle which leads us to become Anarchist Communists. The first part of our Basic Strategy analyses our enemies, allowing us to understand what we need to do in order to survive despite the repression which the powers that be use against us, and also to destroy any obstacle which interferes with the realization of Anarchist Communism.

We have to establish the principles behind our action. These are not abstract concepts. They originate in the conditions under which we live and work and only if they are shared by all will they unite us and not contradict our practices. Although our practice is of necessity linked to the particular, specific conditions of the time and place where we operate, it must always keep these principles in mind, principles which are the product of an analysis of the historical period we are part of.

This, then, is not a programme. It is a correct methodology without which no programme can be considered right or wrong. We will therefore develop our programmes and judge the programmes of others on the basis of this methodology, remembering that every programme must keep in mind the “basic” political situation of our age.

These basic principles of our political work did not appear for the first time today as an invention of ours. They are the same principles that Anarchist Communists have acquired and experimented over the course of time, albeit under varying historical conditions.

Today, it is our turn to adopt them but we must avoid the mistakes of the past. We must avoid certain principles being used in contradiction with others. We can do this not by eliminating from our practice those methods which did not provide good results in the past, but by attaching (as much as possible) the right importance to each “principle” so that together they can form a more organic whole.

II — On Being an Anarchist Communist

Consciousness of Anarchist Communism comes from the consciousness of history. But it is empty unless real individuals adopt it and allow it to take its place in history. Even this is of no value, unless these individuals transmit their consciousness and their existence through their actions and their work.

In order for Anarchist Communist consciousness to spread and for Anarchist Communists to grow in number and act, it is first and foremost necessary for us to live Anarchist Communism (its consciousness, physical presence and political action) in the society around us in the least contradictory and most gratifying way possible, as something useful and beautiful.

Being an Anarchist Communist in the 21st century, in a world dominated by wars, capitalism and repression, means being able to imagine a different way of life, with the same productive possibilities as today. A life in which war, violence and social injustice no longer exist.

Understanding this means understanding the injustice of this society and fighting to end it. But it also means trying to improve the quality of our lives today as much as possible.

There have been those on the one hand, who have been attracted by the ideal of a just society and who felt their lives to be like a christian mission. These people have sacrificed their own lives for the sake of their ideals to such an extent that they have isolated themselves from reality and

become the vanguard of a movement of lofty idealists which is invariably short-lived. They have lived on the bread of their idealism and not of the day-to-day social reality, and have distanced themselves bit by bit from the class struggle, ceasing to be a part of it.

Then there have been others who, faced with the difficulties of political struggle, have come to the decision that it is impossible to arrive at an Anarchist Communist society within their lifespan. While continuing to aspire to Anarchist Communism, they have chosen to struggle for more easily-obtainable objectives even though not completely just. In this way, they deny that Anarchist Communism is achievable and work with the powers to create forms of government which would be “better” for the proletariat but which in reality only serve to drive the class struggle even further from its basic objective — the destruction of social injustice.

Today we talk about the LABOUR STRUGGLE (by which we mean the struggle carried on by all the exploited for their immediate interests with the possibility of satisfying their historical interests) **in order to improve to the best of our abilities the economic conditions under which we live, and POLITICAL STRUGGLE** (by which we mean the struggle carried on through consciousness of historical interests) **in order to obtain an Anarchist Communist society.**

But while no-one denies that the labour struggle can produce immediate, tangible results, can the same be said of the political struggle?

There is an enormous difference between the political struggle of leftist parties (with paid militants and prospects for positions of power) and the political struggle of Anarchist Communist parties (unpaid and with no prospects for power). So much so, in fact, that some 19th-century Anarchists even said that Anarchist Communists do not engage in politics!

So how is it possible for an Anarchist Communist militant to fight for Anarchist Communism (not only for labour gains) and continue to do it without committing either of the previously-mentioned errors — to become an idealistic purist detached from the masses or become a fancy politician detached from the ideals of Anarchist Communism?

