

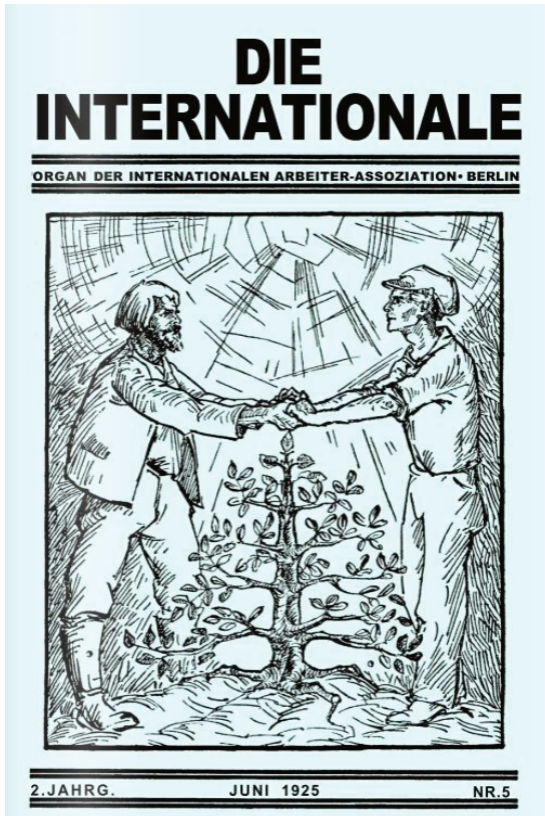


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The birth of the International Workers Association (AIT-IWA),
Berlín, 1922

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FROM REVOLUTIONARY SYNDICALISM TO ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM: THE BIRTH OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION (IWA) IN BERLIN, 1922

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Lecture delivered at the Congress on Anarcho-syndicalism organized by the Istituto di Storia Contemporanea del Movimento Operaio e Contadino, Ferrara, 197

Before the First World War, revolutionary syndicalism was largely assimilated to that of the French CGT, it considered in some way a model for several organizations in other countries, all of which approved of the neutral or negative attitude towards the political parties and, consequently, of the Second International, founded in 1889. However, when the question of the international organization of revolutionary syndicalism itself arose, important tactical differences appeared between the French CGT and the majority of foreign syndicalists .

Under the ideological influence of anarchism and the direct efforts of anarchists, Pelloutier in particular, French trade unionism exercised, from 1892 to 1895, an anti-authoritarian and autonomous ascendancy, anti-parliamentary, anti-militarist,

¹ Paul Arthur Müller-Lehning (23 October 1899, in Utrecht – 1 January 2000, in Lys-Saint-Georges) was a Dutch author, historian and anarchist.

He studied economics at the universities of Rotterdam and Berlin. He knew from a young age the trade unionist and anti-militarist ideas. In Berlin he came into contact with the German anarcho-syndicalist Rudolf Rocker and the anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. He participated in the Committee for the Defense of Anarchists and Social Revolutionaries, who were beginning to be persecuted by the Bolsheviks in Russia. Also in the German capital he met the doctor, professor and well-known antimilitarist Georg Friedrich Nicolai, becoming in 1922 secretary of the International Anti-Militarist Bureau (IAMB), founded in The Hague a year earlier.

In 1922 he joined the International Workers Association (AIT for its acronym), participating together with Augustin Souchy, Albert de Jong and Helmut Rüdiger between 1927 and 1934 in the press service of the International Anti-Militarist Commission –IAMC / CIAM), a body that emerged after the union of the anti-militarist committee of the AIT and the IAMB. The Committee engaged in arduous propaganda work. Between the years 1932 and 1935 he was part of the secretariat of the IWA, together with Rudolf Rocker and Alexander Shapiro.

He was one of the founders of the *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (International Institute of Social History)* in Amsterdam. Most of his written work is linked to his work at the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. He would edit Bakunin's complete works, which were published in French under the title Archives Bakounine.

anti-patriotic. What Pelloutier wanted was to remove the labor movement from the influence and monopolization of political parties. According to Pouget, the editor of the paper “La Voix du Peuple” (*The Voice of the People*), this anarchist ideological influence prevented the conquest of the unions by the Guesdists². But when, in 1909, Jouhaux became one of the main leaders of the French CGT, the struggle of tendencies took hold there.

The French CGT was affiliated to the Berlin Secretariat. Created in 1903 to facilitate and coordinate international contacts between reformist unions, the said Secretariat was nothing more than a simple information office, including the central office of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerkschafts Bund*, under the direction of Carl Legien³, performed the duties. At the international conferences only the leaders of the associated trade unions attended, who only discussed technical questions, setting aside any theoretical problem which might have risked dragging them into the political arena, reserved for the social-democratic parties alone.

Neither the French CGT nor the *Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat* (NAS) (the first trade union center in Holland, of trade union tendency, which had been founded in 1893 and of which Christiaan Cornelissen⁴ was the main animator), had the slightest influence in the Secretariat.

At the conferences, Legien, the permanent secretary and influential in the organization of the German trade unions, refused to put on the agenda the questions proposed by the French CGT, in particular anti-militarism and the general strike. This is why the French abstained from being represented at the conferences of 1905 and 1907.

At the 1909 conference, the French CGT proposed to organize a real congress, the object of which would be to examine the general questions of the trade union

² Translator’s note [TN] : Followers of Jules GUESDES, leader of the marxist *Worker’s Party*(*Parti ouvrier*)

³ TN : A former lathe worker, Member of Parliament between 1893 and 1920 and head of the *General Commission of German Trade Unions* from 1890 until his death, he was the main architect of the centralization and institutionalization of trade unions before the First World War. (Gaël Cheptou, *A Contretemps*, n° 28, October 2007)

⁴ Christiaan Cornelissen (1864-1942), a close collaborator of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, attended the congresses of the Socialist International in Brussels (1891), Zurich (1893) and London (1896). In 1893 he was one of the founders of the *Dutch National Labor Secretariat* (NAS). After a disagreement with Domela Nieuwenhuis, especially about the role of the unions, he left for France in 1898. He collaborated with the organ of the CGT, *La Voix du Peuple* (*the Voice of the people*) and, in 1911, became editor of the *Bataille syndicaliste* (*The Syndicalist Battle*). From 1907 to 1914, he edited the *International Bulletin of the Trade Union Movement*. In particular, he published a *General Treatise on Economic Science* (5 vol., Paris, 1926-1944). In Spanish translation, we have from him *La Evolucion de la sociedad moderna* (Buenos Aires, 1934) and *El Comunismo libertario y el régimen de transicion* (Valencia, 1936).

struggle. This proposal was rejected. Despite this new failure, The French CGT continued to adhere to the Berlin office.

When, in February 1913, the NAS – supported by the *Industrial Syndicalist Education League* of England – proposed to convene an international congress to lay the foundations of a revolutionary Syndicalist International, the French CGT declared itself completely opposed to it. Specifying the reasons for this negative attitude, Pierre Monatte clearly summarized the perspective from which the French CGT would consider the question: “*For us, in France, concerned with creating a trade union International holding real international congresses of trade unions, an International in which we know very well that we would be in the minority, but who will be the real Workers' International - don't you think that we have some reason to ask ourselves whether our participation in a syndicaliste congress and a syndicalist secretariat will not make us turn our backs on the great goal that we settled ?* »⁵.

For the other trade union organisations, the question obviously arose in a completely different way. The tendencies which, in France collided in the CGT alone⁶, crystallized, in Holland or in Germany, in distinct trade union organizations which were clearly opposed to each other. In 1913, a “*revisionist*” trade unionist current, for whom the French CGT was essentially an instrument of struggle within the framework of existing society, had already firmly established itself in the Confédération and the example of the powerful German trade unions contributed to strengthening it; and if revolutionary syndicalists such as Monatte rose up against a Syndicalist International, it was also because they feared that its founding would lead to a split in the French CGT, thus endangering the unity of the French working class.

It was therefore without the French CGT that the revolutionary syndicalists met in London from September 27 to October 2, 1913. Among the most important syndicalist centers were the *Unione Sindacale Italiana*, represented by Alceste De Ambris, by far the strongest organization among the participants⁷; the *Sveriges Arbetares Central-organisation*, in the person of Albert Jensen; the Dutch NAS and the *Freie Vereinigung Deutscher Gewerkschaften*, of which Fritz Kater⁸ was the

⁵ «Le Congrès syndicaliste international », *La Vie Ouvrière*, April 5, 1913, p. 407.

⁶ Translator's note : at this time, the CGT was the only trade-union in France, gathering all the political tendencies inside.

⁷ In addition to De Ambris, this delegation included two other Italians: E. Rossoni, delegate of the *Unione Sindacale Milanese* and the *Camera del Lavoro di Bologna*, and Silvio Corio, for the *Camera del Lavoro di Parma e Provincia*.

⁸ Coming from a modest family, F. Kater was very early on active in the German Socialist Party (SPD), within which his sympathies were with the “youth” (*Jungen*), the pro-anarchist extreme left of the social-democratic party. Having settled in Berlin, he met G. Kessler in 1897, whom he succeeded as

delegate. In all, 38 delegates representing 65 syndicalist federations or centers from Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Cuba, England, Germany, Holland, Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

In addition to the absence of the CGT - but four local French organizations (the Seine/Paris, Tourcoing-Roubaix, Lille, Vichy), also opposed to the founding of a new International, were represented in London -, let us point out the abstention of the *Industrial Workers of the World* (IWW). The defective preparation of the congress undoubtedly had a lot to do with it, but the Americans were also keen on the fiction of being themselves an International.

Most of the delegates presented reports, in writing or orally, on the state of the syndicalist movement in their respective countries. The congress, which did not pass without incident, did not entirely achieve its goal. However, a kind of declaration of principles was adopted, framed in these terms:

“The Congress, recognizing that the working class of every country suffers from the slavery of the capitalist and statist system, declares itself for the class struggle, for international solidarity and for the independent organization of the working classes, based on free association.

This organization aims at the immediate material and intellectual development of the working classes and, in the future, the abolition of this system.

The Congress declares that the class struggle is an inevitable consequence of the private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and advocates the socialization of this ownership and the development of the trade unions into productive organizations, capable of assuming the direction of production. and distribution. Recognizing that international unions will achieve this goal only when they cease to be divided by political and religious differences, declares that the struggle is of such an economic character as to exclude any action exercised by governing corporations or by the members of these corporations and depends entirely on the direct action of organized workers. Consequently, the Congress appeals to the workers of all countries to organize themselves into independent

head of the *Freien Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften* (FvdG, Free Association of German Trade Unions) in 1903.

In 1907, Kater refused a permanent position offered by the *Free Trade Unions* and the following year left the SPD after more than twenty years of membership in that party. This is the year when the FvdG refused to dissolve and adopted a clearly revolutionary syndicalist orientation.

Kater opposed the 1914 war during which he coordinated the illegal activities of the FvdG. In November 1918, he reorganized his organization which took the name of FAUD in December 1919. President of this anarcho-syndicalist organization until 1930, he opposed membership in the Red International Labor Union (RILU) and participated in the revolutionary congresses of Berlin (June and December 1922), which led to the founding of the AIT.

industrial unions and to unite on the basis of international solidarity with a view to obtaining their emancipation and freedom from capitalist and statist domination.
“⁹

This text, of which Alfred Rosmer¹⁰ said that it "*is not dazzlingly clear*", nevertheless contains three elements which fall within the 1922's declaration of principles of the International Workers' Association, namely:

- The destruction, not only of capitalism, but also of the state;
- the transfer to economic organizations of the administration of production and distribution;
- direct action, which excludes any political action.¹¹

The London Congress was the first attempt to give organized form to international revolutionary syndicalism, although the results were limited. The Germans, who proposed the foundation of a syndicalist International, were outvoted despite the support of the NAS. Taking into account also the position of the CGT, they considered that the moment was badly chosen to push for the creation of an organization whose forces would be reduced, and they contented themselves with the foundation of an information office, whose seat would be in Holland. If the congress did not perhaps give all the results that were expected of it, it at least rejected what flowed from the CGT attitude, namely that the syndicalist minorities outside France should, in principle, try to infiltrate the reform movement in their country.

The congress decided to publish an *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement*, the first issue of which appeared in April 1914. Its main editor was Cornelissen, one of the best-known participants who had also written the bulletin published by the International Anarchist Congress in 1907, during the special meeting of revolutionary syndicalists. A new trade union congress was planned for 1915, in Amsterdam.

⁹ Quoted by Alfred Rosmer, "Le Congrès de Londres", *La Vie Ouvrière*, October 20, 1913, 455.

¹⁰ NT : Alfred Rosmer (1867-1964), whose real name is Alfred Griot, was born in 1867 near New York. Anarchist student, member of the *Socialist Revolutionary Internationalist Students (ESRI)* together with Schapiro, he joined the CGT in 1899, where he became lifelong friends with Monatte. Under his influence he moved away from anarchism to become a revolutionary syndicalist. He was one of the founders of the *Third International* in Moscow and of the *Red International Labor Union (RILU)*. It was under his influence that the French CGTU joined the Moscow(syndicalist international. Member of the political bureau of the *French Communist Party* between 1922 and 1924, from which he was expelled in 1924. A friend of Trotsky, he participated in the creation of the first Trotskyist group in France and it was in his house that the IVth International was created in 1938.

¹¹ Alexandre Schapiro, "Las Internacionales sindicales: Amsterdam, Moscú, Berlín", *La Protesta. Suplemento sernanal*, August 24-September 14, 1925.

It goes without saying that the war not only prevented the said congress from meeting, but broke all the relations which the Dutch office had been able to establish. The NAS tried in vain to renew international ties; it was not until early 1919 that syndicalist representatives from Norway, Sweden and Denmark, having agreed on the need to convene a new international congress, asked the NAS to organize it in July or August of that same year. But all sorts of difficulties caused this congress to fail and was reduced, so to speak, to an exchange of views between Dutch and Germans.

The latter will then create, at the end of December 1919, the *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands* (FAUD), of which Rudolf Rocker will be the most listened to spokesperson. The Constituent Congress demanded, once again, the foundation of a Syndicalist International and at the same time declared itself in solidarity with the Russian Soviet Republic. But these two positions will soon become incompatible.

I will be excused for not retracing here in detail the activity of the various trade union organizations during the First World War and the revolutionary period that ensued, although that would have brought many details to my report; I must limit myself to the development of the international relations of these syndicalist organisations. However, let us take a look at the situation facing the revolutionary syndicalists at the beginning of 1920. The revolution was held in check in several European countries, but nothing seemed to be settled yet. In Russia, the new power had remained standing for more than two years. The trade union organizations had known a considerable influx of adherents and formed in certain countries mass organizations which included a large part of the revolutionary proletariat. On the other hand, a regrouping of forces was announced in France, the old CGT was on the point of bursting; elsewhere, a very clear dissimilarity between communists and syndicalists was emerging, sometimes even within the revolutionary unions.

This process, born of a divergent approach to the concrete problems raised by the particular conditions of each country, was accelerated in March 1919 by the founding of the Communist International. In its Platform, it declared that it wanted:

*“to achieve a bloc with those elements of the revolutionary workers' movement which, although they did not previously belong to the socialist party, now place themselves entirely and for all on the terrain of the proletarian dictatorship in its Soviet form, that is- that is to say with the elements of trade unionism.”*¹²

This desire was further accentuated when, in July, the reformist unions founded the *International Federation of Trade Unions* (IFTU), known as the Amsterdam International or the Yellow International.

