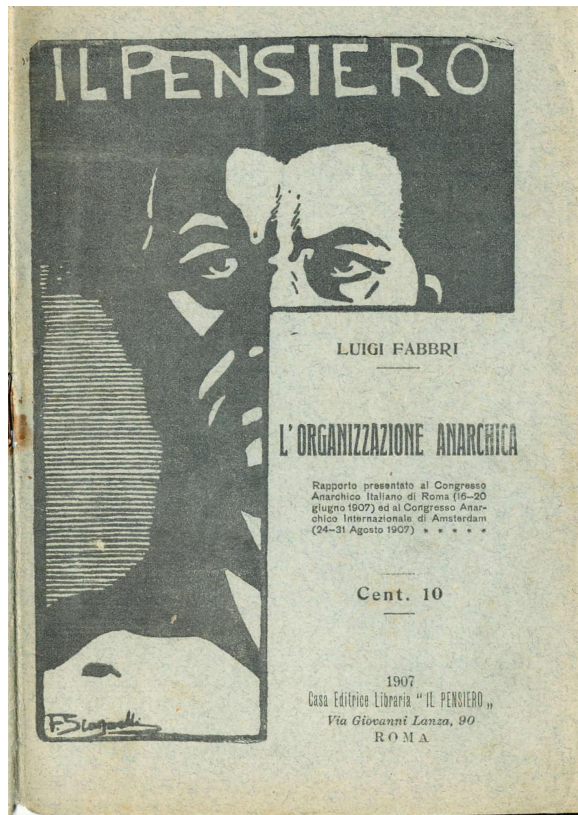


The Anarchist Organization

Luigi Fabbri



June 15, 1907

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To Will Anarchism

Anarchism, thanks to the large number of its proponents who have used writing on every continent, has a library the importance of which can hardly be estimated.

Throughout their history, the anarchists, in addition to translating the emancipatory aspirations of individuals and peoples into a social alternative, were able to branch out in their activism, participating in a wide variety of social movements.

Thus, the reproduction of past texts would be a sufficient task for a collection. We will do this, but in the process, we will try to engage in the task of updating the anarchist analysis of a society the bases of which have been transformed. The exploitation and domination of man by man denounced in the last century continues to fill the framework of an everyday life which unfolds against a different backdrop, in which capitalism develops without borders thanks to the multinationals, in which the State is dedicated to management, and in which knowledge, equipping technocrats with decision-making power, tends to replace the power of money.

While the primary utility of the collection has to do with the theoretical goals of anarchist knowledge, the militant aspect that motivates its creation must be emphasized. Anarchism must everywhere found its presence on durable bases, in publication, in the cultural domain, in fields of contestation, and especially in the world of work, weaving the meshes of an energetic presence, the net in which we must catch the statist hydra.

The "ANARCHIST WILL" project was launched by a militant group; its objective is to contribute to spreading anarchism, to making it known to your friends, your parents, your coworkers. Interested comrades wishing to present a text to us can write to us. We are also interested in finding distributors; indicate to us points of sale, order booklets from us at a 33% discount starting from 5 copies.

If this work interests you and matches your ideal, subscribe to it; "ANARCHIST WILL" is a new element to be added to our inheritance, placed at the service of the social revolution.

Yours for the social revolution,
The Fresnes-Antony Group.

DEAR COMRADES,

We plan to publish texts on the problem of anarchist organization. Number 1, "Reflections on Anarchism," by Maurice Fayolle, was already devoted partly to this question. This installment was translated from Italian by our group; the original was expressed in the form of a report to the international anarchist congress of 1907.

More than the question of the need for organization, Fabbri's text addresses that of the type of organizational structures that the anarchists must give themselves.

One cannot dissociate the question of organization from that of action and propaganda. Organization is an essential means to achieve the goal. Fabbri wrote this text at a time when the Italian and international anarchist movements were prone to displace social concerns in favor of individualistic preoccupations. Social anarchism privileged neither the individual nor the community (composed of individuals) but sought their balance. Individualism was preoccupied with the ego, contrary to Marxism, which interested itself only in relations of force and collectivity.

Individualists who had not encountered Stirner, who explained the origin of the contract by the advantage that each one finds in it (associations of egoists), denied organization as the site of the devaluation of the individual.

A strange self that acquires a value apart from others or by making use of them.

We believe, on the contrary, that individuals develop themselves through mutual aid (cf. Kropotkin), and we share the thought of the Spanish anarchist Ricardo Mella: “Freedom as basis, equality as means, fraternity as goal.”

Yours for the Social Revolution,

The Fresnes-Antony Group.

P.S. — Our financial problems have prohibited us from maintaining the price of 7 F with tax; we have had to increase it to 10 F. We ask you to subscribe before issue #8, when we will put the price of the subscription for 8 issues at 80F and not at 60F.

Introduction

In reprinting the report on Anarchist Organization presented by Luigi Fabbri to the Italian Anarchist Congress in Rome of June 16–20, 1907, and at the International Anarchist Congress of Amsterdam of August 24–31, 1907, published in the same year in Rome, we wanted not only to pay homage to a comrade who, from his youth to his death on June 24, 1935 in Montevideo, Uruguay, fought against capitalism in all its manifestations (authority, religion, oppression, exploitation). We also wanted to recall an important piece of the history of the Italian and world anarchist movements and of the labor movement in general while making one of the fundamental works of the great anarchist thinker available to the youngest comrades. And we wanted in particular to contribute to the solution of a problem that has, in recent years, absorbed the attention of the anarchist “movement” and of those who identify with anarchism. This problem has several times interrupted and blocked the regular development of revolutionary anarchist organizations, preventing them from gathering not so much the fruits of a rational action of propagandist type if not the reactions to the dominant conformism, the process of social-democratization that invested the entire labor movement and the parties that attempt to claim it.

In this way, we are certain to continue the “discourse” developed over the course of many years — up to the constitution of the Italian Anarchist Union in 1920, the program of which was written by Malatesta — by the great thinkers of anarchism who impressed the sign of their action deep within the Italian and international anarchist movements, from Malatesta to Fabbri and Berneri. All their activity moved in the direction of the construction of an anarchist organization with clear ideas and well determined goals, one that is not, on the contrary, torn apart and cut off from any real power of action by the polemic between organizationalists and anti-organizationalists. An organization that would be in a position to “do something more than what each of us can carry out separately,” because it is necessary to prepare the means to overthrow capital and the State. Here is where the need for anarchist organization presents itself.

The first and most important means is a union that is not chaotic, irregular, local, and fragmented, but coherent and continuous over time and space.

Those who do not even tolerate this moral bond that results from the commitment to mutual aid for a given goal will say that it decreases their individual autonomy, and such may be the case. But absolute freedom and autonomy are abstract concepts; we must return to the facts, to what we really want and can really obtain from this autonomy and freedom.

To get rid of the authority against which we fight, that of the priest, the owner, and the police officer, we must make a minimal, voluntary sacrifice of our individual pride. In order to be able to

work with others to remove ourselves from bourgeois and statist violence, even with those who do not have our force and our consciousness, who are not formed by these in the same way as ourselves.

The speech that comrade Fabbri gives in his "Report" is clear; it poses the problem of the strategy and tactics that an anarchist organization must propose if it really wants to destroy the capitalist organization. Substituting for it a "socialist" organization in which work has as its goal the satisfaction of human needs and not profit, in which exploitation of man by man does not exist, in which all the aspects of exploitation and oppression would have been eliminated, whether those of the Western tradition (that of the U.S.A. and its consorts) or the pseudo-communist countries.

To accomplish this, it should not be forgotten that the revolution will not come on its own, like manna from heaven, solely by virtue of the prophetic trumpeting of theoretical propaganda, and even less so from the crash of an isolated bomb.

We cannot "forget that after the revolution, anarchy will not sprout on its own like a mushroom unless it finds organizations adapted to answering the needs of social life and substitutes them for the old organizations that have been destroyed"; and there have been cases in which, "for lack of libertarian organizations, the necessities of life" have "prompt[ed] men to restore the authoritarian organizations."

