

Saverio Merlino

**The Necessity and
Bases for an Accord**

Forward

The brochure we are presenting to the public is the first in a series in which the essential points of the socialist anarchist revolutionary program will be developed.

We believe we must leave behind the vague and general formulas with which we have contented ourselves and, instead of denying the difficulties that are truly present to the radical transformation of society, to confront and resolve them, keeping in view not a distant future, but the real conditions under which the imminent revolution will take place.

By thus investigating anarchist principles and by discussing questions of organization and tactics, we above all aim to put an end to the isolation to which anarchists are condemned in certain countries, to their distance from the mass of the people, and the incredible contrast in ideas, sentiments and conduct that reigns among them.

This is the goal we will pursue in our publications, which will appear in different idioms adapted to the special conditions of the countries to which they are addressed.

We ask those who approve our propaganda to assist us with their counsels and their labor.

Those who have criticisms and observations to make can rest assured that we will use them in seeking for the truth

- The Editorial Group, May 1892

N.B. – Address communications to the editors, c/o E. Malatesta, 12 High Street-Islington N., London

The anarchist party – and the word should shock no one: it only means here all those who profess anarchist principles and work for their realization – has passed through various phases and has taken on different aspects in different countries. As everyone knows, at the current time it is almost entirely communist in France and Italy and partly communist and partly collectivist in Spain, while in America and England there are, alongside communist anarchists, mutualists and even individualists who, however, don't count in the party, for they are essentially anti-socialist and firm defenders of private property. More serious than these theoretical differences are the practical divergences that exist between anarchists and socialists (communist and collectivist), one group being partisans and the other adversaries of organization; one group working for immediate revolution, the other confident in peaceful evolution and waiting for the revolution through

historical fatalism; one group pushing collective action and only accepting individual action when it serves to prepare and provoke the insurrection of the masses, the other limiting itself to calling for individual action; one group believing that the revolution must be, on the part of its initiators, a work of dedication and sacrifice, the other aiming for the amelioration of their personal lot.

As long as it was a matter of combating bourgeois or pseudo-socialist parties, of tracing new paths and showing other solutions to the social question than those given by authoritarians, these divergences did no harm. On the contrary, they served to educate spirits in independence and to show all sides of the problem. Today our task is different: the revolution approaches, the authoritarian socialist parties have given themselves over to the state, and we are called on to act or to disappear from the scene. There is no means of escape in such a situation. We must choose: we anarchists must either become the soul of the revolution or resign ourselves to seeing the movement taken over by a new crowd of politicians.

The current moment is serious and decisive. If we cast a glance on the political and economic situation of different countries we see nothing but imminent strikes, riots, repression and bankruptcy. The expedients invented to fool and paralyze the working masses have been worn out.

From having always promised and never kept their promises, government and party chiefs have completely lost the confidence of the workers.

Within all the social democratic parties a current has been formed that is moving in our direction. If we know how to profit from this current, to enter into contact with the masses and definitively join with them, in a very short time we will be able to enter into decisive battle with the bourgeoisie. But for this we must come to agreement, for the task is great and difficult and demands concord and an extraordinary effort.

Let's speak frankly: anarchism has not always been treated kindly by its adepts. Like socialism, which has lately been shrunk to the tiny proportions of the fight for working hours and a minimum wage, anarchism has been diminished, disfigured, and rendered unrecognizable.

Some of us have taken to applying dogma to the future, solving difficulties with formulas, while others have applied themselves to hiding the goal to be attained, under the pretext of not wanting to pre-judge the future. There are those who have rejected all forms of organization, i.e., the very soul, the essence of anarchism, which means a society organized without authority. And having been thus reduced to individual action, they have raised to the rank of high anarchist exploits acts that have always been committed in reaction to social injustices but which, in not attacking the causes of these same injustices, are incapable of destroying them. An attack on a neighbor's property does not constitute an attack on the institution of property, just as the struggle against persons enjoying

a certain popularity is not a struggle against the principle of authority. Individual action, good as propaganda when it awakens the sympathy of the masses, is on the contrary quite harmful when it goes against their sentiments and when it seems to them to be inspired by individual interest.

