

The Political Organization

Basic Strategy Document Approved by the First Congress of the FdCA, 1985

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

1985

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I – General Notes on the Organizational Problem

Apart from the problem of coming up with a strategy for a process which can revolutionize the conditions which make up the current political situation, the development of class consciousness also throws up another problem, an internal problem, for class-struggle militants: organization.

The organization of the proletariat is a requirement, a need, an essential premise for its emancipation.

It is a requirement because in any situation of struggle, the tasks of class-struggle militants differ and can be distinct and specialized, but together they must be designed to reach the same result, both at the level of immediate objectives and on a more general and comprehensive level.

It is a need, inasmuch as for victory in a struggle there are no real alternatives to any form of organization, in the sense that each form of struggle which does not translate into organizational CONCEPTS and FORMS only expresses itself with levels of political planning which are distinctly inferior to the demands which produced the struggle. In fact, the reaction of the bourgeoisie if it is unable to defeat the proletariat militarily thanks to the strength of will of the latter for liberation, is certainly capable of recuperating, on the level of ideology and economy, the FORMS that the struggle has taken.

It is an essential premise because, assuming that (as elsewhere demonstrated) there has yet to be a social revolution, it is consequently true that errors have been made; therefore, only an organization is capable of dealing with the problems raised by over a century of class struggle, because only an organized group of class-struggle militants can link the immediate needs to the historical teachings, in order to ensure that the proletariat's historical and spontaneous project can survive through the years.

The essential concept behind the term "organization" and how this term has been expressed in the political practices of the proletariat, is that of "self-management" in the sense that Anarchists believe that every form of organized struggle must be "managed" only by those involved and, let there be no misunderstanding here, by ALL those involved.

This concept marks us out from all those who seek to turn organization into a tool for establishing power.

But this concept by no means signifies that Anarchists understand the class struggle to be a collection of organizations for struggle produced by the situation of the class which work towards a common goal by reason of need. Neither does it mean confusing the proletariat's immediate needs (which are the basis of every struggle) and its real needs, which are the basis of the class struggle.

For us, there are two levels of organization, which correspond faithfully to two levels of consciousness and of struggle: the "specific" organization and the "mass" organization.

The specific organization, or party, unites those class-struggle militants whose consciousness requires a complete, definite vision of all the difficulties of the class struggle, that is to say a precise theory and an articulated, concrete historical plan.

The members of this organization already exist before the organization comes into being, and do so even without there being an organization. Their coming together to develop and agree their theory represents the first essential step towards the advancement of the class struggle.

The specific organization is truly anarchist. It is made up only of Anarchists and is distinguishable from other specific organizations by its characteristic theory, organizational form, historical plan and practices.

The mass organization, or labour union, unites various categories of workers on the immediate basis of survival and on the basis of the need to improve their living conditions.

The labour union does not require a complete vision of the more general class struggle, only a practical capacity and a desire to fight capital.

Within the union, ideology is a factor in the struggles but only to the extent that class-struggle militants, who are members of the specific organizations and (being proletarians) also of the mass organization, bring their with them into the union.

The members of the mass organization are all those among the proletariat who understand that it is only by force and not through prayer that improved living conditions can be obtained.

Further to what was said above, the mass organization is not, and cannot be, Anarchist. However, Leninist theory (which sees the labour union as a drive belt of the party) and reformist practices (which see wage increases as a positive step towards socialism) have translated into a hierarchical running of the union's policies. Therefore, on a strategic level, for Anarchists it becomes clearly necessary to develop a labour organization whose internal runnings are dictated by the self-management of policies by all the proletarians who are members of the union.

II — The Specific Organization: Theory and Practice

When speaking of organization, we must at the same time deal with two different problems: the CONCEPT of organization and the PRACTICE of organization.

By concept, we mean the conscious and clear identification by those who are organizing themselves of the relationships which must exist between the various elements that go to make up the political organization, the party. By practice, we mean the difficult task of translating those concepts into the DAILY PRACTICE of the political organization, without there being the possibility of their deteriorating or being subverted and without their always remaining identical and running the risk of no longer meeting the needs of the organization.

Here, we will deal with the first of the problems, not because it is more important or because it is less important but merely because it is an indispensable condition for dealing with the second problem with political clarity (meaning historical clarity). Resolution of the second problem generally depends on "POLITICAL NEEDS" which are usually the "needs of the moment".