What can one oppose in fact to this totalitarian world which derives its strength from an authoritarian structure that has withstood the test of centuries, if not an anarchist organization that is able to face it in the historically favorable moments? And what could substitute for the anachronistic capitalist organization, for profit, for wage slavery, the satisfaction of needs for all who contribute their share to the community? Who can indicate, to the disoriented proletariat, the right line to be followed, taking them by the hand if necessary, pointing out their real enemy?

To the armies, to the police force, to the church, to all the bureaucratic apparatus and all those who may find it beneficial to defend this society, it certainly does not suffice to oppose the negative assertion, the claim of an autonomous "ego" which, in reality, does not exist and often becomes an integral element of the "system."

But something solid and concrete, such as what opposes, for example, Spanish comrades to the mercenaries of the "Tercio" [i.e., Tercio de Extranjeros, the Spanish Foreign Legion, an elite fascist army unit] and the army rabble of Hitler and Mussolini and even to the Russian will which was expressed through the Spanish Communist Party to channel the popular explosion into the impasse of a bourgeois democracy and a patriotic war instead of taking it (in the wake of the Paris Commune of 1871) to its extreme revolutionary consequences.

The lesson of comrades Fabbri, Malatesta, and Berneri is very clear: it remains up to the anarchists, to those who have the future of the movement at heart, to work to build a strong, concrete anarchist organization within which each is held to respect the engagements that he freely assumes within the general framework of the organization's theoretical orientation and program.

It is only on these conditions that it will be possible to work in a concrete way in the direction of the emancipation of the proletariat from exploitation and oppression.

Otherwise, our protest will be destined to remain sterile in practice, merely an anthem to a freedom that is conquered only by deeds and not by words.

THE ANARCHIST ORGANIZATION

Report presented at the Italian Anarchist Congress of Rome (16 June 20, 1907) and at the International Anarchist Congress of Amsterdam (24 August 31, 1907)

[Text translated from Italian by the Fresnes-Antony Group]

Comrades,

For several years, the anarchist movement — having commenced so splendidly within the International — has struggled with an unresolved crisis, especially for want of goodwill between us.

We anarchists, it must be confessed, if we have never been defeated by the persecutions which rain down on us, we have always had a damnable fear of some phantasm that we ourselves have created. We have thoroughly resigned ourselves to being the victims of all the crazies, all the fanatics, all the lovers of hyperbole who, on the pretext of logic, have attempted not only to justify all that they find inconvenient and ignoble among the bourgeois, but to denounce and demolish any work of reconstruction that other comrades attempt, leaving a permanent spectre of incoherence in ideas.

The anarchist idea has individual freedom as its primary basis, but those who have claimed that the individual freedom in anarchy is infinite and absolute would be utopians in the most ridiculous sense of the term, since the infinite and the absolute are abstract concepts, mental configurations barred from any possibility of practical realization. Now, it is always in the name of individual freedom that many anarchists, according to what satisfies them, either proclaim the right to do anything at all, including attacking the freedom and rights of others, or declares as incoherent any attempt at revolutionary realization and organization by propaganda.

We intend to deal here with the objections that are raised to the idea of organization.

* * *

One hears it said that organization is a method and not an end; that is an error. The principle of organization is not only propagated because in organizing today, we can best prepare for the revolution, but also because the principle of organization is in itself one of the principal postulates of anarchist doctrine.

In the bourgeois society that Church and State undertake to hold together by means of hierarchy in order to exploit it to their own advantage, the individual will is absorbed and often cancelled out by the social mechanism, which claims to provide for all, and to regulate the life of the individuals of the birth to death. In this society, the organization of which is monopolized by the State and capitalism, the sole conceivable organization is that for the struggle against oppression and exploitation.

But in the society envisaged by anarchists, where there will be neither men nor “providential” institutions, that will be based on the agreement of all individuals in production and association, organization must be extended to the last individual, and each must concur voluntarily in the general harmony. And since the participation of each must be spontaneous, voluntary, free, since without there being coercion, none is without the obligation of solidarity, it is necessary that the consciousness of the need for organization is initially widespread, so that organization means the true satisfaction of material as well as a moral need. For this reason, we say, propaganda for

organization must be made without interruption, in the same way as propaganda for all the other postulates of the anarchist ideal.

Just as we criticize the current institutions of the State, the property, the family, in order to advocate the advent of anarchy, communism, free love, we feel the need to attack and criticize the system of authoritarian organization in order to propound the idea of libertarian organization.

When we hear some comrades speak to us of “having done with the worn-out question of organization,” we have the same impression as if one spoke of having done with anarchist propaganda. Unfortunately, we are still far from having convinced the anarchists of the need for libertarian organization: for this reason we do not cease to discuss with them and to make propaganda in the direction that seems to us to correspond to the truth.

And since, as we know, the best propaganda is made through example — propaganda by the deed — we seek to organize ourselves, to constitute groups, to federate ourselves. Our adversaries wait to pounce on us at this point, criticizing our work and the organizations that exist and have existed. Each one of their defects, errors or inconsistencies becomes an effective weapon to fight the idea. They do not realize that errors and defects are inevitable in the details, since there is nothing perfect in the world, and that this in any case does not destroy the general utility of the ensemble, in the same way that the mishaps of life are not a reason to reject life.

Without organization, anarchy is as inconceivable as fire without fuel. And we propagate this idea not only for the reasons that we will state, but because we are equally persuaded that modern minds must be impregnated with its spirit, and especially the minds of the anarchists. Organization for common goals with people of other parties and other ideas is useful, but in order to form an anarchist consciousness, to consider only those who are already anarchist, nothing will do but the organization of the anarchists themselves, who must endeavor to be as libertarian as possible. And the development of a new anti-authoritarian consciousness among us — we for whom anarchism is often limited to a merely doctrinary conviction — consists in this effort to make our organizations genuinely libertarian.

I do not know if we who favor it shall really succeed in building this organization that we wish and overcoming the existing spirit of reluctance toward anything requiring long, patient work. But we want to begin this long, patient work in order not to neglect the powerful means of propaganda that is the attempt and the example. It may be that, despite all of our reasons, many things prevent the emergence of real, durable anarchist organizations, insofar as the anti-organizationalists do not cease to block our efforts.

It may be that one must still continue this depressing labor of Sisyphus, building things up in one place while others destroy it elsewhere, as has been the case among us for a few years. I do not know how long it may remain the case that our organizations appear here and there to impel our propaganda, meeting a pressing need, whereas we have a sporadic character. Those organizations which, because they have to be created from nothing, lack the continuity of existence and action, fall more frequently into these specific errors in their youth ...

Why does this matter? Above all, because of the mere fact that present and past organizations had a short existence due to mistakes made, which are avoided only through experience gained by practice and not merely from concepts learned in pamphlets and newspapers.

We think that even most beautiful and perfect organization is destined for death if its members, as erudite as they may be in theory, remain inert. The good of the organization consists in the fact that, *all things being equal*, it is preferable that people who have decided on action be organized

rather than disorganized. It is natural that an isolated individual who acts is worth more than a thousand inept and disorganized people.

Whether the propaganda needed to make the anarchist organization we believe to be necessary emerge even briefly succeeds or not does not matter, up to a certain point. It will displease us not to succeed because we will not be able to harvest all the fruits which we hope for; but we will have at least propagandized for a concept that is inseparable from the idea of anarchy, we will have sown the seeds that will germinate one day or another. Propaganda for the organization of anarchists will impose itself through the necessity of things; and it will be the merit of this propaganda if the organization becomes our own, and not the damaged goods which our adversaries would have bequeathed us.

The ridicule that greets our attempts thus falls on deaf ears. We already know that, as long as bourgeois society survives, our attempts will not succeed or will turn out imperfect; but this conviction does not make us give up “propaganda by the deed.”

In the end, what is the revolutionary struggle, if not an innumerable series of attempts, of which only one, the last one, succeeds — which would not have succeeded if there had not been the preceding failures? In the same way, in terms of organization, we seek to marshal all our forces in order to succeed; each defeat will bring us closer to victory, but each time we look for ways to make a better attempt with a less imperfect result. It will serve to shape consciences a thousand times better than mere doctrinal preaching.

