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Short history of the International of Anarchist Federations (IAF-IFA)

Robert Wogatzke

6 September 1996

Forward:

Here is a short (and incomplete) history of IFA from its creation in 1968 until the congress in 1986. It is in rather poor english and does not include the development since then. An english translation of the current (complete) IFA history doesn't exist at this time. I hope we will find the time to do it soon. The single IFA sections have mainly been active within their single countries during the last three years and general, mutual work is only slowly picking up again...

One thing of importance: During the 1990 congress in Valencia (Spain) a resolution was passed expressing IFAs solidarity with workers struggles and with the IWA in particular, which is the only unionist organisation on an international scale which has not become reformist or totalitarian. The IFA section declared that they would participate in the workers struggles within the anarchist principles of direct action, federalism and the aim of an anarchist social revolution. According

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Retrieved on February 6, 1998 from web.archive.org

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to their particular situation they will do this by participating in anarchosyndicalist unions which are part of the IWA, by participating in other unions in a non-bureaucratic way or by participating in self-organised workers groups/organisations.

The IAF – IFA was created at the international anarchist congress which took place in Carrara (Italy), between August 31 and September 5, 1968. This happened after the congress, which was held in London (between July 25 and August 1, 1958), recreated a certain dynamism and wish towards the organisational aspiration of international anarchism.

The comrades, who met at the London congress, agreed that “The anarchist International had for essential roots the will and the international activity of the anarchists, confirmed in Amsterdam in 1907 and reaffirmed, several times, since then. The International Anarchist Congress, where all the movement participates, is its temporary way of expression... “. Besides, with the constitution of an International Anarchist Commission (I.A.C.) which is in charge of maintaining the relations between two congresses, the importance of continuous work, necessary for the development of the organised anarchist action, is recognised.

The Congress of Carrara, wished in a crucial moment of the social fight (in the continuity of May 68), was the turning point of the work started in London and continued through a lot of contradictions. In Carrara, in a burning atmosphere, we could see the confrontation of various generations of militants, from the Spanish revolution fighter, the anti fascist fighter, to the rebellious youth from the barricades of middle-Europe.

The revolutionary perspective, which was happening with the workers and students struggle, for the first time since the war, found in the congress a very important moment for confrontation and verification. While on one hand, was being con-

firmed the criticism against Marxism, rejecting the “Marxist-libertarian” illusion existing in some areas, was re-launched, on the other hand, the importance of the workers movement as a central actor of a possible antiauthoritarian revolution. Along with this, was defined the basis for a real international organisation, with a permanent existence, which was pleasing the organisational tendency of the movement.

The work which has been performed, since then, by the commission in charge (C.R.I.F.A. : Commission of Relations of The International of Anarchist Federations) has permitted the possibility of keeping a constant international link, the interchange of information, the libertarian solidarity.

From August 1 to August 4, 1971, was hold, in Paris, the second international anarchist congress, in the continuation of the protest movement which was still existing and operating, but being in a more and more difficult situation. In Paris, the comrades were meeting more and more difficulties with militant action which was leading some groups to the only search of efficiency and to the adoption of majority mechanisms for the functioning of the organisation. The hope to overcome and the no man’s land where the mass movement was finding itself, the strong presence of the Bolshevik-like organisations led some people to theorise, and to have a practice far from the usual field of international anarchism. The confrontation which took place allowed a clarification which had an impact on the “national” situations and which still has an impact today. Reaffirming the organisational will of the Carrara Congress (1968), the Paris Congress confirmed its will to go forward, in the same direction.

The third congress of the IAF – IFA, hold again in Carrara (between March 23 and 27, 1978, that is to say, seven years after the previous one) was happening in a special moment of the social and political life of the host country. Aldo Moro, president of the Christian Democracy party was kidnapped by the Red Brigades. This situation allowed to go to the next step forward

in the definition of a collective orientation of the organised anarchist action. Developing a constructive criticism of the process of armed struggle in action, the congress developed the thesis that “revolutionary violence cannot be understood and accepted without the parallel existence of a strong and organised workers movement, agreeing with the libertarian ideas”. The congress registered many opinions, on the possible development of such a movement, due to the work of the anarchist militants in different types of syndicalist structures. The major part of the Federation reconfirmed its agreement with the principles defined in 1968. The French Federation affirmed, for the first time within the International, its choice for a movement independent from the workers movement and with a selfmanagement profile.

The congress decided to have a clear position on the women’s struggle movement showing a strong increase, during that year, and bringing new elements of reflection to the whole revolutionary movement: “the IAF – IFA supports the revolt of women... The IAF – IFA does not leave at a second level the women’s problem and will not be satisfied with a theoretical discussion which will not be put into practice in the every day life”.

Eight years later, in 1986, we go back to Paris, between October 31 and November 3, with the fourth international anarchist congress. Finishing with the long cycle of the struggle started in 1968, the congress started discussing on the subjects of the anti-imperialist struggle and on the movements of national liberation. With an eye on the Latin-American situation, was defined a project of solidarity with the popular struggle in Nicaragua and Haiti and with the proposal of the creation of a commission of relations for Central and South America.

Regarding the syndicalist situation, the previous situation showed two different positions

1. support of the International Workers Association (IWA – AIT) only.
2. support a less ideological approach but more pragmatic with a participation to large reformist unions.

Finally, the responsibility for the C.R.I.F.A., first Italian, was passed on to the French Federation.