

The December Document
from Militant Kindergarten
by the Center for Especificismo Studies

“The social and political tracks don’t always need to be laid at the same time by the same people. It’s wrong to think that the protagonists of revolution are only ever individuals or “great men”. This kind of thinking obscures the work of people who, on a daily basis, are committed to the social transformation of society. We know that we can’t change everyone’s mind, but we can be clear about our principles and where we refuse to compromise. “Slow” is an important concept here and relates to what we’ve said before about “baby steps”. It’s the pace of developing trusting relationships, the pace of the development of class consciousness.”

Protagonism doesn't have to have a famous person's name on it. It's wrong to think that the protagonists of revolution are only ever individuals or "great men". This kind of thinking obscures the work of people who, on a daily basis, are committed to the social transformation of society. Not everyone can or should be open about their support for direct action and talking publicly about a revolutionary ideology like anarchism is complicated. Being a supporter is sometimes a natural position for someone in contact with more than one political organization or with a diverse background of political and activist experiences.

We believe popular protagonism should be contrasted to individual protagonism, the same as we believe Popular Power should be in opposition to individual power. The popular organization must take a protagonizing role in revolution, but surviving social-level fluctuations requires a lasting kind of political organization capable of consistently defending ideas like social force, class struggle, autonomy, combativeness, direct action, direct democracy, and revolutionary perspective. Spreading these ideas is called revolutionary propaganda.

We don't want to ideologize social movements, turning them into subcultures or jamming them up with sectarianism, but we do want our ideology to be present in a variety of different movements and locales. To do this, we need to be thoroughly prepared to discuss and defend our ideas in debates with others because political practice only has force on the social level. The political level is important for developing and unifying around a political line, but the social level is where "politics" are relevant. This means the political organization should be a station for "gearing up" to do politics on the social level.

The key difference between a long-lasting organization of militants, on the political level, and a mobilization of activists is one of perspective. It's rare for activists to do conjunctural analysis because, on the social level, there's not usually time to reflect on what's happening and produce strategy. For us, this can't be skipped. Acting with strategy means deciding which way to go and which ways not to go. It's about focusing our efforts rather than carelessly going in all directions. This

makes our influence as sharp and targeted as possible. It's a process of unifying around specific ideological principles, agreeing to use certain theoretical tools and frameworks, and developing both short and long-term forms of strategy. Of course, in practice, doing this requires a high level of trust and discipline.

If our objective is social revolution, we have to start from a collective point of view in order to break away from individualism and produce a different kind of subjectivity. We can't assume that counter-subjectivity is strictly ideological. It always comes out of a context. Capitalism has conditioned us to think that every problem is personal and must have individual solutions, but class lines really do exist in the world. They aren't projected onto the world by someone's mind. Class consciousness is influenced by social conditions, and this includes things like mutual aid and solidarity. This means that in the class struggle, we become conscious of conditions we weren't aware of before. These experiences are an essential part of political education that can't be learned in Militant Kindergarten.

When it comes to the ideological/cultural aspects of class struggle, the conflicts are less direct and more related to the production, reproduction, and exchange of ideas. Following from this, we see propaganda as an intervention into the ideas and practical concepts that are present in the class struggle. We argue that it takes political organization to ensure that our propaganda supports and reinforces those fighting in active conflicts on the front-lines. Specifically, since there's never an absence of political influence, whenever our actions weaken the ruling class, we want to be prepared to increase our own influence proportionally, on the ground and in the ideological sphere.

In this effort, we see organization as a multiplying factor for the effectiveness of propaganda. One person can progress an idea, but it needs organization to spread. This requires strategic and theoretical unity so as not to waste energy. In our discussions, we've compared propaganda to gardening since it demands constant work, fertile conditions, and planning to produce the best results. Randomly

scattering seeds is not the best use of our limited capacity. We want to learn to better sow militant seeds.

Sometimes, propaganda is as simple as leaving a trace of your work for others to find, but in our experience, it's common for activists to insist on spectacular actions without necessarily thinking about the long-term effects. We argue that it's important to consider what specific forms of propaganda will be most effective and adequate to a given situation. We also think the political organization's awareness of its own capacity is essential to being able to consistently produce and reproduce propaganda.

Today, social media is probably the most obvious form of propaganda, but maintaining a constant presence is often more work than expected. When an org's posts are less regular, the inconsistency is put on full display for others to see. There's a risk in making a lot of noise without being able to sustain it, and we don't want to just carelessly display our weaknesses for our enemies to see. Only constant presence over time can connect strength at a given moment to a broader social transformation. Anybody can suggest ideas that sound "cool" without having critically developed their theory or clearly connected what they're proposing to what's actually happening. By contrast, we want our propaganda to stay grounded. It should speak from a place of theoretical complexity that has been refined and digested and that can be consistently updated and reproduced.

Theoretical knowledge is adaptable and can grow out of and into unique contexts, but dogmatic knowledge can only be applied in specific predetermined situations. The Center for Especifismo Studies doesn't have to function as the sole source of propaganda because the especifismo current of anarchism has a high degree of theoretical unity. Participants in Militant Kindergarten adapt what they've learned to their own production of propaganda, ensuring that it's contextually specific. The main propaganda work of our organization occurs in what we call the Tendency to Learn, where we propagate the desire for educational spaces specifically related to politics and revolutionary militancy. This comes in two forms: (1) promotion before Militant

Kindergarten, in November and December every year and (2) texts like this that are produced after kindergarten sessions. But obviously our process of militant formation consists of more than just saying “read theory” which tends to translate to “propagandize yourself” While it’s true that propaganda calls people to action and that without calling out you can’t get any responses, we have to remember that the call of propaganda will only be relevant to people who are already aware of the class divide and are ready to act. But to the right audience, these calls can connect movements and reveal shared political lines.

