

On the Tightrope

Contributions and Considerations From and For the Anarchic Combat

This text aims to contribute to the development and deepening of the informal anarchic combat, taking into consideration the increasingly specialized technological advances of control and surveillance of the population in general and, specially, of those who venture to rebel against what is established.



No Trace Project / No trace, no case. A collection of tools to help anarchists and other rebels **understand** the capabilities of their enemies, **undermine** surveillance efforts, and ultimately **act** without getting caught.

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On the Tightrope: Contributions and Considerations From and For the Anarchic Combat

Original text in Spanish

En la cuerda floja: Aportes y consideraciones desde y para el combate anárquico

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Layout

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of systematical attacks and the building of complicities, since all political endeavor would be almost entirely devoted to conspiring and executing.

But, is this the kind of life we really seek or desire? Is it possible to go through with this dynamic without falling into militaristic conducts and structures? Multiple fundamental aspects of the anarchic endeavor would be left aside by choosing a life of clandestinity. This lifestyle would hinder the permanent individual and collective questioning that aims at getting rid of authoritarian and/ of citizen-like conducts, since—as it has already been mentioned—it usually demands to take up behaviors that one rejects with the purpose of going unnoticed. Public contacts would be little or practically nonexistent, thus the extensive and fruitful discussions and debates—much needed for our own personal growth—would also diminish greatly.

Along with this, clandestinity also poses the risk of arousing hierarchies and vertical relations, transforming us into what we criticize and attack and creating an abysmal distance between means and ends. From the moment this occurs, we are doomed for we have started to use methods that are alien and opposed to us and what we propose; and, in that case, it would be timely to discard the option of clandestinity.

Therefore, the question stands: how to conjugate an endeavor of systematic and ambitious attack with the much needed individual development in the most diverse areas?

Only the advancement and qualification of the informal anarchic combat and the paths it may open will provide us with answers.

Francisco Solar

Maximum Security Section.

Maximum Security Prison.

September 2020.

As somebody said: “When the hard blows are repeated over and over again, the poetry begins.”

So, is it possible to carry out complex, ambitious and considerably frequent attacks living in a legal “above the ground” situation where the enemy knows your footsteps and where to find you? Would clandestinity make these kind of actions easier to undertake?

Final words

“An action happens that somehow alerts the normal course of events, the police starts working immediately and is able to have a hint or a strong presumption of who may be responsible, however, his/hers/their whereabouts are unknown as well as the places and people they frequent.”

This example represents one of the advantages that clandestinity would imply. It hampers the police efforts to hunt and capture. In this regard, it becomes necessary to return to the issue of the technological advances regarding control and surveillance. In a city which is monitored almost entirely by systems that are perfected daily, any mistake in execution comes at a very high cost and if the perpetrators are already known to the police, then their capture becomes imminent. This, for example, is what happened to the comrades Alfredo Cospito and Nicolai Gai when they shot the nuclear businessman Adinolfi. Clandestinity would reduce the surveillance's effectiveness, in a way, as, by the time the doers are identified, they would already be in the shadows, conspiring for their next attack. The permanent police surveillance the known enemies to the power are under would seize to be effective and this, clearly, is another advantage of the underground, that allows far more mobility. The capacity for action of any kind is enormously limited when there are multiple eyes policing you, and even more so if the sporadic blows become frequent. Hence, life in clandestinity would make it easier to carry out a practice

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It arises from the need to bash the power harder and constantly in order to create cracks that can keep on growing.

It comes as no surprise to anyone the increase of surveillance through security cameras, the variety of cards that we have to use for almost everything and the incipient but fast increase of the use of drones for telesurveillance. All of this, plus the control carried out through cellphones makes the scenario all the more complicated. As this technological gear is interconnected, it takes almost total control of the city, our battle field. The overlaying of images, times and the use of one or another mean of transport makes it possible to detect and track one's movements. The entire city is under a magnifying glass. This world is practically an open air maximum security prison and it is not an overstatement. And if we take into consideration the police and now military presence in every street corner, the scenario becomes even more limited and controlled.

Now well, if every individual in this society is monitored by this interconnected surveillance system, for those who declare themselves as enemies of this society and act accordingly, the level of control increases considerably. The situation turns even more complex for those who are already known to the repressive apparatus, whether it is because they have been imprisoned before, because they are connected to spaces which aim to confront or for any other number of reasons. The room for transgressive action narrows and, with this, the decision to attack transforms inevitably into a tightrope from which one is constantly about to fall from. What can be done in order to outwit the repressive strikes? Or

even, what can be done to hamper the police apparatus' task of capture?

military organizations. Their choice for clandestine combat was the result of a freely made decision taking into consideration the costs it would imply. They dedicated their political activity to the armed combat; some of them by carrying out sporadic but major actions and others with relentless attacks that gave the power no truce. Nevertheless, they did not neglect the reflection nor the propaganda, as it represents a contribution to the qualitative development of the anarchists' combats by showing in deeds a consistency between what is said and what is done.

