All anarchists, whatever tendency they belong to, are **individualists** in some way or other. But the opposite is not true; not by any means. The individualists are thus divided into two distinct categories: one which claims the right to full development for all human individuality, their own and that of others; the other which only thinks about its own individuality and has absolutely no hesitation in sacrificing the individuality of others. The Tsar of all the Russias belongs to the latter category of individualists. We belong to the former.

Ibsen writes that the most powerful man in the world is the one who is most alone! Absolutely absurd! Doctor Stockmann himself[3], whom Ibsen has pronounce this maxim, was not even **isolated** in the full sense of the word; he lived in a constituted society, not on Robinson's island. Man "alone" cannot carry out even the smallest useful, productive task; and if someone needs a master above him it is exactly the man who lives in isolation. That which frees the individual, that which allows him to develop all his faculties, is not solitude, but association.

In order to be able to carry out work that is really useful, cooperation is indispensable, today more than ever. Without doubt, the association must allow its individual members full autonomy and the federation must respect this same autonomy for its groups. We are careful not to believe that the lack of organization is a guarantee of freedom. Everything goes to show that it is not.

An example: there are certain French newspapers whose pages are closed to all those whose ideas, style or simply person have

[3] Malatesta was referring to Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People* (1882). The figure of Dr Stockmann had been very popular amongst individualist anarchists and more than one individualist used "Dr Stockmann" as a pseudonym (for example, Carlo Molaschi). "L'ennemi du peuple" was also the title of a famous French individualist journal. The same can be said for the verse tragedy "Brand". One of the most famous Swedish libertarian newspapers, founded in 1898 and which became in 1908 the mouthpiece of the young socialists party (of anarchist tendency), was also called "Brand". Even today an anarchist periodical of the same name is published in Sweden.

The International Anarchist Congress

Amsterdam 1907

Maurizio Antonioli

1978

PIERRE RAMUS: I am in favour of organization and of all efforts we may make in that regard. Nevertheless, the arguments presented in Dunois' report do not seem to me to be qualitatively acceptable. We must endeavour to return to anarchist principles as they were set out by Croiset a short while ago, but at the same time we must systematically organize our movement. In other words, individual initiative must rest on the strength of the collective and the collective must find expression in individual initiative. But in order for this to happen in practice, we must keep our basic principles intact. As for the rest, we are far from creating anything new. In reality, we are the immediate successors of those who stood with Bakunin against Marx in the old International Workingmen's Association. We are not bringing anything new and we can only give our old principles new life and encourage the tendency to organization everywhere.

As for the aim of the new International, it must not act as an auxiliary force of revolutionary syndicalism. It must occupy itself with the propaganda of anarchism in its entirety.

Sixth session – Tuesday 27 August – Evening session

> *The session opens at eight-thirty. A large public throngs the hall and comrade I.I. Samson,* ***of his own initiative*** *summarizes the events of the day. Malatesta then takes the floor, to talk about organization.*

MALATESTA: I have listened attentively to everything that has been said before me on the problem of organization and I have the distinct impression that what separates us is the different meaning we give words. Let us not squabble over words. But as far as the basic problem is concerned, I am convinced that we are in total agreement.

libertarian groups and federations, founded on the respect for the freedom and initiative of each and everyone.

KAREL VOHRYZEK: It is as an **individualist** that I wish to defend the cause of organization! It is impossible to demand that anarchism cannot allow organization by reason of its principles. Not even the most dyed-in-the-wool individualist condemns the association of individuals outright.

Saying, as sometimes is said, **either** Stirner **or** Kropotkin, thereby opposing these two thinkers, is wrong. Kropotkin and Stirner cannot be opposed against each other: they expounded the same idea from different points of view. That is all. And the proof that Max Stirner was not the crazed individualist that he is made out to be is that he pronounced himself in favour of "organization". He even dedicated a whole chapter to the association of egoists.

As our organization has no executive power it will not run contrary to our principles. In the workers' unions we defend the economic interests of the workers. As for the rest, we must be a distinct group and create organizations on a libertarian basis.

EMMA GOLDMAN: I, too, am in favour of organization in principle. However, I fear that sooner or later this will fall into exclusivism.

Dunois has spoken against the excesses of individualism. But these excesses have nothing to do with true individualism, as the excesses of communism have nothing to do with real communism. I set out my point of view in a report whose conclusions tend more or less to absorb the individuality of the individual. This is a danger that must be foreseen. I, too, will accept anarchist organization on just one condition: that it be based on the absolute respect for all individual initiatives and not obstruct their development or evolution.

The essential principle of anarchy is **individual autonomy**. The International will not be anarchist unless it wholly respects this principle.

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all is the relationship between anarchism, or more exactly anarchist organizations, and the workers' unions. It is in order to facilitate the task of the latter that we, as anarchists, must create special groups for preparation and revolutionary education.

The workers' movement has a mission of its own, which arises out of the living conditions that today's society imposes on the proletariat: this mission is the conquest of economic power, the collective appropriation of all the sources of production and of life. Anarchism too has the same aspiration: but it would not be able to bring it about with only its ideological propaganda groups. Valid as it may be, our theory does not penetrate among the people and it is above all through **action** that the people can educate themselves. Little by little, action will give them a revolutionary mentality.

The ideas of the general strike and direct action exert a great attraction on the consciousness of the working masses. In the future revolution, these masses will in some form or other constitute the **infantry** of the revolutionary army. Our anarchist groups, specialized in technical matters will, so to speak, form the **artillery** which, though less numerous, is no less necessary than the infantry.

THONAR: Communism and individualism are equal and inseparable within the complex whole of the anarchist idea. Organization, joint action, is indispensable to the development of anarchism and does not contradict its theoretical premises. Organization is a means, not a principle; but it follows that in order to be acceptable it must be constituted in a libertarian way.

Organization proved useless when we were just a tiny number of anarchists who knew each other and frequented each other regularly. We have become a legion and we must take care not to disperse our forces. So let us organize ourselves, not just for anarchist propaganda, but also and above all for direct action.

I am not at all hostile to syndicalism above all when it is of a revolutionary tendency. But workers' organization is not anarchist and consequently we will never be completely ourselves within it: our activity can never be totally anarchist. Thus the need to create

Fifth session – Tuesday 27 August – Afternoon session

Comrade H. Croiset from Amsterdam, representing the individualist tendency at the Congress, takes the floor.

HYNAN CROISET: What matters first and foremost is to provide a definition of anarchy that will serve as a basis for my contribution. We are anarchists in the sense that we want to establish a social state in which the individual will find a guarantee of his total liberty, in which everyone will be able to live their lives fully; in other words, in which the individual will be allowed, without restriction of any sort, to live his **own** life and not, as today, the lives of **others**, by which I mean the life imposed on him by others.

My motto is: Me, me, me… and then the others!

Individuals need associate only when it is clear that their individual efforts cannot allow them to reach the goal alone. But the group, the organization, must never, under any pretext, become a constriction for those who have freely joined. The individual is not made for society. On the contrary, it is society that is made for the individual.

Anarchy seeks to enable every individual to develop all his faculties freely. Organizations, however, have the inevitable result of limiting the freedom of the individual to a greater or lesser degree. Anarchy is therefore contrary to any permanent system of organization. For the vain ambition of becoming practical, anarchists have reconciled themselves to organization. They have embarked on a slippery slope. Sooner or later they will reconcile themselves to authority itself – just like the social democrats.

Anarchist ideas must preserve their ancient purity, instead of trying to become more practical. Let us return to the ancient purity of our ideas.

SIEGFRIED NACHT: I will not follow Croiset onto the terrain where he has ventured. What seems to me to require clarity above

Preface

This is the story of the International Anarchist Congress that was held at the Plancius Hall in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from 26 to 31 August 1907. The previous anarchist congress had been back in 1881 in London and was an attempt to re-launch the old International, though it inaugurated the age of "anarchist terrorism", moving the anarchist movement away from the masses of the working people.

The period between 1881 and 1907 saw huge changes within the workers' movement. By then, however, the anarchists had placed themselves firmly outside the sphere of labour, though some comrades did remain close to the workers. When the anarchist movement eventually understood that it had to put an end to its isolation, the result was the calling of an international congress to be held in Amsterdam which was to deal with the most important issues of the day: the attitude of anarchists to the new phenomenon of syndicalism and the question of anarchist organization.

In the introduction to the 1978 book "*Dibattito sul sindacalismo: Atti del Congresso Internazionale anarchico di Amsterdam (1907)*", labour historian Maurizio Antonioli examines the process that led to the Amsterdam Congress and its significance both within the labour movement and the anarchist movement. Antonioli then goes on to compile the various reports in anarchist journals of the time, producing what is possibly the most complete record of the Congress and the debates that lasted six days. We present here Antonioli's introduction together with a slightly abridged version of the rest of the book, having omitted some of the lesser debates and

introductory speeches. With time we hope to include these also. The footnote numbers are those in the original text.

Thonar's words create a minor incident. Some participants applaud noisily, while lively protests are also to be heard.

ERRICO MALATESTA: The problem of the vote that Thonar raises is of course part of the question of organization that we are discussing. Let us discuss the problem of the vote, then; as far as I am concerned, I can see nothing inconvenient in it.

PIERRE MONATTE: I cannot understand how yesterday's vote can be considered anti-anarchist, in other words authoritarian. It is absolutely impossible to compare the vote with which an assembly decides a procedural question to universal suffrage or to parliamentary polls. We use votes at all times in our trade unions and, I repeat, I do not see anything which goes against our anarchist principles.

There are comrades who feel the need to raise questions of principle on everything, even the smallest things. Unable as they are to understand the spirit of our anti-parliamentarianism, they place importance on the mere act of placing a slip of paper in an urn or raising one's hand to show one's opinion.

CHRISTIAAN CORNELISSEN: Voting is to be condemned only if it binds the minority. This is not the case here, and we are using the vote as an easy means of determining the size of the various opinions that are being confronted.

RENÉ DE MARMANDE: It is not possible to do without the vote, even in this way. If we decide not to vote after every debate, how will we know the opinion of the Congress or how many currents of opinion there are in the Congress?

ers' unions, in the anti-militarist movement, among anti-clericalist free thinkers, in the popular universities, and so on, and so forth. What we are missing is a specifically anarchist movement, which can gather to it, on the economic and workers' ground that is ours, all those forces that have been fighting in isolation up to now.

This specifically anarchist movement will spontaneously arise from our groups and from the federation of these groups. The might of joint action, of concerted action, will undoubtedly create it. I do not need to add that this organization will by no means expect to encompass all the picturesquely dispersed elements who describe themselves as followers of the anarchist ideal; there are, after all, those who would be totally inadmissible. It would be sufficient for the anarchist organization to group together, around a programme of concrete, practical action, all the comrades who accept our principles and who want to work with us, according to our methods.

Let me make it clear that I do not wish to go into specifics here. I am not dealing with the theory side of the organization. The name, form and programme of the organization to be created will be established separately and after reflection by the supporters of this organization.

GEORGES THONAR: I wish to associate myself with everything Dunois has just said on the problem of organization and I will abstain from speaking, though not without first making a statement.

Yesterday, we closed the long discussion which arose from the proposal by Domela Nieuwenhuis with a vote. I voted, despite being opposed to any vote, as it seemed to me that the matter under discussion was not important. Many here were surely in a similar situation. I am simply asking Congress to declare today that it acted unreasonably and to agree to act more wisely henceforth.

Anarchism and/or Syndicalism

The revolutionary socialist Congress in London (July 1881), which gathered together the few remaining anti-authoritarian elements of the International who were spread around the world[1], was the last anarchist attempt to "get the old International back on its feet in some way"[2]. There would be no further efforts, thanks to the fact that the choice of "illegality" as the only possible method of struggle (justified as it may have been by the circumstances) removed any possibility for the revolutionary minorities, who were more and more convinced of the imminence of a direct clash, to maintain organic links with the mass organizations that were consolidating themselves throughout most parts of Europe.

"The deliberations in London", wrote Gino Cerrito[3], "... officially inaugurated the era of anarchist terrorism, which (...) completed the transformation of groups into sectarian organizations, at times being reduced to individuals having casual contact with each other, and moving the Anarchist Movement away from the masses of the people, who therefore remained under the exclusive leadership of the legalitarians".

Within the space of a few years, and partly as a result of harsh government repression (which indeed had been the principal rea-

[1] The only organization represented at the London Congress was the Jura Federation. Germans, Austrians, Spaniards, Russians and Swiss-Germans were represented by emigrants living in London (Vera Zasulič for the Russians; Malatesta and Merlino for the Italians).

[2] P.C. MASINI, *Storia degli anarchici italiani da Bakunin a Malatesta*, Rizzoli, Milan 1969, p. 203.

[3] G. CERRITO, *Dall'insurrezionalismo alla settimana rossa*, CP Editrice, Florence 1977, p. 13.

son for the London decisions), the anarchist movement had practically signed its own death warrant as an organized movement. Though anarchism did maintain an unarguable vitality in many countries, almost everywhere — except for Spain — "the sense of organizational continuity, of international relations (…), of a coherent revolutionary strategy"[4] had been lost. Neither did certain isolated attempts, such as the one by Malatesta in 1884[5], seem able to change this tendency and re-launch an internationalist movement closer to the original one.

When, in the late 1880s and early 1890s — and not without some perplexity, contradictions and clashes — a new International did finally give form to the "nostalgia" for the old IWMA which was so prevalent in European socialist circles, anarchists were reduced to the role of more onlookers. To the extent that, having put aside every alternative hope, the only solution that could be seen — at least by those fringes that had survived the anti-organizationalist storm and tenaciously hung on to the Saint Imier tradition — seemed to be that of carving out a place in the new organizations by making the most of its still decidedly "mixed" nature.

As is well known, the various attempts — Brussels (1891), Zurich (1893) and London (1896) — came to no good. The majority at these congresses voted for the exclusion of the anarchists, though with sizeable minorities and for various reasons. However, despite the lack of success as far as the objective was concerned, these efforts to return to the international circuit were not without positive results. Contacts were renewed, debate was stimulated, ideas, discussion points and forms of struggle circulated (a typical example being the general strike) and the possibility was mooted of alliance with other revolutionary forces. As Christiaan Cornelissen

[4] P.C. MASINI, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

[5] See G. CERRITO, *op. cit.*, p.34 and following; P.C. MASINI, *op. cit.*, p.215 and following.

I believe so.

The social revolution, whether one imagines it in the guise of a general strike or an armed insurrection, can only be the work of the masses who must benefit from it. But every mass movement is accompanied by acts whose very nature – dare I say, whose technical nature – implies that they be carried out by a small number of people, but the most perspicacious and daring sector of the mass movement. During the revolutionary period, in each neighbourhood, in each town, in each province, our anarchist groups will form many small fighting organizations, who will take those special, delicate measures which the large mass is almost always unable to do. It is clear that the groups should even now study and establish these insurrectional measures so as not to be, as has often happened, surprised by events.

Now for the principal, regular, continuous aim of our groups. It is (you will by now have guessed) anarchist propaganda. Yes, we will organize ourselves above all to spread our theoretical ideas, our methods of direct action and universal federalism.

Until today our propaganda has been made only or almost only on an individual basis. Individual propaganda has given notable results, above all in the heroic times when anarchists were compensating for the large number they needed with a fever of proselytism that recalled the primitive Christians. But is this continuing to happen? Experience obliges me to confess that it is not.

It seems that anarchism has been going through a sort of crisis in recent years, at least in France. The causes of this are clearly many and complex. It is not my task here to establish what they are, but I do wonder if the total lack of agreement and organization is not one of the causes of this crisis.

There are many anarchists in France. They are much divided on the question of theory; but even more so on practice. Everyone acts in his own way whenever he wants; in this way the individual efforts are dispersed and often exhausted, simply wasted. Anarchists can be found in more or less every sphere of action: in the work-

Far be it from us therefore the inept idea of wanting to isolate ourselves from the proletariat; it would be, we know only too well, reducing ourselves to the impotence of proud ideologies, of abstractions empty of all ideal. Organized or not organized, then, the anarchists will remain true to their role of educators, stimulators and guides of the working masses. And if we are today of a mind to associate into groups in neighbourhoods, towns, regions or countries, and to federate these groups, it is above all in order to give our union action greater strength and continuity.

What is most often missing in those of us who fight within the world of labour, is the feeling of being supported. Social democratic syndicalists have behind them the constant organized power of the party from which they sometimes receive their watchwords and at all times their inspiration. Anarchist syndicalists on the other hand are abandoned unto themselves and, outside the union, do not have any real links between them or to their other comrades, they do not feel any support behind them and they receive no help. So, we wish to create this link, to provide this constant support; and I am personally convinced that our union activities cannot but benefit both in energy and in intelligence. And the stronger we are – and we will only become strong by organizing ourselves – the stronger will be the flow of ideas that we can send through the workers' movement, which will thus become slowly impregnated with the anarchist spirit.