It’s easy to forget why we’re making propaganda and for who, but this is important because every conjuncture has unique conditions which affect how an idea is received. We want our propaganda to be sharp enough to deeply penetrate a social conflict and get right to the heart of the issue. This won’t happen if it’s generic and easily consumable by everyone everywhere. Random commenters on the internet aren’t in a position to understand the problems of workers in a specific industry or workplace. And politicians, with their political parties, are always ready and willing to take credit for the hard-fought wins of a union, a minority group, or a resistance movement. This is why, in especificismo theory, the political organization has an active role to play in defending grassroots social spaces from co-optation. It’s important to be able to say NO, and it’s important that we draw these lines for ourselves, as an organization.

On the social level, there will always be people who reject anarchist ideas, but they’re different from the people who tolerate our presence but aren’t convinced by our methods. We need to be able to recognize the difference quickly in order to understand where we can work together with others and where we can’t. This relates to what we call “non-rejection”. It refers to the cohabitation that can exist when people allow each other to present their “model of performance” in a shared social space. This is why anarchism has to be a trusted and comprehensible force on the social level. People have to trust that anarchist militants are responsible and committed in the good times as well as the bad.

There's no such thing as "neutral" space, so while non-rejection describes a situation without any clear resistance to social transformation, the problem is that it also describes a situation without any active support for revolutionary change. Social movements and popular organizations that are characterized by non-rejection are often confusing ideologically and risk being captured by reactionary tendencies. This means non-rejection indicates a site of ideological struggle.

In mass movements, it should be more normal to tell people where you're coming from politically, to label your tendency so people can get a sense of where they can work with you and where they can't. Since some folks don't have clearly articulated ideologies, it's important to get to a point where it's possible to discuss shared goals and boundaries with each other. We can't just assume that the already-existing ideological tendencies will be able to survive reaction and repression from other forces which is why we don't promote "grassroots-ism," "populism," or a "dictatorship of the proletariat". We want to organize with those who are the most committed and responsible for their role in the movement. And because we're anti-sectarian, we want to work with other militants and activists regardless of their specific ideology. A working unity like this can only be formed in practice. It won't just magically be there. It will be the result of open communication and trusted cooperation. In this way, anarchist militants can help to organize the social level by encouraging others to develop their political ideas outside of the social space. We try to model this by owning our own influence: *especificismo*.

Self-proclaimed vanguards are too common in our movements. They have nothing to offer but generic criticism. This is different from an active minority which is, and aims to continue being, a relevant part of a movement's self-organization. In our political practice, we seek to be equal participants who are "shoulder to shoulder" with others in the social-level struggle. If we are in front of the social movement, we have to borrow capacity from others to enact our ideas. This is authoritarianism. If we are behind the social movement, at the "tail end", we will become sleeves without a way of defending our own

path. This could lead to burnout and new opportunities for the ruling class to increase its power.

In especificismo theory, the political organization needs popular organizations and mass movements for feedback. This relates to the goal of “picking the right tool for the job”. On the political level, we decide together which tool to use (theoretical unity) and how to use it (strategic unity), and since our tools and our techniques aren’t perfect, we also have to be able to pick up new tools and work with others who may be better at using them (the Tendency to Learn). This is different from a dogmatic understanding of theory which blurs it with ideology, claiming to have created perfect tools that are always useful no matter what.

In terms of tools, propaganda is like an arrow: crafted, intentional, and sent to hit a specific target with an intended effect, but education is more open-ended than that. Educational militancy is about creating and defending spaces where you can learn to make arrows, along with other things... There’s no way around the constant struggle for organizations to educate new militants. It takes time and effort to transform ourselves into the effective revolutionaries we need to become. So, the political organization should be like a workshop where all the tools can be laid out on the bench, a place where we can experiment with them and talk about their development and potential improvements.

As we’ve said, social transformation is the result of constant contact with revolutionary ideology. It requires militants to hold firm to an idea in the face of resistance, while gradually planting seeds so that others may encounter them and decide for themselves whether they want to help them grow or not. Militant Kindergarten is a place for learning about militancy so that people can intentionally decide to become militants rather than just find themselves thrown into a form of militancy that they didn’t choose and can’t maintain. To reiterate, “militant” isn’t a status symbol; it isn’t a permanent role; and it definitely isn’t a privilege. It’s more like a dial which can be turned up or down according to changing capacities and positions over time.

Since availability, resources, and commitments all fluctuate, militancy and support for militants are like “gears” that people need to be able to shift between as conditions demand. Supporters have some time and some energy, but they often have other commitments which limit the amount of effort they can contribute. As an organization, we want to continue to take up a role that political organizations aren’t usually capable of committing energy to: the political education of supporters.

“Slow” is an important concept here and relates to what we’ve said before about “baby steps”. It’s the pace of developing trusting relationships, the pace of the development of class consciousness. For us, militancy is about the steady application of social force to influence change along political lines. Articulating these ideas about our understanding of militancy has forced us to be consistent. We know that we can’t change everyone’s mind, but we can be clear about our principles and where we refuse to compromise. Additionally, the social and political tracks don’t always need to be laid at the same time, at the same pace, by the same people. The Center for Especificismo Studies isn’t a political organization, but we are a grouping of tendency with a high degree of theoretical unity. And most importantly we speak a revolutionary language that is recognizable to our comrades around the world.