¹² The Third Communist International. Theses adopted by the First Congress. Official documents for the year 1919-1920, Petrograd, 1920, p. 28.

At that time, syndicalists were not opposed, in principle, to Moscow's proposals. Revolutionary Russia had all their sympathies. Imagine what the situation in Russia was like in 1919. Although the Bolshevik party was in power, the revolutionary phase had not come to an end. Threatened in the north by the intervention of the Allies, in the east by Kolchak, in the south by Denikin and Wrangel, the Soviet government left a certain freedom to the non-Bolshevik revolutionary organizations, to the left Socialist-Revolutionaries, to the maximalists, to the syndicalists, to anarchists. The sanitary cordon against the new regime made the situation in Russia ill known, and the revolution, struggling with the counter-revolution, found defenders among the revolutionaries of the whole world.

Like the FAUD, the Spanish *Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) expressed, in December 1919, at the Comedia Congress, its point of view in the following way:

*“First: That the CNT of Spain declare itself the firm defender of the principles of the First International upheld by Bakunin. Second: Declares that it adheres provisionally to the Communist International because of its revolutionary character, while waiting for the CNT of Spain to organize and convene the Universal Workers' Congress which will discuss and fix the principles according to which the true International of the workers shall be governed.”*¹³

Following the Russian invitation, several trade union delegates attended the Second Congress of the Comintern, which took place from July 19 to August 7, 1920. But for the "leftists" among them, the Congress began under unfavorable auspices: shortly before, Lenin had published his famous pamphlet on "*infantile disease*"¹⁴; and the day before the opening of the Congress, the delegates of the German communist left (including Otto Rühle) returned to Berlin, completely disappointed by the talks they had had with the Bolshevik leaders. The German syndicalists had an observer in the person of Augustin Souchy, who was on a study trip to Russia. Of the Spanish delegates, only Angel Pestana managed to reach Moscow; the USI

¹³ José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish revolution*, vol. I, Paris, 1971, p. 29.

¹⁴ Translator's note : Vladimir Lenin, "Left-Wing" Communism: an Infantile Disorder. In this now-classic work, Lenin aimed to encapsulate the lessons the Bolshevik Party had learned from its involvement in three revolutions in 12 years—in a manner that European Communists could relate to, for it was to them he was speaking. He also further develops the theory of what the "dictatorship of the proletariat" means and stresses that the primary danger for the working-class movement in general is opportunism on the one hand, and anti-Marxist ultraleftism on the other.

"Left-Wing" Communism: an Infantile Disorder was written in April, and the appendix was written on May 12, 1920. It came out on June 8–10 in Russian and in July was published in German, English and French. Lenin gave personal attention to the book's type-setting and printing schedule so that it would be published before the opening of the Second Congress of the Communist International, each delegate receiving a copy.

delegate, Armando Borghi, did not arrive until after the closing¹⁵.

As for the resolutions adopted by the Congress, we know that they were little designed to please the revolutionary syndicalists. The one on the role of the Communist Party in the proletarian revolution said in particular:

“The Communist International repudiates in the most categorical way the opinion according to which the proletariat can accomplish its revolution without having [a] political party. [...]

The propaganda of some revolutionary syndicalists and adherents of the Industrial Workers of The World (IWW) against the need for a self-sufficient political party has helped and does help, speaking objectively, only the bourgeoisie and the counter-revolutionary “social democrats”. In their propaganda against a communist party that they would like to replace by trade unions or by workers' unions of forms that are not very defined and too vast, the syndicalists and the industrialists have points of contact with avowed opportunists. [...] Revolutionary syndicalism and industrialism mark only a step forward only in relation to the old inert and counter-revolutionary ideology of the Second International [social-democrate]; but in relation to revolutionary Marxism, that is to say to communism, syndicalism and industrialism mark a step back.”

After noting that the appearance of the soviets *“in no way diminishes the leading role of the Communist Party”* and that the contrary opinion *“is profoundly erroneous and reactionary”*, the resolution continued:

“The communist party is not only necessary for the working class before and during the conquest of power, but also after it. The history of the Russian Communist Party, which has held power for three years, shows that the role of the Communist Party,

¹⁵ TN : As a matter of fact, this is not correct. On the other hand, he had to leave hastily because of the outbreak of the general strike in Italy. As soon as he arrived, Borghi met Angel Pestaña of the Spanish CNT who informed him of his impressions. For several months, the *Unione Sindicale Italiana* had sent a letter to the Bolshevik leaders to let them know that it wished to join the Third International. However, to his great surprise, Borghi realized that apparently no one knew about it. Pestaña went to inquire and was told each time that nothing was known and that therefore the USI could not participate in the work of the International! Hence no doubt Arthur Lehning's error. Pestaña adds however: *“Later I knew that yes they knew it, but, for reasons unknown to me, they had hidden it.”* As a consequence, the CGL, the Italian reformist central, was there, represented by D'Aragona. Naively, Borghi demanded that the CGL be expelled because of its *“reformist and class-collaborative character”* and *“the preponderant influence within it of the Italian right-wing socialists”*, while the USI *“kept alive the class spirit, did not collaborate with any representative body of the bourgeoisie, and for the support it gave from the first day to the Russian revolution”* (Pestaña, *Memorias*.) The USI paid the price for the reversal of strategy and the implementation of the strategy of the United Front, which advocated rapprochement with the reformist organizations. (See: Armando Borghi, *½ secolo di anarchia*, Esi Napoli, 1954, ch. 17.)

far from diminishing since the conquest of power, has considerably increased.”

This position seemed to close off the Comintern to revolutionary syndicalist organizations, but the door was once again open to them, however under specific conditions, by article 14 of the statutes voted in Congress. It reads:

*“The trade unions which place themselves on the ground of communism and which form international groups, under the control of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, constitute a trade union section of the Communist International. Communist trade unions send their representatives to the World Congress of the Communist International through the Communist Party of their country. The trade union section of the Communist International delegates one of its members to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, where he has the right to vote. The Executive Committee has the right to delegate, to the trade union section of the Communist International, a representative who has the right to vote.”*¹⁶

This paragraph deserves comment, because its scope is twofold. On the one hand, it marks a stage in the struggle of the Russian Communist Party to completely submit the trade unions which were trying, in Russia, to defend what remained of their autonomy. It was from these unions that, at the end of 1919, came the proposal to create a *Red Labor Union Internationale*, but for the authors of this proposal, it was an organization existing alongside the Comintern. But the Party leaders were in no way prepared to tolerate this deviation from centralist principles; and at the Third Congress of *Russian Trade Unions* (April 1920), where the latter announced their adhesion to the Comintern, Zinoviev insisted on the subordination of the future Trade Union International to the Communist International.

On the other hand, article 14 of the statutes was a manifest challenge to the trade union organizations which had had, before the opening of the Congress, a whole series of talks with Alexander Lozovsky and other Russian leaders, from which emerged, on 15 July 1920, the *Provisional Council of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU)*. During these talks, deep differences had arisen on the subject of the “*dictatorship of the proletariat*”, the infiltration of the reformist trade unions advocated by the Bolsheviks, as well as the relationship between the Comintern and the *RILU* [also named *Profintern*]. On this last point, it was clear that the revolutionary syndicalist delegates had voiced deep objections to any leading role for the Communist International. The adoption of the statutes forced them to reconsider their attitude towards an international grouping to which they were, in principle, favourable.

¹⁶ *Le Phare*, La Chaux-de-Fonds, December 1920 (special issue. Theses, conditions and statutes of the Communist International), pp. 155-156, 159-211.

For this purpose, the FAUD and the NAS convened an international syndicalist conference, which took place in Berlin, from December 16 to 21, 1920. It was attended by delegates from the IWW, four Argentine organizations, the French Revolutionary Syndicalist Committee (CSR, the minority of the CGT), FAUD (which also represented a Czech group), English shop stewards, SAC and NAS. As a result of police arrests at the border, the CNT and the USI could not be represented. As for the Norwegian and Danish federations, they sent testimonies of sympathy. Finally, an observer from the Russian trade unions was present; its role, however, was limited to raising doubts about the very reason for the conference, since the Constituent Congress of the RILU, scheduled for May 1921, had to discuss and decide everything.

The Dutch presented theses to specify the character which, according to them, should be given to the new International. They insisted on two points : that the revolutionary organization of production and distribution should be taken over by the unions, and rejected the interference of political parties; it was to have these points included in the statutes that participation at the Moscow Congress seemed advisable to them.

For their part, the French, instructed by Monatte¹⁷, were opposed to anything that could weaken revolutionary unity, according to their point of view: they therefore demanded that syndicalists join the Profintern :

*“The French revolutionary syndicalist minority – they declare -, organized within the reformist CGT, includes anarchist-syndicalists, syndicalist-revolutionaries and communist syndicalists. We believe that these same elements can enter into the composition of the Trade Union International of Moscow, to which the French revolutionary syndicalist minority has already given its support [...] For the moment, it is a question of constituting a trade union international capable of revolutionary action and to set aside all the secondary questions of doctrine, on which we may not agree a priori.”*¹⁸

The Germans having recalled the London resolution of 1913, a commission was appointed (composed of the delegate of the IWW and a member of the FAUD and the NAS) to draft a final declaration. After ample discussion – the French delegation

¹⁷ In the *International Bulletin of Revolutionary and Industrialist Syndicalists* (Berlin, June 16, 1922, p. 17), we read: “The French delegates, Jean Ceppe and V. Godonnèche, played a rather pitiful role at this conference. They presented a written declaration and left the Conference, refusing to participate in its work until the end. Later, at the sessions of the minority trade unionists at the Congress of Lille in 1921, Monatte explained to the representative of the German trade unionists, A. Souchy, that it was he who sent Ceppe and Godonnèche to Berlin with the specific aim of preventing, by all possible means, the creation of a syndicalist International”.

¹⁸ *Communication concerning the International Syndicalist Conference held in Berlin from December 16 to 21, 1920*, Amsterdam [1921], p. 4.

no longer being present – the following declaration was adopted unanimously:

“1. The Revolutionary Labor International places itself unreservedly on the point of view of the revolutionary class struggle and the power of the working class.

2. The Revolutionary Labor International tends to the destruction and rejection of the economic, political and spiritual regime of the capitalist system and of the State. It tends to the foundation of a free communist society.

3. The Conference finds that only the working class is only in a position to destroy the economic, political and spiritual slavery of capitalism by the most severe application of its means of economic power which find their expression in the revolutionary direct action of the working class to achieve this goal.

4. The Revolutionary Labor International then adopts the point of view that the construction and organization of production and distribution is the task of economic organization in each country.

5. The Revolutionary Labor International is entirely independent of any political party. In the event that the Revolutionary Labor International decides on an action, and that political parties or other organizations declare themselves in agreement with it – and vice-versa -, then the execution of this action can be done in common with these parties and organisations.

*6. The Conference urgently appeals to all revolutionary and industrial syndicalist organizations to take part in the congress convened on May 1, 1921, in Moscow by the Provisional Council of the Red International of Labour Unions, in order to found a unified revolutionary Labor International of all revolutionary workers of the world.”*¹⁹

An international syndicalist information office was instructed to confer on this resolution with the interested organizations not represented at the Conference, and to get in touch with the Provisional Council of the RILU This office included Rocker, Jack Tanner (who was in Moscow during the Second Congress of the Comintern) from England and B. Lansink Jr., from Netherlands who acted as secretary.

Thus, when the First Congress of the Profintern opened, almost all the revolutionary trade union organizations were represented there, with the exception of the *Confederação Geral do Trabalho* of Portugal (CGT-P) and the FAUD, both of which, although favorable to the creation of a syndicaliste International, did not accept the one that was to be founded in Moscow, without real guarantees as to its independence. The USI delegate did not arrive in Moscow in time to participate in the Congress: as in 1920, it was the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro* which

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

represented Italian trade unionism. We know how the latter was condemned at the Constituent Congress of the RILU for having maintained its links with the Amsterdam International.

The Congress was held from July 3 to 19, 1921. It had been postponed from May to July to synchronize it with the Third Congress of the Comintern, which opened on June 22. There, faced with the perceptible decline of the European revolution, Trotsky once again stressed the need for revolutionary leadership, that is, for the leading role of the communist parties. The masses had to be taken over, as Radek pointed out, and that meant infiltrating the reformist trade unions more than ever. Zinoviev, for his part, devoted a large part of his report on the trade union question to the trade unionists, among whom he distinguished three currents: the bankrupt reformist, like Jouhaux; the German and Swedish trade unionists whom he harshly criticized; and the tendency represented by the French revolutionary syndicalist minority. These latter elements were invited to reject the neutrality in political matters which condemned them to be, in the decisive struggle, "*objectively a counter-revolutionary factor*". Their place was, on the other hand, in the Red Trade Union International.

As for the the Red Trade Union International, it should, for tactical reasons, temporarily enjoy a certain independence vis-à-vis the Comintern, which, while waiting for those two organizations to have merged, would nevertheless keep the political direction. Zinoviev delivered his speech on the very day the Profintern Congress opened. Before talking about its results, it is good to open a parenthesis to explain the context in which the debates took place.

Already during the Second Congress of the Communist International, Russian anarchosyndicalists had had talks with some foreign delegates, Souchy, Pestana, Borghi and Lepetit in particular, to inform them of the persecutions of which the anarchist and syndicalist movements were victims. As the repression increased further after the departure of the delegates, the anarchosyndicalist leaders Grigorij Maximov, Efim Iarchuk and Sergei Markus tried to send a protest to the Comintern through Rosmer. During the talks, in November 1920, several members of the anarchist organization *Nabat* were arrested and imprisoned in Moscow; among them, Voline and Marc Mratchnyi.

A few days after the outbreak of the Kronstadt uprising, when the Xth Congress of the Russian Communist Party undertook to liquidate the last vestiges of opposition within it (March 8, 1921), they were joined in prison by Maximov and Yarchuk themselves.

When the Constituent Congress of the Profintern opened, the prisoners decided to go on hunger strike. To support them, Alexandre Berkman, Emma Goldman and Alexandre Schapiro brought together a certain number of trade union delegates so

that they could report on them at the sessions of Congress. It was then that long talks took place behind the scenes, in which Dzerzhinsky²⁰ and Lenin were involved, and which ended in a compromise: on July 12, Trotsky signed a document which freed and expelled the anarchists, in exchange for what the fate of the libertarian movement would not be raised in the discussions of the Congress²¹.

But paradoxically, it was Bukharin²² who, shortly before the end of the Congress, put the question back on the table: no doubt to soften the impressions of the European trade union delegates. He tried to make a distinction between Russian anarchism, of a criminal nature, and that of Western countries. It was only with difficulty that the French delegate Sirolle was able to register a refutation of this calumny. The publicized incident highlighted the curious nature of a policy that sought to secure the cooperation of syndicalist abroad, while stopping them at home.