But will these groups of anarchist workers, which we would hope to see created in the near future, have no other role than to influence the great proletarian masses indirectly, by means of a militant elite, to drive them systematically into heroic resolutions, in a word to prepare the popular revolt? Will our groups have to limit themselves to perfecting the education of militants, to keep the revolutionary fever alive in them, to allow them to meet each other, to exchange ideas, to help each other at any time?

In other words, will they have **their own** action to carry out directly?

recalled years later[6], Zurich and London had not just meant defeat for anarchists, they were also an opportunity to meet up, "*dans l'ombre du Congrès ouvrier socialiste*".

That was no small matter, especially if one considers that those were the years of the height of the terrorist boom and of illegalism, and anarchism was caught in the grip of a massive government counter-offensive that culminated in the International Anti-Anarchist Conference in Rome in 1898 which saw the participation of Europe's main powers, with the exception of Great Britain and Switzerland.

In fact, notwithstanding the "terrorist" nature of the period — and this was the idea that bourgeois (and not only) public opinion had of anarchism — it was in the 1890s that the first symptoms of a change within the movement began to be seen. There began to be felt the "need" for a programmatic and operational agreement among socialist anarchists[7] in order to "put an end to the isolation which anarchists in certain countries [had] placed themselves and to the separation from the masses of the people"[8]. Not only in France, but also in Italy and the Netherlands, there was a growing tendency towards a constant, non-instrumental presence in the rapidly-growing labour organizations.

It is not easy to establish the reasons for this evolution. Perhaps it was the repeated exclusion from the Congresses of the International[9], the urgent need to counteract the rebellious,

[6] C. CORNELISSEN, *Le Congrès Ouvrier Révolutionnaire et Libertaire d'Amsterdam (1907)*, in *Almanach de la Révolution pour 1907*, La Publication Sociale, Paris undated (1907).

[7] See F.S. MERLINO, *Nécessité et bases d'une entente*, Impr. A. Longfils, Brussels 1892.

[8] From E. Malatesta's preface to the Italian edition of Merlino's above-mentioned pamphlet (*Necessità e basi di un accordo*, La Popolare ed., Prato 1892).

[9] This is also the opinion, though limited to France, of R. BRECY, *Le Mouvement syndical en France 1871–1921*, Mouton & Co., Paris — La Haye 1963, p. XII.

anti-organizationalist wave with something more solid[10], the heightening social and political tension in many countries, perhaps one or other (or all) of these had sparked off the desire to recompose the movement and, at the same time, to develop a project for it.

In 1900, when Bresci's assassination of Italy's King Humbert I brought to a close (at least in Europe) the "classic" phase of the individualist act, the turning point had been reached. The clearest sign was the calling by French libertarians with syndicalist leanings of an International Revolutionary Workers' Congress in Paris, from 19–23 September 1900. As the organizing committee's circular-letter clarified, "there is a general revolutionary and anti-parliamentary tendency developing among the workers, and it seems useful that the trade unions which are rejected by social democracy can debate the questions which affect the proletariat in general"[11]. Despite the general tone and the assurances of the "worker" nature of the initiative, which was not — as Delesalle[12] said — an attempt to hold "a little anarchist parliament", the congress had a definite anarchist flavour, both in its agenda and in its participants[13]. But the Paris of the International Exposi-

[10] Readers should need no reminder of the "syndicalist" choice of Pelloutier and Pouget in reaction to "individual…dynamite", and Malatesta's attempts to contain the rise of illegalism by seeking to promote the usefulness of the "anarchist party".

[11] *Le Congrès ouvrier révolutionnaire international de Paris 1900*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux" du 31 mars au 6 avril 1900.

[12] P. DELASALLE, *Le Congrès révolutionnaire*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux" du 21 au 27 juillet 1900.

[13] The principal questions discussed were: communism and anarchism; communism and individualism; the general strike; the attitude of anarchists towards cooperatives, anti-militarism, Semitism, Zionism, Tolstoyism; the question of women; the various means of propaganda; organization between revolutionary communist groups from the same country or from different countries; the attitude of anarchists in the case of war, uprising or insurrection; the organization of solidarity; aid funds; publication of an international journal. Participants included the *Étudiants Socialistes Revolutionnaires Internationalistes*, many French libertar-

from syndicalism and refuses to allow itself to become absorbed into it.

Organized or not, anarchists (by which I mean those of our tendency, who do not arbitrarily separate anarchism from the proletariat) do not by any means expect that they are entitled to act in the role of "supreme saviours", as the song goes. We willingly assign pride of place in the field of action to the workers' movement, convinced as we have been for so long that the emancipation of the workers will be at the hands of those concerned or it will not be.

In other words, in our opinion the syndicate must not just have a purely corporative, trade function as the Guesdist socialists intend it, and with them some anarchists who cling to now outdated formulae. The time for pure corporativism is ended: this is a fact that could in principle be contrary to previous concepts, but which much be accepted with all its consequences. Yes, the corporative spirit in tending more and more towards becoming an anomaly, an anachronism, and is making room for the spirit of class. And this, mark my words, is not thanks to Griffuelhes, nor to Pouget — it is a result of action. In fact it is the needs of action that have obliged syndicalism to lift up its head and widen its conceptions. Nowadays the **workers' union** is on the road to becoming for proletarians what the State is for the bourgeoisie: the political institution par excellence; an essential instrument in the struggle against capital, a weapon of defence or attack according to the situation.

Our task as anarchists, the most advanced, the boldest and the most uninhibited sector of the militant proletariat, is to stay constantly by its side, to fight the same battle amongst its ranks, to defend it against itself, not necessarily the least dangerous enemy. In other words, we want to provide this enormous moving mass that is the modern proletariat, I will not say with a philosophy and an ideal, something that could seem presumptuous, but with a goal and the means of action.

attempt at anarchist organization risks foundering on – I do not wish to say being wrecked on. And this important historical fact imposes certain precautions on us, which do not affect, in my opinion, our comrades in other countries.

– The workers' movement today, the syndicalists observe, offers anarchists an almost unlimited field of action. Whereas idea-based groups, little sanctuaries into which only the initiated may enter, cannot hope to grow indefinitely, the workers' organization, on the other hand, is a widely-accessible association; it is not a temple whose doors are closed, but a public arena, a Forum open to all workers without distinction of sex, race or ideology, and therefore perfectly adapted to encompassing the whole proletariat within its flexible and mobile ranks.

Now, the syndicalists continue, it is there in the workers' unions that anarchists must be. The workers' union is the living bud of the future society; it is the former which will pave the way for the latter. The error is made in staying within one's own four walls, amongst the other initiates, chewing the same questions of doctrine over and over again, always moving within the same circle of ideas. We must not, under any pretext, separate ourselves form the people, for no matter how backward and limited the people may be, it is they, and not the ideologue, who are the indispensable driving force of every social revolution. Do we perhaps, like the social democrats, have any interests we wish to promote other than those of the great working mass? Party, sect or factional interests? Is it up to the people to come to us or is it we who must go to them, living their lives, earning their trust and stimulating them with both our words and our example into resistance, rebellion, revolution? –

This is how the syndicalists talk. But I do not see how their objections have any value against our project to organize ourselves. On the contrary. I see clearly that if they had any value, it would also be against anarchism itself, as a doctrine that seeks to be distinct

tion was due to host a great many events that year: from 5–8 September, the Congress of the *Fédération des Bourses*; from 10–14 September, the National Corporative Congress (CGT); from 17–18 September, an International Corporative Congress promoted by the *Fédération des Bourses* and the CGT in open contrast to the Socialist International, whose congress was due to open in Paris on 24 September.

And it was not by chance that the Revolutionary Workers' Congress (later known as the International Anti-Parliamentary Congress, lest there be any doubt about its nature) was set to occur between the International Corporative Congress and the Congress of the International. The aim was clear, at least as far as the organizers were concerned: to involve the delegates of the first Congress and to boycott the second, or at the very least to raise the "anarchist" question again under another guise — that of the autonomy of the labour organization from political organizations. However, only a few days before it was due to open, the Anti-Parliamentary Congress had to be called off as a result of the ban placed on it by the Waldeck-Rousseau government.

We have no way of knowing what the effects of the congress would have been, though leaving aside the intended participation of elements from Romania, Belgium, Bohemia and so on, it would most likely have been limited to France and the emigrant groups there (Italians, Russians, etc.). In any event, the International Corporative Congress, attended by only a few English, French, Italian and Swiss delegates, did not appear to meet with any great success either.

But apart form the outcome, even the will to get together for a wide debate on a "worker" basis was in itself an important fact. It was evidence that, on the one hand, the isolation was coming

ian libraries and study groups, some local trade unions, the newspapers "Le Père Peinard", "le Libertaire", "Les Temps Nouveaux", the Parisian anti-militarist group, the Parisian Italian group, Bulgarians, Czechs and Belgians.

to an end and, on the other hand, wide sectors of the anarchist movement were rapidly moving back to class-struggle positions.

The failed Paris congress appeared not to have produced any effect, seeming only to act as an indication of a developing tendency. But it is extremely difficult to follow the lines of propagation within the movement of certain impulses and to establish exactly who or what was responsible for it. It is clear, though, that powerful ideas such as the general strike, which was to have been the focus of one particular debate in Paris (we are in possession, in fact, of the report which was to be presented)[14], were beginning to spread and take root among libertarian circles both in France and elsewhere. As early as 1900–01, through emigrant channels and the best-known newspapers, numerous anarchist groups (some of whom were often declaredly anti-organizationalist) throughout Europe and the Americas were starting to focus their attention on an objective which the notable expansion of labour organizations, added to a new aggressiveness, appeared to put within easier reach than the traditional insurrectional explosion.

In any event, the new century (at least from 1902–03 on) did seem to offer anarchists objective possibilities for a revival on an international level, though there were variances in the speed of growth in the various national movements as each had to adapt to the peculiarities of its own context. Undoubtedly the stimulus of greater homogeneity in the policies of the socialist parties produced, by way of response, a homogeneous opposition within those forces who were not prepared to accept those policies. It was above all, however, the beginning of a cycle of struggles involving almost all of Europe which, despite rapidly fluctuating fortunes, influenced the composition of the anarchist movement. A movement which, by the way, had never divided itself according to geographic location. But due to its very instability — a result of government repression, internal fluctuations and the continually-changing militarian movement – the abolition of classes – is reached, the power of the State – which serves to maintain the large producing majority under the yoke of a small exploiting minority – disappears and the functions of government are transformed into simple administrative functions". In other words, anarchy is not the negation of organization but only of the governing function of the power of the State.

No, anarchism is not individualist, but basically federalist. Federalism is essential to anarchism: it is in fact the very essence of anarchism. I would happily define anarchism as complete federalism, the universal extension of the idea of the free contract.

After all, I cannot see how an anarchist organization could damage the individual development of its members. No-one would be forced to join, just as no-one would be forced to leave once they had joined. So what is an anarchist federation? Several comrades from a particular region, from Romandy for example, having established the impotence of isolated forces, of piecemeal action, agree one fine day to remain in continual contact with each other, to unite their forces with the aim of working to spread communist, anarchist and revolutionary ideas and of participating in public events through their collective action. Do they thus create a new entity whose designated prey is the individual? By no means. They very simply, and for a precise goal, band together their ideas, their will and their forces, and from the resulting collective potentiality, each gains some advantage.

But we also have, as I said earlier, another sort of adversary. They are those who, despite being supporters of workers' organizations founded on an identity of interests, prove to be hostile – or at least indifferent – to any organization based on an identity of aspirations, feelings and principles; they are, in a word, the **syndicalists**.

Let us examine their objections. The existence in France of a workers' movement with a revolutionary and almost anarchist outlook is, in that country, currently the greatest obstacle that any

[14] "Les Temps Nouveaux" published a special issue with all the reports.

longer a general conception of the world, an ideal for existence, a rebellion of the spirit against everything that is foul, impure and beastly in life; it is also and above all a revolutionary theory, a concrete programme of destruction and social re-organization. **Revolutionary** anarchism – and I emphasise the word "revolutionary" – essentially seeks to participate in the spontaneous movement of the masses, working towards what Kropotkin so neatly called the "Conquest of Bread".

Now, it is only from the point of view of revolutionary anarchism that the question of anarchist organization can be dealt with.

The enemies of organization today are of two sorts.

Firstly, there are those who are obstinately and systematically hostile to any sort of organization. They are the **individualists**. There can be found among them the idea popularized by Rousseau that society is an evil, that it is always a limitation on the independence of the individual. The smallest amount of society possible, or no society at all; that is their dream, an absurd dream, a romantic dream that brings us back to the strangest follies of Rousseau's literature.

Do we need to say and to demonstrate that anarchism is not individualism, then? Historically speaking, anarchism was born, through the development of socialism, in the congresses of the International, in other words, from the workers' movement itself. And in fact, logically, anarchy means society organized without political authority. I said **organized**. On this point all the anarchists – Proudhon, Bakunin, those of the Jura Federation, Kropotkin – are in agreement. Far from treating **organization** and **government** as equal, Proudhon never ceased to emphasise their incompatibility: "The producer is incompatible with government (he says in the "*Idée générale de la Révolution au XIXe siècle*"), organization is opposed to government".

Even Marx himself, whose disciples now seek to hide the anarchist side to his doctrine, defined anarchy thus: "All Socialists understand by Anarchy the following: that once the goal of the proletant personnel — it had split into factions, currents which regularly appeared in various places, sometimes due to external influences, but which at other times had developed spontaneously.

This is not the place to deal with the internationalization of the anarchist movement. To this day we lack the means with which to do so, there are gaps which are too great to fill, and thus far there have been no comparative studies on the matter. Nonetheless, it is certain that in those years the conditions for such a phenomenon were developing, modest as it may have been in size (given the non-central role played by anarchism); it could by no means be compared to the period of the First International.

It is, though, legitimate to think that in 1906, when the idea of building an Anarchist International was once again gaining ground, it was not simply a coincidence or the fancy of a few groups who felt like taking a risk.

The first proposal to create a Libertarian International, which would be able to connect and coordinate the movements in the various countries, was put forward during the second congress of the *Groupement Communiste Libertaire* in Belgium, held at Stockel-Bois on 22 July 1906[15]. The idea was immediately adopted on the following 23 September, during the second general assembly (in Utrecht) of the *Federatie van Vrijheidlievende Kommunisten* in the Netherlands, which proposed an international congress, to be held in Amsterdam the following year[16].

In order to prepare the way for such an initiative, publication of a "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire" was commenced in Herstal, near Liege, under the editorship of Georges Thonar, secretary of the *Groupement*. The appeal launched in the first issue in October[17] confirms our previous impression:

[15] See "Het Volksdagblad", 26 juli 1906, for the report on the congress. Also "Grond en Vrijheid", august 1906 (*Een nieuwe Internationaal*).

[16] See "Grond en Vrijheid", oktober 1906 (*Mededeelingen van de Federatie van Vrijheidlievende Kommunisten*).

[17] *Aux Anarchistes*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", octobre 1906.

> "Although a large number of libertarians have been thinking about the creation of an international organization for quite some time now, it cannot be denied that this tendency — at least in certain countries — is currently stronger than ever before.
>
> We are firm believers in the idea and we rejoice to see the progress it is making each day. We have decided that discussions are no longer enough, that we will not be content with the purely theoretical propaganda of the ideal, that we will resolutely plant the embryo of this International which will surely develop into something good — that much we can say. So it is settled; the Libertarian International will be created within a few months."

The timescale involved left little room for manoeuvre. A month later, the Dutch federation announced that the congress would take place the following July or August (the choice was to fall on August) and made it quite clear that their objective (their main, if not only, one) was the "organization of an international libertarian association"[18].

But why was the drive to "create" an International coming from the Belgians and the Dutch (other than it being a sort of "vocation" for the Belgians, who were also heavily involved in the early days of the Second International)? Why were movements in places which most historians had always considered peripheral to anarchism's epicentre, not to mention the fact that they were countries with huge social democratic tendencies, the first to do anything

[18] *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", novembre 1906.

individual caprice, these groups were destined to disappear with it; those who made them up did not feel united enough, and the first difficulty they encountered caused them to split up. Furthermore, these groups do not seem to have ever had a clear notion of their goal. Now, the goal of an organization is at one and the same time thought and action. In my experience, however, those groups did not act at all: they disputed. And many reproached them for building all those little chapels, those talking shops.

What lies at the root of the fact that anarchist opinion now seems to be changing with regard to the question of organization?

There are two reasons for this:

The first is the example from abroad. There are small permanent organizations in England, Holland, Germany, Bohemia, Romandy and Italy which have been operating for several years now, without the anarchist idea having visibly suffered for this. It is true that in France we do not have a great deal of information on the constitution and life of these organizations; it would be desirable to investigate this.

The second cause is much more important. It consists of the decisive evolution that the minds and practical habits of anarchists have been undergoing more or less everywhere for the last seven years or so, which has led them to join the workers' movement actively and participate in the people's lives.

In a word, we have overcome the gap between the pure idea, which can so easily turn into dogma, and real life.