We must set out clearly the concept and practice of being a member of an Anarchist Communist organization so that it can be something that anyone can do, both in theory and in practice, as they can identify with its *raison d'être* and not only with the (far-off) ideal of Anarchist Communism.

Being a member of an Anarchist Communist organization engaged in politics (against the politics of other political forces, though in the same technical ways and with no other motivation that “struggling” for Anarchist Communism) is alienating. (For the sake of this argument we will not deal here with the labour struggle.)

Having to engage in politics and the alienation resulting from this is yet another obstacle that capitalism puts in the way of the spreading and the success in society of an idea which is contrary to it.

It would be lovely to be able to define (theoretically at least) a “correct” form of militancy, one which is not alienating. But unfortunately, an individual who, driven by the alienation that this society produces, becomes an Anarchist Communist militant will never be repaid even in ethical terms (as things stand at present) for the energy dedicated to the struggle, unless the new society should appear during his or her lifetime.

There have been many comrades who have succeeded in this without deviating, and others who have not.

There are two possible situations. Either political militancy is (consciously or unconsciously) the transposition of the exploited and repressed individual's material and intellectual instincts which are correctly directed against the powers, or militancy is the product of a COMMUNIST CONSCIOUSNESS which the individual needs in order to survive within this society.

The first way of conceiving militancy is that of the excitement of a first approach to politics. It absolutely must not be allowed to survive as failure to do this would mean being unable to understand why one could not accept an appointed position as exploiter (in whatever form) were it to be offered by the powers that be. Historical examples of this are endless!

The second way of conceiving militancy is in effect contradictory. On the one hand, engaging in politics is the expression not only of an economic malady (labour struggle) but also an emotional, intellectual and moral malady that drives us to become communists. Engaging in politics is liberating as the struggle against the ideological system of capitalism brings about a different individual, a communist individual. Engaging in politics thus makes us become in part individuals who are "different" from both the oppressors and the oppressed who seek power.

On the other hand, however, the sacrifices and the efforts which we are forced to make for the political struggle, tend (sometimes successfully, sometimes no) to turn comrades from communism, to weaken their ideals, to worsen their economic conditions. We must not delude ourselves with the idealistic illusion that everyone can be a communist in the face of everything.

If we want an organization of heroes we would be better off training the supporters of Anarchist Communism to write poetry, because very few heroes are born in each century.

In practice, the first way of conceiving politics leads to authoritarianism, to compromise, to Stalinism. The second way is without doubt the Anarchist Communist way, but we have to eliminate as much as possible the real contradictions that can be created, because on this will depend whether those of us who are not really heroes can be Anarchist Communists.

The answer to the problem lies in two factors:

1. introducing the comrades' private lives into the concept of Anarchist Communist politics;
2. bringing to the Anarchist Communist community as much communism as possible.

PRIVATE LIFE

The division of private life and political life was produced with the rise of "political life" which meant, and still means, "power". There exists a division between what is private and what is public, between what is political and what is power. Society today, however, only distinguishes between private and political in terms of power.

The private life of an Anarchist Communist is twice over political:

1. when private relationships (which are influenced by the dominant ideology) determine the evolution of the comrade's communist consciousness;
2. when the private life is influenced by and influences the comrade's political activity.

Introducing the private life into the concept of Anarchist Communist politics simply means setting out in terms of theory and analysis of the situation what already exists: the private life as an essential fact of a living being and as a fact which affects the life of an Anarchist Communist.

This problem is always treated, and rightly so, in a delicate manner, because no agenda, congress or motion will ever be able to transform or improve our private lives.

It is useless to publicize private life or treat it as we treat other political matters, because our private work is just that — “private”.

What we mean, in effect, is that we must be conscious that the political determines and is determined by the private, but only with the help of comrades (comrades with particular characteristics) can we help each comrade develop his or her private life in the best possible way.

We must underline “**in the best possible way**” because, for the very reason that society necessarily determines our private lives, they can only be perfect if society is perfect. This does not, however, provide us with an excuse to do nothing to develop our private lives.

We must be fully conscious of the importance the conditions of a comrade’s private life have in his or her education, development and work as a comrade, and the same is true also of a society.

