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The Logic of Insurrection

Alfredo M. Bonanno

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When we hear the word insurrection we think of some precise moment of upheaval in the past, or imagine a similar clash in the future. Spontaneous insurrection occurs when people are pushed beyond their limits of endurance at their points of exploitation. Certain events take place: street clashes, attacks against the police, destruction of the symbols of capitalism (banks, jewelers, supermarkets, etc). Such moments of popular violence catch anarchists unprepared, amazed that yesterday's apathy is transformed into today's rage.

Look at Brixton a couple of years ago: anarchists were not, could not have been, protagonists in the riot. Events took them by surprise. People rose up for reasons apparently simple, but which were hatching beneath the surface for a long time. Anarchists' participation was simply that of adapting to the situation, the *guests* of an insurrection but not acting with an insurrectional logic. To throw a brick is not the best way for a conscious revolutionary to participate in an insurrection.

When we talk of applying a logic of insurrection we mean going about things the other way round. We do not limit ourselves to identifying areas of social tension and joining in when it explodes,

we try to stimulate rebellion and even more, propose and participate in the formation of an organization of revolt.

Let's try to be as clear as possible.

The kind of organization we mean should be of an associative, social or mass character—a committee, support group, league against repression, association for housing rights, anti-nuclear groups, abstentionist league against the elections, etc—not a specific anarchist group. Why should people have to belong to an anarchist group to take part in a social struggle?

People's participation in this kind of structure can be limitless, depending on the work the anarchists manage to do within it. Beginning with a handful of comrades and people most motivated in a particular struggle, whether it be a wildcat strike, mass sackings, a proposed NATO base, squatting, etc, it would entail initially spreading information about the situation set out as clearly and directly as possible. Leaflets, journals, posters, debates, conferences, public meetings and so on would be used and the embrion of one of the groups mentioned above formed. When there is some response to this part of the work it is time to establish a meeting place and contact number. The organization's actions will become more effective as the struggle progresses, numbers increase and repression develops against it.

The outcome will not be certain. The active presence of anarchists does not mean control but rather stimulation. They have the same rights as the other and no particular weight in decision making. Their suggestions will be considered valid if they are both in tune with the general level of feeling and at the same time try to push it forward.

Timid or hesitant proposals would be rejected as obstacles to advancing the struggle and as betraying the needs and rebellion. A proposal that is too far advanced, that goes beyond the level of the moment would be considered impossible, dangerous and counterproductive. People would withdraw, afraid of being mixed up in who knows what.

Anarchists operating within this structure must therefore be in touch with reality and propose actions that are both possible and comprehensible. It is possible that a spreading mess rebellion could evolve from this initial work of stimulation. This is what we mean by the methods and logic of insurrection. It is quite different to the logic of trade unionism and syndicalism (including anarcho-syndicalism), structures which all begin from a logic of defense as opposed to one of attack. They tend towards quantitive growth (increasing membership) and defending past gains, and, in the case of the trade unions, protecting the interests of one category.

What we are proposing on the contrary are basic associative structures organized to deal with one objective of struggle and stimulate people's feelings of rebellion, to culminate in as conscious an insurrection as possible.

Using this method there is no way the anarchists within the structure can transform themselves into a leadership or power group. In fact, as we have said, they are obliged to follow the conditions of the struggle. They are not working for a quantitive growth in their own anarchist group. They cannot propose simply defensive actions but are constrained to go towards increasingly advanced ones. On the one hand these actions can lead to insurrection and levels that cannot be predicted. On the other they can fail to be effective. In either case the original associative structure inevitably becomes redundant, and the anarchists will go back to what they were doing before.