The basic result of this has been that we have become less and less interested in the sociological abstractions of yore and more and more interested in the practical movement, in action. Proof is the great importance that revolutionary syndicalism and antimilitarism, for example, have acquired for us in recent years.

Another result of our participation in the movement, this too very important, has been that theoretical anarchism itself has gradually sharpened itself and become alive through contact with real life, that eternal fountain of thought. Anarchism in our eyes is no

them to the ambition of re-building a whole new ideology all over again, faced with parliamentary and reformist socialism?

We cannot but recognize it: this ideological attempt was not always an easy one. More often than not we have limited ourselves to consigning to the flames that which social democracy worshipped, and to worshipping that which burned. That is how unwittingly and without even realizing it, so many anarchists were able to lose sight of the essentially practical and workerist nature of socialism in general and anarchism in particular, neither of which have ever been anything other than the theoretical expression of the spontaneous resistance of the workers against the oppression by the bourgeois regime. It happened to the anarchists as it happened to German philosophical socialism before 1848 – as we can read in the "Communist Manifesto" – which prided itself on being able to remain "in contempt of all class struggles" and defending "not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy".

Thus, many of our people came back curiously towards idealism on the one hand and individualism on the other. And there was renewed interest in the old themes of '48 of justice, liberty, brotherhood and the emancipatory omnipotence of the Idea of the world. At the same time the Individual was exalted, in the English manner, against the State and any form of organization came, more or less openly, to be viewed as a form of oppression and mental exploitation.

Certainly, this state of mind was never absolutely unanimous. But that does not take away from the fact that it is responsible, for the most part, for the absence of an organized, coherent anarchist movement. The exaggerated fear of alienating our own free wills at the hands of some new collective body stopped us above all from uniting.

It is true that there existed among us "social study groups", but we know how ephemeral and precarious they were: born out of

concrete regarding international organization? The answer is not a simple one and would require a thorough analysis of the anarchist movement of the two countries, something which is not possible. But it must be said, contrary to what is commonly thought, that both Belgium and the Netherlands — and above all the Netherlands — were in reality anything but peripheral at the time, when compared to the "classical" zone of anarchism — Spain, France and Italy.

We can hazard one or two hypotheses. In both countries, the libertarian tradition had deep roots going back to the early years of the old International. In both countries anarchist federalism had a long history of local and regional autonomy. Both contained some of the most important ports in Europe and the importance of sailors in the spreading of propaganda cannot be underestimated. Both countries formed a cushion between great powers and were home to a deep pacifist tradition which was the basis for active anarchist anti-militarism. Neither should it be forgotten that Amsterdam was the seat of the International Anti-Militarist Association (*Internationaal Anti-militaristische Vereeniging*), formed in 1904 thanks to the drive and untiring activity of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, one of the few European social democratic leaders to pass over to anarchism. Nor that in Belgium, the natural place of refuge for French deserters, anti-militarist agitation in 1906 had reached intense levels, above all in the pages of the aggressive "L'action directe" newssheet, directed by Henri Fuss-Amoré[19].

Belgium and the Netherlands, indeed, were among the first countries to have national anarchist federations (a decidedly relevant fact, even though they were never huge) and to organize union opposition to reformism through separate organizations — the old *Nationaal-Arbeids-Sekretariaat* (founded in 1893 by Cornelissen and formerly the only union in the country, but later

[19] "L'action directe", edited by Gilly (Hainaut) was noted for its "workerist anti-militarism". See "Les Temps Nouveaux", 7 avril 1906.

abandoned by the reformists) and the "tiny" CGT of the Liege region. Yet again, it was the Dutch who proposed, first in 1909 and again in 1913, the formation of a revolutionary syndicalist International.

Naturally, the importance of the Belgian and Dutch movements must not be exaggerated. By force of things, they operated on a rather limited level, both in their physical range of action and in their "political wavelength", and they were in reality dependent, ideologically speaking, on the French movement. But they must have reached a level of de-provincialization and maturity which would allow them to organize successfully such an initiative (something which would have been unthinkable, for example, for the Italians).

The proposal, nonetheless, was greeted with a crescendo of adherents and neither the isolated reservation of individualists and anti-organizationalists nor the scepticism of other (such as Jean Grave) were enough to throw the validity of the initiative into crisis. It was a tangible sign of the extent to which anarchist circles felt the pressing need to bring back an international dimension to anarchism. Above all, the need was felt to do away with the isolation of groups, to have an exchange of information, to find out how the movements in the various countries were getting on. "With our brothers beyond our borders", complained one anonymous piece in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire"[20], "we have only purely theoretical relations. We barely know that they exist".

But obviously, this was not the only problem. It was not just a "letterbox" that was needed. There was also a need for a motor, something which would be able to stimulate growth in the movement, to launch and coordinate initiatives in the struggle, to facilitate widespread agitation, solidarity campaigns and, why not, the spark of revolution.

[20] *Vers l'Internationale*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", octobre 1906.

raised endless protests from them, and its supporters would have been vehemently accused of a hidden agenda and authoritarianism.

They were times when anarchists, isolated from each other and even more so from the working class, seemed to have lost all social feeling; in which anarchists, with their unceasing appeals for the spiritual liberation of the individual, were seen as the supreme manifestation of the old individualism of the great bourgeois theoreticians of the past.

Individual actions and individual initiative were thought to suffice for everything; and they applauded "Enemy of the People" when it declared that a man alone is the most powerful of all. But they did not think of one thing: that Ibsen's concept was never that of a revolutionary, in the sense that we give this word, but of a moralist primarily concerned with establishing a new moral elite within the very breast of the old society.

In past years, generally speaking, little attention was paid to studying the concrete matters of economic life, of the various phenomena of production and exchange, and some of our people, whose race has not yet disappeared, went so far as to deny the existence of that basic phenomenon – the class struggle – to the point of no longer distinguishing in the present society, in the manner of the pure democrats, anything except differences of opinion, which anarchist propaganda had to prepare individuals for, as a way of training them for theoretic discussion.

In its origins, anarchism was nothing more than a concrete protest against opportunist tendencies and the authoritarian way of acting of social democracy; and in this regard it can be said to have carried out a useful function in the social movement of the past twenty-five years. If socialism as a whole, as a revolutionary idea, has survived the progressive bourgeoisation of social democracy, it is is undoubtedly due to the anarchists.

Why have anarchists not been content to support the principle of socialism and federalism against the bare-faced deviations of the cavaliers of the conquest of political power? Why has time brought

Second session – Monday 26 August – Afternoon session

This session is devoted to the reports on the state of the anarchist movement in Belgium, Bohemia, the Netherlands, Romandy (Francophone Switzerland), the USA and Vienna (Austria).

Third session – Monday 26 August – Evening session

More reports on the state of the movement, from Germany, London's Jews, Russia, Serbia, Italy and Britain.

Fourth session – Tuesday 27 August – Morning session

The session begins at nine o'clock. Rudolf Lange is nominated as chairman of the congress, with Christiaan Cornelissen and R. de Marmande as adjutants.

First on the agenda is "Syndicalism and Anarchism". But as one of the speakers, comrade Turner, has not yet arrived[1], Congress decides to deal with the topic "Anarchism and Organization" instead. Amédée Dunois takes the floor.

AMÉDÉE DUNOIS:[2] It is not long since our comrades were almost unanimous in their clear hostility towards any idea of organization. The question we are dealing with today would, then, have

[1] Turner had in fact gone to the International Syndicalist Conference.

[2] *Rapporto presentato al Congresso Internazionale Anarchico di Amsterdam (24–31 agosto 1907)*, from "Il Pensiero", 16 novembre 1907.

In the space of a few weeks the Amsterdam congress became a reality. The first to announce their participation were the Bohemians (the *Česká Anarchistická Federace* and its journal "Nova Omladine", the Czech section of the Anti-Militarist International and the journal "Matice Svobody"), closely followed by the *Anarchistische Föderation Deutschlands* and numerous German-language journals ("Der Revolutionär", "Der freie Arbeiter", "Der Anarchist", "Die freie Generation"). These were followed by the *Jiddisch-Sprechende Anarchistische Föderation* and the newly-constituted *Fédération Communiste-Anarchiste de la Suisse Romande*. Italian groups like the *Federazione socialista anarchica del Lazio* and the journals "Il Pensiero", "La Gioventù Libertaria" and "La Vita Operaia" announced their intention to attend. Finally, there were adhesions from various periodicals and individuals from Algeria, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, the USA, Great Britain, France, Greece, Argentina, Russia, Tunisia, Spain Portugal, Brazil and elsewhere.

In early 1907, Amédée Dunois set up a propaganda group for the congress[21] in Paris. In April, the "Bulletin" recorded nine other such groups, in Amsterdam, Portalegre (Portugal), Bari and Naples (Italy), New York, London, Porto Alegre (Brazil), Buenos Aires, Berlin and Notre-Dame de Lourdes (Canada)[22].

The initiative of the congress also seemed to elicit a new pro-organization drive in several countries. The Italians in the *Federazione socialista anarchica del Lazio* met in Rome on 25 March 1907 and called a national congress for the following June in order to create an organization with a wider territorial reach[23]. The Portuguese group, *Conquista do Pão*, announced in the same period a congress to be held in Lisbon following the Amsterdam congress[24].

[21] See "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", février 1907.

[22] *Ibid*, avril 1907.

[23] *Un Congresso Anarchico Italiano. Appello agli anarchici d'Italia*, in "La Gioventù Libertaria", 30 marzo 1907.

[24] See "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", mai 1907.

The Russians, too, were planning the formation of an Anarchist Federation, according to "Der freie Arbeiter"[25].

The quick reaction from large sectors of international anarchism was not, however, matched by an adequate liveliness and wealth of debate in preparation for the congress. This was perhaps what Georg Herzig was referring to on the eve of the congress, when he spoke of a lack of enthusiasm and of "*émulation préliminaire*"[26]. In fact, while most libertarian newspapers provided news on the preparatory phase, publishing appeals and messages from the organizing committee, very few printed articles which dealt specifically with the questions that the congress would deal with.

In fact, it was limited to constant, but never more than superficial, worries of a practical nature. From the very start, the Dutch made it clear that they wanted to address "practical matters"[27], while the Brazilians of "A Terra livre" expressed their fear that there would be a slide into academe "without addressing anything concrete and practical"[28]. This was also the view of the Italians from "La Gioventù Libertaria", who underlined the need to "discuss **the best form of action**, instead of wasting time on theoretical speechifying and word-mongering"[29], and of the Belgians who, in the words of Henri Fuss-Amoré, repeated that they were "coming to Amsterdam not just to talk but to organize"[30].

But mostly it was a matter of general will to do something, never going beyond a certain point. In effect, the circular sent out by the organizing committee at the end of 1906, signed by Lodewijk,

[25] See "Der freie Arbeiter", den 20. April 1907.

[26] G. HERZIG, *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste", 20 juillet 1907.

[27] *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, cit.

[28] *L'Internationale Libertaire*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", février 1907.

[29] LA G.L., *Riflessioni (A proposito del Congresso Internazionale Libertario di Amsterdam)*, in "La Gioventù Libertaria", 23 febbraio 1907.

[30] H. FUSS-AMORÉ, *Groupement Comuniste Libertarie*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 26 janvier 1907.

The International Anarchist Congress

held at the Plancius Hall in Amsterdam, 26–31 August 1907

First session – Monday 26 August – Morning session

The session opened at nine o'clock with Henri Fuss nominated as chairman. The agenda is discussed.

Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis points out that the International Anti-Militarist Association, of which he is general secretary, will have its 2nd Congress on Friday and proposes that the Anarchist Congress take part, in lieu of its own discussion of anti-militarism. He is supported in this by Raphaël Friedeberg, Pierre Ramus, Max Baginsky and Emma Goldman. The proposal is vigorously opposed by Errico Malatesta and René de Marmande and a counterproposal is put forth requesting that the agenda be adhered to. Following lengthy discussions, the proposals are put to a vote, with Malatesta's winning 38 votes against 33 for the Domela-Friedeberg motion. Malatesta's proposal is therefore adopted.

from a close analysis of the goings on which provide the backdrop to the Amsterdam Congress: it is no longer possible to limit ourselves to accepting uncritically the lines of the Monatte-Malatesta clash, on the basis of what is frequently distorted tradition or historiography. If we look as Amsterdam in its true context, taking into consideration the situation at the time this initiative came about, we can find many answers to the questions that the history of the anarchist movement continues to throw up.

Maurizio Antonioli

Translation by Nestor McNab, 2007.

Thonar, Frauböse, Vohryzek and Knotek, Shapiro — in other words the secretaries of the main (and only) national organizations — already outlined a precise discussion plan: "In recent years, libertarian and anarchist communist principles and tactics have taken on a new light. Without wishing to anticipate the agenda, which is yet to be finally decided by the groups, we wish to say that **direct action** has been so strongly and consciously adopted in so many countries, by reason of the influence of our comrades, testimony to the progress our ideas are making within workers' circles, that discussion of the problems it raises would already of itself justify the calling of an international congress"[31]. Basically what they were saying was that if a congress was being seen as a good idea, it was because anarchism in recent years had re-discovered its vitality thanks to its use of direct action and therefore, in the terminology of the times, thanks to revolutionary syndicalism and syndicalist practice. Thus, Herzig was not wrong to speak of a circular promoting "syndicalist propaganda"[32]. The problem of syndicalism, therefore, was already looking like it would be the major point of the Congress.

And yet, despite this one gets the impression reading the anarchist press during the period leading up to the congress that there was some reticence on the question. Perhaps it was the fear of influencing the outcome of the initiative, by colouring it too much, that led a prominent "syndicalist anarchist" like Fuss-Amoré to insist on the "anarchist" rather than the "workerist" nature (unlike Delesalle in 1900) of the congress (where "workerist" simply meant syndicalist)[33]? Why did Cornelissen, who had even tried to bring Pouget and Yvetot to Amsterdam and had then "fallen back"

[31] The circular appeared in most of the anarchist press in January/February 1907.

[32] G. HERZIG, *cit.*

[33] H. FUSS-AMORÉ, *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 9 mars 1907.

on Monatte[34], also seem to be minimizing the problem[35]? Why then did the polemic that was to emerge during the congress, and even more so after the congress, not also emerge beforehand? The fact that Herzig caught a whiff of "syndicalist propaganda" in the initial call for the congress and that the *Fédération Communiste-Anarchiste de la Suisse Romande* interpreted the new International being set up as an "Anarchist Syndicalist" International[36] was not entirely insignificant.

The only one to intervene on this subject, and who did so with great clarity, was Amédée Dunois, between December 1906 and July 1907. Dunois' argument began with the awareness of the existence of two distinct currents within anarchism: "a certain type of theoretical anarchism, dealing in abstract generalizations" — the sort of anarchism that, for example, in the spring of 1906 opposed the fight for the eight-hour day[37] — that he described as "pure", and the "workerist anarchism" which, "without ever abandoning the firm ground of concrete reality, devoted itself consistently to the organization of the proletariat in the light of the economic revolt, otherwise known as the class struggle". This second sort, though, was not, in Dunois' eyes, simply one of the varieties that anarchism seemed to have split into, but the true and authentic interpretation of "revolutionary anti-authoritarian communism", the continuation of the collectivism of the Bakuninist International which, lost in the reactionary storm that followed the Commune and the "individualist" wave of the Nineties, had reappeared at the time of

[34] According to what Monatte wrote, in a long article which dealt with the founding and life of "La Vie Ouvrière", in "La Révolution prolétarienne", octobre 1959 — janvier 1960 (the comment that interests us is in the October issue).

[35] C. CORNELISSEN, *cit.*

[36] See the note to *Rapport sur le movement anarchiste en Suisse Romande*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", 29 février 1908.

[37] The reference is to the famous strikes of April-May 1906, promoted by the CGT in demand of an 8-hour working day.

laborators included Griffuelhes, Merrheim, Pouget, Delesalle, Lagardelle, Dunois and Cornelissen)[63]. Then, towards the end of 1908, Dunois contributed to the "Bulletin de l'Internationale Anarchiste" in his capacity as member of the International itself, though by this stage, as he himself confessed, he was increasingly led to believe that specific groups were "pointless and superfluous"[64].

By 1909–10, the process of breaking away could be said to be complete. Most of the anarcho-syndicalists, apart from some isolated cases, had either returned to positions close to those of Malatesta (Fabbri or Bertoni, for example) or had definitively opted for syndicalism without any further specification. When, in 1909, Monatte founded "La Vie Ouvrière", amongst the initial nucleus of the journal were Dunois, Fuss-Amoré and Léon Clément, to name just those who participated in the Amsterdam Congress (in effect, Clément had only sent in his report). Cornelissen was by now thoroughly occupied with editing the "Bulletin international du movement syndicaliste". Only later, after the First World War, would anarcho-syndicalism once again be spoken of as a phenomenon at international level.