What has been said serves to shed light on the possible errors that we can make in dealing fully with the organizational problem:

1. lack of clarity in identifying the concept of organization;
2. lack of consequentiality in elaborating the regulation of the organization;
3. incorrectly conceiving the problem of the evolution of the organization.

We must remember that any form of organization of the class struggle is always the product of a historical process with which every experience must be compared. The risk is to do this by comparing the current situation with the organization as it is today without considering its place in history and without evaluating every fact in the light of the history of the class struggle. It is not rare, in fact, to find comrades who believe that the class struggle started when they became political militants.

III – The Specific Organization: The Historical and Political Origins of Our Organizational Theory

The history of the class struggle, the experience of Stalinism on the one hand and spontaneism on the other, has demonstrated to us unequivocally that the problem of organization is full of dangers and traps that the future of the revolution and of every struggle can fall into.

Many heroic class-struggle militants have spoken on the matter and historical events have served to show us many errors which have been made, but all this now enables us to understand the problem clearly.

But even now there are a great many comrades who refuse to judge the theories of Lenin or Kropotkin in the light of events. Their irrational faith in the words of “great” figures runs the risk of perpetuating errors for which the proletariat has paid an enormous price, even to this day.

The history of the class struggle has produced three different organizational concepts:

1. the Leninist concept, which sees the organization as a political structure which substitutes the class;
2. the Bordighist concept, which views the party as an organ of the class;
3. the Anarchist concept, which considers the party as an integral part of the class, that part of the class which is conscious of the historical role of the proletariat.

All three of these organizational theories have been expressed a thousand times during the history of the class struggle, at times correctly applied, other times less so. In any event, those who are today involved in revolutionary activism have ample ideological and historical material at their disposal to be able to take conscious positions with regard to the organizational question.

We have chosen the third concept.

This concept, however, has been interpreted in many ways as far as practical application is concerned. From these we can identify two important types of DEGENERATION.

The first is exemplified by the history of the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana* (FAI) which, after winning a large number of proletarians to its ranks in 1945, fell into the mud of the worst inter-classism as it was unable to produce an Anarchist theory of the proletariat which had always been a part of it and also because it did not have the courage to transform itself into an organization due to its inability to learn historically from the failed experiences of its fellow organizations in other times and places.

The second type of degeneration can be seen in the experience of the *Gruppi Anarchici di Azione Proletaria* (GAAP). They rightly criticized the FAI, but were unable to define themselves in a positive sense. They were unable to take on the responsibility of conceiving their historical role and instead tried (by revising their Anarchist theories) to adopt a more “comfortable” political position which was to their minds more acceptable to the proletariat. In this way they lost themselves and their consciousness in political practice, in the wrong political tactics which was soon to lead to their destruction.

Our political and organizational theories historically speaking are the product of the 1926 “Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists – Project”, which (despite some errors) best sums up Anarchist organizational theories. Politically speaking, we are the children of 1968

in the sense that the bourgeois contradictions of the period sparked off a new and powerful period of class struggle which was able to produce a new political and revolutionary project with respect to the situation of capitalism and, albeit slowly and at times in a contradictory way to promote the self-management of the struggles and of organization in general.

IV — The Specific Organization: Basic Principles

The specific organization of Anarchists is the conscious identification of the relationships that exist between the elements of that collection of class-struggle militants who accept libertarian theories.

Militants

The class-struggle front is made up of a heterogeneous mass of militants. The heterogeneity regards both the political baggage with which they deal with the real problems posed by the class struggle, and the political will to face the problems.

Many proletarians who by right should be part of the most advanced front of the class struggle are instead absent. It is up to us to involve them in what is, after all, their struggle. There are others involved who only do something when their immediate interests are at stake. They too need to be involved more fully in “their” struggle. In any event, they all have their part to play in the mass organization.

Some comrades accept full responsibility for their ideas and this is matched with admirable political work, by acting on their political consciousness, even risking a heavy price at times. These are the class-struggle militants, the militants who want a specific organization and who become members of it.

Then there are the supporters, those members of the mass organization (or the public at large) who support the general lines — not necessarily in every detail — of the specific organization. They identify with the ideology, with the general political lines, but either do not accept them fully because they are not fully convinced, or else they are still unable to dedicate themselves fully to the organization’s political activity.