In the meantime, Rosmer - together with Tom Mann, the most prominent of the syndicalist who had converted to Bolshevism - had tried to convince the revolutionary trade unionists present that the close connection between the Comintern and the Profintern could not be interpreted in the sense of submission from this to that. He hardly succeeded, but a majority of the Congress voted the statutes of the RILU where it was said:

*“Art. XI. [Liaison with the Communist International.] To establish solid links between the Red International Labor Union and the Third Communist International, the Central Council: 1. Sends to the Executive Committee of the Third International three representatives with voting rights. 2. Organizes joint sessions with the Executive Committee of the Third International for the discussion of the most important questions of the international labor movement and for the organization of joint actions. 3. When the situation requires it, it issues proclamations of agreement with the Communist International.”*²³

It should be noted that this text represented a step backwards from the Russian

²⁰ Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877 – 1926), nicknamed "Iron Felix", was a Bolshevik revolutionary, born into Polish nobility. From 1917 until his death in 1926, Dzerzhinsky is famous for having created and led the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission) / OGPU, the secret police of the Soviet regime. He was one of the architects of the Red Terror.

²¹ See G.P. Maximov, *The Guillotine at Work. Twenty Years of Terror in Russia (Data and Documents)*, Chicago, 1940, pp. 475-502.

²² Nikolai Ivanovich Bukharin (1888 – 1938) was a Bolshevik revolutionary. Friend of Lenin and Trotsky while in exile, editor of the Pravda newspaper after the Russian revolution. Chief ally of Staline in his plot against Trotsky, Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev after the Lenine death, he has been evicted from the party by Staline in 1929. Arrested in February 1937, after a show trial he was executed in March 1938.

²³ *Resolutions and statutes adopted at the First International Congress of Revolutionary Syndicates*. Moscow, July 3-19, 1921, Paris, 1921, p. 69.

leaders: there is no question of the political or ideological direction of the Comintern. This setback was imposed by trade unionists who, supporters of the new grouping, aimed to make possible the adhesion of their respective organizations by eliminating the doubts that persisted among them. This was the case, in the first place, with a few French people, who came up against opposing tendencies within the Comité Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire.

The Dutch delegates – all former anarchists greatly impressed by the Russian Revolution – found themselves in a similar situation within the NAS, where pro-Communist and syndicalist tendencies were beginning to separate. The Spanish delegates (including Andrés Nin, the future secretary of the Profintern) also tried to obtain the maximum independence to convince the majority of the CNT - in vain, as we know, because the latter was going to consider their mandates (obtained at an unrepresentative conference) as worthless and disavow the membership they had given to the Profintern.

However, the altogether formal concessions that emerged from the debates were not enough to reduce the opposition. In his very critical account, George Williams, the delegate of the IWW, recounted how the revolutionary syndicalists went so far as to hold separate conferences, during the last sessions of Congress and in the days that followed, in order to consider the formation of a coherent opposition in RILU²⁴. This was only the beginning of a process in which many of these delegates split from the Profintern and condemned its tactics.

We have refrained from analyzing here the debates on the RILU program. They added almost nothing new to the points of view previously expressed by the protagonists, at the Second Congress of the Comintern, and, moreover, the overwhelming majority of Russians ruled out any surprise. Moreover, the Comintern-Profintern connection really summed up the whole problem, because the leading role devolved to the Communist International would, no one doubted, imply the adoption of its political line. Eventually, membership of the Profintern ceased to be a question which merely concerned the international organization of trade unionism: it became more and more a question which determined the attitude to be adopted towards the Russian regime.

From the beginning, there was no shortage of anarchist critics of Bolshevism, notably those of Domela Nieuwenhuis in Holland and Rocker in Germany. In July 1919, Malatesta wrote:

“Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades are surely sincere revolutionaries, as we see how they define revolution, and they surely will not betray, but they prepare the

²⁴ George Williams, *The first Congress of the Red Trade Union International at Moscow, 1921. A report of the proceedings*, 2nd ed. Review, Chicago, n.d., pp. 27-38.

governmental cadres who will serve those who will come next to profit from the revolution and to murder the revolution. They will be the first victims of their methods and I fear that with them the revolution will also collapse. The story repeats itself; Mutatis mutandis, it was the dictatorship of Robespierre that brought Robespierre to the guillotine and prepared the way for Napoleon. “²⁵

But it was especially in 1921 that exiled or refugee Russian anarchists and anarchosyndicalists could make themselves heard outside Russia. They are now the ones who, supported above all by Rocker and the FAUD, will contribute in a decisive way to the awareness of the revolutionary syndicalists and to the foundation of the Berlin International. In October 1921, the FAUD held its XIIIth Congress, in Düsseldorf, and took the opportunity to organize a conference with the foreign delegates who were present. They realized that the RILU did not represent the Syndicalist International as they envisaged it, and they demanded the convocation of a new International Trade Union Congress, on the basis of the Berlin declaration of December 1920 (less, of course, the last paragraph). Those attending the conference came from organizations in Germany, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Holland and the United States. As for the delegates of these last two countries, it is unlikely that they had mandates giving them the right to make such a decision. So let's briefly recall what was going on in the different movements.

Among the organizations present in Moscow in summer 1921, the IWW, the *Federacion Regional Obrera Argentina*, the *Federacion Regional Obrera de Uruguay*, the trade unionists of the Scandinavian countries, the USI and the CNT will decide in turn not to join the RILU. As we have already said, the FAUD and the Portuguese CGT had given up being represented. It is only in France and Holland that the situation remains complex. Elsewhere, revolutionary syndicalists overwhelmingly rejected the Profintern. Now it's time to put them together.

Given their particular situation, the French and the Dutch will only play a very limited role in the unification enterprise. In France, the split of the CGT became inevitable from the end of 1921. In June 1922, at the Congress of Saint-Étienne, the CGT-Unitaire (CGTU) was formed, formed by a pro-communist majority and a revolutionary syndicalist minority with anarchosyndicalist tendencies. From the start, the unity of the new CGTU was precarious; to preserve it, the Second Congress of the Profintern will be obliged to openly proclaim its independence vis-à-vis the Comintern; it was only under these conditions that the CGTU could, at the Congress of Bourges, in November 1923, join the RILU. In the following years, the revolutionary syndicalists [of Monatte's group, after having helped the communists

²⁵ Carta de Errico Malatesta a Luigi Fabbri, 30 de Julio de 1919. Fabbri published this letter as a foreword to his book *Dittatura e rivoluzione* (Ancona 1921); for the Spanish translation, see Luis Fabbri, *Dictadura y revolucion*, Buenos Aires, 1923.

to expel the anarcho-syndicalists from the CGTU in 1924] would gradually leave the CGTU [to join the reformist social democratic CGT. The revolutionary syndicalists of the Monatte group acted as a “boring from within” minority, editing a confidential magazine "La Révolution Proletarienne" (The Proletarian Revolution), undertitled "communist syndicalist magazine" at its inception in 1925, and later from 1930 "revolutionary syndicalist magazine"] On the other hand, it was not until November 1926 that, under the aegis of the IWA in Berlin, the anarcho-syndicalists decided to found a separate organization, the third CGT, the Revolutionary Syndicalist CGT (CGT-SR).

In Holland, after the Constituent Congress of the Profintern, the NAS was increasingly divided. A referendum among its members refused, in the middle of 1922, affiliation to the RILU, but the aforementioned decisions of the Second Profintern Congress reopened the question, and the majority of the Dutch Committee decided not to participate to the Constituent Congress of the International Workers Association (AIT) only to try to prevent the foundation of the latter, by appealing to the unity of the syndicalist movement. In 1923, the Congress of the NAS and a new referendum confirmed this trend: the Profintern won, and it was then that the minority separated to create, in June, the *Nederlands Syndicalistisch Vakverbond*, which joined the AIT in Berlin. . The NAS, for its part, did not finally affiliate with the RILU until December 1925, only to leave it again in 1927, when differences between its leaders and the Dutch Communist Party led to a break.

The International Syndicalist Congress, decided in October 1921, was at first only a conference, which was held in Berlin, from June 16 to 18, 1922. Delegates from the CGTU, the FAUD, the SAC and trade unionists Norwegians, the USI, the Russian Revolutionary Syndicalist Minority (represented by Mratchnyi and Schapiro) and the CNT took part. The Spaniards did not arrive until the last day. An observer from the Union of Sailors, NAS, was present, while the IWW, the Portuguese CGT and the Danish trade unionists had sent messages.

An observer from the Russian trade unions was also there. He came just as the conference was discussing a resolution that harshly condemned the Russian government for its persecution of revolutionary anarchists and syndicalists, and blamed the Comintern and the RILU for remaining silent in the face of this repression.

The arrival of the Bolshevik delegate wrung the following words from Mratchnyi:

“These gentlemen who present themselves here as delegates of the red trade unions of Russia - and if they are red, it is the blood of the workers and peasants that they continue to shed in order to retain their power - we consider them to be representatives of the Russian government, of the Cheka – of the one who

persecutes and arrests the revolutionary workers, of those who arrested and expelled us."²⁶

The break between the delegates present and Moscow was therefore as obvious as it was clear, and the Russian delegation hastened to leave the conference.

The main tasks the conference set itself included discussing the principles and tactics of revolutionary syndicalism, and defining the attitude to adopt towards the RILU. On the first point, it adopted a motion by Rocker, consisting of ten paragraphs in which he specified the character of revolutionary syndicalism. It is this text which will become, six months later, the declaration of principles of the International Workers Association. Rocker defines, in summary, revolutionary syndicalism:

“Revolutionary unionism, based on the class struggle, tends towards the union of all manual and intellectual workers in economic organizations of combat fighting for their emancipation from the yoke of wage labor and the oppression of the State. Its aim consists in the reorganization of social life on the basis of free communism, by means of the revolutionary action of the working class itself. It considers that only the economic organizations of the proletariat are capable of realizing this goal, and therefore addresses the workers as producers and creators of social wealth, in opposition to the modern workers' political parties which can never be considered from the point of view of economic reorganization.

Revolutionary syndicalism is a convinced enemy of all economic and social monopoly and tends towards their abolition by means of economic communes and administrative organs of field and factory workers on the basis of a free system of Councils freed from any subordination to any power or political party. It erects against the policy of the State and the parties, the economic organization of work; against the government of men, the management of things. Its aim, therefore, is not the conquest of political power, but the abolition of all statist functions in social life. He considers that with the monopoly of property must also disappear the monopoly of domination, and that any form of State, included the form of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", can never be an instrument of emancipation, but will always create new monopolies and new privileges.”

Finally, the statement wrote: *“Only in the revolutionary economic organizations of the working class is there the force capable of achieving its emancipation and the creative energy necessary for the reorganization of society on the basis of free communism.”*²⁷

²⁶ *Bulletin international des syndicalistes révolutionnaires et industrialistes*, Berlin, n° 2-3, août 1922, p.6.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 15-16.

We will come back later **to the importance of this document which materializes in succinct terms the passage from revolutionary syndicalism to anarchosyndicalism.**

As for the Profintern, the more or less general opinion of the conference – with the exception, however, of the French delegation which, while awaiting decisions of the Congress of Saint-Étienne, refrained from speaking – was expressed by Alexandre Schapiro:

“Either – he declared – we will lay down elementary conditions [to our membership] which the RILU will be happy to accept, and then we will feel, as soon as we have joined, that we are bound hand and foot, either we will impose conditions so severe that we will know in advance that they will be unacceptable to the RILU. In the first case, it would be either to betray revolutionary syndicalism or either to prepare you to leave the RILU soon as did Spain and Italy. In the second case, it is to act as demagogues, and we can never afford this Bolshevik luxury. It follows that we here at the Conference must simply lay the foundations for an international syndicalist organisation, or at least make the necessary preparations for organizing such an International, and leave it to the Russians to decide whether they agree with our principles or not. We believe the representation of trade unionists at the Second Congress of the RILU illusory and even dangerous. Our duty is to organize our congress and invite the Russians to it – the only ones with whom the conflict exists.”

For his part, Rocker clarified: *“It is time to ask ourselves what does RILU represent? As long as it does not have the possibility of monopolizing the syndicalists, there will remain, apart from Russia, only Bukhara²⁸, Palestine and perhaps still Kamtchatka.”*²⁹

Consequently, the Conference passed a resolution saying that the Profintern *“does not represent, in [itself], neither from the point of view of principles, nor from that of statutes, an international organization capable of unifying the worldwide revolutionary proletariat into a single organism of struggle”*, and decided to appoint a provisional office responsible for convening, in Berlin, in November 1922, an international congress of revolutionary syndicalists. Entered this office, Rudolf Rocker, Armando Borghi, Angel Pestana, Albert Jensen and Alexandre Schapiro.

From that moment, everything went very quickly: the congress, postponed for a

²⁸ Translator’s note : The Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic was a short-lived Soviet puppet state during the years immediately following the Russian Revolution, just as Palestine was a British colony and Kamtchaka designs a mysterious and far-away region ...

²⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.

few weeks so that the results of the Second Congress of the RILU would be known, was held from December 25, 1922 to January 2, 1923.

Delegates (or written adhesions) were sent there by the revolutionary syndicalist centers of the following countries: Germany, Argentina, Chile, Denmark, Spain, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Czechoslovakia. The German councilist communists of the *Allgemeine Arbeiter Union (Einheitsorganisation)* were represented there by Franz Pfemfert. There were French observers, notably from the Trade Union Defense Committee (CSR) which had been set up within the CGTU. The Dutch NAS played the role of which we have already spoken. Of Russia, of course, there was only the Anarchosyndicalist Minority.

The congress fully confirmed the decisions taken at the conference of June 1922. The modification of the statutes of the Profintern, obtained in Moscow by the CGTU, was considered a "*deception*" which brought no argument against the foundation of the International Workers Association. The introduction to the statutes of the new International, which preceded the "*Principles of Revolutionary*



Post card of the *Unione Sindacale Italiana (USI)* published in 1923 in solidarity with the victims of fascism, showing a group of delegates, during the founding congress of the new IWA in Berlin in December 1922.

From left to right- top: Hermann Ritter- Schuster- Armando Borghi- Lindstam- Zelm- Th.J. dissel

In the middle: Orlando- Augustin Souchy- Alexander Schapiro- Rudolf Rocker- Arturo Giovannitti- B. Lansink.

Below: Frans Severin- Virgilia d'Andrea Borghi,- Diego Abad de Santillán

<https://cartoliste.ficcdl.info/article2948.html>

Syndicalism” written by Rocker for the June conference, briefly described the characteristic of the Amsterdam and Moscow Internationals:

“The Amsterdam International, lost in reformism, considers that the only solution to the social problem lies in class collaboration, in the cohabitation of Labor and Capital and in the revolution patiently awaited and carried out, without violence or struggle, with the consent and approval of the bourgeoisie.

*The Moscow International, for its part, considers that the Communist Party is the supreme arbiter of any revolution, and that it is only under the rule of this party that the revolutions to come must be unleashed and consummated. It is to be regretted that in the ranks of the conscious and organized revolutionary proletariat there still exist tendencies supporting what, in theory as in practice, could no longer stand: the organization of the state, that is to say the organization of slavery, of wage labor, of the police, of the army, of the political yoke, in a word, of the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat which can only be a stop to the force of direct expropriation and can only be a suppression of the real sovereignty of the working class, and which thereby becomes the iron dictatorship of a political clique over the proletariat.”*³⁰

The name given to the new organization, the International Workers' Association (or Association Internationale des Travailleurs, AIT), obviously referred to that of the First International of which the Berlin International indeed considered itself the continuation, and particularly of its Bakuninist wing. There, perhaps, there was something even fairer than when James Guillaume noted, in 1910: *“What is the French CGT if not the continuation of the International? »*³¹

But to clear up this question, a separate report would have to be made on Bakunin and the First International. In any case, one can subscribe to this opinion if one assimilates the Bakuninist tendency in the International to the great Spanish and Italian organizations, founded on the principles of Bakuninian federalist collectivism³².