Despite all the contradictions, the misunderstandings, the silences and the incomprehension that we have highlighted, the Amsterdam event had, and still has, important repercussions (repercussions which were not as immediate as Malatesta had predicted) on the anarchist movement. Amsterdam did not lead to the definitive liquidation of "traditional" anarchism as the syndicalist anarchists had hoped, in order that anarchism could regain its leading role in the process of the proletariat's emancipation.

Establishing whether their alternative would have met with greater success, or at least attempting to establish it, would be outside the scope of this work. One thing, though, does emerge

[63] The first issue of "L'action directe" came out on 15 January 1908, the last issue coming out on 3 October of the same year.

[64] See "Bulletin de l'Internationale Anarchiste", décembre 1908.

recommenced their old criticism of syndicalism[58], whereas in Italy, various articles in "L'Alleanza Libertaria" (a new journal which emerged from the Congress of Rome) mostly followed the pre-Amsterdam line[59] of prudent, if open, support for syndicalism. The same could be said for French-speaking Switzerland, where "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste" firmly placed itself half-way between Dunois and Malatesta[60]. In Germany, "Der Revolutionär" hosted a reasoned debate between certain elements for and against syndicalism[61]. In Russian emigrant circles the clash between the tendencies went on as openly as before[62].

So, no exaggerated responses. In fact, even the distancing of the French syndicalist anarchists (but not all) was gradual. Their main worry was not so much clashing with other anarchists as trying to form a unitary front with the other tendencies within syndicalism. In early 1908, there appeared in Paris "L'action directe", designed as an attempt to bring together elements of varying origin — pure syndicalists, syndicalist socialists, syndicalist anarchists, as Monatte himself wrote (apart from him, the other col-

[58] CHARLES-ALBERT, *Après le Congrès*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 7 décembre 1907. J. GRAVE, *Syndicalisme et anarchie*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 1, 8, 15 février 1908. There is a curious comment by Malato in "La Guerre Sociale", du 28 août au 3 septembre 1907, where he talks about two tendencies, one "objective" and one "subjective", the former seeking to change the environment in order to transform the individual, the latter aiming to perfect the individual. The two tendencies that appeared, however, do not seem to us to be distinguished in this way.

[59] See for example A. BORGHI, *Anarchismo e sindacalismo*, in "L'Alleanza Libertaria", 1 e 8 maggio 1908; E. SOTTOVIA, *L'influenza sindacalista nel movimento anarchico*, ivi, 17 luglio 1908; L. FABBRI, *Come e perché siamo sindacalisti*, ivi, 28 agosto 1908, etc.

[60] See L. BERTONI, *Anarchisme et syndicalisme*, cit.; J. W(INTSCH), *Idéologie du syndicalisme*, in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste", 13 juin 1908.

[61] See the debate entitled *Syndikalismus und Anarchismus*, between Luigi (Fabbri) and Karl Holfmann and G. Stine in "Der Revolutionär", in the issues of 16 and 20 November and 7 and 21 December 1907.

[62] See P. AVRICH, *The Russian Anarchists*, University Press, Princeton 1967, p. 81 and following.

the first showings of revolutionary syndicalism, the "practical" aspect of anarchism[38].

It was therefore necessary to push aside all those non-genuine (not to mention anachronistic) forms of anarchism, and ensure that anarchism could root itself solidly in the class organizations and become a vanguard for the workers' movement, whose task would not be to direct the movement, "but to understand it, to inspire it and to light up the darkness of its future"[39].

All this did not mean that it would be superfluous for there to be "an opinion group", "a particularly ideological movement", in other words a specific movement, distinct from the workers' organizations. On the contrary. Dunois was convinced that syndicalism in itself was not sufficient, and was proposing the setting-up of a network of anarchist groups (and therefore with a precise ideological position) which would be able to fulfil the particular function of the vanguard without in any way damaging the autonomy of the workers' organizations[40].

Dunois' articles were forceful enough to be seen even as being somewhat provocative. But even they did not elicit any response. But then, apart from a certain exclusivist tone, there was nothing in them that was not shared by a large part of the movement. For some time already, both in Italy (above all through the work of Luigi Fabbri) and in France (Caughi, Pierrot, Goldsmith), the continuity between the Bakuninist International and revolutionary syndicalism was being openly stated[41]. Even Kropotkin had

[38] A. DUNOIS, *Les anarchistes et le movement ouvrier en France*, in "Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire", juillet 1907 (also published in "Der Freie Arbeiter", den 31. August 1907).

[39] A. DUNOIS, *Un Congrès anarchiste*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 1 décembre 1906 (also published in "Il Pensiero", 16 gennaio 1907).

[40] A. DUNOIS, *Sur le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 16 février 1907.

[41] In this regard, see my *Bakunin tra sindacalismo rivoluzionario e anarchismo*, in *Bakunin cent'anni dopo*, L'Antistato, Milan 1977, pp. 70–71.

supported this idea[42] just before the Congress opened. If anything, the polemics were centred on those forms of syndicalism of Marxist origin (Leone, Labriola, etc. in Italy and Lagardelle in France) that denied any connection between syndicalism and anarchism. Certainly, Dunois seemed to give great priority to union organization over specific organization, but then even Fabbri agreed[43] and Bertoni and Pierrot were not far off sharing the notion[44].

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, we can make out a series of differences in the various trends, which existed not so much in what was said, but in what was not said. If we take into account his later development, Dunois probably considered it of secondary importance, even though he did not question the ideological aspect, whose continuity and survival was a matter for the opinion groups. What, then, was responsible — above all in France — for that revival of anarchist "spirit" on which everyone was agreed? Certainly not the simple, but consistent, input of those "historic" militants. More than anything else, it was the fact that an increasing number of workers' organizations were adopting libertarian practices in the struggles (rejection of mediation, class autonomy, anti-institutionalism, and so on), and what was known as direct action. Basically, anarchism could only bring about anarchy if it became an essential element of the workers' condition and behaviour and not because of any intrinsic value. At this point it was difficult to think that someone like Fabbri, or Bertoni, or even Kropotkin, could be in agreement.

In reality, a position like Dunois' found its justification in a precise reading of the political situation at the time, even though it was

[42] P. KROPOTKIN, *Les Anarchistes et les Syndicats*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 25 mai 1907.

[43] With regard to Fabbri, see my introduction to L. FABBRI, *L'organizzazione operaia e l'anarchia*, Crescita Politica Editrice, Florence 1975.

[44] See for example by Pierrot, *Le syndicalisme*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 11 mai 1907 and by Bretoni, *Gli anarchici e l'organizzazione operaia* (extract from the report sent to the Rome anarchist congress), in "Il Pensiero", 16 giugno 1907.

years, and no longer solely in its initiates, for the realization of its dreams".

While Malatesta, linear and consistent in his defence of the anarchist movement's unity, had sought not to worsen the divide when noting the divergence, Dunois preferred not to "camouflage" the "theoretical and practical conflict". "In Amsterdam, traditional anarchism saw workerist anarchism ranged against it for the first time. And there will be other occasions to follow this first meeting. But traditional anarchism, enveloped in its mantle of idealism which tomorrow will be its shroud, is as half-dead as the other is alive".

As we can see, there were no half measures. For Dunois, the anarchist movement was at a crossroads: either it must accept the positions of "workerist anarchism" or it would die, or at the very least vegetate in a state of continual crisis. But at the very same time, Malatesta was exploring the question of anarchism and/or syndicalism in an article published in "Freedom" and again in "Les Temps Nouveaux" and other papers[57], going so far as to state: "The fault of having abandoned the workers' movement was most damaging for anarchism, but at least it was left with its distinctive characteristics. The error of confusing the anarchist movement with syndicalism will prove to be a serious one. In other words, the "purity" of the ideal first and foremost.

In late 1907 and early 1908, the respective positions seemed to have been clearly laid out. And yet it can be said that they provoked no particular reaction in anarchist circles. The problem of "syndicalism" continued to be discussed more or less everywhere, but without anything much new being said. The articles by Malatesta and Dunois did not seem to have exerted much influence, or rather, they did not seem to have moved the debate on to any extent. In France, Charles-Albert and Jean Grave

[57] E. MALATESTA, *Anarchisme et syndicalisme*, in "Les Temps Nouveaux", 28 décembre 1908.

vide itself 'between the bourgeois sky and the working-class earth', to paraphrase Bakunin's neat expression, and become once again what, frankly, it should never have ceased being. In other words, it must become workerist anarchism again (...) It is from within that anarchism will be able to clarify, to enliven, to fertilize the workers' movement, the workers' practice. I do not see it going so far as to direct it, nor even to influence it from without (...) Anarchism must boldly penetrate the workers' movement, mingle closely with its life, its daily activity, with its struggles, defeats or victories -, let it take its share of tasks and common responsibilities, let it impregnate the whole spirit and feelings of the working class, — and thus, only thus, will it find the strength to achieve all its revolutionary mission"[54].

And Dunois did not stop there. In a later article in the "Pages Libres" journal[55], he spoke openly of a crisis within anarchism, due to the fact that "so many vainly cling to old formulae", while "the minority (has) boldly allied itself to revolutionary syndicalism", defined as a new philosophy, "a launching platform for a whole army of brilliant thinkers and intellectuals, but... merrily unencumbered with the experience and consciousness of a proletariat eager for well-being and freedom"[56].

It was not a question, though, of changing opinion and moving from anarchism to revolutionary syndicalism, since "revolutionary syndicalism is anarchism — but a regenerated anarchism, refreshed by the breeze of proletarian thought, a realistic and concrete anarchism which is no longer satisfied, as was the old anarchism, with abstract negations and statements, a **workerist anarchism** which trusts in a working class strengthened by the struggle over the

[54] A. DUNOIS, *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam*, in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste", 21 septembre — 2 novembre 1907.

[55] A. DUNOIS, *Le Congrès d'Amsterdam et l'anarchisme*, in "Pages libres", 23 novembre 1907.

[56] "Bien-être et liberté" was the motto of the *Confédération Générale du Travail*.

perhaps overly reliant on this. Why was anarchism in those years apparently going through a renaissance? For a series of reasons, but above all because of the general international situation, which saw what was basically a favourable economic situation with a working class on the attack matched by an increasingly unstable political situation.

As a matter of fact, with the new century and in particular after 1902–03, the quality of the workers' struggles became markedly bitter. Maybe it was the awareness of a new strength (the massive expansion of the unions) that had sparked off a wave of demands that was without precedent. This wave affected almost every European nation over a period of time with general strikes and mass strikes. Whether the strikes were for universal suffrage (as in Belgium and Sweden), or to defend civil servants' freedom to strike (as in the Netherlands), or in order to protest outrages against the proletariat (as in Italy), such strikes soon ended up turning into direct clashes with the State. This was to lead to a progressive increase in antagonism between the workers and the State.

Then, in 1905, with the events in Russia reminding everyone in Europe that something which seemed to have survived only in the hearts of the few — revolution — was, after all, possible and with the rising risk of war in the wake of the first Moroccan crisis, the level of the clash rose precipitously. Anti-militarism, too, became an increasing element of the agitation. Once again the State was seen as one and the same thing as the class enemy.

This explains the spread of that anarchist "spirit" we mentioned earlier, and of the recovery in pro-organization anarchism. Indeed it was no coincidence that the German, Czech, Belgian and Dutch national federations were born **after** the Russian Revolution in 1905 and that, generally speaking, the revolutionary syndicalist organizations (the *Česká Federace Všech odboru*, the Belgian CGT and the *Fédération des Unions Ouvrières de la Suisse Romande*) were established **before** these.

From all this, it could be deduced that the growth of the anarchist movement was in some way dependent on the general situation. It was the radicalization of the workers' movement that had given anarchism a breath of life and not vice versa. But such a radicalization took place also (not only, obviously) thanks to the instruments of struggle that syndicalist practice offered, in particular the general strike, whose enormous charge of spontaneity — only barely controllable by the centralist type of organization — was able to throw Second-Internationalist socialist strategy into crisis. This led to the conclusion drawn by certain sectors of the movement, that anarchism had to be syndicalist or else risked extinction.

As we said before, however, none of this came to light before the Congress, which opened in a climate of apparent unity.

It is pointless to deal here with everything that was said at the Congress, documented as it is in the following report. We will limit ourselves to the matter of syndicalism.

It is well-known from contemporary historiography, in particular French, from Maitron's by now classic work[45] to the recent "*Colloque du Creuzot*"[46], that the Amsterdam Congress marked the decisive separation between "orthodox" anarchism and a syndicalism that no longer had anything anarchist about it. This vision allowed Rolande Trempé to imagine Malatesta of all people saying to Monatte: "You are no longer an anarchist"[47].

It is an interpretation which in reality provides little comfort. Monatte's speech was certainly entirely wrapped up in the question of syndicalism, a sort of hymn to syndicalism and the CGT. But it was the same Monatte who, during the next debate, stated "Like everyone else here, our final goal is anarchism" and who several times reaffirmed the validity of "his" anarchism. As for Malatesta, he actually declared in an article that was published in vari-

[45] J. MAITRON, *Histoire du movement anarchiste en France (1880–1914)*, SELI, Paris 1951, p. 306.

[46] See "Le Mouvement social", avril-juin 1977.

[47] *Ibid.*

it would be hard to define them concretely into two agendas; and that in any event the difference lay in a diversity of theoretical appreciation and not in any real difference".

If we believe what Malatesta says then that was clearly not the case. But that is not what matters. The essential point is that the difference struggled to come to light and perhaps some would have preferred it not to. If proof be needed, we only have to see the attitude of Bertoni, who was later to become one of the fiercest "Malatestans". In a long article of his serialized in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste"[53], Bertoni (who was from the Italian-speaking Ticino canton in Switzerland) confessed that he did not understand Malatesta's position on the reformist nature of trade unions and saw it as being dangerously close to that of the "politicians of socialism", tending to exploit the trade union for the good of the party.

The situation would probably have remained static if, on the part of the anarcho-syndicalists, Dunois (who else?) had not pushed the matter. Despite the series of misunderstandings that we have just seen, the syndicalist anarchists had clearly understood that they had been unable to steer the Congress towards "workerist anarchism". The bloc which formed around Malatesta was, all told, decidedly in the majority. It was at this point that the attack on "traditional" anarchism took a much harsher turn.

One month after the Congress, while "Les Temps Nouveaux" was publishing Malatesta's first article, a long piece by Dunois appeared in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste" in which he pulled no punches in his criticism of Malatesta (though he did admit: "Malatesta is infinitely closer to us syndicalists than many of those who gave him their votes"), he repeated quite explicitly that anarchism and syndicalism were one and the same thing, and indicated the road anarchism should take: "It must, finally, stop trying to di-

[53] L. BERTONI, *Anarchisme et syndicalisme*, in "Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste", 30 novembre 1907 (the article was concluded in the following 8th August issue).

ous journals and appended as a preface to Fabbri's congressional report[48]: "I am convinced, ..., that Monatte and the 'young' group are sincerely and profoundly anarchist as much as any 'bearded old comrade'".

But, more so than Monatte's speech, which often avoided the problem, it was Dunois' report on organization that was fundamental. In fact, it should not be forgotten that he was on the receiving end of most of the pre-congress attacks and the post-congress polemics. With regard to the problem of specific organization (a central element, as would become clear later, too), Dunois went on from what had been said in previous articles. But he did introduce a new element by speaking of "syndicalists" who were "hostile — or at least indifferent — to all organization based on an identity of aspirations, sentiment and organizations" and of "syndicalist anarchists", amongst whom he included himself, "who willingly assigned first place in the field of action to the workers' movement" (without however rejecting a "specifically anarchist movement") with "its own action, to be carried out directly". It is true that he then tried to reduce the difference to a misunderstanding by the former of the latter ("This is how the syndicalists talk. But I do not see where their objections are valid against our project to organize ourselves. On the contrary, I see that if they were valid, they would also be against anarchism itself, as a doctrine that seeks to distinguish itself from syndicalism and refuses to allow itself to be absorbed"). But it is equally true that his position was not an isolated case. In fact, it was just what Fabbri had been sustaining for some time (Fabbri had often republished Dunois' articles in "Il Pensiero" and was alone in publishing Dunois' report, again in "Il Pensiero"). Neither was it far from the thinking of Bertoni and Wintsch, who in 1913–14 were to be syndicalism's harshest critics[49].

[48] *Resoconto generale del Congresso Internazionale Anarchico di Amsterdam*, Libreria Sociologica, Paterson 1907, p. 5.

[49] See *Bakunin tra sindacalismo rivoluzionario e anarchismo*, already cited.

economic, political and moral point of view". Whereas the basis of the anarcho-syndicalist vision was production, society tied to the factory and the working class as a world of its own with its own specific existence, Malatesta based his own political vision on the mechanism for the reproduction of power, on the choice between freedom and authority.