Regarding the need to strike hard

The attack against everything that is established is completely and utterly valid from the moment State and capitalism exist and that, I believe, is a common ground among the informal anarchic tendency. Now well, the need for these actions to grow in scale has been repeatedly discussed. However, it has not been frequently carried out. From an anarchic and combative perspective it becomes essential to go through with attacks that will make the powerful shiver and that will let the businessmen who dry a river to water their avocado plantation know that their actions will have consequences.

Actions that show strength and determination, and that can be replicated by any individual who makes freedom his/hers horizon. Whether it is to accompany, extend and deepen a context of revolt, to try to create cracks and gaps in what is imposed in a situation of "normality," or as an act of vengeance, it becomes a necessity to take a qualitative leap in the informal anarchic combat which allows to open new possibilities, still known to us. And, if we intend our actions to have a greater impact, then these must be relatively frequent as memory turns more and more short term and fragile. Therefore, if our strikes are too sporadic, it poses the risk of being reduced to "isolated events" or anecdotal.

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The Autonomous Groups that operated mainly in Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid simultaneously and after the MIL, during the democratic transition in the realm of Spain, followed the same path. Before joining one of these groups the individuals had to possess guns, fake papers and to have contact with a safe hideout in order to start operating. According to different testimonies, this clandestine situation ended up by transforming their political endeavor basically into bank expropriations to finance the underground life, which prevented them from broadening support networks, among other aspects. It is worth mentioning that the Spanish State's repressive apparatus—La Brigada Político Social—suffered no alterations during the democratic transition. This may have determined that the Autonomous Groups in the late 70's and early 80's kept on functioning with the same dynamics as the groups that operated during the dictatorship.

Another experience that is worth considering, is the group *Conspiración de Células del Fuego (CCF)* in Greece, as it is a very recent informal anarchist group of action that opted for clandestinity. I am not sure if the decision was determined by the previous identification of its members or by the identification of any of them by the repressive apparatus. However, what it is certain is that their attacks were constant, adding up to several dozens in one year, which may reflect an advantage of going underground.

Another anarchist group that carried out an armed combat in the same territory was “*Lucha Revolucionaria*,” that driven by police persecution, went underground and in that situation struck the power hard and heavy. This is a clear example of clandestinity in war, where the magnitude of their actions checkmated the system as a whole, according to one of the court sentences against them.

A common feature to all of the groups mentioned is the fact that none of them were constituted as a rigid structure with a strong division of roles, contrary to the left-winged political-

Options and decisions

One of the aspects that the anarchic informal tendency criticizes of the left-winged political-military groups is its strong structure, which leads them, among other things, to opt for clandestinity as a battle strategy. This situation of clandestinity implies a strong role division, which is closely related to the militarization that is common to these groups. Thus conceived, clandestinity would be essential in the gear of an organization that divides its militants into legal and illegal, being these last the hidden wing dedicated to attacking and the firsts, the “public image” advocated to creating support networks, logistics and propaganda, among other activities. Life in clandestinity would be extremely limited to operational aspects; a dynamic of permanent combat that, according to those who criticize it, would exclude aspects as essential and enriching as the necessary exchange of experiences, the sharing of views regarding the struggle or the qualification in areas which, even though are not linked directly to the armed combat, are essential to the struggle for the total liberation. It becomes very hard or even impossible to have the long and deep debates on different topics that are necessary to the broadening of our perspectives. Hence, it results in a great loss of crucial moments and experiences. Turning away from the gears of consumption (and with this I am not referring to the fantasy of the “bubbles of freedom”) also becomes very complicated to sustain in clandestinity, as it requires to follow standard and citizen-like ways and structures if the aim is to go unnoticed. Clandestine life not only implies these and many other restrictions, but it is also defined by loneliness.

Now well, I want to make it very clear that I am referring to clandestinity in and for the war; not to the one—which regardless of how valid and legitimate it is—with the objective to run from the enemy and, for that, requires to lead a quiet life without going on the offensive. I am talking about an option for clandestinity

—even though there are those who are forced into the situation —as a battle strategy, as a strategy to strike the power hard and constantly.

Another common criticism to the groups and organizations that opt for this path is that they finally end up devoting all of their political activity to maintaining the “clandestine structure”, which requires a great deal of resources to sustain itself. Thus, leaving aside crucial activities such as propaganda or the creation of support networks in order to be able to sustain the clandestine comrades. Evidently, this ends up being counterproductive and it strengthens the militarism.

Examples to consider

It is not only left-winged political-military groups who have opted for clandestinity, as anarchist and autonomous groups have also resorted to this strategy in order to face the power. These last experiences are worth considering when it comes to pondering this option.

One of the most remarkable experiences in this regard was the one carried out by the MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación), that fought from the underground against Franco's dictatorship, in the early 70's in Cataluña. Evidently, Franco's smothering boot was decisive in this group's decision of going underground. Nevertheless, its members, prior to being identified by the repressive apparatus, went automatically underground when the group was conformed or in the exact moment they joined it. The MIL's particular feature was, without a doubt, its broad theoretical production which they complemented very well with their armed action. The constant production of texts and reflections and, even, the creation of the publisher “Mayo del 37,” comes to show that the propaganda and the production of political reflections was one of MIL's main concerns, even more than the armed struggle.