³⁰ *Bulletin d'information de l'Association internationale des travailleurs*, Berlin, n°1,15 janvier 1923, p. 3.

³¹ James Guillaume, *L'Internationale. Documents et souvenirs (1864-1878)*, vol. IV, Paris, 1910, p. VII.

³² Bakunin understood very well the character of the AIT (First International), which was to unite all the workers who had decided to resist the employers and, through the practice of real solidarity between workers, through protest struggles and strikes, to bring them to a clearer awareness of their social condition and make them see the path leading to their complete emancipation. It was therefore through practice, through the collective experience of the struggle that the International enabled the workers to develop the seeds of socialist thought that they carried within them, to become aware of what they instinctively wanted, but could not formulate. Bakunin – whether we know it or not – was a man of organization who saw the union struggle as essential. He was the editor of *L'Egalité*, the organ of the Geneva section of the Internationale, where he wrote numerous articles on strikes, etc.

The only major organization whose absence from Berlin may have been surprising was the American IWW. Founded in Chicago in 1905, the IWW was a truly revolutionary labor organization, which rejected interference from political parties and provided – like the Charter of Amiens – that the institutions of future society would emerge from the present economic organizations of the working class. .

To the union organization of the American Federation of Labor, the IWW opposed their industrial organization. If they did not join the AIT, the reason must once again be sought in the fact that they considered themselves to be an International. Although there were, indeed, IWW organizations in England, Australia, Mexico, Argentina and Chile, the international character of these was mainly based on the fact that they included members of all nationalities of the United States. But the IWWs of Chile did not mind joining the AIT. In short, the Berlin International had succeeded in thwarting the activity of Moscow, the meaning of which a qualified representative, the permanent secretary general of the RILU, Lozovski, summed up in 1930:

*“From the foundation of the Profintern - he wrote - all the activity of its sections consists in pushing communist policy into the trade union movement, in winning over the masses for the communist parties and the Comintern, and in expanding the influence of communist ideas among ever-new layers of workers. This is the reason for the birth of the RILU; it is this activity that the ISR has carried out during the 10 years of its existence.”*³³ It couldn't be said better.

If we examine the whole process which, from 1913 to 1922, preceded the birth of the International Workers Association, AIT, we see that the foundation of a syndicaliste International flowed from a new interpretation of revolutionary syndicalism. The new situation, created by the war and by the revolutionary period that followed, had, on the one hand, somewhat delayed the founding of an international organization and, on the other hand, modified the theoretical content that its adherents would bring. **It is in this respect that the anarchosyndicalism advocated by the Berlin International will be distinguished from revolutionary syndicalism while being in some way its extension. Anarchosyndicalism has acquired the conviction that trade unionism cannot be neutral in political matters, as the Charter of Amiens requires.** On this point, anarchosyndicalists could even subscribe to what Trotsky wrote on July 13, 1921, to Monatte:

“Immense new questions have arisen before us... The Charter of Amiens does not

; and in his letters to militants in Bologna and Romagna he always insisted on the importance of the daily struggle. Advocating the refusal of any participation in bourgeois radicalism, this implied the organization, outside of politics, of the forces of the proletariat. And the basis of this organization is indicated: these are “the workshops of the federation of workshops”.

³³ « Der zehnjährige Weg der RGI », Rotes Gewerkschafts Bulletin, Berlin, 26 juillet 1930.

*contain an answer to them. When I read La Vie Ouvrière, I find no more answers to the fundamental questions of the revolutionary struggle. Is it possible that in 1921, we have to return to the positions of 1906 and “reconstruct” pre-war unionism... This amorphous position, it is conservative, it risks becoming reactionary.”*³⁴

But it goes without saying that anarchosyndicalism drew completely opposite conclusions from the situation. **For anarcho-syndicalism, the process of the years 1914-1921 had highlighted the need to replace the political neutrality of trade unionism with an active struggle against political parties whose constant goal is to conquer state power and not to destroy it:**

if therefore syndicalism wants the abolition of the State, it must also want the disappearance of political parties and of parliamentarism.

I would like here to make a remark, in short, a terminological clarification about the term anarchosyndicalism whose vague uses, most of the time, in the literature on the theory and the revolutionary syndicalist movement do not help to clarify either the theory or the facts.

The term anarchosyndicalism should, I think, be applied only to the doctrine and movement of a revolutionary syndicalist character, or industrial unionism, which advocates as a revolutionary and socialist goal the disappearance of the state and of capitalism, the reconstruction of society on the basis of federalism by the economic organizations of the working class, freed from any state power or political party.

Anarchosyndicalism is at the same time an extension of anarchism. Already the French CGT had been under the influence of the anarchists – and first of Fernand Pelloutier – who had imbued it with the anti-authoritarian, anti-militarist, anti-patriotic spirit. The autonomous, apolitical³⁵ and aparliamentary character of the said CGT had always found among the anarchists fierce defenders; and it suffices to recall the names of a Pouget or a Delesalle to show how important the anarchist contribution to revolutionary syndicalism before the First World War was.

A year after the adoption of the Charter of Amiens, revolutionary syndicalism was the main topic of discussion at the International Anarchist Congress held in Amsterdam in 1907; and this is where the famous debate took place between Pierre

³⁴ Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et communisme. Les archives de Pierre Monatte, présentation de Colette Chambelland et de Jean Maitron, Paris, 1968, p. 296.

³⁵ Translator’s note : Antipolitical means against political parties when apolitical means only neutrality toward them. The French CGT was apolitical, a position that was always that of the revolutionary syndicalists like Monatte, when the anarcho-syndicalists evolved towards the anti-political position with the creation of the IWA.

Monatte and Errico Malatesta. The latter, as we know, was in no way hostile to anarchists entering the unions, on the contrary: like Kropotkin, Malatesta always approved of this course of action. But he protested against the opinion expressed in the Charter of Amiens, namely that syndicalism is sufficient unto itself. From the anarchist point of view, it was for Malatesta to take the means for the end.

However, the essential problem arising from the Charter of Amiens must be situated elsewhere. This includes two fundamental points: the struggle against capitalism by means of direct action and the conception that makes the unions the organisms that prefigure the future. These two points are totally incompatible with the aims and tactics of political parties. But the political neutrality which ended up in purely and simply denying the existence of these parties, engendered a profound contradiction at the very basis of the CGT program – a contradiction which would become more and more manifest when the CGT transformed itself into a field of battle of the different political tendencies and will end, in 1914, by abandoning its anti-militarist and anti-patriotic positions.

If doubts had remained for an important fraction of the anarchists as to the political neutrality of the unions, the Russian Revolution would have completely dispelled them. It must be recognized that before 1917, the anarchists had in general paid little attention to the concrete economic problems which the revolution was going to pose; but the events in Russia led some of them to this conclusion that Mark Mratchnyi would later draw: "***We lost a lot of time in pursuing our own organization, while the fundamental interests of the Revolution required the organization of the masses workers.*** »³⁶

The Russian anarchists were forced to realize the importance of this problem by the application of what the initial resolution of the Provisional Council of the RILU called the "*decisive and transitory means of the dictatorship of the proletariat*". Faced with the dictatorship of the Russian Communist Party, the anarchosyndicalists defended conceptions that we will try to summarize.

No one ever thought, they said, that after a social revolution, that is to say after an expropriating and anti-state revolution, a free communist society would be established immediately. Periods of transition will be inevitable – but these transition periods must not degenerate into a system that claims to be temporary while continuing to consolidate. The transitional periods must follow the paths indicated by the fundamental principles which the revolution itself proclaimed in its phase of destruction and reconstruction. What matters is that post-revolutionary acts tend to come closer and closer to the guiding principles of anti-authoritarian

³⁶ Mark Mratchnyi, « Selbstgeständnisse und Ergebnisse », Erkenntnis und Befreiung, Vienne, V^e année, n°38, 1923.

federalism, of collectivism.

For the Russian anarchosyndicalists, the consequences had to be drawn from this. There is only one ground field for the practical preparation of the revolution: it is that of the worker's organization, not to exploit this organization for the benefit of the anarchosyndicalist ideological group, but to make the workers fit to lead the struggle in the direction that anarchists consider the only one capable of leading towards a libertarian society. Since the anarchists refuse to lead the workers, since they do not want to become a political party, there remains a role for them to play: that of cooperating with the workers so that they can lead themselves and jointly manage the economic, political and social life of the country.³⁷

The analysis of the anarchosyndicalists was not accepted by all Russians. Perhaps their conclusions should be stated. For the famous *Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists*, published in 1926 by a group of anarchists emigrated to Paris, also criticizes an anarchism which abstains or even refuses to consider concretely the problems of the revolution. This group, of which Petr Archinov was the best-known spokesman but which also included Nestor Makhno, came to the conclusion that an anarchist leadership of the Revolution must be created. The Platform says: "*The whole Union will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of each member, each member will be responsible for the revolutionary and political of the whole Union.*"³⁸ What it advocates is an anarchist party.

Criticizing this view, Malatesta again defended the opinion he had already expressed at the Anarchist Congress of 1907, namely that anarchists must be present in the workers' organizations, not certainly to direct them but to influence them in a libertarian sense. Anarchosyndicalism went even further in its critique of platformism. **For anarchosyndicalism, no ideological organization – neither political party nor anarchist group – can assume the task of preparing the social revolution of the working class; and this one will have to fight any attempt to monopolize these autonomous organizations, even for ends qualified libertarian. Anarchists can perfectly organize themselves outside the labor movement, but the latter must nevertheless remain the natural center of their efforts.**

In his report, our colleague Elorza spoke of the different currents experienced by the CNT, namely the pure and somewhat statist revolutionary syndicalism of the tendency of Angel Pestana, or the specifically Spanish and very predominant

³⁷ See Alexandre Schapiro « L'œuvre des anarchistes dans la révolution », *L'Idée anarchiste*, 10 juillet 1924 ; and « Les périodes transitoires de la révolution », *La Voix du travail*, février 1927.

³⁸ Plate-forme d'organisation de l'Union générale des anarchistes (projet), Paris, 1926, p. 30.

movement of the anarchists, let us rather say the FAI, because there were other anarchists³⁹.

I especially hear about these other anarchists, who represented a third tendency, less spectacular, but to which belonged anarchists (not affiliated with the FAI) who were militant in the CNT and in the first rank - either as talented orators or editors of organs of the CNT: *Solidaridad Obrera* from Barcelona, *CNT newspaper*, from Madrid – men such as Eusebio C. Carbo and Val Orobón Fernández who were both part of the AIT and defended the principles and anarchosyndicalist tactics that it advocated.

In this context, I will recall that in 1932, the Russian anarchosyndicalist Alexandre Schapiro went to Spain charged by the secretariat of the AIT to study the various currents of the CNT. His very dense and confidential report was presented and discussed at the AIT conference of April 1933, held in Amsterdam, where it was decided to transfer the AIT office, until then in Berlin, to Spain.

Schapiro's report is a document of great value because of the profound and critical analysis that it makes of the relations between the FAI and the CNT and within the latter itself - a document that is all the more historic in that the conclusions of this analysis were confirmed by the events of 1936⁴⁰.

“The 'platformists' – wrote Alexandre Schapiro in 1931 – supporters of an anarchist party, with all that that entails [...] and who protest against the petrification (of anarchism) and 'cooking it in its own juice’, fell [...] into the tendency of triumphant Bolshevism, from which they took the tactics, the methods of struggle and the forms of organization. Without realizing it, they sacrificed Bakunin as well as Kropotkin.

By rejecting both the childish and naive ideas of social revolution and the Bolshevization of Bakunin and Kropotkin, anarchosyndicalism prefers to cooperate in the creation of a movement capable of assuming the responsibilities of a new era.

Anarchosyndicalism is the International Workers Association which does not limit its activities to the daily struggle for improvements in detail, but puts first and foremost, as Kropotkin so aptly put it, the question of the reconstruction of

³⁹ I remember a conversation that in 1931, in Barcelona, I had with Pestaña. As he was criticizing the policy of the FAI, I replied that one could not imagine a CNT without the anarchists. Irritated, he retorted: *“Me too, I am an anarchist”*.

⁴⁰ This report, which had never been published, recently appeared in German, in extracts: Alexandre Schapiro, *“Bericht über die Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) und den Aufstand in Spanien im Januar 1933”*, introd. by Jaap Kloosterman, *Jahrbuchh Arbeiterbewegung*, vol. IV, Frankfurt/M, 1976, pp. 159-194.

the society. »⁴¹

If I believe appearances, we will soon have the opportunity to hear about the anarchosyndicalist movement again. The ideology of Bakuninian-inspired libertarian socialism has always found its strongest resonance in Spain. It was there that the largest, most efficient, best organized of all the federations of the First International had developed, as indeed of the federations of the Anarchosyndicalist International.

After 38 years of persecution and illegality, the CNT, and with it anarchosyndicalism, has reasserted its presence.

Translation : CNT-AIT France

Posted on line on <http://cnt-ait.info>



The IWA logo in the 1920's



The IWA logo in the 1960's

⁴¹ Alexandre Schapiro, "Peter Kropotkin, die Arbeiterbewegung und die internationale Organisation der Arbeiter", *Die Internationale (FAUD)*, January 1923.

AIT-IWA'S FOUNDING CONGRESS TWICE INTERRUPTED BY GERMAN POLICE

Source : <https://iwa-ait.org/content/ninety-years-ago-iwmas-founding-congress-twice-interrupted-german-police>

When the anarchosyndicalist international, AIT-IWA held its foundation congress at the turn of the years 1922-1923, it was against a background of great upheavals. World War I had ended a few years earlier, a war which was immediately followed by widespread revolutionary movements in a number of countries, setting lasting trends in the development of the world.

During the war the social democratic international collapsed, and its affiliated parties threw their internationalism overboard. Under the leadership of especially their Belgian chairman Emilie Vandervelde, they gave active support to the war in the name of their respective countries. The reformist trade union international collapsed at about the same time.

After the end of the war, attempts began to re-build the international organizations. The Communist international was organized at a congress in Moscow in 1919, as a continuation of the so-called Zimmerwald international which has been established already during the war. The trade union international was re-established the same year at a congress in Amsterdam. The social democratic international was formed in 1921 at a congress in Vienna, with the Austrian Friedrich Adler as its prime mover. This organization merged with the social democratic international in 1923.

On communist initiative a congress in Moscow in 1921 founded the so-called Red trade union international. This organization made great efforts to get the syndicalists as members, but the syndicalist organizations refused, being unwilling to be involved in a union international led by a political movement, in this case the communists.

During the days 25.12.1922 to 02.01.1923 delegates from 10 countries representing about 2 million organized workers held a congress in Berlin. It was at this congress that the syndicalist international IWA was founded.

The congress was certainly not able to work undisturbed. Care was needed because some of the delegates had to get there illegally, without the knowledge of the police. The first day of the congress was held in a building in the outskirts of Berlin. The plan was to continue the congress the next day at another place, but the police were on the trail so the delegates had to be given a secret message to meet at the third

place, in Nieder-Schönweide, another area in Berlin. Work went on ok until during the afternoon, when a police patrol suddenly entered the building and wanted to see the delegates' identity papers. The German comrades protested powerfully, and demanded that the police show documentation that they had orders for this action. They had no such orders, so the patrol withdrew, leaving two policemen behind to watch. The congress delegates then crowded out through the door into the street, pushed the policemen aside, and disappeared.