In addition, those who declare themselves enemies of organization are such by habit, because they feel incapable of libertarian solidarity and, at base, do not know how to escape from this dilemma: to command or to be commanded. They have no “libertarian” consciousness and thus they theoretically do not see any other guarantee for individual freedom than isolation, the lack of any pact and any freely accepted bond. In practice, it is they who wish to direct the movement; and at the first attempt of others to resist their influence, at the first sign of independence from those who persist in thinking and acting in their own way, you hear them hurl excommunications, cry inconsistency and treason, and affirm that those who do not say and do as they do are no anarchists. Thus always did the priests of all times and all religions. One who is in good faith protests more against the form than against the substance.

They do not want an organization, but they speak of accord, agreement, free contract and association! We shall not deal with such questions of terminology, and we shall limit ourselves to recalling, once and for all, that organization means neither authority, nor government, nor humiliation, but only *the harmonious association of the elements of the social body*.

As we want that all men should be harmoniously associated someday, we recommend today, in the struggle to bring about such a future, the harmonious association of anarchists. Organization is a means to approach the end, and a means more in harmony with the sociological ends of anarchism.

* * *

I will not waste too much time on demonstrating that, in general, libertarian organization is a necessity. I have already demonstrated elsewhere that organization, far from limiting individual freedom, extends it and makes it genuinely possible, since it offers to individuals a great amount of force with which to overcome obstacles and improve themselves, which each taken separately would lack.

“The greatest possible satisfaction of one’s *I*,” I then said¹, “the greatest material and moral well-being, the greatest freedom, are not possible except when people are connected to one another by the pact of mutual aid. A man in agreement with society is always freer than the man who is in struggle against society. The anarchists fight against the current social organization precisely because it prevents the existence of a society relatively useful to all individuals and work for the day when the whole society is no longer governed by the most savage and ferocious struggle, by exploitation and the tyrannical violence of man against man.

“We can rebel against this bad organization of the society, not against society itself, as many individualists flatter themselves that they wish to do. Society is neither a myth, nor an idea, nor an organism preordained and created by somebody, such that it would be possible to refuse to recognize it and to try to destroy it. It is not even, as the Stirnerites accuse us of believing, something superior to individuals before which it is necessary to make the sacrifice of one’s *I* as one would before a fetish. Society is simply a deed [*un fait*] of which we are the natural performers [*acteurs*] and which exists insofar as we exist. Society is the ensemble of living individuals, and individuals, in their turn, are of such a shape as external influences, including social influences, give to them.

All of this is a natural fact, connected to the universal life of the cosmos. To rebel against this fact would mean to rebel against life, to die. Each individual exists insofar as it is the material, moral, and intellectual product of the union of other individuals, and cannot continue to live, cannot be free, cannot develop physically, except under the proviso of living in society.”

Many object to us that man is egoistic, and that it is always egoism that pushes man to act, even when his thoughts and actions seem altruistic. In denying altruism, their logic brings them to conclude against the spirit of solidarity and association.

There is nothing more dangerous, in a certain way, especially for brains lacking the ability to grasp logic, than to sink with it, in so far as one does not manage to draw all one’s conclusions from a given principle. And that all the more so since one can, starting from the same principle, arrive at absolutely opposite consequences. It often happens that while a theory is logically developed more or less right from the start, it leads to a conclusion in which one does not believe and to which one did not wish to arrive. That arrives especially when one advances by means of abstract doctrines, completely giving up the experiential field of facts.

This indeed happens with many individualist anarchists of all stripes, from the antisocialist Stirnerite individualist to the anti-organizational communist individualist.

Guided by abstract logic, these comrades manage to lose sight of the point of anarchist and revolutionary propaganda. They isolate themselves from society to the point that they are no longer able to exercise any influence on it, which amounts to condemning our idea to remain perpetually at the stage of the utopia. If, in attempting any act of propaganda or revolutionary action, *absolute* coherence with the abstract principle of anarchy or with one’s own interpretation of this principle — if (and here is the real reason), in the face of the incomparable difficulty of acting in a libertarian manner, one shrinks from any form of action in which such difficulty is stronger — one ends up ceasing to do anything, or doing very little, as did Origen, who in order to keep himself pure (or rather because he did not have the strength to do so), cut off his own sexual organs. All anarchist action ends up being limited to criticism of the work of others, to

¹ L. Fabbri, *L’organizzazione operaia e l’anarchia* [*Workers’ Organisation and Anarchy*]. Roma: Ed. Il Pensiero, 1906.

theoretical propaganda (often chaotic and full of contradictions) and to some isolated acts of rebellion that, in the best event, demand too great an effort to be able to proceed and, therefore, to exert a growing influence on events.

Otherwise, as much as theoretical propaganda and propaganda by deed can be useful (I do not deny its utility), it is not enough in its merely individual form. In order for theoretical propaganda to be more effective, it must be coordinated; in order for the deed to be more useful, it must be reasoned and reasonable.

It is true that geniuses and heroes make more propaganda or elicit more excitement than do the mediocre. But the world is made up of the mediocre, not of geniuses and heroes; it is a fine thing if the genius or hero springs from among our ranks, but in the meantime, if we want to be positive and to ensure that we arrive at our goal, our duty is also and especially to count on the continuous, untiring action of the greater number. And most are a force only when they are united; each individual forms, refines, or rounds out his consciousness within the union. We do not forget that geniuses and heroes can also be mistaken; at this point in time, they create more evil than others. There are necessary forms of activity for which the work of only one person, even exceptional, is not enough, that require the cooperation of many, activities in which a genius or a hero often cannot engage. Cooperation, organization on the basis of an idea and a method, freely accepted and not excluding the best but presupposing them, are methods that several anarchists of individualistic tendency deny. They deny them only because, or of agreement with the admirers of the State they do not believe any organization possible without authority, or they do not have the courage to face the difficulty of beginning to be an anarchist by organizing on an anarchist basis, being afraid of the first inevitable stumbles.

When the child learns how to walk, it begins by falling, but that is not a sufficient reason to assert that walking is harmful and results in breaking one's head. However, the anarchists who conclude in favor of the individualistic negation of organization think in just this way: since from the moment one organizes oneself, one can and will fall into error or inconsistency, they conclude from this that organization itself is an error and an inconsistency.

In denying organization, one essentially denies the possibility of social life and also of life in anarchy. To say that it is only denied today is meaningless; to deny it today means eliminating the means of achieving it tomorrow. And at any rate, even on this ground, logic plays some dirty tricks. When one denies workers' organization, one has already started to deny the possibility of communal organization in the future society. Simply because one cannot conceive, as a consequence of the same optical illusion, that the commune of tomorrow will be nothing other than the complex of the organizations freely federated within it, like the patriarchal Russian *mir*, that will be able to also have its own assemblies for the discussion of the interests of the community, but which will not be authoritarian at all, will not be imposed by violence, will be nothing like the bureaucratic municipality of today with its municipal taxes, its municipal guards, its rural policemen and ... its mayor appointed by the monarchy.

The question of whether man is egoistic and whether such is enough to deny association rests on an absurd interpretation of a true concept. Yes, all men are egoistic, but in a different way. The man who takes bread out of his own mouth to feed his neighbor is an egoist insofar as, in sacrificing himself, he intimately feels a greater satisfaction than those who eat without giving anything to the other. It is the same way with all the other sacrifices, even the most sublime that history recalls. But the satisfaction of the bourgeois exploiter that hunger should kill his workers before he himself should have to sacrifice an evening at the theatre is also born of egoism.

This is egoism and that is egoism, but of course no one will deny that they are there two egoisms different from one another. This difference finds its expression in human language when we baptize the noblest form of egoism with the name *altruism*.

This altruism is a manifestation of human solidarity, meeting the need for mutual aid — which exists among men as just it does in a number of animal societies.

Some individualists do not deny solidarity; however, they deny the organization that is a means of manifesting and exercising solidarity. Solidarity is a feeling, and organization does that which corresponds to this feeling: the deed by means of which solidarity becomes the active element of the revolution in consciousness and in events.

Solidarity is a liquor full of force and flavor that needs a vase to contain it in order not to spill uselessly on the ground and evaporate.

