

Letter to the Anarchist Galaxy





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The following appeared online November 2011 and quickly made the rounds of the usual anarchist websites. The anonymous critique is aimed incisively at the growing tendency within international insurrectional anarchism that posits a new guerrilla warfare. Unlike the guerrilla warfare of the New Left, this guerrilla is diffuse, anarchist, and for a total rupture with the existent.

While it is natural for those of us who desire the destruction of civilization to smile widely at consistent news of anarchist armed struggle, we must also remain critical. Much of this debate should be formulated face-to-face by each group of individuals taking action against control. However, space remains for open critique and counter-critique within insurrectional circles. The Conspiracy of Cells of Fire themselves push an idea of a new critique, one attached to notices of attack, through which we may formulate new methods and strategies. While the authors of this piece may disagree with the necessity of each critical text coming in the form of a communiqué, one agreement stands: we must remain active in our search for paths toward the active destruction of domination and control.

The questions remain:

Does insurrectionary anarchism mean the conscious intensification of attack by individuals and groups? Or is it the generalization of revolt - its tools and skills - to every part of society? Are these two mutually exclusive?

What is the point of the named group? Does this merely invite repression? Does group coherency really matter?

Can anonymity help mitigate state repression? Can it prevent our attacks from being recuperated into the Spectacle? Can it mean the negation of political identities and an assertion of an individualism that evades subjectivity?

Can guerrilla warfare truly be separated from vanguardism, specialization, and formalism? Is the anarchist guerrilla a totally different breed?

I offer these questions because I do not have answers. While named groups stir up visions of arrogant Leninism, I cannot hold back my smile when I hear of any blow against domination. I want to envision a path toward rupture, toward the total destruction of the existent. What that means is unknown. We publish this text not as a condemnation of our comrades of the anarchist, anti-civilization, and nihilist armed struggle, but as a small contribution to that struggle.

Solidarity always to those who attack domination, named or unnamed.

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Uninvited, we are forcing ourselves on a debate that is not ours. And which never will be, as it is set on a terrain that remains sterile for the development of insurrectional perspectives and the anarchist ideas and activities that focus on such a development. So, you might ask, why write a letter? Because nothing is closer to our hearts than liberatory and destructive revolt, than the struggle for the subversion of the existent, because we will never stop recognizing ourselves in all comrades who decide to attack the structures and people of power out of a desire for freedom; because there are few things we cherish more than individual will, the striving for coherence and the courage of lighting the fuse, above everything. Don't think we are writing this premise in an attempt to please; it is sincere, as is our concern about the voluntary amputation of the domain of anarchist struggle.

Let's be clear:

More than ever there is a need for the destructive intervention of anarchists, more than ever it is the moment to intensify, to search for possibilities and hypotheses enabling the extension of revolt and insurrection and in this way speed up the overturning of this world. But this need and urge don't absolve us from the obligation to think about what, where, how and why.

Let's be straightforward:

For what reasons are anarchists (we don't have any difficulty in understanding why authoritarians would do so) systematically claiming their acts and signing them with acronyms that have become famous worldwide? What brings them to associate this road with an excessive form of coherence between thinking and acting, between theory and practice, while in fact it is simply the illusory abolition of a permanent tension which should exist between them and which is beyond doubt the moving strength behind the anarchist movement?

This spreading mania risks casting its shadow over all acts of revolt. Not only actions by anarchists that merrily pass through the bitter and always disappointing pill of the claim but also, and perhaps especially, the action of the more general panorama of rebellion and social conflictuality. Maybe that is one of the 'reasons' that pushed us to write this text. Tired of experiencing and finding the anarchist field of attack, sabotage and expropriation more and more assimilated to an acronym and, as such, political representation; tired of seeing the horizon narrowing into two falsely opposing choices: either 'respectable' anarchism, running behind assemblies, social movements and base trade unions; or 'bad' anarchism, being kindly asked to stamp your contributions to the social war with some acronym — and if you don't, someone else will do it for you.

Because we also choose to attack. We also sabotage the machinery of

capital and authority. We also choose to not accept a position of begging and are not putting off the necessary expropriation until tomorrow. But we do think that our activities are simply part of a wider social conflictuality, a conflictuality that doesn't need claims and acronyms. We believe that only when actions are anonymous can they really be appropriated by everyone. We believe that putting a stamp on an attack is moving the attack from the social to the political field, to the field of representation, delegation, actors and spectators. And, as has often been said before in this kind of debate, it's not enough to proclaim the refusal of politics: its refusal implicates coherence between means and aims, and the claim is a political instrument just like the membership card, the program, the declaration of principles.