The congress met again the next day, this time near Alexanderplatz in the centre of Berlin, not far from the police headquarters.

In this building the congress proceeded without interruption for some days. But then one day before noon came a new police attack. The whole building was surrounded by policemen carrying rifles and with revolvers and grenades on their belts. They forced their way into the meeting room, where the delegates raised an uproar and protested powerfully. One delegate lacking proper papers jumped out of the window but was caught by the police outside. A Polish delegate lacking papers resisted the police but was knocked down. A French woman delegate then rushed forward and hit the police officer in the face with her clenched fist. She was arrested and transported with some other comrades to the prison in Moabit. Every delegate was thoroughly searched. Among the delegates were Emil Manus who represented Denmark and Norway, and Edvind Lindstam and Frans Severin who represented the SAC. Two other SAC members were also present, not as delegates, but as individual members passing through Berlin on a journey to Paris. They were the later well-known authors Eyvind Johnsson and Viktor Vinde, the latter to later become editor of *Stockholmstidningen*.

After all this, the police left the meeting alone and the congress continued. It founded the International Workers Association AIT-IWA. The anarchoyndicalist International kept going during the Second World War, when the other internationals collapsed, and continues its activity today.

John Andersson

from "Solidaritet" Aug-sept 1959

Translation : NSF-AIT, AIT-IWA section in Norway

EMMA GOLDMAN, WITNESS OF THE AIT-IWA FOUNDING CONGRESS

A letter from Emma Goldman to Carl Newlander, 12 January 1923, in the IISG archives (<https://search.iisg.amsterdam/Record/ARCH00520>). It content a fascinating account by Emma Goldman of how the Berlin police interrupted meetings and arrested several undocumented foreign anarchists at the founding of the IWA (@IWAAIT <http://iwa-ait.org>) in December 1922.

Januray 12, 1923

My dear Carl

I have been planning to send you a long letter with Severin, with whom I sent fifty Kronen to be forwarded to you. I wonder, have they reached you. I wrote you only a few lines with the money. The Congress and several things that happened here made it impossible for me to write. The I am out of use of the pen and whenever I write on the typewriter for a few hours I have such terrific neck aches, so I waited until our friend who did my book would get the time to take my letters.

The Congress was most interesting. I suppose that you know already that the revolutionnary Syndicalist International was formed at the Congress. It has a small beginning, only about one million and a half gathered in the new organization. There were delegates from Argentine, France, Italy, Holland, Sweden Norway, Denmark, and the Spanish as well as Chili workers were represented through mandates, the delegates having been unable to get there. I am preparin a report for some of our papers which I hope to have ready next week. I will send you a copy, so will not take up the time with a detailed account now.

There was some excitement at two sessions of the Congress. Socialist police came to verify all passeports and papers. We had four people among us who were without papers, some of them facing a stiff sentence in Italy and Spain. The first time of the German comrades so confused the police that they managed to get rid of them. The next day the Congress moved to another hall. Unfortunately they didn't repeat the same process on the last day of the sessoin. By that time the police has managed to learn of our whereabouts and came down reinforced. Two Italians and a little French comrade, a girl, were arrested. The former are still held

and Therese is out on bonds.

The delegate had some finishing work to attend to so I asked them to come to my place for the Tuesday following. Imagine my amazement when at ten o'clock Tuesday morning I was visited by two detectives, just like in the dear old days in America. They asked all sorts of questions. Of course S had to be here, but you know how cold bloodedly brazen he can be in time of trouble. He managed to bluff them. In the end the detectives said there had been complaints from our neighbors. Now comes the joke. The neighbors reported that I am a dangerous Bolshevik agent, that my apartment is used for conspiratory purposes and that I have a secret printing shop. The latter is the typewriter which is a bit antediluvian in the noise that it makes; however, all has ended peacefully. But I thought that you would be very amused to know that I am a bolshevik agitator.

Dear Carl, I am feeling very terrible about your condition. But for the present, I am unable to be of much help to you. I am hoping that when Dr. Michael Cohen comes in May to interest him in your case. Perhaps he will extend you a loan of several hundred dollars to get you to Canada and from there to the States.

I am going to try awfully hard to induce him. He has announced his coming for the first part of May and may also bring Fitz along.

I hope, dear boy, that you can hold our somehow until then.

*Emma Goldman - Russian Jewish
Anarchist - deported to "Buford"
Dec. 31 - 1919.*

Emma Goldman in 1919



Emma Goldman at Kropotkin's funeral,
Moscow, February 13, 1921



MPT ACHARYA : FROM INDIAN NATIONALISM TO ANARCHOSYNDICALISM

M.P.T. Acharya was born on 15th April 1887 in Chennai into a Bhramin family. From early years he was involved in the nationalist struggle. He edited a nationalist magazine for his uncle. When the periodical was suppressed by the colonial authorities Acharya had to escape to French controlled Pondicherry. Sensing he was not safe there he left India and landed in France. He soon moved to London and joined *the Indian House* with V.D Savarkar, Madan Lal Dhingra and other Indian nationalists. When in 1909 Dhingra assassinated Sir William Hutt Curzon Wylie the Indian House soon disintegrated.

In 1909, together with another Indian revolutionary by the name of Sukhsagar Dutt, they reached the Rif region in Morocco, with the aim to join the armed rebellion against Spanish colonialism. But this adventure failed, as the Rif rebels were not willing to recruit the two Indians for suspicion of being spies.

In next few years he visited Berlin, Munich and in November 1911 was in Constantinople to gain Muslim support against the British. In 1912 he moved to New York and in 1914 to San Francisco, where he edited the Tamil edition of *Gadar Party's* periodical. *Gadar Party* was set up a year ago, with help of his friend and IWW member Har Dayal. Har Dayal had spent time with Emma Goldman and when in 1914 Dayal was deported for being "an anarchist" Emma protested and wrote about it in *Mother Earth*.

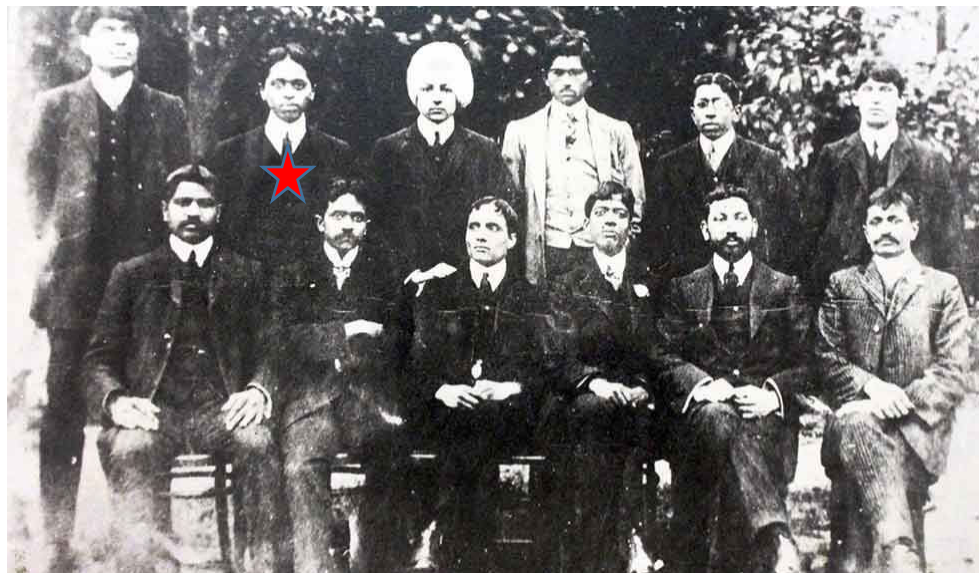
It was during this time Acharya saw the real face of Western Democracies and stood against the notion of nation states. "*Is it to make large cities with miserable people, barely eking their existence that we want to have 'Swaraj'?*"⁴² He asked.

"I consoled myself by answering that the misery was due to foreign Government, but under Indian Government, it would all vanish, because our countrymen will be friends of the poor when they come to rule. Late on, however, when i went to Europe and saw misery there, my illusions about "National" rule were shattered."

Acharya spent the World War period in Middle East and in 1917, with Virendranath

⁴² Swaraj can generally mean "self-government" or "autonomy" (swa-"mine", raj "the ruler") but the word usually refers to Mahatma Gandhi's concept for Indian independence from foreign domination. Swaraj stresses governance not by hierarchical government, but by self-governance through individuals and community building. The focus is on political decentralization. Since this is against Britain's followed political and social systems, Gandhi's concept of Swaraj applied to India, dismisses British political, economic, bureaucratic, legal, military and educational institutions.

“Chatto” Chattopadhyaya, attended a socialist peace conference in Stockholm. Where he met prominent Bolshevik leaders and in 1919 met Lenin. In 1920 Acharya helped form and became Chairman of the Communist Party in exile, with M.N.Roy as Secretary. Acharya was kicked out in 1921 for his criticism of the direction CPI was taking under the Comintern and Roy’s autocratic behavior. He attended the Kropotkin’s funeral in Moscow on 13th of February, 1921.



MPT Acharya (second from left) and some Indian independence fighters, including V.D. Savarkar, in a group photo.

Acharya’s involvement in international anarchist movement was set-off by his disillusionment with the USSR and the whole edifice of Marxist priesthood. He wrote:

“We are Anarchists, because we do not want authoritarianism outside or inside, because to us anti-Marxists, life and society must be, immanently – one indivisible whole impossible of mechanical separation – as the Marxists inorganically think and believe.” “Communism can come only through and beyond Anarchism not before and behind it, as Lenin predicted and died broken-hearted and mad.”

In late December 1922, Acharya and a group of Indians attended the founding meeting of the revived anarcho-syndicalist AIT-IWA, with Rudolf Rocker, Augustin Souchy, and Alexander Schapiro as secretaries⁴³..

⁴³ Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves: Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1923* (Dordrecht; Boston: *Kluwer Academic and International Institute of Social History*, 1989), 267.

Among the other delegates at the founding meeting was the Japanese anarchist Yamaga Taiji, with whom Acharya remained in touch throughout his life.⁴⁴

The Indians' first "success," the secretariat noted sarcastically, was to get IWA literature banned from import into India.

At the suggestion of the AIT-IWA secretariat, a committee of Indians in Europe was subsequently set up with the aim to send anarchist literature to India. While working in complete accordance with the AIT-IWA, the committee was not formally attached to the AIT-IWA. A report in the AIT-IWA magazine "*the International*" of 1925 explains: "According to the Indian comrades who were in Berlin, an Indian committee was formed to make propaganda of revolutionary unionism in India. The AIT-IWA secretariat supported this committee and tried everything to achieve revolutionary syndicalism in India, and also succeeded in making connections. The AIT-IWA press service was specially edited for India in English and was sent to India and its content was printed in organs of the Indian workers' organizations. The first "success" we had in India was that the Indian government banned all AIT-IWA communications to India. ..." ⁴⁵

b) Indien.

Im Einverständnis mit indischen Kameraden, die sich in Berlin aufhielten, bildete sich ein indisches Komitee zur Propaganda des revolutionären Syndikalismus in Indien. Das Sekretariat unterstützte dieses Komitee und suchte alles daranzusetzen, um den revolutionären Syndikalismus in Indien ins Leben zu rufen. Das Komitee suchte Anschluß an die Arbeiterorganisationen Indiens, und es gelang auch, Verbindung herzustellen. Der Pressedienst der I.A.A. wurde in besonderer Bearbeitung für Indien in englischer Sprache nach Indien gesandt und sein Inhalt gelangte zum Abdruck in den Organen der Arbeiterorganisationen. Der erste „Erfolg“, den wir in Indien zu verzeichnen haben, bestand darin, daß die indische Regierung sämtliche Kommunikationen der I.A.A. für Indien verbot.

Indeed, under *the Sea Customs Act of 1878*, the Government of India prohibited "*the bringing by sea or by land into British India of any publications issued by the International Workers Association (Internationale Arbeiter Assoziation), Berlin, in whatever language they may be printed.*" ⁴⁶

Shortly after the meeting, writing under his middle name Bhayankar, Acharya offered a scathing critique of Roy's "*Program for the Indian National Congress*" from December 1922 (Chapter 1). A few months later, Acharya wrote to Chittaranjan "C. R." Das, editor of the radical Bengali paper *Forward*, that his political belief was now "*anarchism, pure and simple.*" During this transition period

⁴⁴ Victor Garcia, *Three Japanese Anarchists: Kotoku, Osugi, and Yamaga* (London: *Kate Sharpley Library*, 2000), 23.

⁴⁵ « Indien », *Die Internationale*, no.5, Juni 1925

⁴⁶ "Prohibition of the bringing by sea or by land into British India of any copy of any publication issued by the International Working Men's Association Berlin," PR_000000192248, file 22-23, NAI.

from communism to anarchism, he contributed to Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Workers' Dreadnought*, and the Berlin-based Russian anarcho-syndicalist AIT-IWA paper *Rabochii put'* (*The Worker's voice*), edited by Grigori Maximoff and Schapiro, and sent his articles to India.



Spanien. Die Verfolgungen in Barcelona.

An die Arbeiter-Konfederation Spaniens sandte das Sekretariat der Internationalen Arbeiter-Assoziation folgendes Schreiben:

Kameraden! Mit großem Interesse und mit begeistertem Mitgefühl folgen wir der neuen Phase Eures großartigen Kampfes, der sich immer mehr zuspitzt und, wie immer, durch die grausamen Verfolgungen gegen die Arbeiterklasse hervorgerufen ist.

Der wunderbare Widerstand und die beispiellose Solidarität der Transportarbeiterschaft Barcelonas, die Geschlossenheit aller derjenigen, die durch Eure glorreiche Konfederation zusammengefaßt sind, beweist aufs neue, welche befreiende Macht die Waffe des Streiks ist, um den Widerstand der Arbeiterklasse zu entwickeln und zu vertiefen. Das gibt uns, die wir Euch als die unsrigen betrachten, in der freien und brüderlichen internationalen Vereinigung, Grund zum berechtigten Stolz.

Kameraden Barcelonas und ganz Spaniens! Der wunderbare Widerstand, den Ihr in diesem Augenblick leistet, ist bereits in die Seiten der Geschichte der Internationale eingeschrieben. Die gesamte Weltreak-

den mutigen Klassenkämpfern Argentiniens ihre tiefste Sympathie aus; sie gelobt, ihrem Kampf mit größter Aufmerksamkeit zu folgen und versichert sie ihrer vollsten Solidarität.

Die Lage in Indien.

Die Bewegung des indischen Volkes, deren Ziel die Befreiung vom englischen Imperialismus ist, stellt sich abseits von jeder Tätigkeit, die sie in Verbindung mit den englischen Machthabern bringen könnte. Sie ist bekannt unter dem Namen „Non-cooperation“-Bewegung.

Das Salz ist in Indien Staatsmonopol. Der Staat erhebt eine Steuer von 2000 Prozent auf die Produktionskosten desselben. Das Salz wird im allgemeinen aus dem Meereswasser gewonnen, das an die weiten Küsten Indiens spült, in Bassins gesammelt und durch die tropische Hitze der Sonne verdunstet, wobei das trockene Salz zurückbleibt. Die Arbeiter Indiens, deren Löhne durchschnittlich unter zwei Pfund Sterling jährlich stehen, sind in großem Maße auf Salz angewiesen. Auf Grund des chronischen Mangels an ungenügenden Nahrungsmitteln sterben Millionen von Arbeitern während Hungerepidemien und der

'Die Lage in Indien' (17 July 1923): Acharya reported on the non-cooperation movement, terrorist activities, strikes, and the first May Day celebrations in India for the AIT-IWA Press service (here the german version, IAA Pressedienst)

Thanks to Ole Birk Laursen for his inspiring works, which have helped dig up and bring back to light M.P.T. Acharya's life and ideas !

