

# Revolutionary syndicalism and organization

The Anarchosyndicalists Group

circa 1980

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## Translator's foreword

For the first time this historical and hard-to-find document of the Greek anarchosyndicalist movement is presented in English: the 'Revolutionary syndicalism and organization' (Επαναστατικός συνδικαλισμός και οργάνωση) was printed in the early 1980s as a small brochure in polytonic Greek (then the standard form of written language) by the Anarchosyndicalists' Group (Ομάδα Αναρχοσυνδικαλιστών), an organization active during 1980 – 1982 in Athens, Greece. This profound text was in danger of being forgotten in archives – until a digitized edition in monotonic Greek was made available over the internet in 2004 on Athens Indymedia, and later in 2009 re-posted on Anarkismo (which is the exact source used for this translation):

- 2004 edition on Athens IMC: [athens.indymedia.org](http://athens.indymedia.org)
- 2009 re-publication on Anarkismo: [www.anarkismo.net](http://www.anarkismo.net)

This translation was finalized on 25 August 2009. Please do be bold in improving it, particularly if you can read the original. You are at liberty in copying and disseminating this text in an unlimited fashion. More translations in other languages are happily welcome to help spread the revolutionary ideas that will prepare the ground for the coming insurrections which will forge the new worldwide civilization of free women and men.

As of 2004 there is a mostly complete archive of documents by the Anarchosyndicalists' Group at the Libertarian Historical Archive, PO box 53, Naousa, Paros Island, postal code 84 401, Cyclades Islands, Greece (Ελευθεριακό Ιστορικό Αρχείο, Τ.Θ. 53 Νάουσα Πάρου 84 401, Κυκλάδες), email: [linos@par.forthnet.gr](mailto:linos@par.forthnet.gr)

[text in square brackets constitute additions by the translator]

# REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM AND ORGANIZATION *By The Anarchosyndicalists' Group*

[An early 1980s brochure first printed in polytonic Greek in Athens, Greece; monotonized and digitized on-line in 2004; translated into English in 2009].

A few days ago we learnt from the press of the completion of the trickery orchestrated behind our backs by the servile bootlickers of the country's labour union and the bosses.

[Translator's note: in the next paragraph, where it says GSEE, it refers to the largest Greek labour union, the General Confederation of Workers].

As they do every year, the self-appointed 'protectors of workers' this year negotiated with the bosses the price of our labour power. The fraud was finalized with a 15% increase in our wages while the retail price index and the bosses' profits have sky-rocketed. This deception will continue for as long as we let the GSEE bootlickers and all political parties' reformists to have the upper hand in our struggle and decide for our lives — these bootlickers and reformists have converted workers' syndicates in bureaucratic machines under the control of the various Boards of Directors, the political parties' trustees and the bosses together with a small number of voters who give their consent to the Boards in the name of all the other workers.

This is an inhibiting factor against the development of an autonomous massive syndicalist movement where all workers would take part against the bosses and their bootlickers.

## **Comrades in daily misery**

[Translator's note: in order to successfully convey the authors' intended meaning, it is better to define a new word: ergatopater(s). Literally: workers' father(s). Approximate free translation: workers' big brother. Definition: a syndicalist leader, or a politician, who contrary to what they say they in fact act against the workers' interests by secretly colluding with the capitalists and the government. Etymology: from Greek εργατοπατέρας / ergatopateras (workers' father) which is a compound formed by the words ergat[is] (worker) + linking-o + pater[as] (father). In order to make it more compatible with English morphology the Greek grammar suffixes are dropped out].

We should not believe the promises made by GSEE's and political parties' ergatopaters right and left but to promote, in every workplace, the creation of autonomous workers' councils that will express the will of the general assembly of all workers without permanent representatives and leaders, and these councils will determine the workers' attitude on frauds like collective bargaining.

We will create these autonomous industrial unions with our daily struggle in our workplaces and our everyday vigilance about our problems. The basic proposition the reformists make against autonomous unions is that they divide the workers' movement.

In reality, autonomous unions do not divide but rather unite the workers' movement because they are connected with each other by delegates who can be directly recalled by the workers and are constantly changed by the general assembly.

- AHEAD TOWARDS THE WORKERS' REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATION!
- DOWN WITH WAGE LABOUR!
- THREE CHEERS FOR REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM!
- THREE CHEERS FOR WORKERS' COUNCILS!

THE ANARCHOSYNDICALISTS' GROUP

## **I. Wage labour and the capital**

1. In 1886 in Chicago the revolting workers were being beaten by the police in the streets.
2. In the present day, a hundred years from then, we still live under the rule of capitalist production. We still live in a world that could be called a 'commercial world'. We, the workers, are still the most basic of all economic goods, the commodity that gives rise to profit. And this relation is realized today with the system driving us to consume even what is unnecessary or dangerous.
3. The factory, the building works, the office are all nothing more than places where our labour is consumed. Our labour has already become the capitalist's property from the moment we enter into these places.
4. In this way our labour has lost any creative potential by the moment it serves the capitalist, who is not interested at all in social well-being, and only looks after their profit. For example: the war industry, land planning, the environmental problem, bureaucracy, etc.
5. It is the capitalist who owns the product of our labour while we are entirely alienated from it. Hence, our labour power is nothing else than a form of capital and the capital is nothing else than a form of accumulated labour power.
6. Not a whit of the product of our labour is given to us, except mere wages that are nothing more than the price of our labour power. This procedure of buying and selling is called wage labour.
7. Therefore, as long as capital exists wage labour will also exist. And as long as we are forced to sell our own life-force and labour power to the bosses, we will support those who control the present society and our thought and will with the brainwashing media and repression.
8. In this state of wage labour, not even a moment remains we can feel human.