Political events are important or unimportant, right or wrong, enjoyable or not, only when they translate into improvements in the individual’s private life.

Improvements in our material living conditions, our home lives, our personal relationships and our relationships with our comrades are all matters which concern our private lives and it is of the utmost importance (in some cases perhaps absolutely essential) that comrades should help each other.

Kropotkin called it **solidarity** and that is what we will call it too. It is a concept that he tried to make scientific by re-discovering in the “animal” nature of other living beings, but maybe it can never be made scientific. However it is easy to understand all its aspects and “secret” laws and can be easily learnt.

But it is not the task of a Basic Strategy document to deal with this matter. Both it and those things that need to change can be best dealt with elsewhere. Here, we will limit ourselves to repeating that this problem **must be dealt with** in practical terms.

AS MUCH COMMUNISM AS POSSIBLE

In this part of the document we will use the word **communism** to denote the novel factor which is held in common by all left-wing ideologies, but distinguishing between political practice and political ideology on the one hand and the primordial and instinctive in every leftist ideology on the other.

In the ideology (not the practice!) of every “comrade” there is a certain vague element: a need, a desire for justice and equality which is shared by every ideology. The differences in methods and aims are another matter, though they can inhibit these needs to the point of denying them, when these ideologies (with the exception of Anarchist Communist theory) come to develop and articulate the needs.

By contrast, this statement would suggest another: that when developing the needs of comrades, Anarchist Communism does not deny them.

“Developing” here does not only mean hypothesizing the future Anarchist Communist society, but allows for its **partial** realization and the **partial** satisfaction of what communism is and of the benefits that derive from it.

The “utopian” experiments of the past on the part of some comrades are merely an acritical attempt to develop and make concrete the above need in an impatient, non-scientific way.

The notion of creating communes and the experiences resulting therefrom represent on the one hand the pressing but irrational desire to “make” communism and, on the other hand, the impossibility of extricating the rabbit from its hole with these methods.

But then, by way of a reaction to these misguided forms of action (though at least they are moving in more or less the right direction), there are those who believe in the saying “the worse it gets, the better it gets”, in other words, the less communism there is, the more desire for communism there is. But this can lead to the fear that the drive for struggle can die with the birth of initiatives which satisfy this need for communism, if only partially.

NONE OF THIS.

As Fabbri put it, the appetite arrives once you start eating. In other words, the more communism you experience, the more you want. For once in our lives we should trust in Man’s selfishness — instead of making do with a little, we should want it all.

It is a matter of understanding what is not utopian and try to obtain it by starting with the real needs which, in order to survive, need to be seen in the practical, everyday reality.

So far it has been easy for us to express the idea. But in translating it into concrete forms, we come across problems of an economic, legal and practical nature which, as they lie outside the scope of basic strategy, do not permit us to go any further in the elaboration of this question.

But there is no shortage of practicable ideas:

- cooperatives together with comrades
- new forms of schools
- communist cultural activities (theatrical, musical, artistic, etc.).

What is important is that they are not impossible to realize, that they take account of the conditions of life of those involved and that they provide the necessary guarantees. This will never involve a certainty that they will be free from being taken over by the powers and turned against those who use them.

At this point, the debate passes over to the level of political strategy and tactics.

GRADUALITY

The concept of graduality lies in the consideration that every form of sudden advance of the socio-economic conditions of a nation is sudden only when seen wearing blinkers. Sudden advances are an explosive development caused by a mixture of rage and political consciousness which have been building up over a long period.

Class-struggle militants often develop a mindset which is useful only for the perpetuation of the status quo: “things will get better after the revolution...”. And until then?

Reformism is revolting, anything new gets eaten up by the system, only the revolution can change things.

It is almost like talking to someone who insists that the torrential rain is due to the fact that the revolution has not yet occurred.

All or nothing, fascism or communism, sunshine or rain.

Anarchist Communism will not come about through an unexpected, sudden revolution which appears without warning through divine intervention by the spirit of Lenin or Bakunin. Preparation for the revolution has already begun. The revolution started over a century ago with the killing of the first Anarchist and it continues, gradually, along its path.