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KROPOTKIN AND THE REBUILDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION (AIT)

Source : <https://iwa-ait.org/content/kropotkin-and-rebuilding-international-workers-association>

In December 2022, international anarchosyndicalism celebrates two anniversaries : the 100th anniversary of the rebuilding of the International Workers Association (AIT-IWA), and 180 years since the birth of the most prominent theorist of anarcho-communism, Peter Kropotkin. This coincidence of dates can be considered symbolic. Kropotkin was never a member of any revolutionary-syndicalist or anarcho-syndicalist organization, but he made a very important contribution to the creation of the anarcho-syndicalist International, and his ideas have had an enormous impact on its goals and principles.

Kropotkin was one of the first anarchist thinkers who launched a campaign for the restoration of the anti-authoritarian wing of the First International, and he led this campaign, even when most of the libertarian movement activists were carried away with so-called "*propaganda of the deed*." Kropotkin saw the basis for this reconstruction in the workers' unions. Back in the "*Bulletin of Jura Federation*", he repeatedly wrote about the labor movement and workers' unions, and in this period he tried to make contacts in trade union circles. In the newspaper "*Le Révolté*" he later published about 20 articles on the need to work in trade unions - at a time when these ideas did not yet have support from such anarchist activists and agitators, as Jean Grave, Errico Malatesta or Johann Most⁴⁷.

Kropotkin argued with much energy for the strengthening of trade unions and the inclusion of anarchists in their work. In 1900, in the London's newspaper "*Freedom*", he called for the convening of a universal "*convention of Labor*", and in 1901 for the creation of "*an international federation of trade unions of the Earth*." He had great expectations caused by the radical metalworkers' strike in Barcelona in 1902 and by an upturn in the strike movement in Europe. These events led Kropotkin to propose the creation of an "*International Union of Labor*" and this idea he voiced through Anselmo Lorenzo in the Spanish newspaper "*Tierra and Libertad*" in September 1902. He raised the question of the organization of a working International, which would in general advocate socialist goals and the socialization of the economy, self-emancipation of the working people, and whose purpose was the preparation the strikes, the fight against the exploitation of female

⁴⁷ Anarchistes en exil. Correspondance inédite de Pierre Kropotkine à Marie Goldsmith 1897 – 1917. Paris, 1995. P.290.

and child labor, the promotion of cooperation, and in the future, the development of plans of socialist expropriation of production⁴⁸. By the development of a more detailed program, the differences from the old International should be taken into account. Interestingly, in the next two issues of the newspaper, its publisher, Federico Urales, rejected this proposal, considering it a simplified retrospective.

However, for the Russian anarcho-communist, it was not just about tactics, but about far more profound things. In Kropotkin's ideas on the future of the anarcho-communist society, professional and industrial associations of workers occupy an important place. In fact, he believed that the basis of the social organization of the free world would be formed by free, self-administered communes, oriented on self-sufficiency and voluntarism, which would then unite in a federation from below. However, it was important to complement these communities with unions and associations of different kinds, including free associations of producers. Kropotkin believed that these production associations would carry out the task of technical management and coordination of production and that workers' and resistance unions (trade unions) may be the prototype and the basis of these future associations, appearing now for the making of struggles for economic strikes by the workers under capitalism.

Trade unions, according to Kropotkin, were to become also the organizational basis for the resurrection of the anti-authoritarian First International. Kropotkin outlined his vision of this process in a letter to French anarchist J. Grave on July 3, 1902. At the time, he envisioned such a movement in the form of an international trade union organization at the heart of which would have to be a core of convinced anarchists - similar to how it was with the creation of the Spanish section of the First International. Kropotkin proposed, based on sympathy for the anarchists in the working masses of Spain and France, to convene an international workers' congress and to organize there an "*international working alliance*", independent from social democracy and focused on extra-parliamentary direct action. Thus inside the mass revolutionary workers' International, something like the Bakuninist Alliance⁴⁹ in the First International should be formed.

Essentially, Kropotkin proposed the following strategy : the anarchists should actively support the global unity of the trade unions, and then, based on their own organization, give them a revolutionary character, displacing social democracy, and through them make a social revolution. It is interesting that the Argentine anarchists succeeded in this in the early 1900's. In this way (only without creating any internal "alliance") in the winning of the Argentine Workers 'Federation (future Argentine

⁴⁸ Nettlau M. Eine Arbeiterinternationale in Kropotkins Auffassung // Die Internationale. 1932. Heft 5. Mai. S.116.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* S.116-117.

Regional Workers' Federation, FORA) and in turning it into an anarchist labor mass movement.

Given such perspectives of Kropotkin, it is not surprising that he showed great interest in French revolutionary syndicalism. He enthusiastically welcomed the strong rise of the revolutionary syndicalist movement in the world. In the report "*Our attitude to the peasant and labor unions*", prepared for the London Congress of Russian anarcho-communists (September 1906), he had emphasized the fact that workers join unions and industrial federations "*outside the existing political parties, including the social-democratic parties*" and seek to "*restore the International Union of Workers, which would lead a direct, immediate struggle of labor against capital - not through the parliament, but directly, by all means accessible for the workers, and only for the workers*". Moreover, he emphasized the role of trade unions in creating a future free society, in the "*organization of communist life and production on the general principles*" and in the huge case of "*restructuring of industry in the public interest.*" According to Kropotkin, "*anarchists look at labor unions as cells of the future social order and a powerful means of preparation for a social revolution which would not be restricted by only change of rule but also turn the modern forms of economic life, that is, the distribution of wealth produced and methods for their production.*" Thus, Kropotkin led a campaign for the creation of a revolutionary-syndicalist International, which he regarded as a continuation and as a direct successor of the anti-authoritarian wing of the First International.

What role was to be played by the anarchists in the workers unions and in the syndicalist movement as a whole? Kropotkin proposed that the anarchists of various countries act on this issue in different ways, depending on the situation of the union movement. Where labor unions were under the complete and undivided influence of social democracy, it made sense to leave them and to organize "*new, albeit smaller free labor unions*", of "*anarchist tendency*". If unions of a country were already revolutionary (as in France in the early twentieth century), it is better for the anarchists to work there, not allowing the transformation of workers' organizations into the instrument of any political parties or the appendage of a parliamentary struggle. He also proposed the creation of non-party trade unions with an anarchist influence (as was the case in Spain)⁵⁰. Subsequently, the idea of various forms of revolutionary syndicalism was reflected in the statutes of AIT-IWA.

Even during the peak of the pre-war French CGT, Kropotkin, in fact, warned of the dangers that can be hidden in "neutral" revolutionary syndicalism, which is not inspired by the ideas of anarchism. He and his supporters in the Russian anarchist movement (group "*Bread and Freedom*") warned of "blinding", criticized the

⁵⁰ Анархисты. Документы и материалы. 1883–1935 гг. В 2 тт. Т.1. 1883–1916 гг. М., 1998. С.242.

tendency to bureaucratization and to the forming of a centralist apparatus in the CGT, the ideological confusion in the ranks of the French revolutionary syndicalist organizations, the risk of loss of influence of the revolutionary wing and of evolution towards conventional trade unionism. They suggested steps such as the activation of grassroots unions and groups of the trade union movement with the decentralization of decision-making and the distribution of the anarcho-communist ideal within the Confederation. It was also necessary for it to abolish bans on political propaganda existing in the trade union movement. The anarchists hoped the CGT could ultimately accept the idea of anarchism as their ideological basis.

An important role in this process must be allocated to discussion with the activists of the revolutionary-syndicalist movement on the strategic goals and objectives of the struggle and on the contours of a future society, that is, in fact - on program issues. As part of this discussion, in his foreword written in 1911 for the book titled "*How we will make a revolution*", written by CGT members Emile Pouget and Emile Pataud., Kropotkin outlined essentially the social changes and the free social order as conceived in the circles of the French syndicalist movement. He welcomed revolutionary syndicalism and its views on the revolution as a great step forward, but called to it overcome some centralist views and issues which he believed syndicalism had inherited from Marxist syndicalism : the desire to preserve the elements of a centralized management staff (through the structures of trade unions), the refusal to generally implement libertarian communist principles in distribution, etc.⁵¹

The points of criticism by Kropotkin on ideas of a "*neutral*" revolutionary syndicalism from positions of anarchist communism proved extremely useful for the creation of the new AIT-IWA. The *Declaration of Principles* of the postwar German anarcho-syndicalists of FAUD was written by Rudolf Rocker. It was not accidental that exactly Rocker (who worked closely with Kropotkin in the pre-war time in Britain, and at the same time was active in the trade union movement) was the author of this first paper, which rejected the ideological "*neutrality*" of syndicalism, and in fact, he made a synthesis of methods and organizational forms of a revolutionary-syndicalist trade union movement with anarcho-communist ideals and objectives in a spirit of Kropotkin. In 1922, this declaration of principles formed the basis of the *Declaration of principles of the AIT-IWA*.⁵²

Kropotkin was not present at the London conference of revolutionary syndicalist unions in 1913 (at this time he was treated in Italy), but the most active role in the

⁵¹ Кропоткин П.А. Предисловие // Пато, Э., Пуже, Э. Как мы совершим революцию. М., 2011. С.3–10.

⁵² See about that: Дамье В.В. Забытый Интернационал. Международное анархо-синдикалистское движение между двумя мировыми войнами. Т.1. М., 2006. С.60–65, 272–278 ; Damier V. Anarcho-Syndicalism in the 20th. Century. Edmomton, 2009. P.66–69, 80.

organization was played by Russian anarcho-syndicalist Alexander Shapiro who was very intimate with him. As is known, the plans of rebuilding of the AIT-IWA at that time were buried by the First World War.

When in 1918 the guns became silent and the revolutionary storm begun, the situation in the labor movement was quite different. A fierce fight for the legacy of revolutionary syndicalism begun between the Bolsheviks, on the one hand, and the anarchists. Kropotkin had lived to see the beginning of this struggle for influence in the labor movement. It became clear that Bolshevism was not truly a revolutionary alternative and would not lead to a free communist society. In a letter to the workers and progressive society in Western Europe, written in June 1920, the anarchist, already old and sick, called on the workers of the world not to go the way of the Bolsheviks, through "*strongly centralized state communism, under the iron rule of party dictatorship*". Kropotkin once again called upon the workers of the West to create revolutionary unions, independent of any political party, and to "*revive the idea of the great International of all workers of the world - but not in the form of a union led by one party, as it was in the Second International, and is again in the Third*".⁵³ He gave this as a letter to delegates of British trade unions who visited him.

Throughout 1920, the old anarchist who lived in the small provincial town of Dmitrov, actively promoted this idea in correspondence and in conversations with libertarian movement activists visiting him. "*What I particularly wish - Kropotkin wrote to Shapiro - is that 3-4 of us will meet foreign friends and syndicalists, working out with them a most common program, and then, having this program in ours hands, begin with organazitional work in Russia. With the purpose and with a clear vision of the enormous task : to create the same International - anarchic, the peasant-worker, with the same broad goals, based on the daily struggle against capital, which our forefathers began to develop in [18]60s. consisting of heterogeneous elements that survived the defeat of 1848 and radicals who were influenced by them*"⁵⁴. He said to American anarchist Alexander Berkman that the Bolsheviks showed "*how the revolution is not to be made*"⁵⁵. In the same 1920, the delegate of German anarcho-syndicalists, A. Souchy got to Dmitrov with a letter from Rocker, old friend and comrade of Kropotkin. Kropotkin and Souchy discussed the Russian revolution, the evils of Bolshevism, the ideal of a free federation of free cities, councils, communities and unions, and the prospects of the

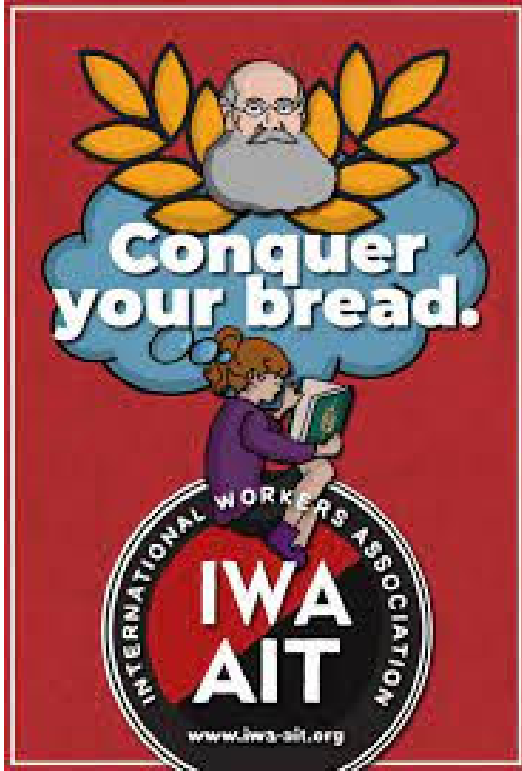
⁵³ Кропоткин П.А. Обращение Кропоткина к рабочим и передовым кругам общественности о текущих событиях // Вопросы философии. 1991. №11. С.43–51.

⁵⁴ Кропоткин, П.А. Письма М.И. Гольдсмит, А.А. Боровому и А. Шапиро // Труды Комиссии по научному наследию П.А. Кропоткина. Выпуск I. М., 1992. С.193.

⁵⁵ Berkman A. The Bolshevik Myth (Diary 1920–1922). L ; Winchester, 1989. P.75.

workers movement ⁵⁶.

Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin did not live to the day when, in late December 1922 in Berlin the Congress of revolutionary workers' unions of the world assembled, which announced the rebuilding of the anarcho-syndicalist International, the International Workers Association (IWA). He died in Dmitrov on February 8, 1921, but, of course, not accidentally, people who stood at the origins of the IWA (which declared itself the revival of the anti-authoritarian wing of the First International)



were exactly the anarchists who had long worked with Kropotkin, corresponded or met with him in the last year of his life. The first secretaries of the IWA were Rudolf Rocker, Agustin Souchy and Alexander Shapiro, who was forced to leave Bolshevik Russia, and did much to ensure, as the old man advised him in Dmitrov, to reveal to revolutionary workers activists what was happening in his home country, to bring together and unify European syndicalists. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the current IWA is a brainchild of Kropotkin, who did so much to restore the anarcho-syndicalist International, and, as he could, to help to prepare for this event.

Vadim Damier, KRAS-AIT, section in Russia of IWA

⁵⁶ Souchy A. "Vorsicht : Anarchist !" Ein Leben für die Freiheit. Politische Erinnerungen. Grafenau,1985. S.46–49.

“SANYA” SCHAPIRO, A FORGOTTEN FIGURE BUT INSTRUMENTAL IN THE BIRTH OF THE AIT



Alexander "Sanya" Moiseyevich Schapiro or Shapiro (in Russian: Александр "Саня" Моисеевич Шануро; 1882 or 1883 – December 5, 1946).⁵⁷ is one of the prominent – yet forgotten – figures of the international libertarian movement of the first half of the 20th century.