This vase, this form, this explication of solidarity, is the libertarian organization, in which minds not only fail to deteriorate but complement one another when they are not well formed, and when they are formed, refine one another. Organization, I repeat, does not mean the diminution of the *ego*, but the possibility for it to find, with the assistance of others, its own maximum satisfaction. It does not mean the trampling and violation of the natural *egoism* of individuals, but much more than a perfect satisfaction, its ennobling in such a way as to elicit pleasure in the individual through the good and not the misfortune of others.

Since, in the common language, one calls such a form of egoism altruism, to distinguish it from the other brutal form existing in the present society of masters and slaves, of governments and their subjects, which consists in the satisfaction of oneself to the detriment of others, and without any criterion of proportion or relativity, without so many sophistries or philosophical nuances, I conclude that altruism is something positive and concrete that has been formed and exists in humanity.

This doctrinary divagation was necessary so that I can show how this question of organization intertwines and conforms with the mother-idea of anarchism, not only in terms of methods, but also in terms of goals, and so as to make it understood that the division that exists on this point among anarchists is much deeper than is commonly believed, that it entails an irreconcilable theoretical disagreement.

I say this in order to answer at all costs the good friends of compromise who affirm: “Let us not make an issue of methods! We have but one idea, our goal is the same; we are thus united without tearing ourselves apart over a little dissension about tactics.” And, on the contrary, I realized for a long time that we tear ourselves apart precisely because we are too close, and this on artificial pretenses. Under the surface varnish of three or four shared ideas — abolition of the State, the abolition of private property, revolution, antiparlamentarianism — there is an enormous difference in the conception of each one of these theoretical assertions. The difference is such that we cannot take the same path without quarreling, thus reciprocally neutralizing one another’s efforts, or, if in some cases, leaving one another in peace, without each giving up what he believes to be true. I repeat: not only a difference in method but also a strong difference in ideas.

* * *

Many object that they are only adversaries of organization within the current society, because they consider organization in a genuinely libertarian sense to be impossible before the revolution.

But then they forget that the revolution will not come of itself like manna from heaven, solely by virtue of the trumpets of Jericho of theoretical propaganda and even less so from the noise of an isolated bomb. They forget that after the revolution anarchy will not sprout on its own like a mushroom unless it finds organizations adapted to answering the needs of social life and substitutes them for the old organizations that have been destroyed. It is possible that, for lack of libertarian organizations, the necessities of life will prompt men to restore the authoritarian organizations.

But the enemies of organization — and also, all too often, its friends — especially neglect to consider the question from the point of view of revolutionary preparation.

Certainly, those who have got it in their heads that revolutions are not made by men but come naturally like cataclysms and earthquakes² may well be opposed to any organization and content themselves with verbal and written propaganda and an isolated beautiful gesture once every two or three years. However, it is now recognized that ideas advance with men, that revolutions are generated by their thought and are accomplished by the work of their hands, and that they are also caused by economic and social factors that have become inevitable by the sequence of effects, the causes of which quite predate ourselves.

An artificial revolution made to the advantage of only one party or class, in addition, would be inevitably destined for fiasco, if it did not turn toward more general interests and if it did not entail an upheaval the need for which would be felt universally.

One knows that the social question currently assumes the aspect of a working-class problem almost exclusively, and that it is to the working classes that it is necessary to dedicate all efforts in order to really uplift the world while avoiding the detours of politics, intellectualism, and mere revolutionary game-playing.

This does not negate the fact that in order to resolve the labor question, in order also to resolve, wholly and integrally, the question of bread and freedom, without sinking miserably into the class egoism that reformism produces, one must consider it in the broadest possible sense.

It should be shown that the emancipation of the proletariat and capitalist monopoly depend also the resolution of man's individual freedom and all the problems weighing on contemporary consciousness.

It is also necessary that the parties with an interest in this upheaval, the proletarians, become conscious of their rights, of the need for the force that they have in hand, provided that they want it. To produce the atmosphere necessary for a revolution, the workers must feel the enormous deprivation in which they live and not remain in a state of nonchalance and Moslem-like resignation. It is likewise necessary that they have a relatively clear vision of the remedy for the disease from which they suffer — and especially a clear and precise conception of the way to destroy and abolish the current order of things. We must above all occupy ourselves with forming this consciousness in the proletariat; propaganda remains the most effective means. It is the continuous exercise of the struggle against capital and the State.

But it is also necessary to prepare the means it is necessary to prepare the means to overthrow capital and the State. Here is where the need for anarchist organization presents itself. The first and most important means is a union that is not chaotic, irregular, local, and fragmented, but coherent and continuous over time and space.

² Jean Grave, *Moribund Society and Anarchy*.

Those who do not even tolerate this moral bond that results from the commitment to mutual aid for a given goal will say that it decreases their individual autonomy, and such may be the case. But absolute freedom and autonomy are abstract concepts; we must return to the facts, to what we really want and can really obtain from this autonomy and freedom.

To get rid of the authority against which we fight, that of the priest, the owner, and the police officer, we must make a minimal, voluntary sacrifice of our individual pride. In order to be able to work with others to remove ourselves from bourgeois and statist violence, even with those who do not have our force and our consciousness, who are not formed by these in the same way as ourselves.

I cannot say for certain that humanity will not one day succeed in becoming an ensemble of individuals free from one another, not having to depend on one another reciprocally in any way, neither for their material nor their moral interests. It is certain that the goal of the libertarian social revolution that is called for, the one we desire the advent of, will be for the moment nothing other than the emancipation of the proletariat from the privilege of capitalist monopoly and of all individuals from the violent and coercive authority of man over man.

To accomplish this, we have to fight against formidable forces: the coalition of the owners, supported by the priests, the bureaucracy, the army, the magistrature and the police force. In order to fight them, to destroy all these terrible wheels immaculate of blood from the gears of capitalist authoritarianism, it is good to link the oppressed in a pact that is mutual, interdependent, and voluntarily accepted — for those who do not tolerate bonds — a moral discipline.

It is not enough that men should become conscious of their rights and needs and know the means by which they may be asserted; it is also necessary that they be made capable of adopting these means of assertion.

It is in this sense that the revolutionary will takes on all its importance. A revolution of the unconscious may be nearly useless; but the consciousness of needs and rights certainly remains equally useless, in the community and among individuals, if there is not the force, the will to act and put into practice what one understands in theory. Here why it is necessary to join and organize to discuss initially, then to assemble the revolutionary means, and finally to form an organic whole that, armed with its means and strengthened by its unity, can sweep the world clean of all the aberrations and tyrannies of religion, capital, and the State when the historical moment arrives.

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“The organization that the anarchist socialists defend is naturally not the authoritarian kind that goes from the Catholic Church to the Marxist Church, but the voluntary libertarian organization of many individual units associated for a common goal, employing one or more methods considered good and freely accepted by each. Such an organization remains impossible if the individuals who comprise it are not accustomed to freedom and are not free from authoritarian prejudices. It is necessary, moreover, to be organized in order to become accustomed to a life in free association”³, and to become accustomed to the exercise of freedom.

Therein resides the need to organize. By organization we understand the union of anarchists in groups and the federated union of groups with one another on the basis of common ideas

³ L. Fabbri, *L'organizzazione operaia e l'anarchia* [*Workers' Organisation and Anarchy*]. Roma: Ed. Il Pensiero, 1906.

and of a common task to be accomplished in practice. This organization naturally preserves the autonomy of the individual within the groups and of the groups within the federation, with full freedom for groups and federations to form according to the opportunity and the circumstances, by trade or by district, by province or by region, by nationality or by language, etc.

The federal organization thus conceived, without central bodies and authority, is both useful and necessary. Useful simply because unity produces force; necessary because ... We will endeavor to give other reasons here, in addition to those already stated, without thereby claiming to have enumerated them all.

There are so many people in the world who call themselves anarchists, but nowadays one baptizes with the name of anarchy so many different ideas, opinions, and tactics that anyone who struggles must choose one of them and know how to recognize which are the ones with aspirations like his own, and which are the ones who, while calling themselves anarchists, are completely the opposite. If some follow a path contrary in all respects to ours, and use means of struggle that contradict, neutralize, and destroy the effects that we have obtained — these diversities, these contradictions depend on meanings and interpretations that are different from, and often completely the opposite of, what one gives to the term *anarchy*.