Over and above that, there is some confusion that we want to expose, because we can't continue to simply stand by and watch a content which is more and more being given over to concepts such as informality. The choice of an informal autonomous anarchist movement implies the refusal of fixed structures, of membership organisations, of centralising and unifying federations; and therefore also fixed recurring signatures, if not all signatures. It is the refusal of the drawing up of programs, the banishment of all political means; and thereby also of programmatic claims that claim to be in the position of outlining campaigns.

It is the refusal of all centralisation; and so equally of all umbrella structures, no matter whether they declare themselves verbally 'informal' or formal. In a positive sense, to us informality signifies an unlimited and undefined archipelago of autonomous groups and individuals which are forging ties based on affinity and mutual knowledge and who decide upon that basis to realize common projects. It is the choice for small, affinity-based circles which make their own autonomy, perspectives and methods of action the basis for creating ties with others. Informal organization has nothing to do with either federations or acronyms. And what brought some comrades to speak not only about informality, but about 'insurrectionalism' as well? With the risk of devaluing the wide panorama of ideas, analyses, hypotheses and proposals, we could say that 'insurrectionalism' contains the methods and perspectives which, out of a non-compromising anarchism, want to contribute to 'insurrectional situations'. The anarchist arsenal of methods for this contribution is enormous. Moreover, the use of methods (agitation, attack, organisational proposals etc.) in itself means hardly anything: only in a thought-out and evolving 'projectuality' do they acquire meaning in the struggle. Setting fire to a State building is beyond doubt always a good thing, but it is not necessarily inscribed in an insurrectional perspective 'as such'. And this counts even less for the choice, for example,

of aiming attacks particularly against rather central, spectacular targets, accompanied by confessions of faith. It is no coincidence that during other moments of insurrectional projectualities, the emphasis was put particularly on modest, reproducible, anonymous actions of attack compared to the more centralized structures and people of power, or on the necessity of well-aimed sabotage of infrastructures that don't need echoes in the media in order to reach their goals, for example the immobilization of transport, data, and energy supplies.

It seems that there are not all that many perspectives behind the current mania for claims, or at least, we have difficulty in discovering them. In fact, and this doesn't imply that we want to underestimate the sincere and courageous rebellion of those comrades, it seems as if there is above all a striving for recognition. A recognition by the enemy, who will hurry to complete its list of terrorist organisations, often signifying the beginning of the end: the enemy starts working to isolate a part of the conflictuality from the wider conflictuality, an isolation which is not only the forerunner of repression (and actually it doesn't really matter, repression is always there — we're not going to weep about the fact that anarchist activities are always being followed by the eyes of the Argus, and thus prosecuted), but especially, and that's the most important, it is the most effective means to combat all possible infection.

In the current condition of the social body, which is sick and deteriorating, the best thing for power is a clearly recognizable and definable knife which tries to stab a piece of it, while the worst for power is a virus that risks harming the whole body in an intangible and therefore uncontrollable way. Or are we mistaken, and is it all more about recognition by the exploited and excluded? But are we as anarchists not against all forms of delegation, of shining examples which often legitimize resignation? Most certainly, our practices can be contagious, and our ideas even more, but only on condition that they bring back the responsibility to act to each separate individual, when they question resignation as being an individual choice.

To inflame hearts, most certainly, but when this lacks the oxygen of one's own conviction, the fire will extinguish fast and in the best case will simply be followed up by some applause for the upcoming martyrs. And even then, it would really be too ironic if the principal opponents of politics, the anarchists, were to take up the torch of representation and, in the footsteps of their authoritarian predecessors, separate social conflictuality from the immediate subversion of all social roles, and do this in times when political mediation (political parties, unions, reformism) is slowly becoming obsolete and outmoded. And it makes no difference whether they want to do this by

taking the lead of social movements, speaking great truths in popular assemblies or by means of a specific armed group.

Or is it all about striving for ‘coherence’? Unfortunately, the anarchists that exchange the quest for coherence for tactical agreements, nauseating alliances and strategic separations between means and aims have always existed. Anarchist coherence is beyond doubt also to be found in the denial of all this. But this doesn’t mean that, for example, a certain condition of ‘clandestinity’ would be more coherent. When clandestinity is not seen as a necessity (either because repression is hunting us down or because it is necessary for certain action), but as some kind of pinnacle of revolutionary activity, there is not so much left over from the infamous a-legalism. In order to imagine this, it might suffice to compare it to the social situation in Europe: it is not because thousands of people are living in a really ‘clandestine’ situation (people without papers), that it makes them automatically and objectively a threat to legalism and crowns them as ‘revolutionary subjects’. Why would it be any different for anarchists living under conditions of clandestinity?