Born in southern Russia, Schapiro left Russia at an early age and spent most of his early activist years in London. During the Russian Revolution, Schapiro returned to Russia and aided the Bolsheviks in their seizure of power during the October Revolution. There he associated with many other prominent anarchists, including Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Peter Kropotkin who went back to Russia like him to participate to the Revolution. When Kropotkin died, Schapiro was one of the organizers of his funeral.

Following the Russian Civil War and the Kronstandt Uprising, anarchists were suppressed in the Soviet Union, and after trying to maintain underground

⁵⁷ Alexandre Schapiro is the homonyme of the father of the genius mathematician Alexandre Grothendieck. Alexander "Sascha" Schapiro (Russian: Александр Шапиро, Ukrainian: Олександр Шануро; c.1889 – 1942), also known by the *noms de guerre* Alexander Tanarov, Sascha Piotr, and Sergei, was a Jewish Russian anarchist who fought in both the Russian Civil War and the Spanish Civil War. Born to a wealthy family, Schapiro renounced the privileges of his upbringing and became affiliated with anarchists in his teenage years. After the dawn of the Russian Revolution, Schapiro aligned himself with the Revolutionary Army of Ukraine, and he fought alongside Nestor Makhno and Maria Nikiforova until the defeat of the anarchists at the hands of the Red Army in the Russian Civil War.

Following the suppression of anarchism in the Soviet Union, Schapiro escaped to Germany, living in Berlin prior to the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. After the rise of German fascism, Schapiro left for Spain and fought alongside the anarchists in the Second Spanish Republic. Upon the victory of the Spanish fascists and Francisco Franco, Schapiro escaped and attempted to hide in Nazi-occupied France, but he was quickly found by the Vichy authorities and handed over to the Nazis. Schapiro was subsequently murdered in the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp in 1942.

While living in Berlin, Schapiro was in a relationship with fellow anarchist and journalist Johanna Grothendieck. Grothendieck gave birth to Schapiro's son Alexander Grothendieck in 1928. Alexander Grothendieck would go on to become one of the most famous and renowned mathematicians of the 20th century.

anarchist opposition in Soviet Russia, Schapiro escaped abroad. Schapiro lived in exile for the remainder of his life, being a long-life apatrid.

He first settled in Germany where he actively contributed to the construction of the International Workers' Association (AIT), founded in 1922 in Berlin. Schapiro collaborated with Goldman and Berkman on anarchist pamphlets denouncing the Soviet state for its authoritarianism and suppression of anarchism.

In the 30'es, he settled in France where he joined the CGTSR, French section of the AIT-IWA..

During the Spanish Revolution Schapiro was very critical of the Spanish anarchist collaboration with the Republican government and joined with the then AIT-IWA Secretary, the French Pierre Besnard, at the June 1937 AIT-IWA Congress in Paris in denouncing the CNT for abandoning anarcho-syndicalist principles. He didn't hesitate to make his criticisms public, publishing open letters with very harsh tone, at the risk of getting angry with the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. This may explain why after his death in 1946, he fell into oblivion again, while many of his criticism turned out to be correct a posteriori.

Schapiro has been instrumental into the creation of AIT-IWA in December 1922 in Berlin : when the Russian revolution exploded, many anarchists were enthusiastic and gave a support to the revolutionary process. But as the time was passing by, and more and more information were arriving from inside Russia, it started to let space for disillusion. While many of the former social-democrats joined the newly Communist Parties established in every countries, many trade-unionists or Syndicalists (whiche were much more revolutionary than the social-democrats) were reluctant to do so. But it was absolutely crucial, from the Bolchevik point of view, that revolutionary syndicalists join them so that the newly formed Communist International could develop its network worldwide. In order to attract the syndicalists in their net, the Bolsheviks created the Red International Labor Union (RILU) in 1921. Anarchosyndicalists had to take a strategic decision for the future of their movement : to enter into RILU in order to practice "boring from within" or to creat a new and separate international organization and then confront openly the bolcheviks. The intervention of Schapiro at the Congress, detailing its own experience of failed cooperation with bolcheviks that ended into hostility and heavy repression against anarchists, achieved the congress attendees that any cooperation with bolchevik was impossible and the inevitability of creating a new international association. In this sense, if ones can regard Kropotkine as the AIT-IWA grand-father, Emma Goldma as the aunty, Rudolf Rocker as the older brother and Acharya as the cousin, Schapiro can be considered indeed as the midwife of the AIT-IWA birth.

An early cosmopolit anarchist

Alexander Schapiro was born in 1882 or 1883 in Rostov-on-Don in southern Russia. He grew up in Constantinople because his father Moses, a member of the secret revolutionary organization Narodnaya Volya, which assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881, was forced to flee the Russian Empire. There, he attended the French school. Schapiro grew up speaking Yiddish, Russian, French, and Turkish, and would later learn German and English. In the mid-1890s, Moses Schapiro switched to anarchism and by age eleven Alexander Schapiro started studying the works of anarchist theorists like Peter Kropotkin, Jean Grave and Élisée Reclus. In the late 1890s, the Schapiro family moved to London and came into contact with the milieu of Jewish anarchists behind the journal *Arbeter Fraynd*. After finishing school, Schapiro moved to Sofia, Bulgaria in 1899 [that was just independent from the turksih ottoman empire in 1878] to study mathematics and physics.

In August 1900, he moved to Paris to attend the Sorbonne University and possibly to participate in an international anarchist congress, which in the end was banned by the authorities. He started studying either engineering or biology with the intention of embarking on a career in medicine, but was forced to drop out for financial reasons. In Paris, he came to know many of the city's leading anarchists and became a member of *Étudiants socialistes révolutionnaires internationalistes* (ESRI, *Socialist revolutionary internationalist students*), an anarcho-syndicalist group involved in the preparations for the banned international congress. Syndicalism was an international movement which first emerged in France and the CGT (*General Confederation of Labor*) and then spread to many other countries. The movement fought for a revolution to abolish the state and capitalism and conceived of this revolution as being based on the general strike.

In 1900 or 1901, at Kropotkin's suggestion, Schapiro moved to London. Like his father, he became an active member of London's anarchist movement. At the time the movement in London was predominantly Russian Jewish. Its leading figure was Rudolf Rocker, a non-Jewish German exile, but the city's best-known anarchist was Kropotkin. In London, Schapiro worked as an assistant for the physiologist Augustus Waller, the inventor of the electrocardiogram. Schapiro is listed as an author on several publications from Waller's lab, but the job also allowed him to devote a lot of his time to the anarchist movement.

Schapiro was a member of the *Arbeter Fraynd* (*Worker's friend*) collective. The collective was split on the question of participation in trade unions. Schapiro was opposed because he feared anarchist principles could be compromised by unionism. According to Sam Dreen, another member, he was intelligent and capable, but also a stubborn and overbearing intellectual who was not in touch with workers' issues. Fermin Rocker, the son of Rudolf Rocker, another member of *Arbeter Fraynd*, liked

Schapiro and considered him well-educated and intelligent, but dogmatic, intolerant, and self-important.

Schapiro was also a member of the *Jewish Anarchist Federation*, a group of Eastern European anarchist immigrants. He was in charge of the federation's Jubilee Street Club, which was established in 1906. It was mostly a library and a center for adult education where workers could learn about art and the humanities. The club used Yiddish but it was open to all workers. It became a forum for workers, anarchists, and socialists of different nationalities and political views and introduced many people to the world of the labor movement and politics. In 1906 and 1907, Schapiro helped publish the *Listki Chleb i Wolja* (pamphlets "bread and freedom"), a series of pamphlets (*Listki*) written by Kropotkin. In the years after the Russian Revolution of 1905, Russian anarchists were the targets of severe government repression. Hundreds were executed or sentenced to long prison terms and many fled to the West. In 1907, anarchist exiles established the *Anarchist Red Cross* to protest the Russian Empire's treatment of anarchists and in order to help imprisoned activists. It was headquartered in London and New York and had branches in several European and North American cities. It organized lectures and collected money and clothing for Russian prisoners. Along with Kropotkin, Varlam Cherkozov, and Rocker, Schapiro directed the London headquarters.

In August 1907, Schapiro was the delegate of the *Jewish Anarchist Federation* at the *International Anarchist Congress* in Amsterdam, the largest anarchist meeting ever, and one of the organizers of the event. Syndicalism was one of the main points of discussion. The French anarchist Pierre Monatte was the primary advocate of syndicalism, while the Italian Errico Malatesta criticized it. The congress helped form links between syndicalists in various countries and spread the movement. The congress decided to form an International Bureau which also became known as the *Anarchist International*. Schapiro, Rocker, and Malatesta were chosen as the bureau's secretaries. Schapiro became the editor of the Bureau's journal, the *Bulletin de l'Internationale Anarchiste*, which he published in French from London until 1910. The *Bulletin* disseminated information about anarchist and syndicalist movements between countries. For about a year, it appeared almost every month, but then died off slowly. Schapiro wrote that the lack of enthusiasm of the international anarchist movement for the Anarchist International and the *Bulletin* was due to "*the fear that organisation might be the way whereby centralisation and authoritarianism could sneak into the anarchist movement*". Rocker praised the patience, intelligence, and talent Schapiro exhibited in his work for the *Anarchist International*. In 1909, Schapiro, Rocker, Malatesta, and John Turner repeatedly called for a follow-up congress, but their calls received no replies. A second congress was finally planned to take place in London in August 1914. Schapiro was heavily involved in the preparations and published a bulletin to facilitate

communication in the run-up to the congress. It focused on anti-militarism, syndicalism, and organizational questions. Anarchists from several countries pledged to attend and Schapiro was optimistic the congress would be a success. However, after World War I broke out, it had to be canceled.

Schapiro took part in the First International Syndicalist Congress in London in 1913. He did not represent any organization, but was one of two translators, with Christiaan Cornelissen the other. The German delegates praised Schapiro's objective approach, while Alfred Rosmer deemed him the only participant who did not lose his poise. There were numerous disputes at the congress, but it ultimately passed a *Declaration of Syndicalist Principles* calling for the abolition of the state and capitalism.

By the time World War I broke out, Schapiro was an important organizer in the international anarchist movement, although he was never as well-known an activist as the likes of Emma Goldman or Alexander Berkman as he was usually preoccupied with behind-the-scenes work for the movement. The outbreak of war became an incisive moment for the international anarchist movement and the broader radical left. The milieu of anarchist exiles in London was divided by the war. Several anarchists supported their respective home nations in the war. In October 1914, Kropotkin declared his support for the Allies. He argued that German militarism was to blame for the war, that Germany was the primary supporter of reaction in Europe, that France and Belgium had to be freed from German attack, and that the German working class was as bad as the German ruling class. Kropotkin's views put him in the minority in the anarchist movement, although Cherkesov, the French anarchist Jean Grave, and the American Benjamin Tucker agreed with him. The question split the movement. Schapiro was immediately and sternly opposed to the war. In the fall, Schapiro, Malatesta, Rocker, and others who opposed the war debated the issue with Cherkesov who presented Kropotkin's views. In March 1915, about 40 anarchists, including Schapiro, Malatesta, and the Americans Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman signed the *International Anarchist Manifesto on the War*. The manifesto denounces the war as "*the most frightful butchery that history has ever recorded*" and a consequence of capitalism's drive for profit and power. Anarchists' role, according to the signatories, "*is to summon the slaves to revolt against the masters*" and they therefore have no business rooting for one side or the other. The pro-war side in the anarchist debate responded with a manifesto of its own, the *Manifesto of the Sixteen*, which was mostly written by Kropotkin. It was also signed by Cherkesov, Grave, Cornelissen and several others and argues that opposition to the war only served to weaken the Allies.

Most anarchists broke with Kropotkin over his views on the war. Schapiro and Rocker were among the few who maintained their friendship with him. Rocker,

however, was interned as enemy alien in December 1914. Schapiro became the editor of the *Arbeter Fraynd* journal and worked with Rocker's partner Milly Witkop to keep it running. In 1916, Witkop was also interned, Schapiro was imprisoned for his opposition to the war, and the journal was shut down by the authorities. After Schapiro's release and the February Revolution in Russia, he campaigned for Russian exiles being allowed to return to their home country. He was a member of a committee headed by Georgy Chicherin, the later Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

Russia and Revolution from hope to anger ...

Schapiro returned to Russia, arriving in Petrograd on May 31, 1917. He was one of several anarcho-syndicalists returning from exile including Vladimir Shatov, Maksim Raevskii, and Volin. The three had been on the editorial board of the syndicalist journal *Golos Truda* (*Voice of Labor*), the organ of the *Union of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada*. They brought the journal with them back to Russia. The syndicalists formed the *Union of Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda* and *Golos Truda* became its mouthpiece. Schapiro joined the editorial staff of *Golos Truda*. The journal began appearing in August 1917. It published articles on French syndicalism and the theory of the general strike. Schapiro was the driving force behind *Golos Truda's* publishing house, which released Russian translations of works by Western syndicalist theorists like Fernand Pelloutier, Émile Pouget, or Cornelissen. The group sought the abolition of the state and its replacement by a federation of "*peasant unions, industrial unions, factory committees, control commissions, and the like in the localities all over the country.*" It supported the soviets emerging in the revolutionary process, but was most excited about the factory committees, which arose after the February Revolution as vehicles of workers' control over production. *Golos Truda* considered these committees "*the cells of the future socialist society*". In an article in *Golos Truda* in September, Schapiro called for "*complete decentralization and the very broadest self-direction of local organizations*" to keep the soviets from becoming a new form of political coercion. In another article, Schapiro criticized the upcoming elections of the Constituent Assembly, calling for "*the abolition of all power, which only impedes and smothers revolutionary creativity*" and criticizing the idea that parliaments can create a free society.

During the Provisional Government, there was some convergence between Lenin and the Bolsheviks on the one side and anarchists on the other, as both called for the government's removal and several radical statements by Lenin led anarchists to believe he had adopted their views on revolutionary struggle. Yet, when the Bolsheviks gained majorities in the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets, the anarchists, including Schapiro, became apprehensive. The Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, was dominated by Bolsheviks, but also included four anarchists,

Shatov among them. On October 25, it overthrew the Provisional Government, the event that became known as the October Revolution. Elated by the revolution, *Golos Truda* was also pleased when the Bolsheviks mandated workers' control in all enterprises with at least five employees in November, but control over factories was soon transferred to the state after workers' control led to economic chaos.

The 1918–1921 Civil War split the anarchist movement. Most syndicalists viewed the Bolshevik government as the lesser evil, because they feared a White Army victory. Details on Schapiro's activities are scarce, but he collaborated more openly with the Bolshevik government than most syndicalists. He worked for the Commissariat of Jewish Affairs, part of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, which was headed by Chicherin whom Schapiro had come to know in London. For the Commissariat, he produced Yiddish periodicals that promoted the Revolution but were not specifically Bolshevik. By 1920, he was working as a translator for the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. At one point he held a high post in the Moscow rail workers' labor union. While he worked for the Bolshevik regime, Schapiro continued to criticize it, in a measured way according to both supporters and critics of Bolshevik rule.

An opponent to the Bolcheviks inside the Soviet Union

In 1918, the Bolshevik government initiated a wave of repression towards the anarchist movement. In May, *Golos Truda* was shut down. Schapiro turned his attention to pushing back against this repression and helping anarchist prisoners. In 1920, syndicalists from several western countries came to Moscow to attend the second congress of the Comintern. They knew little about conditions in Russia. While in Moscow, several syndicalists including Augustin Souchy, Ángel Pestaña, Armando Borghi, and Bertho Lepetit visited anarchists like Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, both of them Russian-born anarchists who returned from the United States in 1919, Kropotkin, who had also returned to Russia, and Schapiro.