Nowadays, if one spoke of making nothing more than a pure scientific and philosophical academy, there would be no great need to differentiate ourselves in form and to separate group from group. There would not even be any need to gather. But anarchism, in my opinion, and I share this belief with many, if it is a scientific and philosophical tendency in theory, a speculative doctrine, it also wishes to be a human movement of struggle and revolution in practice. A movement which has definite means and which has fixed as its point of departure certain truths on which all those who act in this direction agree. Very well, how will it be possible to announce an energetic and resolute movement if we who believe ourselves to be more in the right than the others and who seem more than the others to have to propose good methods of revolution to advance towards the integral freedom of anarchy, if we do not group ourselves, organize ourselves in any way, so that the work of the ones is not contradicted and neutralized by that of the others; that by ourselves one cannot know who, in calling himself an anarchist, is with us and who is against us?

If we want to move, if we want to make something more than what each one of us can do separately, we must know which of these so-called *comrades* we can agree with, and which ones we are in disagreement with. This is especially necessary when one speaks of actions, of movement, of methods requiring many of us to work together, to succeed in obtaining the results we want.

Since there are initiatives, movements, actions that are not possible without the concord of numerous individuals, legions or nations whole, it is here that the need appears, not only of individual with individual and group with group in the same city, but also of groups of one city with those of another and — why not? — those of one nation with another.

The need to differentiate oneself in organizing among anarchists who share common forms and methods of collective struggle and propaganda, also necessitates clarification of ideas in the face of one's adversaries. As long as we all allow ourselves to be lumped together under the common denomination of anarchists, one will always be right to ask us whether our anarchy has ever existed. One says that it is a school of socialism; another, on the contrary, baptizes it as the negation of socialism; one seeks in it the triumph of the individual against humanity and interprets it as a continual struggle between men, *dentibus et rostrius* [tooth and nail], and another interprets it as human solidarity *par excellence*.

The worst extravagances are developed as the quintessence of anarchist philosophy; e.g., somebody recently affirmed the useful social function of crime in anarchy⁴ ...

We do not claim infallibility; we may even be wrong. Nevertheless, we believe we are in the right. And as long as we think we are in the right, we will seek to persuade others that our idea is not the opposite of what it is. We feel the need to spend our limited resources to make the propaganda that we believe to be good, and we refuse to assist with that which we consider bad.

So far are we from wishing to establish solidarity with ideas and methods that are not ours, we rather wish to avoid the confusion that links us pell-mell and makes our propaganda chaotic, contradictory, and fruitless.

It also appears that various interpretations of anarchy can be recognized in methods and means of action that are so various and contradictory – some of them so anti-social and anti-libertarian that they make greater obstacles to our propaganda than the most ferocious reaction.

You, for example, who are in favor of syndicalist organization, you will make a conference to advise the workers to organize themselves! Very well, in the same place that you will speak in favor of the organization, the general strike, revolutionary agitation for the eight-hour day, in the name of anarchy, there, the following day, always in the name of anarchy, another will come to say that organized labor is a useless band-aid, that the general strike is a utopia or a mirage, that the achievement of the eight-hour day is a mere reform unworthy of being defended by revolutionaries, all that I often read in anarchist newspapers of the anti-organizational tendency.

Write to express your opinion in the newspaper, and somebody will contradict it completely in the next issue; and if you do not have the good fortune to be the supreme manipulator of the newspaper ... you will not have even the freedom to discuss it.

But afterwards, even if you can discuss freely, you will only succeed in making a good academy, since you will not be able to act nor to gather around you for action those who approve of your idea, and to gain approval for your idea from a number of essential people. You must differentiate yourselves, associate with those you agree with and say: “Here we are anarchists who want to do such-and-such, and on such-and-such a point, we think thus, thus and thus. Let’s get to work!”

It is necessary not to forget that organization is a means of differentiation, of specifying a program of established methods and ideas, a kind of banner under which to assemble in order to march into battle so that one knows whom one can count on and is aware of the force that one can deploy.

The forms of this organization count little, the name is often the solitary and unique form which distinguishes it from the unavowed organization of those who claim not to be organized. We assume the name because it specifies our idea and our proposals because it with the value of a program. We say, for example, left anarchist by hearing the unit simply all those which fight for anarchy. When we specify Socialist-anarchist federation we think of the preestablished union of the individuals and the adherent groups who agreed in a locality given around a program of ideas and methods.

It are curious that one finds to repeat on this term of federation more than on the credits of party; we had precisely chosen it because it historically implies (as was also Bakunin’s intention) the concept of decentralized organization, from the bottom up, or rather (since there should be neither bottom nor top) from the simple to the compound. We precisely said to *federate* ourselves

⁴ In the “Aurora” of Ravenna.

because this term has lately acquired an opposite and negative significance of centralization. In a much more relative sense, there are federalistic republicans versus unitary republicans.

We anarchists, who in certain places, as in Rome, have organized ourselves, have formulated a program. All those who accept it form the organization the program of which they have established themselves, whether they are groups or individuals; each group and each federation decides via its correspondence, newspapers, congresses, etc, on the direction in which they intend to develop their collective action, the forms of federal organization and groups and internal methods. A group or federation may exaggerate certain formalities; even if mistakes are made, they are such that even those who are opposed to the organization, who unite only once to accomplish some action, may commit them.

We believe it necessary to place ourselves squarely upon a well defined road, with our own means and the sole responsibility for our actions, so that what we do is not destroyed by others. There are many who in theoretical propaganda and in action express a number of ideas and do a number of things that do not seem anarchist to us, or at least are not useful according to us — quite the contrary.

We do this so that our ideas and our methods may appear in their true significance, without ambiguity or uncertainty, in the eyes of comrades and sympathizers, who will thus be able to leave behind their own confusion, as well as in the eyes of the public, so that it knows that our ideas are these and not the opposite.

Those who decide not to remain with us for fear of a word, while doing as we do in our practice, merely in order not to put off those who, at base, are our adversaries, show their own weakness and perpetuate the ambiguity. Under their banner, with their good intentions, they cover many damaged goods. In that case, it is preferable that they separate from us.

However, to organize oneself and differentiate oneself from those who are not in agreement with us on some essential point, in the interpretation of the terms and methods of anarchy, does not mean that we claim a monopoly over use of the term or over the anarchist movement itself, or that one wishes to exclude anyone from the great libertarian family. But to be all of the same family does not mean that all have the same ideas and the same temperament, that all want to do the same things and that all agree on everything. In most families, the case is rather the opposite.

It may be not only ideas that divide us in our choice of tactics but also, to some extent, temperament, and that this determines whether some of us are united or disunited. I feel, personally, that I am sufficiently master of myself, i.e. enough of an *individual*, that it seems to me that I am stronger when I feel the solidarity of others behind, before, and beside me. It does not seem to me that I diminish myself by joining in a mutual pact with those who are my companions on the road. This question of temperament reinforces rather than weakens my thesis. If there are currents that cannot even be united because of their temperament, it is better that each should take its own route and that they should differentiate themselves.

I insist on the need for organization even to those who, while admitting it in fact and in practice, reject it in theory and in name. I have the conviction — and I believe I am not mistaken — that many of those who declare themselves to be in dissension with us are more so in words than in ideas, more so in appearance than in fact. They are to some extent victims of an illusion; their fear of the term is only an indication of a certain unconscious and unconfessed opposition to the substance.

* * *

But many comrades who are afraid of the term more than of the substance sometimes sacrifice the one to their antipathy toward the other. They say that there is no need to create organization but that it already exists by itself.

This is true. The man who thinks and who fight is a sensible, organizable, and organized being *par excellence*. Therefore, even those comrades who declare themselves opposed to organization are, in reality, organized.

However, this organization, not having a name and external forms, seems not to exist, thereby allowing them to say to us: "See? We do very well without organization!" It also serves to mask and dissimulate what may not cohere very well with the concept of integral autonomy in the internal functioning of such an organization. Some such inconsistencies are inevitable in the society of today, and I do not make use of this to attack anti-federalist methods, but I am bound to point out that where the external forms of organization are lacking, there is also lacking an important means of monitoring up to what point such an organization remains libertarian. When, on the contrary, the organization is visible, its substance is denounced by the form, and it is more amenable to criticism; consequently, one can better fight and eliminate, as far as possible, the anti-libertarian manifestations within it.

