

## EVOLUTION OF ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM

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### 1: BEGINNINGS

Anarcho-Syndicalism is not a utopia. Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas, tactics, and forms of organization gradually developed out of the daily lives and struggles of the oppressed and rebellious workers against the employing class and the State. Anarcho-Syndicalism--i.e., self-management of industry by the workers themselves in a stateless society--rests on very solid foundations. In various forms (guilds, free communes, revolutionary unions, collectives, cooperatives and many other voluntary associations) this tendency traces back to the Communes of the French Revolution of 1789, Haymarket, the Paris Commune and other upheavals of the 1880s, the International Workingmen's Association (First International, IWA, founded 1864), as well as the French Anarcho-Syndicalist movement of the 1890s and early 1900s.

The early labor movement at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution did not, as Marx declared, consist of an "incoherent scattered mass" of ignoramuses. The labor movement of that period actually constituted a counter-society, a closely-knit network of thousands of living mutual aid and cultural associations covering all of Great Britain, including the most remote areas. All the themes stressed by modern revolutionary socialists--not only the State and political institutions, but the social and economic features of industrial and finance capitalism, law, monopoly, private property, rent, interest, profit, armed struggle, the class nature of workers' struggle, etc.--were already discussed in the 1790s, when the Industrial Revolution began, by thousands of articulate workers.

Marx added absolutely nothing new or constructive to the legacy left by the pioneers of the socialist labor movement, formulated when Marx was still in his teens. What is more, as far back as 1833 radical workers had already formulated the basic principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism so viciously opposed by Marx in his notorious, slanderous campaign against the libertarian sections of the First International. Surprisingly enough, E.P. Thompson (himself a professed Marxist and former Communist Party member) in his well-known work, *THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH WORKING CLASS*, reveals that in 1833 the principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism were already formulated and quotes from a periodical of the period to prove his point:

"The trades unions will not only strike for less work and more wages, but they will eventually abolish wages, become their own masters, and work for each other... a House of Trades will take the place of the House of Commons and direct the commercial affairs of the country, according to the will of the trades which comprise associations of industry... It will begin in our lodges, extend to our general union, embrace the management of the trade, and finally swallow up the whole political power..."

(see pages 206-207, and 829-830)

In his *ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM* (page 70, Italian edition, 1947),

Rudolf Rocker notes that "...the idea of the General Strike was met with great sympathy by the English workers..." as far back as 1832.

## 2: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

In the days of the International, the radical labor and socialist Federations in Spain, Italy, Latin America, large parts of Switzerland (Jura Federation), Belgium, Holland, France, etc., were predominantly Anarcho-Syndicalist in character, while Marxist influence, even in England, was at most minimal. Rather than relinquish control over the International, the Marxist faction, in typical communist party fashion, connived to break up the International (as Marx and Engels later admitted). Their conduct was severely criticized even by Marxist historians like Franz Mehring, Otto Ruhle, Eduard Bernstein, and others.

Over a century ago, the libertarian pioneers of the First International formulated the main principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism. Eugene Varlin, member of the French Federation of the International, declared:

"...the social riches can be assured to humanity only on the condition that it is controlled by labor. Otherwise social wealth will be monopolized by the centralized, authoritarian State. The State will then institute a hierarchical organization of labor from the top down in which the worker will be reduced to the level of a cowed, domesticated animal, indifferent, without initiative and without freedom..."

The resolution of the Basle Congress of the International outlined an Anarcho-Syndicalist economic order in which the intermeshing coordination of local, regional, national and international Industrial Federations "...will take the place of the present governments, and do away once and for all with the governments of the past..."

In a major policy declaration contrasting the Anarcho-Syndicalist position as against the authoritarian attitude of the Marxist factions Bakunin explained:

"...Just as the State is authoritarian, artificial, violent, alien and hostile to the natural interests and instincts of the people, to that same degree must the organization of the International be free, natural, and in every respect in accordance with these interests and instincts....

"But what is the natural organization of the masses? It is based upon their different occupations, their daily life, their various kinds of work, their trade organizations. Their federation in the International and representation in the Chambers of Labor not only create a great academy in which the workers of the International, combining theory and practice, can and must study economic science. They also bear in themselves the living seeds of the new social order. They are creating not only the ideas, but the facts of the future itself..." (Protestation of the Alliance)

The anarchist dictum that power in society must circulate from the bottom up, from the periphery to the center, should be reformulated. Power should not flow from the bottom up or the top down for the simple reason that THERE IS NO TOP, AND THERE IS NO BOTTOM. Power, like the blood stream, should circulate freely throughout society, continually renewing and revitalizing its cells.

### 3: SOVIETS

Oscar Anweiler, in his pioneering work THE SOVIETS, lists Bakunin and Proudhon among the theoretical forerunners of the Soviet form of workers' self-management; i.e., release from the State's tutelage, self-government by cooperative producer groups, autonomy of self-regulating communes.