Or might it all be about frightening the enemy? A recurring element in claims is that apparently there are anarchists who believe they can scare power by expressing threats, publishing pictures of weapons or exploding little bombs (and let’s not mention the despicable practice of sending letter bombs). In comparison to the daily slaughter organized by power it seems kind of naïve, especially to those who have no illusions left concerning rulers that are more sensitive, capitalism with a human face, or more honest relations within the system. If power, despite its arrogance, were to fear anything it would be the spread of revolt, the sowing of disobedience, the uncontrolled igniting of hearts. And of course, the lightning of repression will not spare anarchists that want to contribute to this, but that doesn’t prove how ‘dangerous’ we are in any way whatsoever, it maybe only speaks about how dangerous it would be if our ideas and practices were to spread among among the excluded and exploited.

We are continually surprised about how little the idea of some kind of shadow is able to please contemporary anarchists, the ones that don’t want to resign themselves, wait or build mass organisations.

We used to be proud of it:

We would put all on all to make the swamp of social conflictuality extend and so make it impossible for the forces of repression and recuperation to penetrate. We didn’t go searching for the spotlight, or for the glory of the warrior: in the shadow, at the dark side of society we contributed to the disturbance of normality, to the anonymous destruction of structures of control and repression, to the ‘liberation’ of time and space through sabotage so that

the social revolt could continue. And we used to diffuse our ideas proudly, in an autonomous way, without making use of the echoes of the media, far away from the political spectacle including the 'oppositional' one. An agitation which was not striving to be filmed, recognized, but which tried to fuel rebellion everywhere and forge ties with other rebels in the shared revolt.

It seems that today more than a few comrades have chosen the easy solution of identity over the circulation of ideas and revolt, and have in this way reduced affinity relations to a joining something. Of course it is easier to pick up some ready-made product off the shelves of the militant market of opinions and consume it, rather than develop a proper struggle track that makes a rupture with it. Of course it is easier to give oneself the illusion of strength by using a shared acronym than to face the fact that the 'strength' of subversion is to be found to the degree and in the way it can attack the social body with liberating practices and ideas. Identity and 'formation of a front' might offer the sweet illusion of having meaning, especially in the spectacle of communication technology, but doesn't clear every obstacle from the road. Even more, it shows all the symptoms of sickness of a not-so-anarchist conception of struggle and revolution, which believes in being able to pose an illusionary anarchist mastodon before the mastodon of power in a symmetrical way. The immediate consequence is the evermore narrowing of the horizon to a not-so-interesting introspection, some patting on the back here and there and the construction of a framework of exclusive self-reference.

It wouldn't surprise us if this mania were to paralyse the anarchist movement even regarding our contribution to more and more frequent, spontaneous and destructive revolts. Being locked up in self-promotion and self-reference, with communication reduced to publishing claims on the internet, it doesn't seem that anarchists will be able to do a lot (apart from the obligatory explosions and arsons, often against targets which the people in revolt are already very much destroying themselves) when the situation is exploding in their neighbourhood. It seems that the closer we seem to get to the possibility of insurrections, the more tangible these possibilities are becoming, the less anarchists want to be busy with it. And this counts equally for those who are closing up themselves in some ideology of armed struggle. But what are we talking about when we speak about insurrectionary perspectives? Definitely not just about a multiplicity of attacks, even less when these seem to tend towards the exclusive terrain of the anarchists with their fronts. Much more than a singular armed duel with the State, insurrection is the multiple rupture with time, space and roles of domination, a necessarily violent rupture which can signify the beginning of the subversion of social relations. In that sense, insurrection is

rather a social unleashing, which goes further than a generalizing of revolt or riots, but which already carries in its negation the beginning of a new world, or at least should do. It is precisely the presence of such utopian tension that offers some grip against the return to normality and the recovery of social roles after the great feast of destruction. So it may be clear that insurrection is not a purely anarchist matter, although our contribution to it, our preparation towards it, our insurrectional perspectives, could in future times be beyond doubt important and maybe decisive for pushing the unchaining of negation towards a liberating direction. Abandoning in advance these difficult issues — which should be gaining importance in a world that is becoming more and more unstable — by locking ourselves up in some identity-based ghetto and cherishing the illusion of developing ‘strength’ by common signatures and the ‘unification’ of anarchists that are prepared to attack, inevitably becomes the negation of all insurrectionary perspectives.