What is more, this can't be generalized. Certainly, if it were possible that everyone were to refuse to pay his rent and taxes, to do his military service, to obey authority's injunctions, the necessary consequence would be the revolution. But this is hardly possible. There are only a few individuals who can act in this fashion, thanks to the exceptional situation in which they find themselves as well as certain personal qualities. And even these people don't revolt every day, nor in all the acts of their lives. As for the masses, they only conceive of collective revolt and, in this case, it is not against the payment of a tax or their rent they will rise up, but for their complete emancipation.

We should add that there are acts, like theft, which, when they aren't justified by great necessity, far from being approved and imitated by the masses isolate those who commit them, surrounding them with distrust and hatred. In fact, in those places where this kind of individual action has prevailed the anarchists have found themselves separated from the masses, incapable of attempting the least movement, and their ranks have been invaded by people who would more appropriately have been among the bourgeoisie and the exploiters of the workers.

The immediate goal of the partisans of individual action is the amelioration of the lot of the individual. The immediate goal of state socialists is legislative reforms. Our immediate goal is the social revolution. Naturally, those who aim for the amelioration of their personal position claim that when each will have obtained advantages over the bourgeois across the way the question will be resolved for everyone, just as the state socialists claim that law by law, reform by reform, we will arrive at the most perfect of possible worlds. But we know that the promised reforms will not be realized and that, even realized, they will only ameliorate the lot of one category of workers at the expense of the others. And we also know that everything an individual gains in current society is lost by others, and if we individually arrived at despoiling all the bourgeois all we will have done is replace them. So we only see one solution: the revolution. We cleanly separate ourselves from reformists and the so called partisans of individual action, for we believe all interests must be subordinated to the revolution; we must fight against everything that slows it down and all that could reconcile us to the current order of things. In truth, we have been separated from reformists for quite some time. As for the partisans of that kind of individual action of which we've spoken, the time has come to completely break with them. Nothing binds us to them. It is obvious that since they admit neither organization nor collective action we have nothing to do with each other. On the other hand, the kind of propaganda they

pursue is more apt to alienate the sympathy of the masses from us than to win them over. The people, with their good sense, don't understand how we can reach socialism through the bourgeoisism of individual expropriation.

On the practical plane we feel the need to clearly separate ourselves from those who, while calling themselves – like us – anarchists and revolutionaries, preach or practice isolation and every man for himself. It is hardly necessary to say that in theory and practice we are at antipodes from the individualist anarchists. We, communists and collectivists, we are above all socialists, i.e., we want to destroy the cause of all iniquities, all exploitation, all poverty and crime: private property.

Individualist anarchists, on the contrary, want to maintain it by regarding it as an integral part of human liberty. Strange liberty, which consists on one hand of slavery, and on the other in domination and exploitation! It's true that individualist anarchists claim that by removing any restraints on individual liberty, by destroying the engine of oppression that is the state, there will naturally result a regime, if not of liberty, at least of justice. But as long as private property exists, wherever it can reproduce itself there will always be something of the state. The owning class will always arrange things so that the workers will be held in submission; if the public police are suppressed they will constitute a private police (like the Pinkertons in the United States). And they will still be the government. It is only by suppressing both property and government that we will make them truly disappear. Any remnant of property necessarily brings with it a remnant of government, and reciprocally the least vestige of government will allow for exploitation and usurpation, not to mention the reconstitution of private property.

It has been claimed that the revolution, like lightning and the wind, is a fact of nature and man can't hasten it by a single second. This is one of the many philosophical subtleties that bourgeois scholars have inculcated in us. Actor or instrument, man is always the agent, the principal actor of social transformations. History is made by men: the more conscious they are of their goals, and the more conscious individuals there are, that much more certain and rapid is the march of progress. The individual can't do much, but the masses are capable of everything. And even if we are nothing but the blind instruments of historical destiny, even then it's historical destiny that will push us to act, to unite, to dedicate ourselves. Let us accept the explanation we want, but let us unite and dedicate ourselves. Some people torture their brains trying to know if man dedicates himself for his interests or his pleasure, or if he dedicates himself against his interests and despite his displeasure. This is nothing but a Byzantine question, a chicken and egg discussion. One must begin by knowing what we mean by pleasure. The individual who, in order to save the life of another, sacrifices his own does not do good, and it's not true that the man who gives his life for an idea is insensitive to the pain of dying and seeing suffer the beings who are attached to him. These

generous individuals act in the full knowledge of doing themselves harm, because they feel attached by invisible – but real – ties to their like, and follow the impulses of sociability that have been grafted onto their nature. But whatever the case with these scientific disputes, the fact remains that there are men who sacrifice their individual pleasure to social well-being, and there are those who, on the contrary, sacrifice others to themselves. The former deserve to be encouraged, the latter should be condemned. The former inspire sympathy, friendship, recognition; the latter, disgust.