It is extremely important for an Anarchist Communist organization to distinguish clearly between militants and supporters, for one reason. As the internal democracy of the organization is absolute, in other words as decisions are taken contemporaneously by all, all members of the organization must identify totally with it.

All this is very “real”, in the sense that it represents what actually happens in the real world every day; it is something that all class-struggle militants know first-hand.

However, when we look around us, we immediately realize that the class-struggle militants who make up today’s specific organizations are not as we have defined them.

In fact, what we have said can only be true and can only become living, daily political action if it is part of a precise ideology, Anarchist Communist ideology, which enables EFFECTIVE realization of the concept. In other words, the real essence of being a class-struggle militant can only exist as part of a political ideology which is simply the self-consciousness of the class reality.

Let us examine what happens in a specific organization of Second or Third Internationalist origin, in which the internal bureaucracy is accepted and practised.

The class-struggle militant becomes a functionary of the party. His or her political militancy in effect becomes the administration of a power which is in part conceded by the State (which recognizes the party and its functionaries as “the basis for the democratic administration of the country”) and in part conceded by the supporters, i.e. by the consensus that this party’s policies (be they right or wrong) has obtained in terms of numerical strength.

The real control of the power which the party has thus “earned” is not however in the hands of all its “functionaries” (ex-militants of the class struggle), but only of those who by merit or trickery have managed to become “members of the central committee”.

We will now examine what happens in those specific organizations (the various Marxist-Leninist parties) in which the bureaucracy is accepted but not practised, given the lack of “power”, but in which there is an acceptance and practice of the concept of “politics first” (Mao) and that whereby the party is a structure which substitutes the class and therefore where its political activity recognizes the “popular masses” in the party (Lenin).

The class-struggle militant becomes a militant of the organization. He is paid, trained, and has a role and power insofar as he, more so than the others, is able to bring the policies of the party to the “popular masses”.

His place of work is the organization; he in fact becomes external to the class as a unit of production — he cannot strike because to go against his work would mean going against the proletariat. All his time is dedicated to politics. He loses his individuality; having become a class-struggle militant as a unit of production, he is alienated at the moment in which he became a militant of a specific organization that has no need for units of production, not having enough power yet, but which simply needs people with plenty of time at their disposal so that the organization’s theories can be publicized as much as possible.

Militants of an Anarchist Communist specific organization are, and remain, first and foremost class-struggle militants. Our work in the organization is an integral part of our lives as human beings and as comrades, and is neither oppressive nor alienating.

We know that everything is political, from the way in which we struggle for our immediate interests to the way we run our private lives and our free time, from the way we work together in the building of our organization tirelessly but without privilege, save that which our daily political work may derive in the class struggle.

Collective Responsibility

The principle that each class-struggle militant must answer to the whole class for his or her actions (and as that is materially impossible, to his or her conscience, i.e. to the political organization), though conceptually valid, must be rejected in an Anarchist organization.

If the militants of the organization adopt libertarian theory as being correct for the class struggle and if they recognize in the organization they are members of the best form for correctly expressing their political ideas, they must consequently conceive of the organization as a unit. In other words, the members of the organization acting collectively in the class struggle in effect become a unit when they recognize that they share substantially similar ideas.

At this point, the whole organization becomes responsible for the political activity of each member which in effect represent it in the class struggle and, vice versa, each member is responsible for the political activity of the organization in general.

Collective responsibility is not, however, a law which exists simply because someone has thought of it.

By collective responsibility, we mean in practice that if militants make, by common agreement, a decision which politically concerns those who make it, then each member is answerable to the others for any lack in carrying out his or her political task.

The decisions which are made by common agreement and which regard the organization's militants are the organization's political lines.

No-one is answerable for problems or decisions which they were not involved in making. Furthermore, the assembly of militants must not take an inquisitorial attitude to single militants (examining the whys and wherefores of facts or things that do not concern the assembly). Neither must it act as a judge of any militant's reasons for failing in a political task which he or she took on.

The assembly can only recognize the responsabilization or otherwise of that militant or group with regard to the political line or task that was accepted.

The assembly can simply say: this comrade accepts his or her responsibility or not, and take then any appropriate action.

Political Unity of the Organization

The historical interests of the proletariat are identified for all its various components. In contrast, however, the immediate interests of each component often differ noticeably.

