To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Anarchist Congress held in Amsterdam in August 1907, the Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici has produced an English translation of the 1978 book "Dibattito sul sindacalismo: Atti del Congresso Internazionale anarchico di Amsterdam (1907)". In which labour historian Maurizio Antonioli examines the process that led to the Amsterdam Congress and its significance both within the labour movement and the anarchist movement. He then goes on to compile the various reports in anarchist journals of the time, producing what is possibly the most complete record of the Congress and the debates that lasted six days.
Maurizio Antonioli is a historian specializing in the history of labour movements, on which he has published extensively, and currently teaches at the University of Milan in Italy.

Nestor McNab is a teacher and translator living in Rome. He has edited, amongst other things, "La Piattaforma Organizzativa - origine, dibattito e significato", containing Italian translations of material regarding the 1926 Organizational Platform.

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The International Anarchist Congress of 1907

Notes:

The International Anarchist Congress

held at the Plancius Hall in Amsterdam,
26-31 August 1907
And could it have been otherwise? Do we not all want with the same passion the liberation of humanity, the total destruction of Capitalism and the State, the Social Revolution?

Our first Congress will have its fruit if all those here today, once they return home, concentrate more on what is to be done rather than on what has been done; if we return to our activity of propaganda and organisation with the maximum possible confidence and energy. To work, comrades!

A round of applause greets these vibrant words. Enthusiasm is at its greatest. The faces of all are lit with joy. A comrade then sings the Internationale:

"Debout, les damnés de la terre!
Debout, les forçats de la faim!"

All sing. The French revolutionary anthem has truly conquered everyone. Wherever men, anarchists or socialist, fight against social injustice and dream of the liberation of humanity, the Internationale has become the refrain of war that rings out during strikes, rallies and congresses.

It is over. The hall gradually empties. Handshakes, goodbyes, or rather au revoirs, given that most of the participants are not leaving Amsterdam until the next day, though some do have to catch the evening or night train.

At nine o'clock the last meeting takes place in the large hall on the first floor of the Plancius. The hall throngs with a large public, which is extraordinarily attentive and calm as only a Dutch public can be. Cornelissen, Broutchoux, Monatte, Ramus, Chapelier, Samson, Munz ic, Sepp Örter, Fraböse and Ludwig take it in turns to speak. The same idea runs throughout all their speeches: the idea that the Amsterdam Congress will leave a lasting impression on the revolutionary world and that international anarchism will be more mature and stronger as a result.
Religion". On the question of "Alcoholism", Prof. Van Rees presents a motion of ten points and agrees to integrate two additional points proposed by Emile Chapelier. The motion, however, is not put to the vote due to the opposition of almost every delegate to it.

The agenda then passes on to the topic of "Anarchism as life and as intellectual activity" (speakers E. Armand and Mauricius, from Paris). Both speakers, however, are absent and as no-one asks for the question to be dealt with, it is passed over.

On the question of production associations, one of the speakers, I.I. Samson, has already presented his report. The other, Emile Chapelier, follows the example of Ramus and Rijnders and forgoes his report. There is, however, a resolution on the matter, proposed by Samson. But in this case too the congress refuses to vote on it as the problem raised by Samson cannot be dealt with in a few minutes. There is no time to deal with the matter thoroughly and it is thought preferable to leave it until the next congress.

The final matter on the agenda is the question of "Esperanto", on which comrade Chapelier has prepared a lengthy report. But he limits himself to presenting a resolution, also signed by Malatesta and Rogdaev. The resolution is opposed by Amédée Dunois and Henri Fuss. After further discussion an alternative resolution is proposed and adopted.

Comrade Emma Goldman then declares the agenda to be completed and that Congress has therefore concluded its work. She then invites Errico Malatesta to say a few closing words. Malatesta rises, and in a loud, penetrating voice makes the following speech:

MALATESTA: Comrades, our Congress is over. The bourgeois papers of all colours had announced that this first International Congress would take place in turmoil, confusion and incoherence. Even some comrades had predicted greater discord among our ranks.