Too much individualist philosophy would lead us to embrace the bourgeois, our enemy. What is more, by philosophizing about egoism we become egoist. And without men who dedicate themselves we can't make the revolution; in fact, we can't even organize a strike. Why would an unemployed worker refuse to replace a striker? Would he refuse based on his future? But he struggles for existence in the moment, and if he succumbs he has no future. In the same way, we can say and prove all we want to the thousands of victims of capitalist exploitation that they should rebel, that it is more in their interest to go to prison, or even to be killed, than it is to daily allow themselves to be robbed, tortured, trampled upon. There will be many who will find it preferable to suffer slavery or prison. The theory of personal interest is false and entirely anti-revolutionary. It is only appropriate for the bourgeoisie, whose sentiments it so perfectly mirrors, but it does immense harm to the workers, whose strength and hope consist in mutual sacrifice.

It is time to explain what we mean by revolution.

Statist socialists, when from time to time they call themselves revolutionaries, (more often than not they deny this) mean by revolution a riot that will carry them to power. The people will fight, and then they'll elect or allow to be constituted a committee or council, big or small, central or local. And they will charge this committee or council with accomplishing the revolution, i.e., placing property in common, organizing production, etc., and failing that they will overthrow it and replace it with another if it doesn't faithfully execute the mandate it received.

We anarchists believe that the council or committee will do nothing at first, but will rather think to constitute itself as a party and give itself a military force in order to remain in power and mock the people. Afterwards, it will attempt to do something. It will constitute itself as representative of the state, great owner of all social wealth. It will name administrators and directors, it will fix mandatory working hours for all workers, levy taxes on production, will enrich itself and its dependents and partisans and reduce the masses to a state of slavery worse than the current one. And all of this because the people, having initiated the revolution at its own risk, will have abdicated, after the victory, into the hands of a few individuals, even if they are the best of them.

It is because the people instinctively feel the danger of being disappointed that they hesitate to commit to the struggle and at times believe themselves fated to eternally remain the slaves and playthings of some. They must be reassured, they must be told in the clearest and most precise fashion how they can avoid becoming the prey of a new leading class coming from within some worker's, socialist, or even anarchist party.

Here we approach the most important of questions of principle and tactics. It's a matter of knowing how we will act the day of the revolution, who will be our friends and enemies, when we should have recourse to force, and when we will refuse to use it. This is a point that has not been discussed enough, for we were optimistic enough to believe that everything would go for the best as soon as we'd be in the midst of a revolution, and that everyone, acting as they saw fit, without the least regard for others, society would find itself one fine day organized on the basis of the most perfect justice, the most complete equality. This is a utopia, a dangerous utopia. Society will arrange itself, but individuals must apply their good will to this. There will doubtless be great virtues, but also unforeseen obstacles. We shouldn't expect a miraculous transformation of human nature: that transformation will take place afterwards, more or less slowly, by the effects of the new conditions of existence. To suppose them to be instantaneous, contemporaneous with the revolution, means putting the effect before the cause.

One of the most serious dangers for the revolution is constituted by men's tendency to impose their will and their views by any means necessary. Violence, at first put at the service of a laudable goal, among some of them engenders the habit of command and among others the disposition to obey. When this occurs the revolution is lost. On the other hand, we cannot renounce the use of violence at the beginning of the revolution, for we will have to defend ourselves and guarantee our conquest not only against avowed enemies, but even more against secret enemies; not only against the remnant of the bourgeoisie, but also against the new masters who might come from our ranks or the ranks of the social democratic parties. So it is important to correctly orient ourselves, to know precisely who we will have to combat and who to respect, at least in general. Excesses and weaknesses are inevitable, but if we have principles as our guide we can stop and correct ourselves in time before in our turn being swallowed up by the abyss in which all past revolutions have perished.