This depends on three factors:

1. the corporative urge created by the natural desire of workers to improve their lot;
2. the desire of capital to divide, split up or block the struggles of the various categories of workers in order to better manage and extend its power;
3. the reformist ideology which seeks at all costs to start from the workers' immediate interests, thereby impeding the spread of those sectoral and corporative struggles, enabling the problem of the proletariat's historical interests to be affronted.

The class struggle is therefore by nature a united struggle and if it is not yet so, it must become so.

There are in our times many active political organizations which were born and bred in the class struggle, who claim to represent the proletariat with their policies. They too are a further cause of the proletariat's disunity and splintering.

This is not to be criticized overly, as the process which leads to the subverting of the existent political, economic and social relationships is not clear in anyone's mind and the various political forces of today are actually useful for clarifying and as a point of debate on questions regarding the class war. In this way it is also possible to avoid the errors that a single Leninist organization (if there were one) might have the proletariat make.

There must be an Anarchist Communist organization and this organization must present itself as a real and effective alternative to the other political forces which today exist.

But in order to do this and in order to be able to realize its political proposals, it can only be conceived of as a united organization.

It must also be added that Anarchist Communism is an extremely precise and well-defined political project as far as its general lines are concerned. It is unique and the organizations which promote it can only be of a single, united nature.

But though political unity is a necessity, as we have shown, it is also true that:

1. because political decisions are linked to political analysis which can differ, they too can differ, a) because it is difficult to obtain reliable, scientific data and b) because evaluations are often the fruit of experience, which can vary;
2. the political consciousness of the proletariat is not always at the same level and changes with the changing circumstances in various places and the political decisions change accordingly; it must also be remembered that political decisions need to take account of variances in the condition of the political forces involved;
3. political unity means both unity of political lines and of political forces and that sometimes a single political line can involve dividing the political forces in two, each with its single political line.

From what has been said, it follows that the political unity of the organization is, and always will be, an objective — never an obvious pre-condition or given fact from which to begin.

Leninism, with its theory of democratic centralism and the central committee, has provided an answer to these contradictions which the history of the proletariat has shown to be totally deleterious, full of risks and a starting point for many errors and deviations.

Our answer to the contradictions, as usual, consists in observing the current situation and translating this into political concepts. A fundamental factor is the need for political unity as a basis for it to work effectively. This can, on the other hand, be impeded by the diversity of opinion among comrades on the political line to adopt.

We should therefore conserve political unity without impeding the diversity of opinion insofar as it is well known that the evolution of a political line hinges on the possibility that a commonly-accepted idea can be questioned if this doubt is raised through a desire for improvement and if it is based on events and new, previously-unconsidered factors. In other words, criticism is not good solely because it is good per se. It is good because it involves thoroughly examining something and then deciding RATIONALLY to reject it because it is wrong or to accept it because it can improve the work of the organization with respect to the class struggle.

There are two rules involved here:

1. being too liberal and allowing anyone (anyone within the organization, that is) to question everything at any time;
2. being too restrictive and allowing maximum freedom of expression, but requiring the organization's members to abide by the decisions of the organization at any cost.

In other words, the nub of the problem remains. In the absence of a charismatic leader, there CAN be a majority and minority of opinion on certain questions (each with its own responsibility and its own right/duty with regard to the organization). So what must be done?

We have already said that the minority is essential as all innovations originate within the mind of one person or group and can become accepted by the majority if seen to be demonstrated in words or in facts.

However, we have also said that it is unacceptable for there to be a minority position on everything or for that minority to be heard only within the organization.

At this stage, the conclusion is a logical one, albeit one which is the product of a hundred years of errors by a good part of the proletariat which accepted a still imperfectly-defined Anarchist Communism.

As we see it, there is a **Theory** of Anarchist Communism which is the product of a century of history. This is a summary in words and concepts of Anarchist experiences and cannot be questioned.

In their essence and substance, its ideas represent the historical identity of our political selves. In concrete terms, our theoretical document, which is not intended to be a full compendium of Anarchist Communism, summarizes our historical memory and evaluates any past errors in the light of history and experience. Accordingly, it cannot be questioned.

Let it be clear: anyone who questions it has no place in our organization. Any member of the organization who starts to doubt the Theory, ceases to be a member from that point.