We have the problem, however, of the contrast between those on the one hand who believe in “action now!”, in forcing the situation, in the hopes of a fast and easy solution to the problems of whole populations and those, on the other hand, who believe that only a lengthy process of acquiring consciousness can change things — so long, in fact, that we might as well learn to put up with things in the meantime.

The methodology of graduality does not allow for the progressive ideology of coups d'états nor for any biological evolutionism toward a more just society.

Every struggle, every explosion of rage, every revolt and even every defeat, is a step forward in the gradual development of the conditions which will lead to the revolution. But only as long as every political act produces consciousness and as long as every political act becomes part of the memory of each revolutionary.

Gradualism is not irresponsible faith in the slow advancement of the class struggle. It is the consciousness of the fact that things happen when there are the necessary conditions for them to occur and, above all, when the most important premise (i.e. the growth of class consciousness) is not forgotten during a struggle.

Graduality has certain similarities with reformism and agrees to a great extent with reformism in holding that political conquests cannot and must not all come together, but can be obtained one by one. Where they do differ, and violently at that, is on where these conquests should be obtained: PARLIAMENT or CLASS STRUGGLE. The same difference exists on how they should be obtained: AGREEMENT WITH THE BOSSES or FORCING THEM ON THE BOSSES. And on the methodology with which they are maintained: RESPONSIBILITY IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE or SELF-MANAGEMENT.

Graduality also has several things in common with revolutionary Leninism, agreeing with it for the most part on the fact that a revolution can bring the historical phase of capitalism to a close, but here too there are enormous differences as it believes that class consciousness is required in order to produce an Anarchist Communist post-revolutionary period and not a class of authorized bureaucrats who are delegated to build Anarchist Communism.

We do not want to use either the gradual conquests of a parliament for our gradualism, nor the revolutionary conquest of the State in order to arrive at the objectives of our gradualism. What we want, independently of the State and of parliament and against both of them, is to gradually build the conditions for the revolution, both in the form of social conquests (the management of which remains in the hands of the proletariat) and in the form of mass and “specific” political organizations in which class consciousness remains strong and evolves and grows without leaders who have been delegated the management of these organizations.

We are gradualists up to the revolution and even afterwards during the whole transition period, but we know that the speed of our gradual advance is DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL to our strength and to our ability to “subvert”.

Graduality is not an alibi for advancing slowly. Anything but! It is simply an awareness that the evolution towards Anarchist Communism must not be confused with the illusions of a struggle.

Every struggle, in fact, must sow consciousness and strength, above all in the wider approach to the evolution towards Anarchist Communism. The more struggles there are, the closer we get to the time of the revolution — as long as we do not expect every struggle to be the last.

This is because we are certain that class consciousness is the same thing as Anarchist Communist consciousness.

III — Self-management

If all those who engaged in politics managed themselves, we would be in an Anarchist Communist society, as the self-management of all activity is only possible if there is no constituted power to control social life even if this does not concern it.

No-one can doubt the enormous difference that exists between the clarity of meaning that the expression “self-management” evokes and the nebulous nature of self-management, correctly practised.

The principle of self-management, more than any other principle, is harder to put into practice than to establish its correctness.

As a political practice, SELF-MANAGING THE POLITICS WE ENGAGE IN is immediately, instinctively and unequivocally recognizable as Anarchist Communist. The trouble is that it is difficult to be Anarchist Communist above all because it is difficult to manage the politics we engage in.

Self-management involves rejecting the ideology and practices of capitalism (be it of the State or Market variety) and the idea that this is an impossibility is responsible for providing the greatest contradictions among the proletariat.

Lack of faith in the possibilities of self-management and the repression of self-managed struggles, have been, are now and will continue to be important strategic tools in the hands of capitalism.

As comrades, we must try to exercise every type of pressure, every possible manoeuvre, every way of forcing self-management to remain at the heart of every struggle. And when it is substituted by any of the various forms of centralism (be they more or less democratic), we must gather and educate all those who reject centralism under the banner of self-management.

