

Manifesto of the Black Band

Black Band

September 1885

Companions,

The newspapers of the Republican reaction fill their pages with odious rants against 'the Black Band', which has just struck the first spark of the Social Revolution. These newspapers accuse us of being *clericals* and supporters of *Bonapartism*—us, who have blown up churches and Madonnas and who hate despotism in every form it may take: Caesarism, divine-right rule, Orleanism, or Republican Monarchism. The label 'Black Band' has allowed them to spread their hypocrisy and lies. Well! We declare openly, so they cannot hide behind ignorance: the 'Black Band' is the 'Misery Band'. The *black flag* we carry is the flag of hunger, of strike, of ceaseless struggle on the ground of the Social Revolution, the flag of the annihilation of capital, of the bosses, of the exploitation of man by man. And we say clearly to them, companions: despite the persecution crushing us, despite the soldiers of the Empire, despite the servants of the Empire, we are ready to raise our flag again tomorrow, until victory crowns our efforts and sacrifices!

Long live the Social Revolution!

The Anarchists of Montceau-les-Mines.

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<https://www.retronews.fr/journal/le-francais-1868-1887/4-septembre-1882/653/2062043/2>
Manifesto (in reality more of a response to the bourgeois press, which was attempting to co-opt the movement) by the Black Band, published in *L'Étendard Révolutionnaire* ("The Revolutionary Standard"), an anarchist newspaper based in Lyon. The Black Band consisted of groups of miners from the Saône-et-Loire region, approximately 100 km from Lyon, who were likely partly connected to the Lyon anarchists and maybe even the Jura Federation, and were unquestionably anarchist in orientation. This text may contain the earliest known reference to the black flag as an anarchist symbol. Louise Michel adopted this symbol the following year during the demonstration of 9 March 1883, giving it the same meaning articulated here by the Black Band—strike, hunger, struggle, and death. After her, the symbol was frequently taken up by the anarchist movement and given additional meanings.

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