If he or she is a part of the wider (not necessarily conscious) Anarchist Communist movement, then we would have to evaluate and consider the innovation as either being a step forward, and take action accordingly, or a step backwards, and criticize it. But nonetheless, we should do this only if the minority has survived as part of the class struggle outside the organization and has tried and tested its theory with experience.

In any event, our Theory is neither totally precise nor totally clear-cut; it is above all a distinguisher. In other words, it serves to eliminate the errors already made by Anarchist Communists and to distinguish us from the other components of the class struggle. It is therefore as precise as it needs to be. It is a PLATFORM which is acceptable only to some people, who will not necessarily be in total agreement with every non-distinguishing part or those parts which have yet to be verified.

In real, practical terms: on what is written — no minority; on what is not written — freedom of interpretation.

The rigidity expressed with regard to any minorities there may be regarding Theory is a result of the fact that we believe it to be totally true (history having demonstrated it) and we believe that it can be scientifically demonstrated to all those who are biased to the contrary.

Our organization's **Basic Strategy** is the product of analysis of the current political situation. It is the vision that Anarchist Communists have of the powers and of the counter-revolutionary political forces, our evaluation in terms of strategy, where we define the concrete role we must have if we want to ensure that a classless society can be built (if the subjective and objective historical conditions, the class struggle, lead to a "period of transition").

Our Theory serves to set out the historically-deduced premises which allow us to define ourselves as Anarchist Communists. Our Basic Strategy, instead, analyses the state of political and economic power and of the counter-revolutionary forces on the left, and defines our historical role today and in the transitional period.

The Basic Strategy must be shared by all because, as it defines the historical role in the present day of the Anarchist Communists who are gathered together in our organization, it represents the very soul, the motivation and the reason of our political action.

Any lack of unity at this level would inevitably lead to chaos when deciding the simplest problems of strategy, methodology and alliances.

On the other hand, the analysis on which the definition of our role rests is not based solely on our Theory, on our simply being Anarchist Communists. It is also based on analysis of capitalism, State socialism and reformism. This analysis can be wrong to some degree, but it is vital that it be correct as it will give rise to the definition of our role. Even so, it may be wrong, or that two Anarchist Communists reach two different conclusions each in line with Anarchist Communism. The problem of a minority therefore arises. On the one hand, it is not possible for there to be division within the organization on such an important political matter. On the other hand, it is equally damaging for there to be division among Anarchist Communists.

In the first place, the more scientific basic strategic analysis is, the better it is. A minority position leads to further examination of the matter and is therefore welcome and useful, particularly if this leads to a resolution of the divergence between the majority and the minority, thereby strengthening the organization's Basic Strategy.

Instead, if the divergence should worsen, then a split in the organization is inevitable, unless the minority agrees not to voice its dissent outside the organization in order to protect the unity of the organization, and carries on an internal process of criticism which is both constructive and does not impede internal debate.

In conclusion, in the case of dissent on Basic Strategy:

1. the different analyses must be argued within the organization in an attempt to resolve the difference, making the analysis even more scientific (*but always remaining consistent with Theory*);
2. the minority leaves the organization if it feels it must make its dissent known outside the organization;
3. the minority can be expelled if the majority believes that the minority is blocking the other activities of the organization by expressing its dissent within it; clearly, should the minority leave the organization it would in any event be considered the organization's closest ally in the class struggle.

On the whole, however, while it is possible for two opposing groups to form as a result of differences of basic strategy, it is unlikely for there to be a split unless there are economic or power interests at stake.

In conclusion, as long as there are no positions of power or prestige within the organization and among its members, then there are unlikely to be divisions due to problems regarding basic strategy and any rationally and scientifically valid dissent will serve towards a more precise and more correct definition of our role in the class struggle.

Our **Political Strategy** is a collection of general lines for our intervention within the class, taking into account the objective situation, our organizational capacities and, of course, our Theory and Basic Strategy.

The conscious, free unity of all the organization's militants in the area of Political Strategy is obviously an important condition for reaching the objectives which it sets out.

Let us now see how and why minorities can be created and what happens to these minorities. There can be divergence on political strategy due to:

- a. non-conformity of a proposal for political strategy with Theory and Basic Strategy;
- b. differences in political analysis
- c. differences in the evaluation of political analysis
- d. differences in the evaluation of the subjective situation.