Let us establish the point of departure. We rebel against current society not in the name of an abstract principle of justice (which is quite difficult to establish), but for the effective amelioration of humanity's lot. What is more, we have a fixed base of operations. We have, on the one hand, the laboring masses, more or less poor and enslaved, and on the other the privileged minority. These latter must disappear, not physically (it is neither possible nor desirable to kill all the

bourgeois and all those who show any disposition to replace them), but socially, which means that those who have left the ranks should return there, become workers and members of society just like the others. The workers on their side must go forward, take possession of their tools, of the means of labor and life without paying tribute and without serving anyone.

The expropriation of the bourgeoisie can only occur (as we have already said) by violence, by acts.

Workers in revolt don't have to ask permission of anyone to take over factories, workshops, stores and houses and to install themselves there. It is just that this is barely a beginning of taking possession, a preliminary. If each group of workers, having taken hold of a part of capital or wealth, wanted to remain absolute master to the exclusion of others, if a group wanted to live on the wealth taken hold of and refused to work and come to an agreement with the others for the organization of labor, we would have, under another name or for the benefit of others, the continuation of the current regime. The original taking of possession can thus only be provisional: wealth will only truly be placed in common when everyone works, when production will have been organized in the common interest.

The fundamental principle of the organization of production is that each individual must work, must render himself useful to his like unless he is sick or handicapped. As long as we adhere to this principle it will be easy to correct inequalities in the taking of ownership, in situation, etc., for we will have no interest in possessing more than is necessary in order to work, and we will return to society in the form of products what we will have taken from it as instrument of production.

Inequality, injustice, discord will all burst forth the day there are men who will want to escape from work in order to live at the expense of others. Especially at the beginning of the revolution there will be those who will attempt this, and all men who are sincere revolutionaries will turn against them.

This principle, that all men must make themselves useful to society through work, has no need to be codified. It must become part of our mores, inspire public opinion, become part of human nature, so to speak. This will be the stone upon which the new society will be built. No arrangement founded on this principle will produce serious and lasting injustices, while the violation of this principle will infallibly and in a short period of time bring back the inhumanity of the current regime.

Once this principle is recognized it will be up to the workers to organize work and to regulate their reciprocal relations. Force can do nothing here; agreement is necessary. It will occur through free pacts and contracts that are always modifiable among all associations, and through pacts that associations will contract among themselves.

Pacts of association can differ much among themselves. In an association workers will reciprocally commit to a certain number of hours of labor, in another to accomplish in a given amount of time a given task. The workers in one association will prefer to put in common the products of their labor, others will prefer for each to take his portion of their labor. We can't impose communism on the latter, or collectivism on the former, though in theory one of the systems might appear preferable to the other. Since the communists will not take the place of collectivists at work, we must let each do as he wishes. If in some spot there were people who want to try out Proudhonian mutualism they must be left the freedom to do this, though we are convinced that this system is too artificial and too ingenious to be practicable with success. Even if peasants wanted to share out the land and cultivate it separately it would be folly to employ force against them, for it isn't by force that we will inculcate solidarity in men, that we will give birth to reciprocal friendship, the sentiment that all are members of one body – society -, a sentiment that will make it appear natural to a strong man that he works more than the weak, just as for the man with fewer needs it will seem natural to see his neighbor consume more than he.

The socialist camp is divided today in two large sections; on one side those who, following political economy, seek the just measure of all labor; to pay, compensate all individual effort in order to maintain a justice within society that is formal, cold, and more apparent than real. On the other side, those who think that such calculations render all society impossible, that men, working together, are content when they have enough to satisfy their needs, and that far from always being jealous of their rights, they are happy to assist each other.

If this is true, pure and rigorous collectivism is not possible, for it lacks the measure of individual labor and the relative utility of all things. Rigorous and absolute communism is not immediately applicable, for it too lacks the measure of individual strength and needs, and in any event, in communist anarchism there will not be any authority charged with sharing out labor according to strength, or products and pleasures according to needs. In order for things to go well, or rather that they go correctly, it is thus necessary that each individual work as much as he can and consume a proper amount, taking into account the needs of his like, which will doubtless occur after – but not at the beginning of – the revolution.