"...The inherent quality of soviets is driving toward the most direct, far-reaching, and unrestricted participation of the individual in public life... When applied to the collective the soviet becomes the area of self-government by the masses combined with the will to revolutionary transformation... the council becomes effective wherever the masses wish to overcome feudal or centralized power... Councils took an inherently revolutionary direction... Proudhon's and Bakunin's concepts are closely associated with these ideas..."

### 4: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM VERSUS MARXISM-LENINISM

Historians concerned above all with the Marxist-Leninist character of the Russian Revolution ignore or underestimate its Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies, As far back as 1907 Lenin, in a draft resolution to the Fifth Bolshevik Party Congress, initiated discussion on "...the unaffiliated workers' organizations in relation to the Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies among the proletariat". Anna Pankratava, a Bolshevik historian, deplors the fact that "in the early days of the October Revolution, anarchist tendencies were easily and successfully manifested in the first period of chaotic and primitive socialization... The factory councils frequently took over management of factories whose owners were eliminated or fled..." Similarly, at the Third Congress of Soviets (early 1918) Lenin deplored "...anarchist tendencies [which] now take on living form as self-governing communes of producers and consumers..."

The Russian Anarcho-Syndicalist G.P. Maximoff declared that "the period from February to October 1917 was in its sweep and scope a most resplendent one in anarchist and syndicalist propaganda and action... The land to the peasants! The factories to the workers! All power to the Soviets!" Maximoff documents the growth of the Anarcho-Syndicalist, self-management movement:

"...before the All-Russian Trade Union Convention, the Anarcho-Syndicalists succeeded in organizing, on the platform of the IWW, between twenty and thirty thousand miners on the Debaltsev District of the Don Basin... Throughout the Novoyrossisk Province, the labor movement adopted the Anarcho-Syndicalist platform...."

"Anarcho-Syndicalist periodicals in Moscow, Petrograd and twenty major cities were widely circulated and avidly read by the workers... In Petrograd, the journal GOLOS TRUDA and BURAVESTNIK each reached a circulation of 25,000... In Moscow, the daily ANARCHIA's circulation was 25,000..."

Lenin told the Congress of Factory Councils (June 27, 1918) that "...we have abandoned the old methods of workers' control and preserved only the principle of State control..." The attempts of the Bolshevik Workers' Opposition faction to alter the policy of the Communist Party in favor of allowing a measure of workers' control of industry was condemned by both Lenin and Trotsky (who urged the militarization of labor) as a "syndicalist deviation". The heroic attempts to save the Revolution from its usurpers--peasant uprisings, strikes, passive resistance--culminated in the slaughter of the gallant Kronstadt rebels in 1921 and the Makhno peasant movement in the Ukraine.

#### 5: REVIVAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION (IWA/AIT)

The campaign of the Communist Party-dominated Red International of Trade Unions to infiltrate and finally capture the international libertarian and Anarcho-Syndicalist labor movement led to the reestablishment in 1921-22 of the original IWA/AIT, retaining the same principles worked out by the libertarian wing of the first IWA. Affiliated to the revived IWA/AIT were the international Anarcho-Syndicalist organizations, totalling well over six million militants.

Though almost depleted by the catastrophic rise of fascism, the sabotage and infiltration of the communist parties, the degeneration of the Social Democrat parties into the structure of modern capitalism, World War II, and the defeat of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, the IWA/AIT miraculously survives--even making some progress.

#### 6: CONCLUSIONS

The desire for workers' control of industry--a key principle of Anarcho-Syndicalism--is deeply rooted in the heart of the world proletariat. The movement for free Soviets (councils) which the workers and peasants of Russia fought for and which was finally crushed with the massacre of the Kronstadt Soviet in 1921, the crushing of the workers' council movement in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the 1958 and magnificent Solidarity uprisings in Poland, the Czechoslovakian freedom revolts in 1968 and manifestations to this day, even in Russia itself; all included many ex-communists but would certainly be condemned by the Bolsheviks as an "Anarcho-Syndicalist deviation". There is, of course, the classic example of the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39 in which the great constructive achievements of the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in establishing rural collectives and workers' control of industry were carried out in accordance with the Anarcho-Syndicalist principles formulated by the Libertarian wing of the First International over a century ago.

It is obvious that workers' control in the true sense of

that term is possible only in the kind of libertarian society envisioned by the pioneers of Anarcho-Syndicalism. Deep changes in the structure of society will have to be made, and many hard battles fought before workers' control is a reality. The class-collaborationist, politically-dominated labor organizations now thoroughly integrated into the structure of capitalism and the state cannot, and will not even begin to initiate revolutionary changes. It is imperative that we begin a wide-ranging discussion of radicalizing and rebuilding the workers' movement and work out much more effective methods than have thus far been advanced. Speed the day!