It has to be said, though, that such complexity escaped most of the participants at the congress. Some saw in the Malatesta-Monatte clash nothing but the re-emergence of traditional insurrectionalism over the general strike. Others crystallized their attention on the problem of ends and means, emphasizing that it was anarchism which had to gather syndicalism within it and not the other way around. Yet others limited themselves to seeing only Malatesta's criticism of corporativism, of the potential "conservatism" of the unions. Few understood the true nature of the clash. Malatesta himself confirmed this impression[51]: "On these questions, as expounded by Monatte and I, there followed a debate which was most interesting, however much smothered by a lack of time and by the tiresome need for translation into many languages. It ended with the proposal of various resolution, but I do not believe that the differences in the tendencies were well defined; in fact, a great deal of penetration is required to understand them and, indeed, most of those present did not do so and voted nonetheless on the various resolutions. Which, of course, does not deny the fact that two quite real tendencies have appeared, however much the difference exists for the most part in predicted future developments rather than in the present intentions of the comrades".

Fabbri, too, contributed at the time by way of a letter of clarification to "La Protesta Umana"[52], minimizing the divergence and reporting how Malatesta believed that "if two tendencies did emerge from the congress on syndicalism, it was so barely perceptible that

[51] See *Resoconto generale* ..., cit., p.5.

[52] L. FABBRI, *op. cit.*

In fact, we can say that the viewpoints of the French syndicalist anarchists, the *Fédération Communiste-Anarchiste* from francophone Switzerland and the Italians from the *Federazione Socialista anarchica* were to all intents and purposes identical.

If anyone's position could be described as somewhat "anomalous" it was Malatesta, who was closer to the English-speaking comrades. On the problem not so much of organization as of the attitude to take towards the anti-organizationalists, Malatesta differed sharply from the syndicalist anarchists and those favourable to syndicalism. As a dyed-in-the-wool pluralist, he fought hard for the "party", combating the strictest forms of individualism, but he was prepared to accept a certain opening towards the anti-organizationalist communists. This was demonstrated by one of his speeches, where he sought to minimize the differences as being misunderstandings caused by words ("Enough arguing; let us stick to deeds! Words divide but action unites"), something with which Fabbri, for example, declared himself to be in disagreement[50].

The simple fact is that while Malatesta tried above all to protect the unity of the anarchist movement, others were more than willing to do without certain elements if it meant saving the unity of the revolutionary workers' movement. The unifying power of action was something that the syndicalists too could see, but who to unify — anarchists? Why not the proletariat instead?

And just what was the basic difference between Malatesta and Monatte? Malatesta was by no means anti-syndicalist. He declared that he was (and, in fact, had always been) "a supporter of the unions" and he constantly encouraged anarchists to join the workers' organizations. Neither had he ever dreamed of "damaging" the autonomy of the labour organizations (another point on which he agreed with the syndicalists). Certainly, Malatesta was insistent that the general strike was insufficient as the definitive weapon

[50] L. FABBRI, *A proposito del Congresso di Amsterdam. Due parole di schiarimento*, in "La Protesta Umana", 28 settembre 1907.

and underlined the need for an insurrection, for armed defence, which would run parallel to and continue after any eventual paralysis of the production. But, after the Russian Revolution and the various other experiences of general strikes, was there anyone who thought that "downing tools" would be enough to achieve a social revolution?

Nor were the dangers of corporativism minimized by Dunois or by Monatte. In fact, it was in order to limit them, to neutralize them, that the organic participation of anarchists was required. It is true that "syndicalist anarchists" seemed inclined not to reject so-called *fonctionnarisme*, or at least not to reject it a priori, whereas Malatesta was, on that point, rigidly intransigent (but then so was Bertoni…). But was this enough to divide the two sides?

Undoubtedly there was a difference, and a deep one at that. And to some extent we have already established what it was. It lay not so much in the choice between syndicalism as an end or means, which was later to become an integral part of the polemics within the anarchist movement. Monatte, while refusing to see "in the organized proletariat merely a fertile terrain for propaganda" and reducing it "to a simple means" (Malatesta was clearly referring to the practice of syndicalism, not to the organized proletariat, though not if it meant merely a mass to be manoeuvred), was by no means questioning anarchy as an end, as we stressed above.

The nub of the matter lay elsewhere. Malatesta could not share the idea that anarchism had to be practically reborn continually within the process of the workers' emancipation, that it was in other words "stuck" to the history of the class struggle. The terrain of the class struggle, as understood by the syndicalist anarchists, seemed too narrow to him. And anyway, as he himself explained, he did not believe in the existence of classes "in the proper sense of the term", nor in the existence of "class interests". The starting point of the struggle of the exploited must not and could not be shared class interests, even "ideal" identity with the aim of a "complete liberation of humanity, at present in servitude, from the

Maurizio Antonioli
The International Anarchist Congress
Amsterdam 1907
1978

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the misfortune to be unwelcome in the eyes of the editors. The result it: the editors are invested with a personal power which limits the freedom of opinion and expression of comrades. The situation would be different if these newspapers belonged to all, instead of being the personal property of this or that individual: then all opinions could be freely debated,

There is much talk of authority, of authoritarianism. But we should be clear what we are speaking of here. We protest with all our heart against the authority embodied in the State, whose only purpose is to maintain the economic slavery within society, and we will never cease to rebel against it. But there does exist a simply moral authority that arises out of experience, intelligence and talent, and despite being anarchists there is no-one among us who does not respect this authority.

It is wrong to present the "organizers", the federalists, as authoritarians; but it is equally quite wrong to imagine the "anti-organizers", the individualists, as having deliberately condemned themselves to isolation.

For me, I repeat, the dispute between individualists and organizers is a simple dispute over words, which does not hold up to careful examination of the facts. In the practical reality, what do we see? That the individualists are at times "organizers" for the reason that the latter too often limit themselves to preaching organization without practising it. On the other hand, one can come across much more effective authoritarianism in those groups who noisily proclaim the "absolute freedom of the individual", than in those that are commonly considered **authoritarian** because they have a **bureau** and take decisions.

In other words, everyone organizes themselves – organizers and anti-organizers. Only those who do little or nothing can live in isolation, contemplating. This is the truth; why not recognize it.

If proof be needed of what I say: in Italy all the comrades who are currently active in the struggle refer to my name, both the "individualists" and the "organizers", and I believe that they are all right,

as whatever their reciprocal differences may be, they all practise collective action nonetheless.

Enough of these verbal disputes; let us stick to action! Words divide and actions unite. It is time for all of us to work together in order to exert an effective influence on social events. It pains me to think that in order to free one of our own people from the clutches of the hangman it was necessary for us to turn to other parties instead of our own. Ferrer would not then owe his freedom to masons and bourgeois free thinkers, if the anarchists gathered together in a powerful and feared International had been able to run for themselves the worldwide protest against the criminal infamy of the Spanish government.

Let us ensure that the Anarchist International finally becomes a reality. To enable us to appeal quickly to all our comrades, to struggle against the reaction and to act, when the time is right, with revolutionary initiative, there must be an International!

Seventh session – Wednesday 28 August – Morning session

> *The session opens shortly after nine o'clock. First comrade R. Lange is confirmed in his role as chairman. The, following the Dutch and German translations of Malatesta's speech, the correspondence is read, above all a letter from comrade Tsumin who writes from Paris to excuse himself for not taking part in the Congress for health reasons. The discussion on organization begun the previous day is once more taken up.*

MAX BAGINSKY: An error that is too often made is believing that individualism rejects organization. The two terms are, on the contrary, inseparable. Individualism more specifically means working for inner mental liberation of the individual, while orga-

nization means association between conscious individuals with a goal to reach or an economic need to satisfy. We must not however forget that a revolutionary organization requires particularly energetic and conscious individuals.

The accusation that anarchy is destructive rather than constructive and that accordingly anarchy is opposed to organization is one of the many falsehoods spread by our adversaries. They confuse today's institutions with organization and thus cannot understand how one can fight the former and favour the latter. The truth is, though, that the two are not identical.

The State is generally considered to be the highest form of organization. But is it really a true organization? Is it not rather an arbitrary institution cunningly imposed on the masses?

Industry, too, is considered an organization; yet nothing is further from the truth. Industry is piracy of the poor at the hands of the rich.

We are asked to believe that the army is an organization, but careful analysis will show that it is nothing less than a cruel instrument of blind force.

Public education! Are not the universities and other scholastic institutions perhaps models of organization, which offer people fine opportunities to educate themselves? Far from it; school, more than any other institution, are nothing more than barracks, where the human mind is trained and manipulated in order to be subjected to the various social and mental phantoms, and thus rendered capable of continuing this system of exploitation and oppression of ours.

Instead, organization as we understand it is something different. It is based on freedom. It is a natural, spontaneous grouping of energies to guarantee beneficial results to humanity.

It is the harmony of organic development that produces the variety of colours and forms, the combination that we so admire in a flower. In the same way, the organized activity of free human beings imbued with the spirit of solidarity will result in the perfec-

tion of social harmony, which we call anarchy. Indeed, only anarchy makes the non-authoritarian organization of common interests possible, since it abolishes the antagonism that exists between individuals and classes.

In the current situation, the antagonism of economic and social interests produces an unceasing war between social units and represents an insurmountable obstacle on the road to collective well-being.

There exists an erroneous conviction that organization does not encourage individual freedom and that, on the contrary, it causes a decay of individual personality. The reality is, however, that the true function of organization lies in personal development and growth.

Just as the cells of an animal, through reciprocal cooperation, express latent powers in the formation of the complete organism, so the individual reaches the highest level of his development through cooperation with other individuals.

An organization, in the true sense of the word, cannot be the product of a union of pure nothingness. It must be made up of self-conscious and intelligent persons. In fact, the sum of the possibilities and activities of an organization is represented by the expression of the single energies.

It follows logically that the greater the number of strong, self-conscious individuals in an organization, the lesser the danger of stagnation and the more intense its vital element.

Anarchism supports the possibility of organization without discipline, fear or punishment, without the pressure of poverty: a new social organism that will end the terrible struggle for the means of subsistence, the vicious struggle that damages man's best qualities and continually widens the social abyss. In short, anarchism struggles for a form of social organization that will ensure well-being for all.

The embryo of the this organization can be found in the type of syndicalism that has freed itself from centralization, bureaucracy

and discipline, that encourages autonomous, direct action by its members.

DUNOIS: I must point out that while I tried to bring the discussion from the lofty heights of vague, abstract ideas down to the concrete, precise and humbly relative ideas of the earth, Croiset has, on the contrary, sent it back up to the heavens, back to metaphysical heights where I refuse to follow.

The motion I propose for adoption by Congress is not inspired by speculative ideas on the right of the individual to full development. It is based on completely practical considerations regarding the need to organize, to bring greater solidarity to our propaganda and struggle.

> *At this point, Dunois reads the motion, whose slightly modified text can be found below.*

CORNELISSEN: Nothing is more relative than the concept of the individual. Individuality in itself does not exist in reality, where it is always limited by other individualities. The individualists too often forget these real limits and in fact the great benefit of organization will be to make the individual aware of those limits by allowing him to get used to conciliating his right to personal development with the rights of others.

BENOÎT BROUTCHOUX: My experience as a revolutionary militant has definitely taught me that organization is still the most effective means to prevent that fetishism which is too often applied with regard to the person by certain agitators, which confers on them an authority that is actually extremely dangerous. You may know that in Pas-de-Calais we have a powerful miners' organization. Well, no-one would find amongst us even the slightest trace of authority or authoritarianism. Only our enemies can claim otherwise and denounce, for example, something resembling a constituted authority in the form of the secretaries of our union branches.

GERHART RIJNDERS: Neither am I hostile to organization. In fact, there is not one anarchist who is against it, underneath it all. Everything depends on the way in which the organization is conceived and set up. What we must avoid above all are personalities. In Holland, for example, the existing Federation far from satisfies everyone; but it is also true that those who do not approve can simply choose not to join.

ÉMILE CHAPELIER: I would ask that speeches be a little shorter and to the point. Since Malatesta's speech yesterday evening, which dealt thoroughly with the matter, not one new argument for or against organization has been produced. Before talking about authority and liberty, we should agree on the meaning of these words. For example, what is authority? If it is the influence that men of real ability exercise in a group, then I have nothing to say against it. But the authority that we must avoid at all costs is the authority which arises from the fact that some comrades blindly follow one man or another. This is a danger and in order to avoid it I would ask that the organization to be created be without leaders and general committees.

GOLDMAN: As I have already said, I am in favour of organization. I would just like Dunois' motion to affirm the legitimacy of individual action explicitly, alongside that of collective action[4]. I am therefore presenting an amendment to the Dunois motion.

> *Goldman reads her amendment which, after being accepted by Dunois, is later added to the latter's motion in an abbreviated form.*

ISAK SAMSON: Here in Holland there is a Federation of Libertarian Communists to which I belong. Undoubtedly, as comrade Rijnders was saying a short while ago, many comrades have refused to join. For reasons of principle? No, for reasons that are exclusively personal. We do not exclude, nor have ever excluded,

[4] This proposal by Goldman was made with Berkman in mind.

Fourteenth session – Friday 30 August – Afternoon session

This session is held as part of the Anti-Militarist Congress with the delegate of the Bohemian Anarchist Federation, Vohryzek, being elected as chairman. De Marmande, who is delegated to speak in the name of the Anarchist Congress, makes his report on the history and development of the anti-militarist movement, emphasizing the leading role played by anarchists. He concludes by putting to the vote the motion approved by the morning session of the Anarchist Congress and it is passed unanimously. There follow a series of speakers including Friedeberg, Rogdaev, Domela Nieuwenhuis, Croiset, Ramus, Goldman and Fabbri.

Fifteenth session – Friday 30 August – Evening session

The session opens towards nine o'clock and is poorly attended, many of the delegates having remained at the Anti-Militarist Congress. Others are in a nearby room, at a meeting of revolutionary syndicalists.

The agenda foresees discussion of Alcoholism and Anarchism and Professor J. Van Rees presents a short report. Discussion of the topic is postponed until the following day.

GOLDMAN: Irrespective of how you want to call it, Max Baginsky and I would above all like Congress to vote on it.

Put to the vote, the Goldman-Baginsky declaration is unanimously approved.

The discussion on anti-militarism is then opened, but owing to the lack of time and the fact that the Anti-Militarist Congress has just opened, it is decided that the anarchists should join the latter congress, presenting a motion passed by the Anarchist Congress. The motion is signed by Malatesta, de Marmande, Thonar, Cornelissen, Ramus and Domela Nieuwenhuis.

MOTION:

"The Anarchists, desiring the integral emancipation of humanity and the absolute liberty of the individual, are naturally the declared enemies of all armed forces in the hands of the State – army, navy or police.

They urge all comrades, according to circumstances and individual temperament, to revolt and refuse to serve (either individually or collectively), to passively and actively disobey, and to join in a military strike for the destruction of all the instruments of domination.

They express the hope that the people of all countries affected will reply to a declaration of war by insurrection.

They declare it to be their opinion that the Anarchists will set the example."

The motion is approved without discussion and the session comes to a close at midday.

anyone. Let them come to us, then, if they want to. In fact, I do not hide from the view that, whatever the form of organization, they will always be malcontent. They are so by nature and we should not worry too much about their criticism.

VOHRYZEK: The Dunois motion says nothing about what the nature of the anarchist organization should be; I therefore ask that it be completed by means of an addition specifying this, an addition that Malatesta has agreed to sign with me.

Vohryzek reads the addition, which can be found below. The discussion ends. The motions presented are now voted on. There are two: firstly, the Dunois motion, slightly amended by Goldman and completed by Vohryzek and Malatesta; the second is the motion presented by comrade Pierre Ramus.

DUNOIS MOTION:

"The anarchists meeting in Amsterdam, 27 August 1907,

considering that the ideas of anarchy and organization, far from being incompatible as is often stated, complement and clarify each other, as the very principle of anarchy lies in the free organization or producers;

considering that individual action, important as it may be, cannot make up for the lack of collective action of a combined movement, **to the same degree that collective action cannot make up for the lack of individual action**;

considering that the organization of militant forces would ensure new development of propaganda and could only accelerate the penetration of the ideas of federalism and revolution into the working class;

considering that workers' organization, based on common interests, does not exclude an organization based on shared aspirations and ideas;

are of the opinion that comrades from every country should proceed to form anarchist groups and federate the groups once they have been formed."

VOHRYZEK-MALATESTA ADDENDUM:

"The Anarchist Federation is an association of groups and individuals in which no-one can impose his will nor belittle the initiative of others. Its goal with regard to the present society is to change all the moral and economic conditions and accordingly it supports the struggle with all appropriate means."

RAMUS MOTION:

"The Anarchist Congress at Amsterdam proposes that the groups from all countries unite in local and regional federations, according to the various geographical divisions.

We declare that our proposal is inspired by the very principles of anarchism, as we cannot see the possibility of initiative and individual action outside the group, which, founded according to our wishes, only provides a practical terrain for the free expansion of all individuality.

The federative organization is the most suitable form for the anarchist proletariat. It unites existing groups into an organic whole that grows through the addition of new groups. It is anti-authoritarian. It does not allow for any central legislative power which can

Congress holds that acts of revolt, above all when they are directed against representatives of the State and the plutocracy, must be considered under a psychological profile, being the results of the deep impression made on the psychology of the individual by the terrible weight of social injustice.