It will perhaps be objected that we will produce more than necessary and the labor owed to society by each individual will be so minimal that no one will refuse to carry it out. In truth, there are those who have gone so far as to say that enough is already produced to satisfy all the needs of all men, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and, finally, provide welfare to the millions of men suffering in poverty. This thesis seems to us to be far from the truth. It is possible that

there are accumulations of products in a few places, in a few stores momentary overstock. But what is this in comparison with the absolute misery that exists in entire quarters, in the countryside, over an immense part of the territory.

If there is abundance today it's in the production of luxury items, and not in that of objects consumed by workers. For the landowner and the capitalist only allow the fields and factories to produce enough to feed the workers who, for their part, produce for them the objects destined to satisfy their needs or their whims. When that limit is reached the landowner leaves the land fallow, the capitalist closes the factory and the worker dies of hunger. This is easily understandable, this is even necessary under the current regime, for it is indispensable that the boss be able to count on the worker's hunger so as to impose on him his conditions, that the merchant count on their need for his services so as to impose his, that the big capitalist, the wholesaler and the banker be able to act in the same way towards their clients. . .

The result is that there is in reality on the market just enough to live on for a few days, and the least unforeseen circumstance can reduce a country to famine.

One should thus not count on the abundance of existing provisions; one shouldn't believe that we would only have to invade the stores and gaily consume their contents for weeks or months. Once the revolution has broken out our first concern must be production: before fighting, we must exist.

To be sure, we possess, even today, sufficient means of production to satisfy all reasonable needs, i.e., to provide a well-being to all greater than that of the average of the capitalist class of today. But all this well-being must be created by labor, by the transformation of industry, even of individual technique, through instruction, etc. What is more (except perhaps for a few products) there will never exist absolute abundance and surplus production, for it would be absurd if man were to work to produce that which he doesn't need. He would rather dedicate his labor to new production for the satisfaction of new needs. Needs are infinite, forever increasing, and labor, instead of diminishing and descending to zero, as certain think, will probably increase too, while becoming agreeable, varied, and free.

There will no longer be, as is the case today, men condemned to long days of labor, to stupefying and homicidal fatigue, and the idle: individuals who wrack their brains trying to find ways to kill time, to amuse themselves. Man will pass from one job to another, from manual labor to study and artistic recreation. But in working, in studying, in cultivating the fine arts, etc, his goal will always be to make himself useful to his comrades.

We must renounce the illusion of believing that man in the future will only work a few hours or minutes a day and will pass the rest of his time in the farniente, boring himself to death.

Work is life and also the tie that unites men in society. There must be solidarity in labor in order for society to function properly.

Solidarity cannot be decreed by a law, and though it can be imposed by public opinion it is nevertheless necessary that public opinion be in agreement with individual sentiment. Communism can thus only be established there where men will not be inclined to abuse solidarity.

What is more, in the beginning solidarity will be limited to a certain number of associations or locales; it will probably not expand from one country to another, will not be universal. At the start, between regions there will be simple relations of reciprocity, occasional assistance, etc. Social evolution will follow that of individual sentiment.

Making our ideas concrete, we can establish the taking of possession as the revolutionary act par excellence, free pacts contracted by associated workers as the basis of future organizations of labor, the federation of associations more or less extended as the crowning of the edifice. Communism, collectivism, and other systems will be attempted, perhaps even blended together, and while they are being experimented with men will little by little get used to living together, to working for each other and to enjoying the happiness that will surround them. The need for certain things, for reciprocal assistance, the development of machinery, the increase in production and especially the education of men in solidarity, will lead humanity to communism, which we generally agree in regarding as the final and visible end of the revolution, because it is the highest expression of human solidarity.

But we shouldn't lose sight of the extent and variety of the movement. We will have not only to work, but to fight; not only to produce what we consume today, but a hundred times more; not only to establish local agreements, but also regional and international ones. We need only think of situation of the big cities, whose provisioning depends on countless arrangements with surrounding locales, while these latter depend on the cities. We need only think of the current distribution of industries, of the organization of exchange, of the great arteries of communication, etc. Without a doubt all this must be changed, but this can't be done overnight. There will be trial and error, even conflicts before agreement can be reached. Just to determine what must be produced, which needs deserve preference, and what limitations individuals should impose on their desires a certain amount of time will be needed. We will not immediately fall upon a perfect system. There will be no heavenly inspiration, but experience and agreements will tell the individual and the labor associations what society has need of at a given moment.