To get back to the world of fronts and acronyms, we could for example mention the obligatory references to imprisoned comrades as a clear sign of the restraining ourselves within a framework of exclusive self-reference. It seems that once locked up by the State, these comrades are no longer comrades like we are, but are precisely ‘imprisoned’ comrades. In this way, the positions in their already difficult and painful debates become fixed in a way that can have only two exits: either the absolute glorification of our imprisoned comrades, or absolute rejection, which can very quickly turn into a renouncement of developing and embodying solidarity.

Does it still make sense to continue repeating that our imprisoned comrades are neither positioned above or below other comrades, but are simply among them? Isn’t it remarkable that, despite the many struggles against prisons, the present current is again coming out with ‘political’ prisoners, abandoning a more general perspective of struggle against prison, justice,...? In this way we risk completing what the State was already trying to realise in the first place by locking our comrades up: by turning them into abstract, idolized and central reference points, we are isolating them from the social war as a whole. Instead of looking for ways to maintain ties of solidarity, affinity and complicity across the walls, by placing everything in the middle of social war, solidarity is shrinking into the quoting of names at the end of a claim. On top of that, this is generating a nasty circular motion without much perspective, a higher level of attacks which are ‘dedicated’ to others, rather than taking strength from ourselves and from the choice of when, how and why to intervene in given circumstances.

But the logic of armed struggle-ism is unstoppable. Once set in motion, it unfortunately becomes very difficult to counter. Everybody that doesn’t join

and take up its defence is compared to comrades that don't want to act or attack, that submit revolt to calculations and masses, that only want to wait and are refusing the urge to light the fuse here and now. In the deformed mirror, the refusal of the ideology of armed struggle is equal to the refusal of armed struggle itself. Of course this is not true, but for who wants to hear that, there is no space for discussion left open. Everything is being reduced to a thinking in blocks, for and against, and the path which we think is more interesting, the development of insurrectional projectualities is disappearing into the background. To the applause of the formal libertarians and the pseudo-radicals as well as the repressive forces, who desire nothing more than the drying up of this swamp.

Because who still wants to discuss projectuality today, when the only rhythm that the struggle seems to have is the sum of the attacks claimed on the internet? Who is still searching for a perspective that wants to do more than strike a little? There is, by the way, no doubt about that: striking is necessary, here and now, and with all the means that we think appropriate and opportune. But the challenge of the development of a projectuality, which aims at the attempt of unchaining, extending or deepening insurrectional situations, demands a bit more than the capacity to strike. It demands the development of proper ideas and not the repetition of other people's words, the strength to develop real autonomy in terms of struggle and capacities; the slow and difficult search for affinities and the deepening of mutual knowledge; a certain analysis of the social circumstances in which we act; the courage to elaborate hypotheses for the social war in order to stop running behind facts or ourselves.

In short: it doesn't only demand the capacity to use certain methods but especially the ideas of how, where, when and why to use them, and then in combination with a whole spectre of other methods. Otherwise there will be no anarchists left, only a spectrum of fixed roles: propagandists, squatters, armed strugglers, expropriators, writers, window breakers, rioters, etc. There would be nothing more painful than to find ourselves so unarmed in the face of the coming social storm than for each one of us to have only one speciality left. There would be nothing worse in explosive social situations than having to note that anarchists are too much involved in their own back yard to be able to really contribute to the explosion. It would give the most bitter taste of missed opportunities when we, by focussing exclusively on the identity ghetto, would abandon the discovery of our accomplices inside the social storm, the forging of ties of shared ideas and practices with other rebels, breaking with all forms of mediated communication and representation and in this way opening up space for true mutuality which is allergic to all power and domination.

But as always we refuse to despair. We are aware that many comrades

are searching for possibilities to attack the enemy and forge ties with other rebels through the spreading of anarchist ideas and struggle proposals, in a time and space that abandons all political spectacle. It is probably the most difficult path, because it will never be rewarded. Not by the enemy, not by the masses and most probably not by other comrades and revolutionaries. But we carry a history inside of us, a history that connects us to all anarchists and which will obstinately continue to refuse to be enclosed, either within the 'official' anarchist movement, or in the armed-struggle-ist reflection of it. Those who continue to refuse to spread ideas separately from the ways in which we spread them, thus trying to exile all political mediation, including the claim. Those who don't care much about who did this or that, but connect it to their own revolt, their own projectuality which expands in the only conspiracy we want: the one of rebellious individualities for the subversion of the existent.

“ We believe that only when actions are anonymous can they really be appropriated by everyone. We believe that putting a stamp on an attack is moving the attack from the social to the political field, to the field of representation, delegation, actors and spectators. And, as has often been said before in this kind of debate, it's not enough to proclaim the refusal of politics: its refusal implicates coherence between means and aims, and the claim is a political instrument just like the membership card, the program, the declaration of principles.