Conscious organization is useful because it is the best means, — when it is real and substantial and not only formal — of preventing an individual or a group from concentrating in itself all the work of propaganda and agitation and also becoming the referee of the movement.

The unorganized, or better yet, those who are organized without their own knowledge and who therefore believe themselves to be more autonomous than the others, can better serve as the prey of those organized by the passing speaker, by the most active comrades, the most ambitious group, and the best-made newspaper. They are unconsciously organized by lecturers, agitators and newspapers. As long as these do their work, all is well, but if they make one wrong step ... good night! Much time may pass before this is recognized. On the contrary, the anarchists who have organized themselves, in already knowing what they are doing because the external forms themselves remind them that they are associated, discuss any proposal with bias, and are thereby less prone to being surprised. Precisely because union creates force, they can oppose a greater force of resistance to the influence of the more intelligent, sympathetic, or active comrades. They know how to be organized, and as we all know, it is more difficult to manipulate a mass of people conscious of their situation than an innumerable quantity of unconscious people.

However, the organized are also only human, and all the virtues of organization cannot prevent them from falling into error. In the current society, the perfect libertarian coherence of an organization is impossible (will it even be possible in anarchy?). To a lesser extent, they also will often open themselves up to the criticism of the *purists* in theory. Their organization may also more than once assume incoherent aspects and give rise to some manifestations of centralism and authoritarianism.

But their fault, unlike that of the anti-organizationalists, consists in the fact that the motes in their eyes is visible because there is a public organization, whereas the beams in the eyes of the others are not immediately visible — which does not prevent them from doing greater damage to the principle of anarchy.

One can never insist enough on this truth: the absence of organization that is visible, normal, and willed by each of its members renders possible the establishment of arbitrary organizations that are even less libertarian, that believe themselves to have vanquished all danger of authoritarianism only by denying their own essence. These unconscious organizations constitute a major

danger since they place the anarchist movement at the disposal and the whims of the most cunning and scheming types.

Today, the ensemble of anarchists is disorganized; it is precisely because of this formal disorganization that the mass of comrades experiences intellectual domination without the control of a newspaper editor or a lecturer ... It is also a form of organization, but one which is less anarchist because it is more centralized and more personal.

We want, in fact, a *conscious organization* that depends on our will, in order not to be obliged to suffer an unconscious and unavowed organization. Having to make something determinate and specific triumph, there is the need for *organizing in fact, not only in name, because there is not only a need of consciousness, but also of quantity*. Being numerous does not ruin anything ... One must not think that we wish to make an antithesis between the terms *consciousness* and *quantity*. One can be numerous while being conscious, and as for the rest, even if the conscious ones are very few, helping the less conscious will certainly not make them become unconscious. Not to mention that the least conscious in the organization, through their contact with the conscious, will to a greater or lesser extent acquire the consciousness which they lack, according to their degrees of intelligence and goodwill. Even when one is not organized, is it not the case that many who are drawn into the orbit of an action by a more appealing, intelligent or active individual or group are also unconscious? Only, in such a case, many are those who may be drawn into the field of the struggle in order to help it, who become conscious of the absence of organization thereafter, but who are left in darkness and inertia ...

Let us be sure we understand what this wondrous “consciousness” is!

If one says to us: “either your organization will draw in only the conscious ones, in which case it will be useless (this is also an error, but ... let us leave that to one side), or it will draw in the unconscious, and then it will be dangerous because it will be diverted from its purpose and become centralized, authoritarian,” etc.

We point out at once that since even those who call themselves anti-organizationalists, in practice, if they do not want to be isolated from life and from the struggle, are obliged to organize themselves, this objection also applies to those who make use of it. However, it is a false objection to begin with. There are no absolutely conscious or unconscious people; consciousness is a relative and multiform thing. There are more conscious and less conscious people; and between the absolute (which is in any case non-existent) of virtue/consciousness and vice/unconsciousness, there is a graduated scale as long as Jacob’s ladder. One can thus be a conscious revolutionary and at the same time a not very coherent anarchist; and an anarchist who is coherent to the point of being a scrupulous fanatic can be the exact opposite of a revolutionary. And yet one as much as the other is useful for anarchy.

In any case, if one of the so-called unconscious people agrees to remain in an anarchist organization and to help us in the struggle, it will be always go better than if he did not join in; he will be in any event more conscious than those who remain in a state of darkness and inaction, or worse, those who agitate against us, a brute force in the hands of the priest and the chief of police. If organization only served to assemble the maximum number of people (on the contrary, it serves to do so many other things), without taking account of the culture that it diffuses, of the knowledge of ideas which increases among the organized through continuous contact — for that alone it would serve as a factor of individual and collective consciousness.

But the propaganda determined by the organizational anarchists is also a form, a demonstration that prepares for the future society, — a collaboration with an aim of constituting it, a means

of influencing the environment and changing conditions. Others also work in the same direction. We want to work in the ways that we believe to be most effective; we choose certain forms of struggle in conformity with our way of seeing and, if one likes, with our temperament. In the end, it is like any other mode of the division of labor.

To be precise: *in order to contribute more strongly to the formation of a free society, to influence the proletariat and to throw it into the fight against capital* in the most advantageous and organic way, we who have a special conception of struggle and movement must first understand how, without loss of forces, we can make such a contribution and exert such an influence.

If it draws the proletariat into our ranks, into our party, so much the better; that means that we have learned how to make better propaganda and that we can bring ourselves closer to the revolution and the triumph of anarchy.

Anarchist organization must be the continuation of our efforts, of our propaganda; it must be a source of libertarian counsel that guides us in our action of daily combat. Based on its program, we can spread our action to other camps, to all the special organizations for particular struggles into which we can penetrate and carry our activity and action: for example, unions, anti-militarist societies, anti-religious and anti-clerical groups, etc ... Our special organization can also be useful as a site for anarchists to gather (not to centralize!) in order to forge the most complete agreement, accord, and solidarity that is possible among ourselves. The more we are united, the less there will be the danger of our becoming involved in inconsistencies and losing our ardor for the struggle, for battles and skirmishes, or of our being divided by others who are not entirely in agreement with us.

And if our organization becomes such not only in name but in fact, if it succeeds in establishing solid and sure bonds of friendship and camaraderie among all anarchists and obtains their active agreement on the principal postulates of our program, then, having already served as a powerful and useful means of preparation, it will also be a powerful and useful means of action. An organization suited to such a goal is not improvised; in waiting for the turn of events to create it instead of thinking of them ahead of time, we will run two dangers — either that of needing to form instant agreements on bases that are neither very certain or libertarian, or that of being taken by surprise, like simpletons, by the events themselves (which, unfortunately, is even more probable).

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One of the most often repeated objections to the concept of an organization that would be not only local, but regional and national, through the federalist method, is that it might make us fall into an inconsistency with the anti-authoritarian conception of anarchy.

In order to speak of this blessed coherence, it is necessary that we specify its content! Many are those who possess a “coherence” so elastic that it expands and contracts according to the one who uses it.

One can often apply to the anarchists of the various fractions the saying that Ferrero attributes to savages, to paraphrase loosely: “What I and my friends do is coherent, what those who think differently from me do is incoherent.” And in this way one can excommunicate oneself to infinity, because each one will be able to find a way of showing that his adversary’s ideas are incoherent, and for this reason is not a good anarchist — more especially as the principles of the anarchy that one takes for one’s foundation vary so much in their interpretation from one individual or group to another.

What is the meaning of this “coherence” that is constantly spoken of, especially by those who do nothing, against those who wish to move and to act? It means doing nothing in practice that is in contradiction with theory. A prohibition, as we can see, that the individualists are the first not to recognize, they who scrupulously or rather literally claim the poorly understood “do as you wish” of Rabelais.

So that there is coherence between theory and practice, it is necessary first of all to define the theoretical program within the limits of which practice is to be bounded in order not to contradict it. And our program has been several times said and repeated because we take too long to speak about it.