It could be established, as a general rule, that only the most noble, most sensitive and most delicate characters are subject to such deep impressions as to manifest themselves in inward or outward acts of revolt. From this point of view, acts of revolt are the socio-psychological consequences of an unacceptable system; and as such, they must, with their causes and motives, be understood rather than exalted or condemned.

During revolutionary periods such as in Russia, the act of revolt – even without considering its psychological nature – has a double goal: it undermines the very basis of tyranny and excites the enthusiasm of those who dare not rebel. This is above all the case with terrorist attacks directed against the most brutal and hateful representatives of despotism."

In accepting this resolution, Congress expresses its support for the individual act of revolt and its solidarity with collective insurrection.

MALATESTA: As far as I am concerned, I accept the Goldman-Baginsky declaration. But as it cannot be linked either to the discussion on syndicalism, which is closed, or to that on anti-militarism, which is shortly to begin, I propose that it be considered as a simple declaration of principles and not as an ordinary motion, and that Congress vote on it as such.

The General Strike cannot be confused with the Political General Strike (*politischer Massenstreik*), which is nothing more than an attempt by politicking elements to deviate the General Strike from its economic and revolutionary ends.

With the spread of strikes to whole localities, regions or trades, the working class will progressively rise up and drag itself towards the Expropriating General Strike, that will include the destruction of today's society and the expropriation both of the means of production and of the produce itself".

This last motion obtains 25 votes and is consequently passed.

The reader may be rather surprised that these four motions could have all been passed, given the evident contradictions between them. It defies the parliamentary norm, but it is a conscious transgression. In order that the opinion of the majority not suffocate, or seem to suffocate, that of the minority, the majority presented the single motions one by one for vote. All four had a majority of votes for. In consequence, all four were approved.

At this stage it appears that the subject of syndicalism and the general strike are finally exhausted. But Emma Goldman stands up and announces that it would be strange for an anarchist congress not to pronounce itself in favour of the right to revolt, in its widest sense, and reads the following declaration, countersigned by comrade Baginsky:

"The International Anarchist Congress declares its recognition of the right of both the individual and the whole mass to revolt.

make obligatory decisions for the groups and individuals, who have the right to develop freely within our common movement and to act in an anarchist and economic sense without any orders or obstacles. The federation does not exclude any group and every group is free to leave with any funds it has paid over or to join again, whenever it considers it necessary.

We likewise recommend that our comrades form groups according to the needs of their respective movements and not forget that the strength of the national or international movement depends on its constitution on an international level, as the means of emancipation can only derive from combined international action."

Comrades of all countries, organize yourselves in autonomous groups and unite in an International Federation: the **Anarchist International**.

Following the reading of the French, Dutch and German motions, a vote is taken. The Dunois motion obtains 46 votes, the Vohryzek addendum, 48. Against, only one hand is raised against the motion, none against the addendum which thus obtains the unanimity of votes.

The Ramus motion is then put to the vote immediately, obtaining 13 for and 17 against. Many of those in attendance declare that they are abstaining as the Ramus motion adds nothing to the one already voted on.

The report published in "Pages Libres" underlined the importance of the voting at the Congress:

> *"The Amsterdam resolution is not without importance: now it will no longer be possible for our social-democratic enemies to invoke our old hatred of any sort of organization in order*

to banish us from socialism without any further trial. The legendary individualism of anarchists has been publicly put to death in Amsterdam by the anarchists themselves, and all our enemies' bad faith will not be able to resuscitate it"[5].

It will be seen nonetheless that both in the preceding discussions and in the motions presented thus far, organization was dealt with only from a theoretical point of view. There still remained to make decisions of a practical nature, to create the Anarchist International. That was the task of the next session.

Eighth session – Wednesday 28 August – Afternoon session

This was a private session. The press was forewarned that it would not be admitted and did not turn up. Apart from those attending the congress – and a roll was called by nationality in order to avoid gate-crashers – only a small number of observers was present in the hall, amongst whom Fritz Kater, president of the Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften *who had been following the Congress proceedings for two days from the ranks of the German delegates, and several comrades from Amsterdam known to the organizers.*

At the start of the session the organizing committee of the Congress presented its financial report, from which it could be seen that expenses had exceeded the funds in hand and a deficit of around 250 francs was foreseen. After a short exchange of views, it was decided to have a

[5] This is, of course, an entirely biased consideration on the part of the editor.

That it is necessary for an increasingly audacious revolutionary spirit to guide the efforts of the Syndicalist organization towards the expropriation of the capitalists and the suppression of all authority;

That as expropriation and the taking of collective possession of the instruments and produce of labour can only be the task of the workers themselves, the Syndicate is destined to transform itself into an association of producers and is therefore the living bud in today's society of the future society;

Invite comrades of all countries, without forgetting that Anarchist action is not limited only to the sphere of the Syndicate, to participate actively in the autonomous movement of the working class and to develop within the Syndicalist organizations the ideas of revolt, individual initiative and solidarity, which are the very essence of Anarchism."

This motion is passed with 28 votes for and 7 against. As it contained nothing regarding the general strike, it was completed by the following motion:

FOURTH MOTION: NACHT – MONATTE

Countersigned by Fuss, Dunois, Fabbri, Zielinska and Walter.

"The Anarchists gathered in Amsterdam from 26 to 31 August 1907, declare that they consider the expropriating General Strike as a remarkable stimulus to organization and the spirit of rebellion in today's society and as the form with which the complete emancipation of the proletariat can be accomplished.

The Libertarian Communist Congress therefore rejects the strike for political rights (*politischer Massenstreik*), whose goal is unacceptable to Anarchism, but recognizes the economic and revolutionary General Strike, that is to say the refusal of the whole proletariat as a class to work, as a fitting means for the disorganization of the economic structure of today's society and for the emancipation of the proletariat from the slavery of the wage system. In order to achieve this general strike it is essential that the anarchist ideal penetrate the Syndicates. A Syndicalist movement that is animated by an Anarchist spirit can, through the revolutionary General Strike, destroy class domination and open the path to Anarchism's final goal: the realization of a society without authority."

This motion is passed with 36 votes for and 6 against.

THIRD MOTION: DUNOIS

Countersigned by Monatte, Fuss, Nacht, Zielinska, Fabbri, Walter.

"The Anarchists gathered in Amsterdam from 26 to 31 August 1907, considering

That the current economic and juridical regime is characterized by the exploitation and enslavement of the mass of producers, and establishes absolutely irreconcilable opposing interests that make up the class struggle;

That by solidarizing the resistance and rebellions on the economic terrain without doctrinaire worries, the Syndicalist organization is the fundamental specific organ of this struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and all the bourgeois institutions;

collection among those in attendance at the end of the session and that an appeal for solidarity to comrades from every country would be made as soon as possible by the Congress' treasurer (J. De Bruijn) to all anarchist newspapers.

As Congress decided that the report of this session could not be published in detail, we must limit ourselves to a brief glance. All were in agreement regarding the usefulness of establishing international relations among anarchists but opinion was somewhat divided on the best ways to establish those relations. Many delegates spoke during the discussion: Georges Thonar, Henri Fuss, Chapelier, Malatesta, Fabbri, Ceccarelli, Monatte, Zielinska, de Marmande, Broutchoux, Walter, Wilquet, Nacht, Samson, Cornelissen, Rogdaev, Vohryzek, Lange and Friedeberg.

Thonar requested that the International be made up of national and regional federations each gathering a certain number of local sections; the federation would correspond directly with each other through trusted persons. Fuss replied to this, saying that rather than go into such detail, Congress should limit itself to creating a correspondence bureau with the task of linking the various national movement. Vohryzek raised the problem whether or not to accept isolated individuals as members and asked that they be accepted only upon presentation. Nacht supported the idea that the delegates of existing organizations should begin by making arrangements amongst themselves and later presenting Congress with a definite plan for the International.

Lange proposed the creation of an International Bureau of Correspondence of five members, based in London with the task of acting as intermediary between the

groups and this proposal, as will be seen, was accepted by Congress. Then Friedeberg asked that the Bureau remain in permanent contact with the groups and set up the archives of international anarchism with the newspapers and written reports that it would receive. Emma Goldman opposed the idea of a Bureau of Correspondence. She thought that the expenses that a Bureau would incur would be better spent on the publication of an international Bulletin, the costs of which the American comrades agreed to bear. At this point Cornelissen replied that in effect the Bulletin seemed most useful but that it would best be published by the International Bureau.

At a certain point the chairman, Lange, announced that several concrete proposals had been deposited on his desk during the course of the discussions. The proposals came from comrades Vohryzek, de Marmande, Friedeberg, Lange, Nacht, Fabbri, Fuss, Broutchoux and Samson and, far from being incompatible, complemented each other. It was then proposed to fuse all the proposals into one and the session was suspended in order to do this.

The session recommenced after half an hour. Vohryzek, de Marmande, Friedeberg and the others had come to agreement on the following text which obtained 43 votes against 6 when submitted for approval to Congress:

"The anarchists (federations, represented groups and individuals) gathered at the Congress of Amsterdam declare the "Anarchist International" hereby founded.

It is made up of the existing organizations and the groups and single comrades that may join successively. The individuals, groups and federations shall remain autonomous.

and Knotek, and is passed with 33 votes for and 10 against.

SECOND MOTION: FRIEDEBERG

"The class struggle and the economic emancipation of the proletariat are not identical to the ideas and aspirations of Anarchism, which go beyond the immediate aspirations of classes and are aimed at the economic and moral liberation of all humans, at an environment free from authority and not at a new power, that of the majority over the minority.

Anarchism, however, sees in the elimination of class oppression, in the disappearance of economic inequalities, an absolutely necessary and essential stage towards the achievement of its final goal. Anarchism must oppose the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat being waged with means that contradict anarchist ideas and impede the true goal of Anarchism. Anarchists therefore refuse to wage the struggle according to the methods of Marxist socialism, that is to say parliamentarianism and a corporative union movement whose only goal is the betterment of the proletariat's conditions, means that imply the consequential development of a new bureaucracy, of an approved or unapproved intellectual authority, and the oppression of the minority by the majority. Anarchist means for the abolition of class oppression can only be those that arise directly from the affirmation of the individual person: "direct action" and "individual disobedience" – that is to say active and passive individualism, both by one person and by a mass, moving with a collective will.

struggle for the betterment of working conditions and as unions of producers that can serve in the transformation of capitalist society into an Anarchist Communist society.

Thus Congress, while recognizing that it may be necessary to create special revolutionary Syndicalist groups, recommends that comrades support the general Syndicalist organizations which are open to all the workers of the same category.

But Congress considers that it is the function of Anarchists to constitute the revolutionary element in these organizations and to propagate only those forms and manifestations of direct action (strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc.) that are inherently revolutionary and aimed at transforming society.

Anarchists consider the Syndicalist movement and the general strike as powerful revolutionary means, but not as substitutes for revolution.

They also recommend that in the event of the proclamation of a General Strike for the conquest of political power, comrades participate in the strike but at the same time seek to use their influence to encourage the Syndicates to push their economic demands.

Anarchists think that the destruction of capitalist, authoritarian society can only come about through armed insurrection and violent expropriation, and that use of the strike, more or less general, and the Syndicalist movement must not allow us to forget more direct means of struggle against the military might of governments."

This motion is signed not only by its authors, but also by comrades Wilquet, Goldman, de Marmande, Rogdaev

An international bureau to be composed of 5 members is hereby established. This bureau shall have the task of creating an international anarchist archive, accessible to comrades.

It shall establish relations with anarchists from the various countries, both directly and through the mediation of three comrades chosen by the federations and groups from the countries involved.

In order to join the International on an individual basis, comrades must first be vouched for by an organization, by the bureau and by other comrades known to him.

The expenses incurred by the bureau, archive, etc., shall be covered by the federations, groups and individual members."

For their part, Baginsky, Goldman and Ramus presented the following motion, which obtained only 4 votes:

"The Anarchist International Congress declares the International to be founded. This International will not have a central bureau. Its functions will be ensured in the following way: the federations, groups and movements of an anarchist tendency in every country shall individually or collectively elect two correspondents whose names and addresses shall be published in every issue of international anarchist periodicals. These correspondents, according to the instructions received from their groups and federations, shall remain in constant contact with the correspondents from other countries. The publication of an International Bulletin is hereby established."

And thus came about the founding of the Anarchist International that so many comrades in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Bohemia had been looking for-

ward to for so long. On the announcement of the result of the vote, unanimous applause broke out. It was seven o'clock and the session drew to a close with the singing of "The Internationale".

Ninth session – Wednesday 28 August – Evening session

At 9 o'clock the large Plancius Hall is literally packed. Lange declares the session open. On the agenda is the discussion of the following point: "Syndicalism and Anarchism". Comrade Pierre Monatte from Paris, a committee member of the Confédération Générale du Travail, *takes the floor as the first speaker.*

MONATTE: My aim is not to offer a theoretical exposition of revolutionary syndicalism but to demonstrate it to you at work and thus to let the facts speak for themselves. Revolutionary syndicalism, unlike socialism and anarchism which came before it, has found a place for itself more through action than through theory and it must be sought in action rather than in books.

One would need to be blind not to see all that anarchism and syndicalism have in common. Both have the aim of the complete destruction of capitalism and the wage system by means of a social revolution. Syndicalism, which is the proof of a reawakening in the workers' movement, has reminded anarchism of its worker origins; and indeed anarchists have contributed in no small way to dragging the workers' movement along the revolutionary path and popularizing the idea of direct action. So, syndicalism and anarchism have reacted to each other, to the greater benefit of each.

It is among the ranks of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* in France that revolutionary syndicalist ideas have taken form and developed. The Confederation occupies a place all of its own within

libertarian tendencies; and many of these carry out anarchist propaganda directly. The recent Argentinean workers' congress, described as a unification congress[27], approved with a large majority the proposal made to the unions to contribute to the propaganda of anarchist communism.

Ceccarelli goes on to outline the miserable state of the Argentinean workers and ends by declaring that he is authorized to propose the anarchist congress vote on a resolution aimed at impeding as much as possible European emigration to a country where, as much if not more than any other, there is neither bread nor freedom.

Errico Malatesta and several other delegates then observe that the resolution proposed by Aristide Ceccarelli merits special discussion, which congress cannot engage in at the moment as it must first finish dealing with the matter of syndicalism.

Without deliberating on the problem raised by Ceccarelli, it is decided to move on to the vote on the motions relating to syndicalism and the general strike, of which there are four.

FIRST MOTION: CORNELISSEN – VOHRYZEK – MALATESTA

"The International Anarchist Congress considers the Syndicates as both fighting organizations in the class

[27] In March 1907 in Buenos Aires, the FORA and the UGT met in congress in an attempt to merge. The operation failed thanks to the intransigence of the anarchist delegates who announced that they were in favour of an organization oriented towards "libertarian communism", obtaining a majority. This attitude of "non-neutrality" was harshly criticized by Luigi Fabbri (see his article *Una spiegazione necessaria*) in the 7 May issue of "La Vita Operaia". The article was republished in "La Protesta" on 7 July and in "L'Acción Socialista" on 16 July.

differences which are not enough to divide the anarchist army into two rival camps.

The session came to a close at one o'clock in the morning.

Thirteenth session – Friday 30 August – Morning session

It is nine o'clock when Lange, who has remained as chairman, declares the session open. The debate on syndicalism and the general strike is finished and there remains only to vote on the various motions that have been presented, before moving on to the subject of antimilitarism. Comrade Aristide Ceccarelli, though, asks to say a few words on the Argentinean workers' and anarchist movement. He takes the floor.

ARISTIDE CECCARELLI: For some years now in Argentina a strong workers' movement has been developing. There exists a group of militants who describe themselves as syndicalist. But, like the Italian syndicalists whom they greatly resemble, they have not renounced the methods of parliamentarianism; the only ones to carry out any serious work within the working class along revolutionary lines are the anarchists. It can be said that almost all the organization in the *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina*[26] show

[26] On 25 May 1901 in Buenos Aires, the *Federación Obrera Argentina* [Argentinean Workers Federation] was founded as a union central that was "autonomous" from the political parties. It was strongly federalist and influenced by anarchists. For this reason, the socialist opposition which was contrary to the general strike and to direct action, set up the *Unión General de Trabajadores* [General Union of Workers] in March 1902. The 4th congress of the FOA (held in Buenos Aires from 30 July to 2 August 1904), decided to add the term *Regional* to the name, thereby creating the FORA.

the international workers' movement. It is the only organization that, while declaring itself openly revolutionary has no links with political parties, even the more advanced ones. In most other countries, social democracy plays the leading role. In France, the CGT leaves the socialist party in its wake, thanks to its sheer numbers and the influence it exerts: it expects to represent alone the working class and has openly rejected all the advances made to it over recent years. Its autonomy is its strength and it intends to remain autonomous.