Schapiro relayed to them Russian syndicalists' critique of the regime and their fears of persecution. Some of those syndicalists then raised these issues with the Bolshevik leadership. After the congress, Alfred Rosmer, a French syndicalist who became a communist and a member of the Executive of the Comintern, stayed in Russia. Rosmer contacted Schapiro and met him at the *Golos Truda* printing house. The Russian syndicalists had written a letter of protest and hoped it would receive attention if Rosmer submitted it to the Comintern. Rosmer and Schapiro discussed the issue and Rosmer was optimistic it could be resolved. The defiant tone of the letter the Russian syndicalists then drew up surprised Rosmer and he refused to submit their declaration unless they softened it. Eventually, Schapiro and Gregori Maximoff, another member of *Golos Truda*, rewrote the letter and Rosmer submitted it in February 1921. They never received a reply, as the Kronstadt

uprising put an end to attempts at reconciliation between the Bolshevik leadership and the anarchist movement.

Schapiro, like several other anarchists, had regularly visited Kropotkin. While carefully avoiding the question of the war, they had long discussions on the situation in Russia. In January 1921, Kropotkin, almost eighty years old and living in Dmitrov, a suburb of Moscow, contracted pneumonia. Schapiro, with Goldman and Nikolai Ivanovich Pavlov, took a train to visit him, but their train was delayed and they arrived an hour after he died on February 8. Schapiro and Berkman were part of a commission formed by the country's anarchist groups to organize Kropotkin's funeral. The funeral drew 20,000 anarchists and was the last anarchist demonstration – an *in fact* the past opposition demonstration ... - in communist Russia.



De camino a la estación en las calles de Dimitroff.
Alexander Berkman camina frente al ataúd.

In early 1921, the government started to ban syndicalist and anarchist writings. After the Kronstadt uprising in March, the Bolshevik government began rounding up anarchists. Schapiro's critique of the regime, which had been fairly moderate, turned into fundamental opposition. In May, Schapiro was one of several signatories to an open letter to Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership circulated in the West. It protested the persecution of Russian anarchists in the wake of Kronstadt. In June 1921, Schapiro, along with Goldman, Berkman, and fellow anarchist Alexei Borovoi, anonymously wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Russian Revolution and the Communist Party*, which was published by Rocker and smuggled from Germany. They argued that anarchists had refrained from protesting the repression leveled against them in Russia as long as the Civil War was being fought so as not "*to aid*

the common enemy, world imperialism". The end of the war, however, had made it clear that the biggest threat to the revolution "was not outside, but within the country: a danger resulting from the very nature of the social and economic arrangements which characterize the present 'transitory stage'."

Although wary of the persecution of syndicalists in Russia, representatives of syndicalist organizations from several Western countries attended the founding congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), which the Bolsheviks convened in July 1921. Disputes between syndicalists and communists over tactical issues dominated the congress. The Bolshevik suppression of the anarchist movement also became an issue. The day before the congress began, thirteen imprisoned Russian anarchists entered a hunger strike. Goldman, Berkman, the anarchist-turned-Bolshevik Victor Serge, and above all Schapiro made sure that the visiting syndicalists were apprised of the imprisonment of anarchists and the hunger strike. The foreign syndicalists raised the issue with the head of the Cheka, Felix Dzerzhinsky, and with Lenin himself. Finally, negotiations in which Schapiro, Berkman, two Spanish delegates, and two French delegates represented the syndicalist side yielded a compromise with the Bolshevik leadership. The anarchist prisoners would end their hunger strike, be released, and leave the country. They remained imprisoned until September, when they were released and allowed to emigrate to Germany by the end of the year. Among them were Maximoff, Volin, Mark Mrachnyi, and Efim Iarchuk who had all worked with Schapiro in the *Golos Truda* group. While the negotiations were still ongoing, Nikolai Bukharin addressed the RILU congress in the name of the Bolshevik Party and attacked the Russian anarchist movement. This caused the congress to erupt into chaotic shouting. The French syndicalist Henri Sirolle then responded for the syndicalist delegates and defended Russian anarchism. He demanded that a representative of the Russian syndicalist movement who was present, most likely Schapiro, be allowed to address the congress, but he was denied. After the congress, Schapiro denounced the RILU as "*the illegitimate daughter of the Communist International, and consequently the handmaiden of the Russian Communist Party*" and warned Italian syndicalists against associating with it.

In Berlin Schapiro pave the way for the creation of IWA against RILU ...

In November 1921, Schapiro, Berkman, and Goldman received permission from the Soviet government to attend an international anarchist congress in Berlin in December. They were held up in Latvia when the visa for Germany they had been promised was not issued. Goldman suspected the Bolsheviks were behind this, but this is unlikely. The American government had circulated photos Schapiro, Berkman, and Goldman to its foreign embassies, as it was concerned that Goldman might try to return to the United States. With them having already missed the congress, Sweden issued the trio visas two weeks later, but on the train on their way to Stockholm the Latvian police arrested them. Their belongings were searched and they were jailed for a week. This was engineered by the American commissioner in Riga who was then able to search the anarchists' belongings and make copies of all documents the American government might be interested in. Schapiro, Berkman, and Goldman were released and able to leave Latvia for Sweden on December 30. Their status in Sweden was precarious and they were only allowed to stay as long as they pledged not to participate in anarchist activities. While Berkman and Goldman remained in Stockholm and wrote about their experiences in Russia, Schapiro decided to join the Russian syndicalist exiles in Berlin after entering Germany secretly.

In June 1922, he attended a syndicalist conference in Berlin. The meeting was called to discuss the international organization of the movement and whether to negotiate with the RILU or start an independent syndicalist international. Schapiro and Mrachnyi represented the Russian syndicalist movement, but a representative of Russia's centralist unions also attended. Schapiro and Mrachnyi used the meeting as another opportunity to denounce the Soviet government's repression of syndicalists and anarchists. The meeting decided to create an international Syndicalist Bureau, to which Schapiro would be the Russian representative, and discussed the position the syndicalist movement should take on the RILU. Concerning negotiations with the RILU, Schapiro presented the congress with two options. Syndicalists could present the Bolsheviks with minimal conditions, which they might accept, or harsher conditions, which they could not. The former he deemed a betrayal of syndicalist principles and the latter a mere ploy. Instead, he proposed that the syndicalists break off negotiations with the RILU and go their own way. The assembly adopted a resolution which made no mention of negotiations with the RILU. This was the end of collaboration between the syndicalist and the communist movements in most countries. In its stead, the conference formed a Syndicalist Bureau, in which Schapiro represented Russia, to prepare a second conference at which a syndicalist international was to be formed.

After the meeting Schapiro decided to return to Russia, feeling he could make a

contribution there. He contacted Chicherin and received assurances he could safely return to Russia. However, on the night of September 2–3, two weeks after Schapiro's return to Russia, he was arrested in Moscow. The secret police charged him with working with underground anarchists, but was mostly interested in his international contacts. Chicherin ignored a letter Schapiro sent him from prison and the RILU refused to notify the Syndicalist Bureau of his arrest. Nevertheless, the news soon reached the West and sparked an international solidarity campaign to free Schapiro. After Western syndicalists, particularly the French CGTU, protested his incarceration, the Soviet government became worried about damaging the RILU's relations with them. Schapiro was released and, charged with anti-Soviet activities, expelled from Russia in October 1922, on the anniversary of the October Revolution. Schapiro himself sarcastically called this coincidence an "*exceptional honour*". He subsequently wrote about his imprisonment in several syndicalist journals in the West.



On January 10, 1922, after their exile from Russia: from left to right: Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Lidya Gensa, Alexander Schapiro and the Swedish Lindström who received them.

The decisive role of Sacha Schapiro in the affirmation of IWA's anarchosyndicalist character

Schapiro decided to return to Berlin. There, he became one of the most active Russian anarchosyndicalist exiles.

Following the decision of the June 1922 conference in Berlin, a new conference was planned in December same year to establish the International Worker's Association (IWA, International Association of Workers⁵⁸ also known as AIT, Asociacion Internacional de los Trabajadores). Schapiro participated very actively in the founding congress of the new anarcho-syndicalist international AIT. **He drew up the first draft of the statutes. Schapiro therefore had an essential role in the constitution of the libertarian principles of the AIT⁵⁹, of which he says "Anarchosyndicalism is the International Workers' Association which does not limit its activities to the daily struggle for improvements in detail, but puts in the very first place, as Kropotkin so aptly put it, the question of the reconstruction of society".**

Schapiro and Efim Iarchuk, another former editor of *Golos Truda*, represented the Russian syndicalist movement. **Reflections on the Russian Revolution played a central role in the deliberations, as the Russian experience demonstrated the fundamental differences between syndicalism and state socialism, according to the delegates. Rocker pointed to the Bolshevik government's treatment of Schapiro in making the case against participation in the RILU and for the formation of a syndicalist international. Schapiro himself argued that participation in the RILU would be incompatible with syndicalist principles. The establishment of the AIT-IWA finalized the international syndicalist movement's break with Bolshevism.** Berlin was selected as the seat of the AIT-IWA. Schapiro, Souchy, and Rocker were elected to its secretariat. Within a few years, the IWA consisted of union federations in Germany, Italy, Sweden, Spain, Norway, Portugal, the Netherlands, France, Argentina, and Mexico as well as minor affiliates in numerous other countries. Schapiro considered the AIT-IWA more important than did the other members of the secretariat who mainly thought of it as a response to both Bolshevism and reformism. He viewed the AIT-IWA as the continuation of the efforts to unite the international syndicalist movement that had begun before World War I and performed most of the secretariat's work during the organization's first year. He hoped discussions within the AIT-IWA would lead to

⁵⁸ The English name adopted in 1922 was International Working's Men International (IWMA), as a clear and direct reference to the English name of the First International of 1864. It has been changed to International Worker's Association (IWA) in the 70's, to have a more gender neutral tone. In other languages as Spanish or French, the acronym remained the same: AIT.

⁵⁹ Alexandre Schapiro obituary, *Adunata dei Refrattari*, 22-3-1947, New-york

unity among syndicalists on questions concerning revolutionary tactics and strategy. He later found that the AIT-IWA frequently had to mediate between contradictory understandings of anarcho-syndicalism.

From 1923, Schapiro served on the *Joint Committee for the Defense of the Revolutionaries Imprisoned in Russia* and then on the *AIT-IWA's Relief Fund for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned in Russia*. This fund helped the revolutionaries imprisoned by the Bolsheviks of all tendencies: anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists (including Nestor Makhno), but also left communists, revolutionary socialists, maximalists or even left Zionists.

BULLETIN OF THE RELIEF FUND

of the International Working Men's Association

for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned or Exiled
in Russia

No. 1

PARIS-BERLIN

December, 1926

RESOLUTION OF THE I.W.M.A.

In view of the renewal of wholesale political persecution in Russia, and because of the increased need of aid, the INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION has resolved to organise a RELIEF FUND for the benefit of Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists in Russian prisons and exile. For this purpose the Secretariat of the I.W.M.A. has nominated Comrades ALEXANDER BERKMAN and MARK MRATCHNY as the Secretariat of the Relief Fund.

STATEMENT

We welcome the resolution of the International Working Men's Association (Syndicalist International) which gives our work of aid the moral and financial support of that important international labor body. We consider that the action of the I.W.M.A. in creating the Relief Fund, constituted as mentioned above, expresses the appreciation of that body of the work carried on by us in behalf of our imprisoned and exiled comrades in Russia. At the same time and for obvious reasons the Anarchists terminate their representation in the Joint Committee for the Defense of Imprisoned Revolutionists in Russia, which — as such — hereby ceases to

They sent numerous aid packages and letters of encouragement to anarchists in prisons and gulags in the Soviet Union. Schapiro and a group of exiles that also included Maximoff edited the anarcho-syndicalist newspaper *Rabochii Put'* (*The Workers' Way*), the AIT-IWA's Russian-language organ. It was printed on the presses of the German syndicalist journal *Der Syndikalist* with financial support from the IWA and secretly distributed in Russia. It ran for six issues from March to August 1923. Schapiro used the journal to expound on the lessons he drew from the Russian Revolution. According to him, anarchists reacted to the revolution in two ways, both of them partly counter-revolutionary. The first position was taken by the Soviet anarchists who regarded dictatorship as a necessary transitional phase on the way to a stateless society. The second held that the revolution must be immediately fully anarchist and therefore resorted to militarism like Nestor Makhno. He concluded that anarchism could only overcome such problematic reactions by giving more attention to a theory of the revolutionary process rather than the ideal of a post-revolutionary society. Schapiro repeatedly criticized

Makhno und his movement, the Makhnovshchyna, as "*non-anarchist*" or "*war anarchism*". Schapiro met Makhno when the latter stayed in Berlin for a few weeks in 1925 and the dispute repeatedly escalated into shouting.

In April 1932, Schapiro was elected to the secretariat of the AIT-IWA again, having left in 1925. With initially around 1.5 million workers organized in the AIT-IWA's member organizations, it quickly declined in large part due to government repression and it had less than half a million members by its own estimates in 1929–1930. This number grew at once when democracy was restored in Spain and the Spanish affiliate of the AIT-IWA, the National Confederation of Labor (CNT), was able to operate openly, becoming the AIT-IWA's largest member organization. In December 1932, Schapiro went to Barcelona on behalf of the AIT-IWA in order to set up its Iberian organization. The CNT was beset by internal turmoil, divided between the more moderate leadership, known as the "*treintistas*", and the *Iberian Anarchist Federation* (FAI), which was established in 1927 to ensure that anarchist principles were strictly followed. Schapiro was tasked with mediating the conflict between the FAI and treintistas.

He traveled on to France, where he continued to work with the IWA, being part of the French section CGT-SR, and edited another anarcho-syndicalist paper, *La Voix du Travail* (*The Voice of Labour*).

Ses articles publiés dans “ Der Syndikalist ” de Berlin et “ Le Combat Syndicaliste ” de Paris et dans d’autres périodiques et revues de notre mouvement, ont toujours été caractérisés par leur clarté dans les idées et la concision dans le style. Les travaux publiés par Shapiro ont contribué à la clarification des idées et de la tactique anarcho-syndicaliste. avec ses idées sur l’anarcho-syndicalisme. ”
Agustin Souchy dans “ *Tierra y Libertad* ” 25-1-1947]

Thoroughly disillusioned, Schapiro left Europe for New York in June 1939, just before the start of the Second World War, after the defeat of the Spanish revolution and Republic, and as the activity of anarcho-syndicalists in France were very hard : all their energy was focused on helping the Spaniards refugees while they were also facing a huge repression from the government that will finally disband the organization at the beginning of the war. [94].

From September 1945 to August 1946, he edited a new anarchist journal entitled *New Trends*. He published articles on anarcho-syndicalism, the situations in Spain and Russia, as well as the killing of Carlo Tresca. Alexander Schapiro died of heart failure in New York on December 5, 1946. The anarchist Mollie Fleshin reacted to Schapiro's death writing that "*the best brains of the movement are passing out one after another and [...] I have a feeling as if the movement itself is passing out*".

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**From revolutionary syndicalism
to anarcho-syndicalism:
The birth of the International Workers
Association (AIT-IWA)**



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