9. The basic social custom that enables this relation is property; whether private or state ownership, it is what supports the existence of the present economic organization, which is based on the exploitation of wage labour by those who own the means of production.

## **II. Property and the state**

1. The state is the politico-economic mechanism that, by use of its organs, supports and consecrates the exploitative system.
2. The parliament, the courts of law, the prisons, the army, the police, the laws... all have one and only mission: to repress class struggle and keep the workers enslaved under the yoke of wage labour.
3. The state's rule over every expression of life is its power. The state in no case hesitates to enforce its might by the violence of institutionalized terrorism (police, military, etc.).
4. The state, consequently, is a mechanism inherently coupled with wage labour and must be resisted by those who fight against it.
5. In older forms of capital development (private economy — free enterprise), the owning class also managed the production process. Namely, the capitalist decided what and how much to produce without any central intervention. The state was limited to enforcing the law and order that would support the capital.
6. Today, the development of transnational corporations (gigantism) and the tendency of production to thwart consumption crescendoes the perception that a state-controlled economy is needed.
7. This need leads to a state that has absolute control over society, extending its rule even over production.
8. This tendency of capitalist production's restructuring follows three parallel models (with significant resemblances and differences): a) the model of state intervention in production (state interventionism — Sweden, etc.); b) the integration of the owning and management classes within the state (state monopoly capitalism); and c) the nationalization of production (state capitalism — Russia).
9. The anti-capitalist and anti-statist movement must, in our opinion, take into account these changes in the nature of the system in order to pick further goals and determine its praxis.

## **III. Reformist syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism**

1. Even from the initial class struggles there were two currents within syndicalism: reformist syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism.
2. Reformism as a conception does not see the syndicate as a worker's organ for the struggle towards the revolution and for the revolution, or, in the best case, sees the syndicate

as an assistive instrument of the political organization (of a party) that promotes change (marxism — social democracy, etc.).

[Translator's note: small-m marxism in the digitized original].

3. By removing the syndicate from this basic (in our opinion) historical role it makes it an arbiter and a mediatory mechanism, a trust that fine-tunes the price and the conditions of buying and selling labour power.
  4. As a corollary, in the model of organization proposed by reformist syndicalism, this leads not to an anti-hierarchical platform for the future but to the maintenance of capitalism's vertical organizational forms and authority.
  5. These forms are based on hierarchy and representation; on the lack of any autonomy and on central decision-taking from above.
  6. Moreover, these organizational forms advocated by reformism abolish every jurisdiction of grass-roots organizations, making them mouthpieces of the central administration's decisions.
  7. In the current phase of capital's development, in many instances, reformist syndicalism and the institutionalized syndicates are integrated with the state becoming parts of it (co-management — the UK, Germany, Sweden, etc.).
  8. In Greece, we can say that there is no tradition of revolutionary syndicalism. The syndicalist movement is monopolized by various reformist parties (governmental or marxist).
- [Translator's note: small-m marxism in the digitized original].
9. The General Confederation of Workers (GSEE), virtually the only syndicate, is an institutionalized mechanism, an offshoot of the ministry of labour, which controls the cosmos of work from the background.
  10. The other professional organizations have no real access to the workers and are composed of members and supporters of the four main parties that operate within them (AEM, ESAK, PASKE, PESP).
  11. All these organizations do is just this process: once a year the workers are called to elect the administration councils. Then it is them who decide and the workers just execute their decisions. The administration councils decide when there will be a strike, and the workers merely obey. Whenever they think it is needed they call the workers in assemblies where they explain their policy.
  12. This situation has led the workers' movement to a stall so that no real clash has happened in the last five years.
  13. The workers' few direct action attempts are violently repressed by the state and the reformist organizations. For example, mobilizations of workers in the home appliances sector, of the masons, etc.

[Translator's note: above, it refers to examples from class struggles in Greece]

## IV. Revolutionary syndicalism and organization

1. Contrary to reformism, revolutionary syndicalism expresses the belief that society can be changed by the rebelled workers' action.
2. In our opinion, this belief is not a manifestation of a revolutionary ideology, but a historic expression of class struggle in the organizational plane. This means that revolutionary syndicalism is not a theory born in the minds of a few wise persons, but a revolutionary movement born out of class struggle.
3. Revolutionary syndicalism is based on two constituents: a) on direct action; and b) on anti-authoritarian organization.
4. Direct action is the praxis implemented by the base of the workers without the intervention of managers and middlepersons. Its main characteristic is the direct class war between workers and bosses, which whets the antitheses by using revolutionary approaches. Feroocious strikes, sabotage of production, etc.