This attitude of the CGT of refusing to deal with parties has led its exasperated enemies to label it anarchist. But nothing is further from the truth. The CGT is a wide grouping of syndicates and workers' unions and has no official doctrine. All doctrines are represented within it and are equally tolerated. The confederal committee does contain a number of anarchists, who meet and cooperate with socialists, the majority of whom – it is worth emphasizing – are no less hostile than the anarchists to the idea of agreements between the unions and the socialist party.

The structure of the CGT is worth describing. Unlike so many other workers' organizations it neither tends to centralize nor is it authoritarian. The confederal committee is not, as our rulers or reporters from the bourgeois press imagine, a managing committee uniting legislative and executive powers: it is free of all authority. The CGT is governed from below upwards; the union has no master other than itself; it is free to act or not to act; no external will interferes or influences its activity.

The basis of the Confederation is the syndicate. But the syndicate itself does not join the Confederation directly; it does so only through its corporative (trade) federation on the one hand, and its *Bourse du Travail* on the other. The Confederation consists of the union of federations and bourses.

The life of the Confederation is coordinated by the confederal committee which is made up of delegates from both the *bourses* and the federations. Some of its members go on to form commissions

which function in parallel – the newspaper commission ("La Voix du Peuple"), the control commission dealing with financial matters, and the strikes and general strike commission.

Only congress has the power to deliberate collective matters. Every syndicate, no matter how weak, has the right to be represented by a delegate of its own choosing.

The Confederation's accounts are rather modest. Less than 30,000 francs a year. The continuous agitation that arose from the great movement of May 1906[6] for the 8-hour day did not cost more than 60,000 francs. Such a small figure provoked great surprise amongst journalists when it was announced. What? The Confederation was able to support months and months of intense workers' agitation with just a few thousand francs? The fact is that French syndicalism, while poor on a financial level, is rich in energy, dedication and enthusiasm, and these are riches that are hard to become slaves to.

But the French workers' movement has not become what it is today without effort and time. Over the last thirty-five years – since the Paris Commune – it has gone through various phases. The idea of the proletariat, organized into "resistance societies", being the agent of the social revolution was the idea that lay at the heart of the great International Working Men's Association founded in London in 1864. The International's motto was, you will recall, "the emancipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves", and it is still our motto, all of us, the promoters of direct action and enemies of parliamentarianism. The ideas of autonomy and federation, so popular amongst us, once inspired all those in the International who rose up against the abuse of power by the general council and who took sides with Bakunin after the Hague congress. Furthermore, even the idea of the general strike, so popu-

[6] In May 1906, 158,000 people were on strike in France in support of the 8-hour day. See CH. TILLY – EDW. SHORTER, *Strikes in France (1890–1968)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970, pp. 119, 120.

the atmosphere in the hall has gradually become more and more heated and agitated. There is a general desire to bring the debate on syndicalism to a close at any cost and Dunois vainly requests that Monatte's reply be postponed to the next day.

MONATTE: Listening to Malatesta this evening as he bitterly criticized new revolutionary ideas, I thought I was hearing an echo from the distant past. Malatesta's best response to the new ideas, whose brutal realism frightens him, is to drag up the old ideas of Blanquism that once led us to believe that the world could be renewed by means of a triumphant armed insurrection.

Furthermore, the revolutionary syndicalists here this evening have been widely reproached for sacrificing anarchism and the revolution to syndicalism and the general strike. Well then, I can personally tell you that our anarchism is worth just as much as yours and we have no intention whatsoever of hauling down our flag, just like you. Like everyone else here, anarchism is our final goal. It is just that as the times have changed, we too have changed our conception of the movement and the revolution. Revolution can no longer be carried out as it was in '48. As for syndicalism, while it may in practice have given rise to errors and deviations in some countries, experience will stop us from repeating them. Instead of criticizing syndicalism's past, present and even future defeats from on high, if anarchists became more closely involved with its work, the dangers that syndicalism can hide will be averted for ever.

THONAR: Despite what Monatte says, there are no young or old people here defending new ideas or old ideas. Many young people, and I am one of them, glory in not abandoning one iota of anarchist ideas, which are safely sheltered from the ravages of the storm.

If anything, I believe that there are simply differences of judgement between the "young" on one side and the "old" on the other,

ing they can thus damage the economic general strike supported by the anarchists.

Anarchist must oppose the propaganda in favour of a strike destined not to put an end to the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, but to safeguard the institution of universal suffrage under threat from the government or to conquer political power.

Nonetheless, if such a strike broke out, anarchists would have to take part in order to push the workers firmly in the direction of revolution and to instil the movement with the goal of economic demands.

RAMUS: While comrade Monatte may have justified in advance all the reserves that Malatesta later expressed by speaking from an exclusively revolutionary syndicalist point of view, I can only associate myself fully with Malatesta.

It seems absolutely essential to me that we never lose sight of the fact that syndicalism, the general strike and direct action with all its various forms cannot be considered as anything but truly anarchist means of action. Syndicalism can be said to be contained within anarchism; but it would be wrong to say that syndicalism contains anarchism.

The great merit of syndicalism, of union action, essentially consists in opposing bourgeois parliamentarianism in practice, something which is evident. But just as I cannot look at the general strike as a surrogate of the social revolution, I cannot admit that syndicalism is sufficient unto itself, as the syndicalists do. Anarchism has already provided it with all its weapons of war; when it has also received a philosophy and an ideal only then will we admit that syndicalism is sufficient unto itself. And it will be sufficient unto itself because it will have become… anarchism!

In closing let me say this: we are anarchists first and foremost, then syndicalists. But never the opposite.

> *It is past midnight when comrade Ramus finishes his speech. Those present at the Congress are very tired and*

lar today, is an idea from the International, where its innate power was first understood.

The defeat of the Commune sparked off a terrible reaction in France. The workers' movement suffered a brusque decline once its militants were killed or forced into exile. The workers' movement, however, found its feet again after a few years, at first slowly and timidly, later to grow more and more courageous. A first congress was held in Paris in 1876[7] and was entirely dominated by the peaceful spirit of the cooperativists and the mutualists. At the following congress[8], some socialists spoke up regarding the abolition of the wage system. Finally, in Marseilles in 1879[9] the new arrivals triumphed and gave the congress a markedly socialist and revolutionary character. However, there quickly arose differences between the socialists of different schools and tendencies. In Le Havre[10], the anarchists withdrew, unfortunately leaving the field open to the supporters of minimum programmes and the conquest of power. Left alone, the collectivists also ended up in disagreement. The struggle between Guesde and Brousse destroyed the nascent workers' party, leading to a full-scale split[11].

[7] 2–10 October 1876.

[8] Lyons, 28 January – 8 February 1878.

[9] 20–31 October 1879. The congress pronounced itself in favour of the collectivization of the means of production and was oriented towards "*la federation générale de toutes les corporations*". In Marseilles, the *Fédération du Parti des travailleurs socialistes de France* [Federation of the Party of Socialist Workers of France] was founded.

[10] In November 1880.

[11] There had already been the first signs of dissent between the Broussists and the Guesdists at the Congress of Rheims (30 October – 6 November 1881), where the *Fédération* transformed itself into the *Parti des travailleurs socialistes*. At the following congress in Saint-Étienne, which opened on 25 September 1882, the Guesdists walked out and set up the *Parti ouvrier* [Workers Party], later to become the *Parti ouvrier français* [French Workers Party]. The followers of Brousse instead founded the *Parti ouvrier socialiste révolutionnaire* [Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party], which later became the *Fédération des travailleurs socialistes de France* [Federation of Socialist Workers of France].

But neither the Guesdists nor the Broussists (who were to be split again some time later by Allemande)[12] were able to speak for the proletariat any more. The proletariat, quite rightly indifferent to the polemics raging between the various schools of thought, had transformed its unions into what it now called **syndicates**. Left to their own devices, in safety – thanks to their weakness and the jealousies of the various cliques – the syndicalist movement gradually acquired strength and confidence. It grew. In 1892, the *Fédération des Bourses* was formed[13]. Since its inception in 1895[14], the *Confédération Générale du Travail* has placed much emphasis on maintaining its political neutrality. In the meantime, a workers' congress in 1894 (in Nantes) had voted for the principle of the revolutionary general strike[15].

This is the age when many anarchists, having finally realized that philosophy alone is not enough to make a revolution, entered the workers' movement, which the more perspicacious saw offered the best hopes. Fernand Pelloutier was the man who, more than anyone else, embodied this evolution of the anarchists[16].

All the later congresses tended to sharpen the division between the organized working class and politics. In Toulouse in 1897[17], our comrades Delesalle and Pouget had what are known as the tactics of boycott and sabotage adopted. In 1900, the newspaper "La Voix du Peuple" was founded with Pouget as its chief editor[18]. The

[12] In 1890 the possibilist left wing led by Jean Allemande formed a party which took the old name *Parti ouvrier socialiste révolutionnaire.*

[13] Saint-Étienne Congress, 7–8 February 1892.

[14] Limoges Congress, 23–28 September 1895.

[15] 17–22 September 1894.

[16] Pelloutier (1867–1901) was secretary of the *Fédération des Bourses du Travail* from 1894 and a supporter of anarchists joining the syndicates.

[17] 20–25 September 1897. The Congress proclaimed the general strike to be "synonymous of revolution".

[18] "La Voix du Peuple" was the mouthpiece of the CGT and began publication on 10 December 1900. The pre-war series ended on 3 August 1914, when hostilities broke out. Émile Pouget (1860–1931), who had been behind the old

social revolution we are working towards will mean the expropriation of a class. The combat unit is therefore not as in the past an opinion group, but a trade group, workers' union or syndicate. The latter is the most appropriate organ of the class struggle. But it is essential that it be progressively guided towards the appropriating general strike and that is what we invite comrades in every country to do.

SAMSON: Among the means of workers' action recommended both by syndicalists and anarchists, sabotage occupies a leading role. However, I feel obliged to point out certain reservation in its regard. Sabotage does not fulfil its aim; it seeks to damage the boss, but instead it damages those who use it and, at the same time, sets the public against the workers.

We must seek to perfect the working class with all our strength; but I believe that sabotage works against this objective; if it only damaged machinery, it would not be such a bad thing, but it damages above all the professional morality of the worker and for this reason I am against it.

BROUTCHOUX: I am far from sharing Malatesta's fears regarding syndicalism and the workers' movement. As I have already said, I belong to a miners' union which is totally won over to revolutionary ideas and methods. This union has supported energetic, violent strikes which have not been forgotten – and will support others in the future; in our union we know only too well what the hypocritical tactics of conciliation and arbitration preached by the apostles of social peace lead to, and we believe only in struggle, in violent demands and in revolt. The evolution taking place amongst us in workers' circles seems to me to give lie formally to Malatesta's theories.

VOHRYZEK: I am hoping to propose a specific motion on the political general strike to Congress. The idea of this general strike is gaining ground day by day in the German countries, especially since the social democrats have made it their own, no doubt believ-

Twelfth session – Thursday 29 August – Evening session

The session begins towards nine o'clock with the Dutch translation of Malatesta's speech, after which the discussion continues.

FRIEDEBERG: As I agree with Malatesta on the question of the relationship between anarchism on the one hand and syndicalism and the general strike on the other, I would be wasting Congress' time if I spoke at any length.

Like Malatesta, I do not believe that anarchism gives itself the sole objective of emancipating one class, however interesting it may be, but the whole of humanity, without distinction of class, sex, nationality or race. Keeping all anarchist action within the boundaries of the working-class movement means, in my opinion, doing grave injustice to the essential and profound characteristic of anarchism.

I set before the chair a motion inspired by this idea and submit it to the approval of Congress.

FUSS: I would point out to Malatesta that there are still some anarchists who, for all their involvement in the workers' movement, remain no less faithful, and declaredly so, to their convictions. The truth is that they find it impossible to view the organized proletariat as merely fertile terrain for propaganda. Far from considering it a simple means, they attribute to it its own value and wish for nothing more than to be the vanguard of the army of labour on the march towards emancipation.

We struggle against the bourgeoisie, that is to say against capital and against authority. This is the class struggle; but unlike political struggles, it takes place essentially on the economic terrain, around those factories which will one day have to be taken over. We are no longer living in times when the revolution means taking over a few town halls and decreeing the new society from a balcony. The

CGT overcame its initial difficulties and demonstrated its growing strength more and more every day. It was becoming a force which both the governments and socialist parties had to deal with.

The new movement was then subjected to a ferocious assault by the government, supported by all the reformist socialists. Millerand, who was now a government minister[19], tried to regiment the syndicates and turn every *Bourse* into a branch of his ministry. He had hired agents working for him within the organizations and trusted militants were the object of attempts to corrupt them. It was a dangerous time. The danger, however, was averted thanks to the agreement between all the revolutionary factions – anarchists, Guesdists and Blanquists. And once the danger was over the agreement remained. Strengthened after 1902 with the influx of the *Fédération des Bourses*[20], an event which created **workers' unity**, the Confederation today draws its strength from itself; and it is from this pact that revolutionary syndicalism was born, a doctrine which makes the syndicate the organ and the general strike the instrument of social transformation.

However – and I would call the attention of all the non-French comrades to this extremely important point – neither the achievement of workers' unity nor the coalition of revolutionaries could alone have brought the CGT to its present strength and influence if we had not remained true, in our union practice, to the basic principle that in effect excludes syndicates of opinion: **one single syndicate in each town for each trade**. The consequence of this principle is the political neutrality of the syndicate, which cannot and must not be anarchist, nor Guesdist, nor Allemandist, nor Blanquist, but simply of the workers. Differences of opinion, often

"Père Peinard" journal, was its chief editor until 1909. His place was taken by Yvetot (1909–1912), who was in turn succeeded until 1914 by Dumoulin.

[19] In 1898 Alexandre Millerand, an independent socialist, accepted the post of Minister of Industry and Trade in the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet.

[20] Montpellier Congress, 22–27 September 1902 (13th national corporative congress and 7th CGT congress).

subtle and artificial, fall into the background in the syndicate, enabling agreement. In practice, interests prevail over ideas: all the polemics between the various schools and sects cannot eliminate the fact that the workers, who are all equally subject to the laws of the wage system, have identical interests. And this is the secret of the agreement reached between them, which makes syndicalism so strong and which allowed it at the Congress of Amiens last year to state proudly that it was sufficient unto itself[21].

My contribution here would be decidedly incomplete if I did not demonstrate the means that revolutionary syndicalism counts on to achieve the emancipation of the working class.

These means can be summed up in two words: **direct action**. But what is direct action?

For a long time, under the influence of the socialist schools of thought and in particular the Guesdist school, the workers entrusted the task of satisfying their demands to the State. Remember the workers' marches led by socialist deputies, delivering the fourth estate's petitions to the public powers! Given that such methods of action brought bitter disappointment, it gradually came to be thought that the workers could only obtain those reforms that they were able to impose **by themselves**; in other words, that the motto of the International that I previously mentioned should be understood and applied as rigorously as possible.

Doing things oneself, depending on oneself alone – that is direct action. But this naturally takes on different forms.

Its main form, or rather its most noticeable form, is the strike. A double-edged sword, it was said recently: a solid and well-tempered sword, we say and one which can strike at the heart of the bosses if ably handled by the worker. It is through the strike that the working masses enter the class struggle and familiarize themselves with the notions that arise therefrom; it is through the

[21] 8–16 October 1906.

without having to produce anything. This conviction inspired the authors of two propaganda pamphlets published about twenty years ago: "Les produits de la Terre" and "Les produits de l'Industrie"[25], pamphlets that have done more harm than good in my opinion. Today's society is not as rich as is thought. In one piece, Kropotkin showed that if there were to be a sudden interruption in production, England would survive for only one month, and London no more than three days. I am fully aware of the phenomenon of overproduction. But every overproduction is immediately corrected by crises that quickly restore order to industry. Overproduction is always temporary and relative.

But it is time to conclude. I used to deplore the fact that comrades isolated themselves from the workers' movement. Today, I deplore the fact that many of us are going to the opposite extreme and allowing ourselves to be absorbed by that movement. Once again I repeat, workers' organization, the strike, the general strike, direct action, the boycott, sabotage and armed insurrection are all simply **means**. Anarchy is the **goal**. The anarchist revolution that we want goes far beyond the interests of one class: what is proposed is the complete liberation of humanity, which is currently in a state of servitude, from an economic, political and mental point of view. So, let us be wary of any unilateral, simplistic means of action. Syndicalism, an excellent means of action because of the worker forces it places at our disposal, cannot be our only goal. And even less so should it allow us to lose sight of the only goal that is worth the effort: Anarchy.

[25] M. Nettlau (*Bibliographie de l'anarchie*, Brussels-Paris, 1897, p. 70) attributes both pamphlets, which came out in 1885 in Geneva and 1887 in Paris respectively, to Élisée Reclus and an anonymous helper. In the report carried by "Publication Sociale" a note attributes them only to Reclus' helper.

The general strike as it is described to us is a pure utopia. Either the workers, starving after three days of striking, will go back to work with his tail between his legs and we add yet another defeat to the list, or he will decide to take the products into his own hands by force. And who will try to stop him? Soldiers, gendarmes, the bourgeoisie itself, and the whole matter will be necessarily decided with rifles and bombs. It will be an insurrection and victory will lie with the strongest.