If the differences arise due to contradictions with Theory and Basic Strategy, then the matter is dealt with as previously indicated.

If the differences arise from different analyses of the current situation, then the problem is to first establish whether it is possible to overcome the differences by clarifying and analyzing the problem better. This will, in any event, lead to more precise analysis. Should it not lead to unanimity, then the organization will have one official political strategy (the majority view) and one or more minority political strategies which can be expressed outside the organization. However, the minority position must not contradict the majority position when it comes to developing tactics.

If each analytical difference translates into a vision of the political role of the organization which is in contradiction with that of the majority, then the minority freely chooses to keep its position “verbal”. In other words, it can be expressed (also outside the organization) verbally, but the organization’s political unity remains intact, or else it is expressed through a contradictory tactic with respect to the majority. In this case, by consciously breaking the political unity of the organization, the minority must be expelled.

It can happen (and we must be very careful here) that the differences arise out of questions of evaluation both of objective analysis and of subjective conditions. This must be seen in relation to the “optimism” or “pessimism” arising from the conditions which the various comrades are living in.

We must therefore be careful not to generalize, applying to the whole organization the positive evaluations arising from a positive political situation in one place, or applying to the whole organization the negative evaluations arising from a difficult situation somewhere. We must guard against creating false problems or splits due to this, and seek a just agreement without falling into the “maximalist” trap of splitting in order not to have to come to agreement. Mediation must not be considered as compromise, but as a balance.

In conclusion, any organization that has a common theory and a common basic strategy should have no difficulty reaching a common political strategy. And this will come about as long as the minority does not enter into practical political activity in contradiction with the majority and as long as the need to be united is not overcome by the dogmatic maximalism of those who are incapable of adapting themselves to their collective responsibilities.

The majority, however, must clearly understand the FUNDAMENTAL concept that a minority of Anarchist Communist militants does not appear out of the blue, but is either the product of a negative experience that the majority has not yet had to deal with, or of inexperience which will disappear given time. For this reason, the majority should always accept the possibility of adopting the minority position if it is proved to be the more correct.

The organization’s **Tactics** are the workplan of the organization and are valid from one congress to the next. They are based on analysis of the situation at the time and its possible

development. They take into account upcoming political events together with the strength of the organization and the possibilities for alliances.

This plan of action must, of course, be rigorously consonant with the organization's Theory. We must reject any suggestion that a tactic which goes against our Theory could "in fact" create greater strength with which to follow later a tactic which conforms to our Theory. This idea is false, firstly because the truth is historically verifiable and it is useless to be under any illusions regarding tactical means, which, if in contradiction with theory, will be unable to put that theory into practice. Secondly, any consensus obtained on the basis of a tactic which contradicts theory will in effect be a consensus on a "different" theory and will lead to division within the organization, something which in itself contradicts the need for political unity in the organization.

There have been those in the past who held that it was possible to adopt a tactic of using the structures of power in a revolutionary way. At this point all we can do is point to the deleterious consequences that this sort of thinking led to.

Tactics must not contradict Basic Strategy either, for the simple reason that as tactical political analysis is basically a more detailed version of the general lines established in the basic strategy, the initiatives and plans of action contained in the tactics cannot contradict them. The most that can happen is that during tactical analysis, certain erroneous evaluations in basic strategy may come to light.

A tactic which is in contradiction with Political Strategy would be a nonsense, as political strategy represents a unifying element for the various tactics which are adopted and, given that the organization's political unity also implies the historical unity (throughout the years) of the organization's political activity, it would be absurd to propose a tactic which is in contrast with the political strategy.

However, we should remember that tactical analysis can (and if necessary must) be the starting point for a constant revision of political strategy both in the light of the changing nature of the forms of political oppression and of the subjective conditions of the organization.

Given this situation, it can happen (in fact is probably always happens) that every congress sees proposed two or more tactics, each arising naturally from Theory, Basic Strategy and Political Strategy. It is the task of Congress, then, to clarify the various analyses, eliminate misunderstandings, correct evaluations and so on. In other words, it must eliminate any errors, insofar as it is possible. But different tactics will remain, and in fact it is impossible to demonstrate scientifically and definitively any political tactic.

At this point there arises a question: is it possible for the organization to adopt two or more tactics which can differ both in words and in practice?

