About the problems posed by the concrete class struggle and popular organisation

Reflections from an Anarchist Communist Perspective

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many of those issues that are not necessary for unity's sake in the specific struggle and organisation to which they belong.

3. The level of the revolutionary organisation or party— the political revolutionary level: This level is the most specific of them all, and it is characterised by gathering people from different popular subjects (ie. Students, workers, etc.), but who share a political view and a political programme (of a revolutionary and libertarian nature, in our case). Coming from different backgrounds, it is obvious that this level will naturally refer to changes in society as a whole, and this level as well is the most restricted; unity here is based on the required levels of ideological and tactical unity. Otherwise, there is not much point in staying together, if it is not possible to come out with a collectively agreed programme for intervention in society at large. This level is the one that reflects clearest the class struggle positions and the different class options assumed by the different political forces.

This is, briefly, a general overview of the problem of the actors of struggle, class and organisation. It is only a skeleton to be used for the discussion about what to do in the medium term, and how to address the big problems we have ahead in trying to define a revolutionary path for our respective region in the XXI century.

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them is by agitating demands, practices and exposing the contradictions of the system in them. Here is where the unity of the bulk of the people is possible, and this should be regarded as the aim. And though they are not political by its nature, they can get political in the course of struggle and by the natural development of the class contradictions. No matter how political they can become, they cannot be confused with a political group or with a tendency. And we need to keep it clear that we aim that our ideas influence the majority, but minorities cannot be purged and we cannot impose ideological definitions or labels on them.

2. The level of the tendency, network, current or front— the social political level: This is an intermediate level, in this one are brought together members of a single popular subject with a certain political leaning: this is what makes it different from the above level. This leaning, though, cannot be as defined as the one of a political group or party. Certain activists or militants that share outlook and that share policies regarding to the specific issue of their concern, come together to form a certain tendency inside of a bigger movement or organisation. A good example can be a tendency in a Trade union: people can disagree on many political issues, they might come from different political traditions, but they will, for instance, agree in developing a combative trade unionism and in the fight against social partnership, for instance. You really don't need to agree with anything else; it would be mistaken to try to confuse unity with "marriage" and you would only risk failing to achieve the most urgent tasks. They would be more specific, politically talking, than the trade union itself; but they wouldn't be a defined, homogenous, political force. Another good example are the experience of the "libertarian fronts" in South America—they bring together students, workers and neighbours who share a libertarian approach to politics, in terms of organisation and means of struggle, and that share a set of concrete proposal regarding to their problems. But the people in the fronts would disagree on

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Three Levels of Organisation

Taking into account the above mentioned (that is, the nature of the working class and its concrete expressions), we can now get into the matter of this document: the three levels on which the people organise and the way to build a movement of a revolutionary and libertarian nature. It should be stated that there are no magical formulas for this, and that the description of these three levels is as theoretical and general as the definition of the working class; they do exist in an essential way, but they are expressed in concrete and specific ways as well.

The levels of the organisation are determined by the merging of both a programme of action and the social nature of the actors alongside whom we fight. To go any further, let us first agree on an unavoidable dilemma of every revolutionary movement: the acknowledgement that only the unity of the working class can overthrow the ruling class and the fact that the working class is not a homogeneous block—there are different levels of awareness and class consciousness, there are different ideas, opinions, tendencies, some being more inclined to a libertarian pole, and others more towards an authoritarian pole. Therefore, unity is necessary, but an absolute unity is just not possible. So we need to determine the levels of unity that we can achieve in different levels of organisation[1]. It is not possible to divide this issue from the nature of each level of organisation:

1. The level of the social, popular or mass organisations— the social level: This level is characterised by those organisations who bring together a single actor of struggle, regardless of their political leanings (trade unions, student unions, community associations, etc.). The unity has to be as broad as possible, we have to struggle against sectarianism in them, and the way to influence

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[1] It is a merit of Bakunin and of the Platform, to give us very interesting glimpses over these issues.

their identity around the industrial networks, during the Unidad Popular period (1970–1973). This reflects the dynamic nature of the social actors, and of their identity. But the creation of such an identity, and the creation of those actual demands, are the ground over which struggle can flourish; not over a theoretical statement about the social conflict in abstract, or over lofty demands of social change.

Once we decide which ones are the popular subjects in a concrete place and time, we can start thinking in the medium term about concrete demands for struggle, in the frame of a programme, and we can take the political initiative. But we can also start thinking of ways to organise those sectors in accordance to our political views, or at least, how to influence in a healthy and libertarian way, their own organisations. But here we need to be very careful not to confuse the different spaces and types of organisations, if we want to create unity and not discord. The best example of how not to do it is the classic Trotskyst approach that completely mixes up the domains of a party, with the ones of a social movement. This political short sightedness leads to the shrinking and splitting of every single group in which they take part, until it is impossible to distinguish them from their "fronts". Sectarianism is the only logical result of this practice, and weakening of the social forces. Historically, anarchists have suffered from the same problem in the form of anarcho-syndicalism, that traditionally confused a "party" with a "union". The results are there for everyone to see: they didn't end up acting like a proper political force, and they didn't act like a proper union. That caused its quick decline almost everywhere.