As an organization, our struggle must seek to ensure the victory of the ideology and practices of self-management at every level (ideological, educational, in the struggles, within the labour unions, in the press, in violence and in “political courage”).

Our organization must be an emblem, a flag-bearer of self-management. It must be the practical representation and a clear example that it is possible to self-manage the transformation of capitalist society into an Anarchist Communist society.

In fact, despite the strategy of capital, the first spontaneous, instinctive form of anti-capitalism has always been for self-management if only because participation and decision-making is always based on the participants themselves and on their needs — in other words, SELF-MANAGEMENT.

But sooner or later leaders, chiefs, bureaucracies, and so on, appear. These are the powers who identify with the proletariat, but only because it suits them to do so.

YOU JUST HAVE TO LOOK AROUND.

The survival of Anarchist Communists must be seen by all to be the survival of self-management, despite today's pyramidal power structure. What we must avoid at all costs is any non-self managed deviation within the organization.

While self-management is an indispensable condition for advancing our political practice, it alone is not enough.

Self-management does not mean **corporativism or sectarianism**. Without class consciousness or historical memory (in other words, without Anarchist Communist ideology) it can turn into oppression of the weaker components of the proletariat even if they are managing themselves correctly. Self-management can mean advancing one's own interests over and above those of other sectors of the proletariat.

Self-management as an indispensable condition, but not in itself sufficient, means that self-management without organization cannot achieve anything.

Self-management is a light that allows those who want to be Anarchist Communists to be Anarchist Communists, but it produces little effect on those who are not.

The battle for self-management is the toughest battle that Anarchist Communists have to fight. What is important is that all our struggles are self-managed. This is absolutely essential.

IV — Relations with other political forces

We have analysed and established that within the proletariat there exist pseudo-Socialist, counter-revolutionary ideologies and we have condemned them. But we cannot forget that in one's political practice it is useless to reject alliances with anyone who is not identical to us.

It is first necessary to distinguish our enemies from our adversaries, our adversaries from our allies and our allies from our nearest comrades.

Errors of judgement can easily be made. This can either be because, driven by the fire of polemics, we are too easily led into condemning someone quite close to us because of one small difference, and thereby committing the sin of excessive purism. Or because, driven by a noble desire to unite our forces, we too easily accept someone who is actually quite distant from us because of one small common point, thereby committing the sin of over-simplification.

Unfortunately, it is often true that we tend to emphasize the differences with those who are close to us, while with those who are distant we may be willing to emphasize the similarities, given that the differences seem too obvious to us.

If engaging in politics also means being emotional, where we are most likely to make errors (due to our emotiveness) is in the area of our relations with other organizations.

We should always be strict with ourselves on this point and even accept the inevitability of making mistakes. With this in mind we will certainly be better disposed towards self-criticism and to understanding the errors of our comrades.

We must always be careful of those involved in the class struggle who use libertarian words in order to trick and deceive, and unmask them. But we should be equally prepared to recognize as friends those who may not at first seem to be comrades due to a lack of experience.

This is a most difficult task. Any error, any hurry, any uncertainty or even any certainty on our part can have a heavy price to pay. But it is ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY both to struggle in order to unite those who are only different on the surface (in order not to waste our energies), and to avoid allying ourselves with people who will later betray us.

IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT to remember that a great many Anarchist Communist defeats have been the result of too much faith and of political errors in this area.

Anarchist Communists have excelled in fighting capitalism face on, but have been defeated when capitalism has disguised itself as communism.

OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Or, our relations with Anarchists.

The Anarchist movement can be defined by its basic characteristics, which are:

1. a rejection of power as an instrument and method of struggle in the building of an Anarchist Communist society;
2. acceptance of the principle of self-management;
3. consciousness that power can only be destroyed through violence;
4. political action must be addressed to the exploited, who are the authors of the revolution.

We do not agree that we can accept into the one political organization the various forms in which these principles can be expressed. Our aim is to represent one tendency which all can join once they consciously consider our ideas to be correct.