So then, let us prepare for this inevitable insurrection instead of limiting ourselves to exalting the general strike as if it were a panacea for all evils. And please do not raise the objection that the government is armed to the teeth and will always be stronger than the insurgents. In Barcelona in 1902, the army was not so numerous[24]. But there had been no preparation for armed struggle and the workers, who did not understand that political power was their real enemy, sent delegates to the governor to ask him to get the bosses to give in.

Furthermore, the general strike, even taken on the level of what it really is, is still a two-edged sword that must be used with prudence. The subsistence services would not be able to cope with a prolonged stoppage. It will be necessary to take control of food supplies by force, and straight away – without waiting for the strike to turn into insurrection.

Rather than inviting the workers to stop working, what we should be doing is asking them to go on working, but for their own benefit. Unless that happens, the general strike will soon become a general famine, even if we were strong enough to commandeer all the produce in the warehouses straight away. The idea of the general strike has its origins in a completely erroneous conviction: the conviction that humanity could consume the produce accumulated by the bourgeoisie for months and years

[24] Malatesta was referring to the general strike which broke out in Barcelona that year.

strike that they receive their revolutionary education, measure up their strength against the strength of their enemy capitalism, gain trust in their own power and learn to be audacious.

Sabotage is no less valuable either. It works along these lines: **bad work for bad pay**. Like the strike, it has always existed, but it has only acquired its revolutionary significance in recent years. The results achieved by sabotage are already notable. Where strikes have proved useless, sabotage has managed to break the bosses' resistance. A recent example: the sabotage that followed the strike and defeat of the Parisian building workers in 1906. The building workers went back to their sites determined that their peace with the bosses would be more terrible than their war. And so, tacitly and unanimously in agreement, they began to slow production down; as if by chance, sacks of plaster or cement were found to be ruined, etc., etc. This war is still continuing today and, I repeat, the results have been impressive. Not only have the bosses often had to concede, but the construction workers have come out of this campaign much more conscious, more independent, more rebellious.

But if I dealt only with syndicalism as a whole, forgetting to mention its particular manifestations, what sort of apology would that be! The revolutionary spirit in France was dying, year after year it languished. Guesde's revolutionism, for example, was only in words or, worse still, for the benefit of elections and parliament; the revolutionism of Jaurès, on the other hand, went even further: it was simply, and openly, ministerial and governmental. As for the anarchists, their revolutionism had taken refuge in the lofty heights of the ivory tower of philosophical speculation. But it was amongst all these *défaillances*, in fact because of them, that syndicalism was born; the revolutionary spirit came alive again, became renewed at contact with it, and the bourgeoisie, for the first time since anarchist dynamite had hushed its grandiose voice, the bourgeoisie trembled!

It is important, then, that the syndicalist experience of the French proletariat be of use to the proletariat of every country. And it is the task of anarchists to ensure that this experience begins again everywhere there is a working class that is struggling for its own emancipation. Instead of opinion-based syndicalism, which gave rise to anarchist trade-unions in, for example, Russia and to Christian and social-democratic trade unions in Belgium and Germany, anarchists must provide the option of French-style syndicalism, a neutral – or more precisely, independent – form of syndicalism. Just as there is only one [working] class, so there should be only one single workers' organization, one single syndicate, for each trade and in each town. Only on this condition can the class struggle – no longer facing the obstacle of arguments between the various schools of thought and rival sects on every point – develop to its fullest extent and have the greatest possible effect.

The Congress of Amiens proclaimed that syndicalism is sufficient unto itself. Now I know that this word has not always been completely understood, not even by anarchists. But what does it mean, if not that the now mature working class finally intends to be sufficient unto itself and not to entrust its emancipation to anyone other than itself? What anarchist could object to such a clearly-expressed will for action?

Syndicalism does not waste time promising the workers heaven on earth. It asks them to conquer it and assures them that their action will not be entirely in vain. It is a school of will, of energy, of fruitful thought. It opens new hopes and prospects to anarchism, too long closed in on itself. Let anarchists embrace syndicalism, then; their work will be all the more fruitful, their strikes against the social regime all the more decisive.

As with every human endeavour, the syndicalist movement is not without its faults, but far from wishing to hide them, I believe it is useful to remember them constantly so that we can act to overcome them.

However, moral solidarity between proletarians is possible, if economic solidarity is not. Workers who limit themselves to the defence of their corporative interests will not know what it is, but there will come the day when the shared will to transform society will make new men of them. In today's society, solidarity can only be the result of sharing a common ideal. It is the task of anarchists to incite the syndicates to the ideal, guiding them little by little towards the social revolution – at the risk of damaging those "immediate gains" which they are so fond of today.

One can no longer deny that union action carries risks. The greatest of these risks certainly lies in militants accepting official positions in the unions, above all when they are paid positions. As a general rule, the anarchist who accepts permanent, paid office within a union is lost to propaganda, and lost to anarchism! He becomes indebted to those who pay him and, as they are not anarchists, the paid official who finds himself torn between his own conscience and his own interests will either follow his conscience and lose his position or else follow his interests and so, goodbye anarchism!

The official is a danger to the workers' movement, comparable only to parliamentarianism: both lead to corruption and from corruption to death it is only a short step.

Now, let us move on to the general strike. As far as I am concerned, I accept the principle and promote it as much as I can, and have done so for several years. The general strike has always struck me as an excellent means to set off the social revolution. However, let us take care to avoid falling under the dangerous illusion that the general strike can make the revolution superfluous.

We are expected to believe that by suddenly halting production the workers will starve the bourgeoisie into submission within a few days. Personally speaking, I can think of nothing more absurd. The first to starve to death during a general strike will not be the bourgeoisie who have all the accumulated produce at their disposal, but the workers, who only have their labour to live on.

obstacle, cannot be forgotten by us anarchists and we must defend it because it is subjected to the worst sufferings.

Let me repeat: anarchists must enter the workers' syndicates. Firstly, in order to carry out anarchist propaganda; secondly, because it is the only means that can provide us with groups that will be in a position to take over the running of production come the day; furthermore, we must join in order to counteract to the best of our abilities that detestable state of mind that leads the unions to defend only particular interests.

The basic error of Monatte and of all revolutionary syndicalists, in my opinion, derives from an overly simplistic conception of the class struggle. It is a conception whereby the economic interests of all workers – of the working class – are held to be equal, whereby it is enough for workers to set about defending their own particular interests in order for the interests of the whole proletariat against the bosses to be defended.

The reality is very different, in my view. The workers, like the bourgeoisie, like everyone, are subject to the law of universal competition that derives from the system of private property and that will only be extinguished together with that system.

There are therefore no classes, in the proper sense of the term, because there are no class interests. There exists competition and struggle within the working "class", just as there does among the bourgeoisie. The economic interests of one category of worker are implacably in contrast with those of another category. And indeed we sometimes see some workers much closer, economically and mentally, to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat. Cornelissen gave us some examples of this fact here in Holland. And there are others. I need no remind you that workers very often use violence during their strikes… against the police or the bosses? No, against the scabs who too are exploited and even more unfortunate, while the workers' true enemies, the only real obstacle to social equality, are the police and the bosses.

The most important is the tendency of individuals to entrust the task of struggle to their syndicates, to the Federation, to the Confederation, to rely on collective strength when their individual energy would be enough. By constantly appealing to the will of the individual, to his initiative and his daring, we anarchists can react vigorously against this negative tendency to resort continuously to the collective strength for small and large matters alike.

Syndicalist *fonctionnairisme*, furthermore, provokes lively criticism which, it must be said, is often justified. It can and does happen that some militants no longer fulfil their function in order to fight in the name of their comrades, but in order to make a living. But we must not deduce from this that the trade union organizations must do without officials. Many organizations cannot do without them. But they are a necessity whose defects can be corrected by an ever-vigilant spirit of criticism.

Tenth session – Thursday 29 August – Morning session

> *The session opens at nine-thirty. It is decided that the chairman shall remain unchanged until the end of the Congress. After the translations of Monatte's speech into Dutch and German, Friedeberg speaks to observe that all the main European papers have published reports on the Anarchist Congress with the exception of the social-democrat papers. These papers, most notably "Vorwärts", have observed the most religious silence; they undoubtedly prefer to entertain their readers with the diplomatic farce currently being played out in the Hague!*

MALATESTA: Rather than regret this unanimous silence, I would be happy about it, personally speaking. In the past, every time the social-democratic press has dealt with anarchists it has

been to slander them. Now it says nothing: that at least is a step forward.

> *But Monatte did not want "L'Humanité", the French socialist paper, and "Vorwärts", the rich and powerful "central organ" of German social democracy, to be placed on the same level. "L'Humanité" was poor and had no correspondents in Amsterdam. Monatte was convinced that this was the only reason for the silence on the part of "L'Humanitè"*[22].

MALATESTA: Time is passing and we are still far from having got through our too-full agenda. We still have three important problems to discuss: "Syndicalism and Anarchism"; "The economic general strike and the political general strike"; "Anti-militarism and Anarchism", not to mention many questions of secondary importance. As it is difficult to separate syndicalism from the general strike, I would ask that in order to save time, they be discussed together.

> *It is decided that the questions of syndicalism and the general strike be unified under the title "Syndicalism and the General Strike" and that the discussion take place in the afternoon.*
>
> *Comrade Nikolai Rogdaev takes the floor to speak about "The Russian Revolution". Rogdaev speaks in Russian and most people attending the Congress do not understand him*[23]*. Everyone's eyes, however, are fixed on that pale youth in whose eyes burn a strange flame. And everyone can guess at what he is saying. He speaks about*

[22] In actual fact, "L'Humanité" did carry news from the agencies in its 28 and 29 August issues.

[23] Cf. Appendix to *Dibattito sul sindacalismo. Atti del Congresso Internazionale anarchico di Amsterdam (1907)*, edited by Maurizio Antonioli, Florence 1978.

be able to divide the working class more than ever. I do not even want **red** syndicates, because I do not want **yellow** syndicates. On the contrary, I want syndicates that are open to all workers without distinction of opinions, absolutely **neutral** syndicates.

So then, I am for the greatest possible participation in the workers' movement. But I am for it above all in the interest of our propaganda, whose range of action would be considerably increased. It is just that this participation cannot result in our renouncing our dearest ideas. In the syndicates we must remain as anarchists, with all the force and breadth of the term. The workers' movement is nothing more than a means – albeit obviously the best of all the means at our disposition. But I refuse to take this means as an end, and I would reject it if it were to make us lose sight of the other elements of our anarchist ideas, or more simply our other means of propaganda and action.

The syndicalists on the other hand teach us to make an end of the means, to take the partial for the whole. That is how in the minds of some of our comrades syndicalism is about to become a new doctrine, threatening the very existence of anarchism.

Now, even if it is reinforced by the pointless use of the adjective revolutionary, syndicalism is and always will be a legalitarian, conservative movement with no other possible goal – at best – than the improvement of working conditions. I need go no further for proof than the example offered by the great North American unions. Having presented themselves as radically revolutionary, at a time when they were still weak, once they grew in size and wealth these unions these unions became markedly conservative organizations, solely occupied with creating privileges for their members in the factory, workshop or mine, and are much less hostile to the bosses' capitalism than the non-organized workers, that ragged proletariat so maligned by the social democrats! Now, this continually-growing proletariat of the unemployed, which counts for nothing with syndicalism, or rather which counts only as an

the struggle in which Russian anarchists (including himself) are engaged against murderous czarism; he recalls the revolts and the martyrs, the suffering and the executions, all the enormous drama that is being played out in Russia only to be met with the indifference of Europe.

At this point, Siegfried Nacht raised an incident. He accused comrade Croiset of having given information to some bourgeois journalists from Amsterdam the previous evening on yesterday's private session. He suggested that Croiset give some public explanation.

Nacht's words provoked great emotion throughout the assembly. It was not known what information Croiset had provided and it was feared that it could possibly be damaging to some delegates (in particular the Germans) once they returned to their countries.

But Croiset rose and asked to speak. He was pale. His defence, alternately in Dutch, German and French, was listened to in silence.

CROISET: What Nacht says is in effect true, I realize that with deep regret. I am worthy of your reproach, and I accept it *a priori*, a result of my guilty thoughtlessness. I wish only to protest vehemently one expression used by Nacht. He says that he "surprised" me. Only one who hides can be surprised. However, it was during the course of yesterday's public meeting that I spoke to the journalists. I would add that the information given cannot compromise any of our comrades.

MALATESTA: While I deplore comrade Croiset's thoughtlessness, I would ask Congress to continue with the agenda before it.

The majority shared Malatesta's point of view and formally reproached Croiset. It should be added that some of those present, represented by Chapelier, were contrary

previous speakers, and in particular Monatte. Otherwise I would be needlessly inflicting you with pointless repetition, something which we can allow ourselves to do at a rally, for example, faced with a hostile or indifferent audience. But here we are amongst comrades and I am sure that on hearing me criticize what there is to be criticized in syndicalism none of you will be tempted to take me for an enemy of organization and workers' action; were that to happen it would mean you do not know me very well!

The conclusion arrived at by Monatte is that syndicalism is a necessary and sufficient means for social revolution. In other words, Monatte has declared **that syndicalism is sufficient unto itself**. And this is, in my opinion, a radically erroneous doctrine. The aim of my speech is to counter this doctrine.

Syndicalism, and more precisely the workers' movement (the workers' movement is a fact that no-one can ignore, whereas syndicalism is a doctrine, a system, and we must avoid confusing them), the workers' movement, I repeat, has always found in me a staunch, but not blind, defender. It is because I see it as a particularly favourable terrain for our revolutionary propaganda and at the same time a point of contact between the masses and ourselves. I do not need to insist on this point. It must be admitted that I have never been one of those anarchist intellectuals who benevolently walled themselves up in the ivory tower of pure speculation once the old International disappeared; that I have never stopped fighting that attitude of haughty isolation wherever I have found it, be it in England, Italy, France, or elsewhere, nor pushing comrades back to the path that the syndicalists, forgetting a glorious past, call new, but that the first anarchists had already established and followed within the international.

I want anarchists to enter the workers' movement today, as they did in the past. I am a syndicalist, in the sense of being a supporter of the syndicates, today as I was in the past. I do not demand anarchist syndicates that would immediately justify social-democratic syndicates, or republican, or royalist or others which would at best

to this reproach, given Croiset's apology and the practically inexistent damage.

Eleventh session – Thursday 29 August – Afternoon session

As soon as the session opened, Emma Goldman read out a resolution in support of the Russian Revolution proposed by comrades Rogdaev and Vladimir Zabrezhnev together with Goldman, Cornelissen, Baginsky, Pëtr Munžič, Luigi Fabbri and Malatesta. The resolution was unanimously passed.

Discussion of the general strike and syndicalism then resumed. The first to speak was Christiaan Cornelissen.

CORNELISSEN: I do not believe that any anarchist could object to Monatte's speech. However, it should be agreed that he spoke solely from the point of view of a syndicalist militant and that from an anarchist viewpoint his speech requires completion.

Anarchists, we must support both syndicalism and direct action, but on one condition: that their goal be revolutionary and that they do not cease to aim at transforming today's society into a communist and libertarian society.

We cannot hide from the fact that neither syndicalism nor direct action are always, necessarily revolutionary. It is possible to use them for conservative, even reactionary, ends. Thus the diamond workers of Amsterdam and Antwerp have greatly improved their working conditions without resorting to parliamentary means, by the sole use of direct syndicalist action. And what do we see now? The diamond cutters have made a sort of closed caste of their corporation, around which they have built a Chinese wall. They have limited the number of apprentices and they oppose ex-cutters returning to the trade once they have left. Certainly we cannot approve of such practices!

And neither is this a Dutch speciality. In England and in the United States, the unions have often practised direct action. They have used direct action to create a state of privilege for their members; they prevent foreign workers from working even when they are members of unions; and lastly, being made up of "qualified" workers, they have at times opposed the movements of manual labourers, of "unqualified" workers. We can approve of none of this.

Similarly, we cannot approve of the attitude of the French and Swiss typographers who refuse to work with women. There is at present a threat of war between the United States and Japan, but the fault lies not with the American capitalists and bourgeoisie, who would draw even greater benefit from exploiting Japanese workers than American workers. No, it is the American workers themselves who are sparking off the war by violently opposing the importation of Japanese manpower.

Finally, there are also other forms of direct action that we must never cease to combat: for example, those that seek to oppose the introduction of machinery (linotypes, hoists, etc.), in other words the improvement of production through the improvement of the tools of production.

I intend to condense these ideas into the form of a motion that will set out which forms of syndicalism and direct action anarchists can support.

Comrade Malatesta immediately takes the floor and replies to Monatte with one of his most vigorous speeches. From the moment the old revolutionary begins to speak, with the down-to-earth eloquence and frankness so appreciated by all, silence falls on the hall.

MALATESTA: I wish to state straight away that I will only deal here with those areas in which I am in disagreement with the