In other words: to what point does political unity mean tactical unity?

Anarchist Communist unity is based on theoretical unity. This historical role of Anarchist Communists is proved by their strategic unity. The long-term political objectives, the political project which is the basis of the organization is united because there is unity on political strategy.

But while the internal unity of the organization and the possibility that debate and minorities can be positive factors is a result of the above, as far as the organization's external image is concerned, it is tactical unity which is often an indicator of the compact nature of the organization and therefore, in the eyes of many, the organization's reliability.

The policy of forming alliances is extremely useful as part of a tactical plan, and is made possible thanks to tactical unity. The policy of "contrast" with our class enemies and political adversaries is also more effective, the more united the organization is.

There is no doubt that differences between comrades must in no way provoke a split or, above all, lead to the formation of opposing factions – the danger of which cannot be emphasized too much. It is something which threatens the very foundations of the organization’s political unity which is based first and foremost on the honesty of the political relationships between members.

Shared tactics, throughout the organization, if they are correct, are extremely productive. A minority and a majority can be useful for improving a tactic if the differences are clarified and overcome, but if not they can also divide the organization.

During the course of a congress lasting only a few days, an organization must provide itself with clear, shared tactics. It is a difficult task and depends to a great measure on the political maturity and the serenity of the comrades.

Demagogy, leadership cults, presumptuousness and bad faith, if translated into POLITICAL FACT, are the greatest enemies of unity.

At this point, by way of conclusion, we can say:

1. the organization expresses itself officially with one tactical line, but must give space to minority tactical lines which can be expressed outside the organization;
2. in practice, the organization’s branches will apply the tactics they consider the most appropriate, as long as this is not in contradiction and damaging to the official, majority tactic; it is always to be hoped, however, that minorities will freely and autonomously hold to the official tactic.

Militants can be allowed to adopt an incorrect tactic (remembering that both the minority and the majority can make a mistake) without them having to leave the organization because we know that at times one can learn from one’s mistakes, but the minority tactic must never DAMAGE the organization. If that happens:

1. either the comrades who support it should decide not to put it into practice, or
2. they must be expelled, as it is absurd for the organization to adopt two tactics which are mutually damaging.

However, if there are two or more compatible tactical lines, the whole organization, the majority or the minorities can always decide which one is best in practice as there is always a continual verification of the effectiveness of tactics.

Federalism of the Membership

In an Anarchist Communist organization there is no authority which has the task of directing political activity, neither are there “grassroots members” to put into practice the directives of a central committee.

There is in our organization absolute identity between those who decide and those who act. Decisions are the result of conscious acceptance of the organization’s political lines (which EVERY member has contributed to establishing) and are made only by the same people who then put them into action.

By comparing these two different organizational methods, we firmly reject so-called democratic centralism and apply the concept of federalism. This is fundamental if the Anarchist Communist organization is to maintain its identity over time.

It is important to emphasize that in a federalist system, the single member's responsibility is not to his or her "leaders" but to all those who work with him or her (collective responsibility).

It should also be remembered that every decision must be based on and made with reference to the organization's theory and strategy (political unity).

This organizational concept is valid for every group of comrades who intend to practise Anarchist Communism, but it is also useful and productive for the growth of class consciousness.

In fact, we can identify in federalism the consequent evolution of the autonomous, self-managed organizational forms that the class struggle often produces. The autonomous and self-managed method of the organizational structure of the proletariat leads both to an Anarchist Communist development of political consciousness and to a conception of federalism as an extension of autonomy and self-management.

An organizational structure, federalism has the task of allowing autonomous, self-managing local structures to become a united force on a national level, maintaining nonetheless local autonomy and self-management and allowing self-management of the national organization.

In order to exist, a federalist structure needs to have a clear idea of what its basic components are — its members (Militants).

This makes it necessary to create a clear distinction between the organization's Militants (who need to have the required level of consciousness) and its Supporters (who do not have the same level and who are therefore not part of the organization's structures, who support the organization but are not part of it).

The organization is based on its regular congresses and the decision of these congresses represent the unity of the organization. *Let us repeat once more* — congress is in the hands of ALL MILITANTS and ONLY MILITANTS. While its decisions may be of interest to non-members and involve alliances with them, only the Militants are linked together under the concept of collective responsibility.