So we need to know what we are talking about when we talk about organising the people for the struggle, as there are many sorts of organisation, and we need to have a clear policy in all of the different levels of the organisation of the people.

As anarchists start discussing the prospects for anarchist activity in the medium term, the link becomes clearer between strategy and tactics: that is to say, what we see as our goal, the libertarian society, and the means through which we are going to reach it. Considering the strong rejection of traditional anarchism of the artificial distinction between "means" and "ends", it is very surprising how often they are divorced in anarchist practice. This is caused mainly due to the lack of strategic planning, what should create the bridge to link the "distant future", and the day to day issues we deal with. There is little chance of disagreement in any of the two, both the daily issues and the distant future (though nothing can be discarded in the mad zoo of Anarchy), but clearly, it is in the medium term prospects when most of the disagreement emerges, as it is in that point when we start talking about the revolutionary path to achieve the overthrowing of the old society and the birth of the new one. It is only when we have decided our medium term prospects when the struggles turn to be "revolutionary", as they start serving a goal, as we can take the political initiative and as it is only then when the distant future stops being a utopian dream to become a revolutionary programme.

We acknowledge the need of achieving something more than media coverage or a bunch of new militants with each struggle. We acknowledge as well, the need to create some mechanism so that we can test if we are actually going somewhere. That is supposed to be the creation of permanent (organic) links that, in one way or another, will survive the passing sparks of rebellion, linking those rebellions in time. And at the same time, we need to have a set of objectives to aim for that will serve as the guide to our activity and the evaluation tool with which to measure effectiveness.

With regard to the organic links between struggles, we need to look into the nature of the actors in struggle, to know how to address, from a libertarian point of view, the problem of organisations in society.

Actors of Struggle

First of all, and there is not much need to argue this in length with class struggle anarchists, the basis of the struggle is the contradiction between two fundamental classes; working class and bourgeoisie. As comrade Mac Giollamóir stated in Workers Solidarity (86), *"The working class is one side of the social relationship that defines capitalism. This relationship is the relationship of the employer and the employed. It is the relationship between the capitalist who buys the worker's ability to labour and live freely and the worker who gives up that ability in order to live at all"* It is part of a dynamic, dialectical, relationship; not a set of fixed characters. The main characteristics of the working class are its dependence on the wage system; its lower rank in the hierarchical organisation of labour (you always end up having someone above); its nature as a creator of profit that is appropriated by the capitalist; and thus, the fact that it lives exploited and oppressed.

This is the underlying reality that shapes the life of modern—capitalist—society. It is real, but we are talking about a relationship, about a description of a process, about theoretical models to understand a reality that is far more complex than these two antagonistic poles (otherwise, revolution wouldn't pose no problem, as if only by numbers the ruling class would have been long been expelled from power). Between this two poles, a wide range of grey areas do exist. And the class conflict assumes a concrete expression in concrete characters. Who are those characters? That is a matter of paramount importance to any revolutionary, and the definition of those actors of struggle will determine to a great extent the tactics chosen.

We can tell these actors of struggles in groups or categories by many indicators:

1. Problems that affect them immediately and their immediate interests;

2. Traditions of struggle and organisation sprouting out from these set of problems and interests;

3. A common place or activity in society;

No matter that the actors can be in quiet, the potential for them to become a factor of explosion of the class struggle can be there in slumber.

As well, it is worth mentioning that the actors of struggle (or popular subjects, as they are also called), do not necessarily represent a clear cut class; take for example the traditional examples of actors of struggle—students, workers, neighbours and peasants. Only workers can be considered a "pure" class, while all the others contain members of different classes and all sorts of grey areas (petit bourgeoisie, bourgeoisie, the nebulous middle class, marginal elements and the working class). The class nature of the social actors, in general, gives an important need to a working class tendency expressed as a political force, able to win other segments of society to a revolutionary cause and programme.

These, as well, are categories that don't exist in isolation from one another: the kids of the worker can be students, and they are all residents of a certain community. But their identity as part of a certain actor of struggle becomes clear when the struggle emerges, and around certain organisational traditions. To give an example, in the year 1983 in Chile there erupted huge mass rallies against the dictatorship of Pinochet; although the calls to struggle came from the Miners' unions, the relative weakness of the unions in a semi-clandestine context, caused that the main space for protest were the slums—where the workers lived—and other layers of society as well, including small shop owners, and so on, took part on the struggle right beside workers. But the identity of these struggles was created around certain organisations and struggles that were located in that concrete space—the slums in this case. And many of them were the same people that ten years before, articulated