We firmly believe that our way of conceiving Anarchist Communism is the most scientific possible. But we must consider our comrades who are our brothers and sisters as people and who can with time and experience become militants in our organization, by strengthening their analysis.

We must seek joint action, discussion and debate.

Much will depend on the clarity with which we can motivate our choices and our convictions. We must have no fear, no hesitation.

However, this does not exempt us from unmasking with the utmost firmness anyone who infiltrates the Anarchist movement with the aim of weakening it and leading comrades astray!

The greater the tendency to work together, the more we must be vigilant against infiltrators and provocateurs but we must never, under any circumstance, use provocative or violent means against any who may make errors either because of false beliefs, lies or bad experiences. Sooner or later they will either leave the movement or else join us.

Debate must be carried on with decision but must not be suffocating and, as far as provocateurs are concerned, any condemnation must be motivated and firm. This is true with regard to both strategy and tactics.

OUR ALLIES

From the point of view of strategy (political strategy) we consider as being allies only those political organizations whose primary objectives are not fundamentally different from ours, even if they do not consider themselves to be part of the Anarchist movement. This is true even if they are influenced by methods and practices of power which they ingenuously consider transitional. It does not apply to those who openly, consciously and uncritically agree with Marxist-Leninist principles.

Any strategic alliance must be based on an awareness that it is hard to be Anarchist Communists, that capitalism and its ideology create often impassable barriers which present many from being Anarchist Communists.

A strategic alliance seeks no favours. It is based on the awareness that our allies contribute to our work while carrying on their own battles.

When evaluating these organizations, we must make a distinction between their leading elements and the mass of their members and seek to establish what, if any, possibilities the ordinary members have of eventually defeating any Marxist-inspired theories, thanks to a more or less active libertarian minority within the organization in question.

If we are careful in our evaluation of possible allies, we need to ensure that any strategic alliance be established on the basis of a real possibility of political debate.

From a tactical point of view, we consider as allies all those political organizations whose ideological stability indicates a libertarian evolution of the members and leaders as a whole or in part.

We form tactical alliances only if there is some practical advantage to be had for our organization or if there is good reason to believe that the use of libertarian methods within the alliance would place in question the political principles behind the ally's political theory.

No alliance must be formed if there are grounds for believing that such an alliance would damage our organization.

OUR ADVERSARIES

We consider as adversaries those organizations whose politics are supposedly in the interests of the proletariat but which in fact are not, and which have no intention of or are incapable of changing their basic authoritarian positions and vertical structures.

No strategic alliance with these organizations is possible. It may be possible to form tactical alliances with them in order to advance certain common struggles, but only if the alliance is of use to our organization and as long as we are aware that we must always protect ourselves and be careful of the dangers that the alliance could hold for our organization.

We should be guided by the following criteria:

1. the alliance should be useful to our organization;
2. our organization must be strong enough and ready to defend itself from and if necessary counter-attack any attempt at a premeditated attack on us.

It is important to repeat that past experience has taught us that our adversaries are always ready and willing to eliminate political organizations with libertarian practices. Anarchist Communists must accept the ideological and practical task of defending not only their own organization but also the entire Anarchist movement and, if possible, our allies too from the practices which (we repeat) experience has shown us to be TYPICAL of those we have defined as adversaries.

But this should not stop us taking advantage of their strength if it is tactically useful to our organization.

OUR ENEMIES

Our enemies are those who have betrayed the cause of the proletariat but who remain within the proletariat as they have yet to be recognized as traitors.

It is our task to **fight them** with every means and on all levels, provided this struggle does not lead to setbacks or to a diminution of the class struggle.

We must defend ourselves from them in any way, **at any price**, because the survival of Anarchist Communism within the class struggle is essential if we are to have even the slightest chance of ending it.

We are also enemies of all leaders, of all those who hold a form of power, even if it calls itself “socialist”. We need to carry on a constant struggle against them without let-up and without ever seeming to accept them.

Ridiculing power, even red power, does not mean setting back the class struggle but (as long as it does not damage our organization) advancing it.

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