Now perhaps it can be understood how it is possible for an organizational structure (the Anarchist Communist organization) to be made up of a collection of autonomous units and remain united, allowing its supporters to develop within it and self-manage their political activity.

Remember, though, that while the local section is the operative structure of the political line of the federalist structure, this means that the functionality of the federation is linked to the operative efficiency of each section.

Let us also remember that the struggle for Anarchist Communism will be victorious or not if Anarchist Communist comrades in their cities or towns are victorious or not, and that therefore our activities in the places we live in are where all our efforts need to converge. The ultimate aim of an organizational structure on a national level is always, and is only that of rendering the political activity of each section more productive (not easier!), more incisive and more credible. Finally, let us repeat that, after all is said and done, the existence of a section must be functional and of use to the political work that *each militant* carries on within the proletariat.

At this point, a serious problem arises — how to make the federalist system as efficient as possible. But why is this such a big problem?

We must be careful, with the excuse of being efficient, not to be led astray by organizational proposals which contradict and annul the political benefits (autonomy and the integrity of Anarchist Communism) which the federalist system gives us.

Above everything else, we want each militant to act only if he or she is fully convinced of what they are doing — which is why minorities are acceptable. We are convinced that we can grow and achieve something good through our political practices only if those involved fully understand the true value of the decisions they make. This is the only real guarantee which assures us that the real meaning of our decisions will always be the principal motive of the practical actions that each militant carries out in his or her workplace or in other struggles.

Let us now examine how we can be efficient without the need for a central committee.

In order to be as co-ordinated, precise and well-informed as possible, it is necessary for certain tasks to be dealt with by specialized commissions.

The greatest risk we run is that these commissions become power centres. In order to avoid this happening, the commissions must be vested with executive power (in the sense of the power to carry out its tasks) which is limited to the areas decided by congress and must remain strictly within these bounds.

Two types of commission can be created:

1. those connected with the day-to-day running of the organization, for example the commissions for relations, for finances, for the press, for supporters and any others that congress may decide to create;
2. the “working” commissions, such as the labour commission, the education commission, the commission for relations with other political organizations and, again, any others that congress may decide to create.

As far as international relations are concerned, this will be best dealt with elsewhere, when dealing with the question of the Anarchist International.

Commissions are composed of a group of militants from the same region. Their work is controlled by all militants and all militants actively participate in the work of the commissions.

One commission which must never be created is a “political commission”, in other words a commission whose specific task is to make political decisions in addition to, or in place of, those decided by congress.

Such a commission must be absolutely rejected, whatever guise it may take. It is a negation of the very meaning of Anarchist Communism. However, it is not hard to imagine certain particularly urgent political situations that would require rapid decisions to be made so that the organization’s response can be united and more effective.

It is agreed that no commission can be delegated this task, as it is absurd that one part of the organization can make decisions which are binding on the entire organization. The problem is therefore resolved by the creation of a **National Council** (“council” in the sense of a group of people who give counsel, or advice).

This Council is made up of a limited number of comrades chosen by congress on the basis of their proven political capacities. its task is to meet during particularly urgent political moments and to issue a political statement which must naturally be in agreement with the organization’s Theory, Basic Strategy, Political Strategy and Tactics. This statement serves as *advice* to the organization’s militants who *freely decide* to accept it or not.

The better-qualified politically the members of the National Council are, the more their statements will be clear, explicit and well-founded.

Successive congresses will evaluate the work of the National Council and define its limits and its possibilities.

V — The Specific Organization and Basic Deviations

This part of the Basic Strategy will represent the historical memory of our organization. This is where a record will be kept of any deviations that should occur which we are as yet unaware of. It is perfectly possible for such deviations from Anarchist Communism to occur even though this platform may seem thorough. Comrades who join our organization in the future should remember that, as long as capitalism exists, it is possible for any political structure to be the birthplace of provocative policies, be they of a reformist or adventurist nature.

Let us remember that while it is relatively easy to become an Anarchist Communist in this society, it is much harder to remain one. In fact, it is probably the most difficult thing we could do as we have to struggle against fascism, bourgeois repression, the dangers of reformism and, above all, the authoritarian education and ideology that this society forces onto us.

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Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici
The Political Organization
Basic Strategy Document Approved by the First Congress of the FdCA, 1985
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