Anarchy means *the absence of government*, absence of any authoritarian and violent organization in which, by means of violence and the threat of violence, one obliges men to do what they do not wish to do, and not to do what they wish to do. The absence, thus, not only of the apparatus of government — whose laws prohibit and prescribe what legislators have established — but the absence also of the owner who imposes his will in placing, according to his whim, more or less bread in the mouths of the proletarians; the absence of the priest who pressures everyone to depend on him and particularly pressures the people to obey the government and the owner by means of the moral violence of religion (the threat of a terrible violence, that of hell after death).

Now, for an organization of anarchists to fail to cohere with the principles of anarchy, this organization would have to be opposed to such a program, creating within itself an authority that has the authorization and possibility to violently impose its will or way of seeing on the members over the will of the majority. Anyone can see that in our organizations this is made practically impossible, if not absolutely impossible. How could a community of anarchists authorize one or more persons to impose their will on others? Even on the absurd assumption that they would want to do so (it would then cease to be an association of anarchists by the mere fact that they could *want* such a thing), where would they ever find the means of constituting an authority that could violently force its subordinates to do what they do not wish to do?

The anarchist revolutionary movement is a struggle against the violent and coercive manifestation of authority. And parties in which such a coercion is not exercised — and so as not to be sophistic, I do not understand by violence only the direct material violence or the threat of material violence through which coercion is exercised — these parties are not authoritarian in practice. To be authoritarian without possessing any instruments of violence can only mean being authoritarian in one’s preconceptions, deliberately, by program and principle.

For example, the republican party, the socialist party, and many workers’ organizations are authoritarian, not really because they exercise a violent authority, and not because they are organized, but simply because their goals are authoritarian, their ideas and their programs admit authority and even claim it as necessary, their methods of political struggle relying on legality and parliamentary politics, on the authority in action that constitutes governments and bourgeois society.

For the anarchists, this is impossible, since an insurmountable barrier separates them from the governmental and bourgeois worlds alike: namely, our anti-authoritarian ideas and practices, intransigent, extralegal, unparliamentary and revolutionary.

It is rather the same with organization as with so many other things. One has seen the political parties existing until now degenerate, and one found the cause of this degeneracy in the fact that they were organized. But one has exchanged the cause for the effect. Socialist, republican, and working-class organization in general degenerated into authoritarian and legalist forms for the

simple reason that it contained in it the seed of so much evil. The very idea that without authority one cannot remain together, this seed was intensively cultivated through the legalist practice of participation in the authoritarian functions of statist and bourgeois organizations.

The anarchist organization has a strong antidote against this evil seed of authoritarianism: unparliamentary and anti-legislative tactics, intransigent towards all government agencies. For that reason I am an intransigent anti-parliamentarian, because as long as anarchists will not yield even an inch — without any pretext of opportunism and temporary utility — their revolutionary spirit may weaken a little for other reasons, but they will always remain anarchist in their hearts and also in their speech; and sooner or later, the revolutionary spirit will re-appear by the pressure of the idea itself. If their organization has as its basis a program that specifies the action, it is not possible for the idea to become authoritarian — since it has neither the need, the possibility, nor the opportunity to do so — without having to completely disavow the idea, along with the entire practice and history of anarchism and the term “anarchy” itself.

To do so, one would have to be infected with prejudice, to completely change direction *a priori*, to turn away from the theory and the movement, and to declare: we are not anarchist any more.

The organization is not a body, conscious in itself, that guides its members; it is the members who guide themselves according to their own theoretical and practical criteria. The organization cannot change anarchists into non-anarchists; rather, it is anarchists who, in changing themselves, can make the anarchist organization into an authoritarian organization. Very well, as long as the anarchists, while being organized, remain anarchist, preserve the anarchist idea and continue to propagandize for it, and proceed with the tactics that have been engaged in up to that point, the fear that the mere fact of organization will result in deviations and inconsistencies will remain unrealistic and completely puerile.

I have already said that it is necessary to conceive of coherence with the idea in a relative manner, as it is necessary to conceive of all things and ideas in a relative manner, because I do not want to exclude, even if it seems impossible to me, the possibility of errors.

* * *

In speaking of freedom and the abolition of authority, there are some anarchists who understand this to include the elimination of noncoercive authority, of the moral discipline that appears necessary to unify any number of people, on the ground of a reciprocal pact of shared life and mutual aid.

They do not understand that the absolute freedom of man does not exist, that it is a quite relative thing, determined by and subject to external causes.

It is, in short, *the possibility of being able to satisfy all our physical and psychic needs without putting up with any dominance on the part of others*. This freedom is impossible without organization.

And note that I do not refer only to the happy times that we will experience in anarchy! I want to say that by organizing, we can enjoy this very day a greater freedom than we could in isolation. United, we can better resist the domination of the owner and of the government; united, we can better satisfy our need for propagandist and revolutionary action; we thus have a vaster field of struggle and greater means at our disposal, which does not prevent us each from doing likewise and better through forms of activity which are essentially individual.

When we affirm the wish to organize ourselves, we also fix the “why” of our organization; it must serve to act where, in isolation or in small numbers, the thing would be more difficult or

impossible. Naturally, where the force can suffice for just one, this one, while being organized, acts on his own without the help of others, since his own forces suffice. And likewise, the group does not need the help of the other groups federated with it for what it can accomplish itself.

Any libertarian organization emerges insofar as there is a need to unite in a group to achieve a given goal; to create other groups, to federate with other groups, and so on.

One objects to us that any community is likely to be divided into majority and minority, and that in many cases the organization will make it so that the minority must be subjected to the majority. On the contrary, we do not admit domination of this kind, and for this reason we give neither the majority nor the minority the right nor the means to impose its will.

Certainly, a division of opinion and opinions may emerge. If discord emerges over fundamental ideas and tactics, it is necessary that the two parties separate, since they now constitute two distinct parties. Thus, we anarchists, when the difference appeared too great and irremediable, divided ourselves from the International of the authoritarian socialists.

On the other hand, if there are divisions on questions of little importance, which do not concern the general movement and its general ideas, each one may think and act outside of the organization in his own way, without posing any obstacle to the common work of the organization itself.

But if it is at the very heart of the organization that dissension appears, that division into a majority and minority occurs with regard to secondary questions, questions of practical methods, concerning special cases, then one cannot cry inconsistency to the one or the other; the more easily the minority yields to doing as the majority wishes. And as this condescension can be only voluntary, any character of authority and of coercion is lacking. If the party wishes to hold a congress and all are unanimous in wanting to bring together anarchists of the whole world, if there are differences only concerning the place to hold the gathering, some proposing Rome and others Paris, it will be necessary that or one or the others yield. And naturally they will yield, if they have a strong enough need and desire to gather; as it is natural that those who yield be less numerous, since even they will be of the opinion that it is preferable for the general economy of forces, that it should be a minority rather than a majority that accepts a given disadvantage.

It is a known fact that the adversaries of federal organization, in opposition to us, declare themselves "autonomists," and call their groups "autonomous"; it is wise to recall once and for all that we are autonomists, i.e. in favor of individual autonomy within the groups, and of autonomous groups within the federation and the party. We must repeat this in order to dispel, even in the linguistic forms, the least apparition of the formalism with which we are reproached.

This term, "formalism," is employed wrongly by our opponents: either it means the need to give form to ideas and to the struggle, which is so natural that everyone is forced to resort to it, or it means the worship of forms to the neglect of contents, in which case we anarchists do not deserve this reproach, which is unjustified by any positive fact.

Precisely such vague charges of "formalism," of "authoritarianism," of "artificialism" comprise the polemical armory of the adversaries of organization. And these abstract words have a meaning so broad and a range of interpretations so vast that one can launch them against any adversary against whom one has no other arguments to put forward. They create a certain effect, and one is always embarrassed to have to defend oneself from this charge; they can be used by whoever is able to make use of them first. But they are meaningless words, since nobody specifies which formalism, which authoritarianism is really harmful and opposed to anarchist doctrines, and which is possible in an anarchist organization. It is thus not the vague scarecrow of formalism,

but certain specific authoritarian forms of organization, forms we know quite well, that we must combat amongst ourselves as well as in the critique of other parties. These forms are so visible, that there is no danger of their seducing even the least conscious of anarchists — much less an anarchist community.

