

The Organisation of Armed Struggle

Carlo Cafiero

1881

COMRADES and EDITORS of
“Il Grido del Popolo”

On the eve of the London Congress it is urgent that every opinion be expressed concerning immediate *revolutionary* action, action that is aimed at bringing the outbreak of revolution nearer.

At this congress the legalists and parliamentarians will be conspicuous by their absence, and all those present will be in perfect agreement concerning the need for violent means. Therefore, the whole order of the day will be reduced to the following question: How shall we organise the violence?

Two solutions will be proposed: one from the classical school, the other from the modern one. The first will propose the disciplined order of the army division and well-defined battle lines. The second, on the contrary, will support the scattered order of the maniple; the first will require a great concentration of strength, the second, an immense dissemination of strength.

The anarchists in France are organising with the same system: their strength is growing and is already imposing itself on the government.

All the other types of oppression which constitute the remaining States of Europe can be situated between the Russian autocracy and the French republic.

The problem, therefore, is practically resolved. The phalanx and cohort authoritarian military type of organisation has seen its day and is now absolutely impotent, even if it is strong enough to withstand the first clash with the State.

The centralised revolutionary organisation has been broken like a pane of glass in Germany by Bismarck, without a single drop of blood being shed, while the Romanovs, with their gallows and tortures, cannot overcome the scattered organisation of small groups in Russia.

It is true that in Germany the defect was not only in the form, but also in the content of the action. But after all, this compact strength had been so greatly exalted in the electoral field, and so much hope attached to it once the legal field had been barred, that with good reason we can attribute its defeat not only to its legalistic aims, but also too its authoritarian form. Today it has been demonstrated that the doctrine of similitudes will be relegated to the museum along with the armour of bygone times; the strength of the revolutionaries is its antithesis – the doctrine of opposites. To the centralising State, disciplined and disciplinary, authoritarian and despotic, we must oppose a decentralised force, free and anti-authoritarian. Need we enumerate the advantages of the new system? Apart from the greater strength of attack and resistance, action

proceeds far more easily and quickly, everyone *sacrifices* more willingly *possessions and life* for the work of his own initiative, betrayal becomes difficult and of limited damage, defeats partial. All attitudes and all initiatives, finding their full development, give prodigious results, like the *cabiliek* bomb and masterly construction of mines. Therefore, no more offices of correspondence or statistics, no more general plans worked out in advance. That each comrade seek to form in his own locality a group around himself, a handful which will act infallibly. Ten men, six men (*and women*), can carry out actions which will find echoes all over the world.

Hardly will the actions of one group have begun, when the whole country will be covered in groups, and action become generalised. Every group will be its own centre of action, with a plan all of its own, and a multiplicity of varied and harmonic initiatives. The concept of the whole war will be one only: the destruction of all oppressors and exploiters.

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