It's not by ignoring difficulties that we will exercise a useful influence over events. We must look problems and difficulties in the face, confident in the immensity of human energy and the means we will dispose of.

The revolution we conceive of can only be made by and for the people, without any false representatives. We have no confidence in laws: the revolution must be an actual thing, not something written on paper. We believe that the new organization of society from the bottom up, i.e., commencing by the taking of ownership and local agreements becoming increasingly general, and not from top down, by the decrees of a central authority served by an army of functionaries.

Thus understood, the revolution obviously can't be the work of a party or a coalition of parties: it demands the assistance of the entire labor masses. Without the laboring masses we can carry out a coup d'état, not a revolution. Any party or coterie of individuals, under one or the other denomination, even without an official title, without being called Committee of Public Safety or General Council, by acting, and perhaps by implementing terror, that will take the direction of the movement and take control of the masses, will kill the revolution and necessarily prepare its own domination.

In order to ward off this danger there is only one means: that the masses promptly organize themselves and the different groups immediately set to work.

The salvation of the revolution lies in the immediate – and partly preventive – organization of the working masses.

The current working class organization is bad, authoritarian. It has too limited goals. It is often the plaything of politicians. And yet it is the germ from which will come the future social organization. It is thus important that it not be left to itself: we must work for and with it.

We anarchists can contribute in three ways to the revolutionary orientation of working class organizations. In the first place we must recall societies to a real and active life. There where all activity is concentrated in the hands of a few leaders and where the associates are called upon only to pay their dues and obey orders, we must show the drawbacks of authority, the ease of betrayal or abandonment by chiefs, the rivalries, discords, and intrigues that can come from the association.

The workers have no need of chiefs: they are quite capable of charging one of their own with a particular task, as long as they are on their guard, careful of not being encroached upon by their representatives. Their society must be their home. They should gather together like a family, consecrate their leisure hours to it and deal there with all their interests. This is a new phase into which working class societies must enter in order to prepare the completion of the great transformation of society.

In the second place we must work to expand the goal of the workers and their associations. Every category or class, instead of thinking of its own interests, must fraternize, practice solidarity on a vast scale, even with unorganized workers, the unemployed, and proletarians without a trade. It is in the interest of the

better-treated workers to take the cause of the less-favored workers and the unemployed in their hands. Assisting the latter to improve their situation is the most certain, if not the only means of durably improving their own lot. For his part the unemployed worker should not stand in the way of the demands of those workers in a better situation. By making it understood that it is in the interests of every category of workers to support the demands of all other categories we will reveal to the worker his true strength, which is not yet known to him. The bourgeoisie must know that it has against it, not detached and divided groups, but all workers, all proletarians, and that every strike is necessarily the signal for the general mobilization of the working class and could become the beginning of the revolution. It must know that the workers place the general interest above every particular interest, and above all questions of wage and work they aim for total emancipation, at doing without bosses and exploiters.

Finally, we must inculcate in workers the need to learn from each other, to form deep convictions. A true accord is one that has as its basis common aspirations and a community of ideas. It is only through this that workers unite, even if they don't have the same organization. The sacrifices and abnegation demanded by the struggle against the bosses can only be carried out by men with convictions. The man with convictions will never betray his own kind. There is thus a too-neglected real force for the working class in the propaganda of principles. The existing associations pay too much attention to interests, and too little to principles. And it is principles that truly assure the triumph of trampled upon interests. It is necessary that in each association there be a means of agitating the great social questions, that all ideas be discussed, that the workers be intellectually and morally prepared for the task incumbent upon them: that of renewing society.

At the same time that we will be elevating the movement of organized workers, by rendering them increasingly revolutionary and anarchist, we will have to seriously occupy ourselves with those without a trade and take an increasingly active and energetic part in their agitation. For it is from here that will come the final assault on bourgeois society. It is from this thin social stratum that will come the revolutionary impulse. Every other category of workers can obtain concessions; the problem of the unemployed is irresolvable and their numbers are constantly increasing. What is more, the agitation of the unemployed is essentially more revolutionary than a strike. It doesn't have a limited goal: it supposes greater poverty, and every revolutionary act is possible and even more justified on such occasions. We anarchists should put our revolutionary action in accord with the sentiments of the masses, naturally more excited during times of agitation than during ordinary times.