[Translator's note: the Greek word 'μαλακία' — 'malakia' (singular) / 'μαλακίες' — 'malakies' (plural) which we will meet in the next paragraph cannot be translated accurately in English as it has a plethora of meanings and associations; so it is used directly, in the form 'malacky' (singular) / 'malackies' (plural) slightly adapted to English grammar and morphology. While its literal meaning is 'wanking', in the next paragraph's context the word is used to mean: bullshit (the closest English word, but lacks other important secondary meanings that make malacky irreplaceable), stupidity, (talk) rot, idiocy, cowardice, softness, slavishness, spinelessness, nonsense (another good approximation for a translator who would prefer to avoid neologisms), and the quality (or utterances) of a jerk. Those interested in a sociolinguistic approach on this word can find a discussion in James Faubion's 1993 book 'Modern Greek lessons: a primer in historical constructivism' by Princeton University Press, page 223].

5. This way of action used by revolutionary syndicalism is in antithesis to the reformist malackies about arbitration and third-organs' syndicalism.
6. Revolutionary syndicalism, as an organizational theory, supports the association of workers in horizontal syndicates whose functioning is based on the principles of decentralization, autonomy, recallability, and on pluralism.
7. The revolutionary syndicate is a federation of autonomous unions of workers in the production site.
8. These organizations are the fundamental free structures from which the revolutionary syndicate is formed.
9. The free participation of workers in these grassroots assemblies abolishes the syndicate's role as an intermediary and a trust of labour power and transforms it into an organ of the masses for the collective accomplishment of direct action.



10. All decisions, therefore, are taken by the base in the assemblies of the grassroots councils and are aggregated in local and wider levels by the — always recallable and alternating — delegates.
11. This means that in the revolutionary syndicate all responsibilities are executive and never decisional. Only the base makes decisions.
12. The functioning of the revolutionary syndicate is not based on democratic centralism but on revolutionary pluralism. So, every proposal can, and has the right to, be propagandized on the social plane no matter whether it is a minority or majority.
13. The revolutionary syndicate, therefore, is the free organization of masses at the place of production. It is the natural organization of the workers.

## **V. Revolutionary syndicalism, industrial demands — generalized self-management**

1. In revolutionary syndicalism there is no begging, only demands.
2. The revolutionary syndicate as a natural organization of workers in the site of production has a dual mission: a) the promotion of workers' conquests with direct action; and b) the promotion of class struggle against the bosses with the ultimate aim of abolishing wage labour and the exploitation of human by human, as well as the free organization of society with generalized self-management.
3. Revolutionary syndicalism combines these two goals so that, with everyday clashes at the workplaces, the need for a social revolution and generalized self-administration becomes more evident.
4. The self-management of production (and of life) abolishes the appropriation of workers' labour and energy by the ownership and management class, therefore emancipating labour and destroying the essence of commodity which is the basis of the disunited social relations that exist today.
5. The collective use of social wealth transcends the alienated social relations and replaces them with free human relationships.
6. Wage labour as an exchangeable primary commodity ceases to exist and its place is taken by free creativity, which is based on the principle of 'from everyone for everyone'. It follows that, in such a production system, consumption will be the determinant of production, while in the the current exploitative system it is production which drives consumption. That is, the production process will be judged by the people's needs.
7. The organization of life will be managed by the producers themselves and will be coordinated by the producers' councils.
8. The state, the military, the police, the national borders, the schools, the motherland, the family become museum pieces, shites of an epoch of social constipation.

9. Today, as capitalism nears its explosive point, self-management is the only solution.

## VI. The Greek reality and the revolutionary industrial groups

1. In Greece today worker syndicalism has really got bogged down.
2. After the repression of the industrial movement in [Greek factories] Pitsos, A.E.G., Eskimo, etc. and of the masons' movement (23 July — 25 May) the opportunity for the development of direct action in production sites that had been opened was in fact lost, with the consequence that these days the workers limit themselves to the ghost of mediatory syndicalism which is actualized in the background by the reformist syndicalist unions' administration councils.
3. In parallel, the capital was re-organized, renovating and completing the repression apparatus against the labour movement. For instance, the black-legging machine, employment law, MAT [riot police], persecution of syndicalists, mass layoffs, etc. resulting in open direct action being impossible in today's places of production.
4. In this situation the only solution is the promotion of revolutionary groups within the places of production that will rally the revolutionist workers whose aim will be the advancement of direct action.
5. We believe that these groups' action will focus on: a) prevailing over reformist syndicalism and revealing its haggling with the bosses, b) forging ahead revolutionary forms of praxis such as fierce strikes, occupations, sabotage of production, etc., and c) propagandizing decision-making by the workers themselves by the agency of the general assemblies and beating the belief in representation.
6. Here we ought to make it clear that in no way we believe that these groups can replace the real organizations of workers in production sites.  
[Translator's note: zymosis in the next paragraph means the development and spread of political maturity amongst the workers].
7. These groups with their action are the zymosis' catalysts for the advancement of class struggle by direct action.

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