A serious reproach made against anarchist federal organization is that it is “artificial.” But everything that is *made*, everything that human beings do, except for completely instinctual movements, is artificial; because natural things are not enough, and are often dangerous. Lightning is natural, but we prefer to use artificial lightning rods against it, and although cancer and tuberculosis are natural thousands of doctors exhaust themselves seeking an artificial means to cure them. And it is good that they do so. Propaganda is also an artificial thing; moreover, the more it is done artfully, the more fruitful it shall be. Why couldn't there exist an organization with an aim of propaganda, since this can become more important?

All the fears of the anti-organizationalists pertain to form, artifice, method; they observe that a form of organization, a name, a method were adopted by our enemies and they conclude some by the judgment in block from those. They do not succeed in making the very simple reasoning which a many these forms, of these terms and these methods are inoffensive in themselves, and have of another value only that of the contents. Give them anarchist contents and they will be in perfect coherence with anarchy. There also exists, naturally, of the forms which do only one with the substance, and they are or are not anarchist; but it is not the case of the organization which is not enough for the appearance of an authority and on the contrary made up of anarchists it is an obstacle.

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One finds another reason for inconsistency in the alleged ease with which in the organization, the individuals who are the most intelligent, attractive, active or even ... the best at cheating can become true authorities over the mass, presenting a danger of deviations. I demonstrated earlier that this danger is greater among the non-organized and that, on the contrary, organization serves to fight against and not to facilitate such a danger.

In any event, the danger remains, even if it is reduced and even if the determining element is not organization per se. But is there a true inconsistency with the anarchist idea in this? I do not believe so, because if it were, then anarchy would be impossible. Men will be never be completely mentally and physically equal, and even if certain enormous disparities tend to disappear, there will always be talented and mediocre people, active and inactive, appealing and unappealing — some will always have an indisputable moral superiority over others, and perhaps all the more so when there are no more material tyrannies.

Since anarchy is the positive aspiration to battle, since it is the destruction of material tyrannies, it has nothing to oppose to moral authorities other than science. Science in itself represents a source of moral authorities. Who, in an anarchist society, would not recognize the authority of the doctor concerning hygiene and that of the architect concerning the construction of a wall? Thus, there will be the moral authority of the man of genius, the man of sympathy, the active man, etc, anarchy not thereby ceasing to exist, since neither the doctor, nor the architect, nor the brilliant or active man, nor the cheater will be able to put forward their authority when the others do not want to undergo it. The anarchist social organization will not place at their disposal any means of coercing the will of others. This phenomenon will certainly entail disadvantages,

but ... we never said that in anarchy there will be no more disadvantages of this kind and that life will turn into a terrestrial paradise.

We do not dream of denying that anarchist organizations in today's society may present several disadvantages. However, they are not the product of organization, because without it, one would experience greater disadvantages, as one does now. They do not represent an inconsistency with the anarchist idea in and of themselves.

"But what about offices?" somebody will object. "In anarchist organizations, we see the nomination of executive committees, commissions of correspondence, secretaries, etc.; are these not real authorities, miniature governments?" I answer no, above all because they have no means of imposing their will on those associated, since they intend to do what they have been authorized to do. They are not authorities, because if they were, the existence of civil and human society would not be possible.

In all life in common, there exists the division of labor among those who associate; some of them must take care of social functions necessary and useful to all. These functions are authoritarian today, because they are exercised mainly by authoritarian organizations; but they themselves are not authority.

Many fall into the following ambiguity: they see an indisputably useful function exerted in a domatory and bad way by government or by the capitalist; they conclude that the origin of this bad thing and this domination is the function and they demand that it be suppressed. And I believe that no anarchist will maintain that in anarchy one will have to abolish the mail service or the railways simply because today the post office and the railroads are run in a despicable manner by the capitalist State. What applies to the future society, applies to anarchist organizations, which delegate some of their members to accomplish a specific function, not to exercise a power. Delegation of functions, not delegation of powers. One cannot do more than delegate functions, as long as all the comrades within a circle cannot be the treasurer or the secretary at the same time, and not all can perform a given role when just one is enough.

The need for these assignments of roles expands and becomes stronger when the organization is more important and its field of activity broader. But to remove any danger of authoritarianism, it is enough to carefully limit and define the functions that must be fulfilled; to specify that they can act *in the name of the association* only when its members have authorized or consented to this; that they must carry out what the members decide and not dictate the path to be followed to the members. Thus, even the most remote suspicion of inconsistency is removed.

If so much as a larva of authority can never personify itself in these representatives of the association, one can always speak of *moral* authority without the danger that it can transform into a *de facto* coercive authority. Such an authority could never be as strong as that which an active and intelligent comrade can develop in a disorganized setting. It is almost the case today in bourgeois associations that a treasurer, a secretary or an executive committee — even if they are emphasized in the newspapers — have practically no power in reality. Why should one suppose it possible in an anarchist association? Isn't it a useless doctrinary sophism in this case?

It is silly to say that the anarchists want to organize in order to ape the authoritarian parties, because they believe that these owe their progress to the fact of being organized.

The truth is that the authoritarian parties not only made progress in the manner of being organized, but also in the organization itself; one does not exclude the other, and unity of any kind is always an appreciable force.

It is true that organization does not possess a magic life, but *it can add to its members' force and capacity for action provided that these are "men and not sheep."* An organization created by anarchists with an anarchist goal, whatever term it may use to define itself, old or new, does not presuppose in itself any intrinsically authoritarian spirit. It will owe the progress it makes only partly to the organization because it follows the libertarian idea; in the same way that the authoritarian parties, after having made so much progress with the aid of organization, now start to regress not because of the organization, but simply because their goal was in their deliberately authoritarian and anti-revolutionary means and ends.

Thus, for example, the insurrection will be useful for the revolution, but there can also be reactionary insurrections. Insurrections have been made by Sanfedists [ultra-religious reactionaries] or in favor of the Bourbons, but was there in this any reason for Italian patriots to deny the utility of insurrection for the liberation of the fatherland from foreigners? Organization and its forms serve authoritarians, but no contradiction prohibits us from making use of it ourselves.

All the difficulties in the content reside in the denominations; some do not like the term "party," others that of "organization." Thus some exclaim over the fact that anarchists constituted a federation of Latium and want to form an Italian federation, that there are German anarchist federations and parties, Dutch, Bohemian, etc. As if one meant in this way to recognize the principle of nationality! But that is really formalism, and worse! ...

* * *

To sum up, in no way does the concept of federal organization of individuals into groups, and of groups into regional, national and international federations, contradict anarchism's principles of freedom.

This coherence with the libertarian method within bourgeois society is not reserved for anarchist organizations. There also exists and can exist associations composed by non-anarchists that are libertarian in their manner of operation, which does not harm but, on the contrary, facilitates their particular goal. Reclus found examples of libertarian groups among primitive peoples who do not govern themselves in true anarchy; Peter Kropotkin speaks to us of libertarian associations among animals, savages, and artisans, as well as in medieval cities. To show the existence in modern society of a strong tendency towards communism and anarchy, Kropotkin and Elisée Reclus provide many examples of associations, commercial, industrial, philanthropic, scientific and artistic, which, while having a goal quite distinct from the anarchists', are in their internal organization exactly or nearly libertarian. If such a possibility is not excluded for non-anarchist individuals who have associated for absolutely bourgeois goals, why should we exclude it for ourselves? Why should we who are anarchist and who set for ourselves a fundamentally anti-bourgeois and anti-authoritarian goal deny for ourselves the possibility of associating on libertarian bases?

Autonomy and organization are far from being contradictory terms: on the contrary, they express with precision the concept that the anarchists have of individual and society. "Autonomy and federation are the two great formulas of the future," says our friend Charles Malato⁵; "from now on, it is in this direction that social movements will turn." And that way, too, turns our idea, because we think that organization finds in the form of the federation the best way to develop itself in a genuinely anarchist direction.

⁵ C. Malato: "*Philosophie de l'Anarchie*" (édition P.V. Stock, Paris), p. 185.

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The Anarchist Organization
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