Finally, we must always be with the masses.

When the workers demand improvements, salary increases, reductions in working hours, abolition of work rules; when they go on strike to defend their dignity or to affirm their solidarity with a companion fired or mistreated by bosses, we have to say to them that none of this resolves the question. We must profit from the occasion to preach more widely and effectively the need for the revolution for the abolition of private property and government. We must do everything possible to widen and generalize the movement and give it a revolutionary character. But above all we must be with the workers, fight along with them, sacrifice ourselves for them if we must. To turn away from the movement would mean appearing to be friends of the bourgeoisie, rendering our ideas and persons antipathetic to the masses and consequently renouncing the medium indispensable for materially and morally making the revolution: the participation of the masses.

In any case, if the economic effects of strikes are partial, transitory, and often non-existent or disastrous, that doesn't change the fact that every strike is an act of dignity, an act of moral revolt, and serves to get workers used to thinking of the boss as an enemy and to fight for what he wants without waiting for grace from on high. A striker is already no longer a slave who blesses his boss: he is already a rebel, he is already engaged on the path of socialism and revolution. It is up to us to have him advance along that road.

This then, in a few words, is our program: the social revolution as immediate goal, agitation among the working class as principal means.

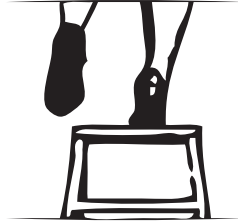
And now a few words about us. We have proved the need in the future society for organization among all men and for all needs, and the necessity in current society for the workers to struggle against their exploiters. It would be absurd if we were to admit the need for organization for everyone, but not admit or practice it ourselves.

The organization we mean is naturally free and anarchic, i.e., without chiefs, which doesn't mean that we put forward iconoclasm and the hatred of forms to the point of refusing ourselves those means indispensable for existing and pursuing our goal. We don't like abstractions, and words don't frighten us. Wanting the revolution, and wanting it completely and seriously, with all our being, we will choose the means that seem most apt to bring it closer. If an accord is needed among us (and it is needed), if we must make mutual commitments (and we must), if we must guarantee ourselves against informers and exploiters (and we certainly must), we won't hesitate to act consistently with this. If those people who imagine they've found the philosopher's stone of anarchy and who make of it a synonym for disorganization and isolated individual action were to excommunicate us, this would leave us perfectly indifferent. We want to dedicate ourselves to the cause of the social revolution. Our forces are limited; we know we can increase them with an accord through mutual confidence and solidarity, and we commit ourselves

– all others who wish to – to this path. This obligates no one, no more than it prevents others from acting as they wish.

We think that the moment has come to gather together our forces, to give our action a more correct direction, to leave behind the vagueness and the dilettantism in which some of us have gone astray recently, and to give battle to the bourgeoisie. The moment has come to take from the hands of the social democrats and multicolor politicians the heritage of the working class movement that the International initiated, to which the anarchists often contributed at the cost of their lives, but which has recently been taken over by legalitarian socialists without their having advanced things a single step. We are called upon to try in our turn. The working masses are turning to us and anxiously want to know if we are capable of beginning the revolution along with them. We can't retreat. Failing, leaving our lives in the melee would be better than holding ourselves apart, philosophizing at leisure on historic fatalism and the errors of others. We have criticized enough: everyone now knows that parliamentarianism, reforms, partial ameliorations are worth nothing. Our ambition is neither official nor unofficial power, and this is our claim to the sympathy of the masses. But this isn't enough. We must act. We must fight in the ranks of the people. We must demonstrate our principles in action. We must prove to the world that anarchy isn't an abstract concept, a scientific dream, or a distant vision, but a vital and living principle, destined to renew the world and establishing it on the imperishable foundations of well-being and human fraternity.

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Saverio Merlino
The Necessity and Bases for an Accord
1892

Nécessité et Bases d'une Entente. Brussels, 1892, Alex. Longfils
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