But the facts have given lie to all these prophets. Despite insufficient material preparation, due only to our poverty, despite the difficulty for delegates of such different languages and origins to understand each other, this Congress has succeeded in the best possible way. Not only has it completely confounded the malignant hopes of all our enemies, I can say that it has outdone even the most optimistic hopes of its supporters.

Instead of provoking a split in the anarchist camp, it has cleared the path towards a fruitful union. It has exhorted comrades, who until today had been struggling in isolation, to help each other irrespective of borders so that we can march towards our future together. Undoubtedly there have been some manifestations of disagreement among us, but these have only concerned secondary questions. We all agree on the

Preface

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

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

In the introduction to the 1978 book "Dibattito sul sindacalismo: Atti del Congresso Internazionale anarchico di Amsterdam (1907)"], labour historian Maurizio Antonioli examines the process that led to the Amsterdam Congress and its significance both within the labour movement and the anarchist movement. Antonioli then goes on to compile the various reports in anarchist journals of the time, producing what is possibly the most complete record of the Congress and the debates that lasted six days. We present here Antonioli's introduction together with a somewhat abridged version of the rest of the book, having omitted some of the lesser debates and introductory speeches and the reports on the situation in Russia. These will be included in the complete version of the book to be published in the future. The footnote numbers are those in the original text (except first note * - see notes for details). Translation from Italian to English is by Nestor McNab
have no greater success but agreement is made on London, an essentially international centre which is home to militants from all countries.

There remains to choose the five members of the Bureau. A list circulates featuring the names of Errico Malatesta (despite his protestations), Rudolf Rocker, Alexander Schapiro, John Turner (absent) and Jean Wilquet.

The five comrades are elected; Malatesta in the lead with 53 votes. Malatesta is Italian, Rocker and Wilquet are German, Schapiro is Russian and Turner is English.

At Malatesta’s proposal, the Congress mandates the International Bureau to launch a campaign of agitation in every Western country in support of the Belgian comrade, Eduard Joris, who was sentenced to death by a Turkish court for his participation in an attempt on the life of the Sultan (21 July 1905).

Before the session ends, one delegate requests that the date of the next Congress be fixed and an exchange of views takes place. It is decided to hold another congress in two years’ time and it is left to the International Bureau to fix the exact time and place, in agreement with the member federations and groups. The session ends at twelve thirty.

Seventeenth session – Saturday 31 August – Afternoon session

This final session of the Congress is held in a room on the first floor. There are as many delegates as there were on the first day, if not more, but there is a general tiredness in the air, typical of the last day of any Congress. The agenda has not been completely dealt with and everyone agrees to finish as soon as possible. Emma Goldman is elected to the chair.

The first point on the agenda is “The complete education of the child”. The speaker is Léon Clément from Paris, but in his absence comrade de Marmande takes on the task of outlining Clément’s report. The proposal is to create a model school in every workers’ centre, under the patronage of the revolutionary syndicates. Everyone agrees in approving such an idea and it is hoped that Léon Clément’s report can be published and widely distributed, but no deliberations are made on them.

Owing to the lack of time, Pierre Ramus decides not to present his report on “Modern Literature and Anarchism”, as does comrade Gerhart Rijnders, who was due to speak on “Anarchism and
Trabajadores [General Union of Workers] in March 1902. The 4th congress of the FOA (held in Buenos Aires from 30 July to 2 August 1904), decided to add the term Regional to the name, thereby creating the FORA.

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

Sixteenth session – Saturday 31 August – Morning session

Like the Wednesday afternoon session, this too is held in camera, as certain measures concerning the functions of the International Anarchist Bureau must be taken.

Comrade Lange, to whom the Congress is indebted for the good order which has reigned at most sessions, is relieved of his duties due to tiredness and his place is taken by Enrico Malatesta.

Henry Beyle and Benoît Brouchetoux propose that Congress adopt the following resolution:

“Congress notes that the (French) republican government acts against the workers in the same way as all governments have always done. It sends its fraternal greetings to comrades Yvetot, Marck, Lévy, Bousquet, Torton, Lorulot, Berthet, Clémentine Delmotte, Gabrielle Petit, to the twelve anti-militarists currently in prison in Paris and to all comrades incarcerated in the republic’s prisons.

Congress also sends its warmest greetings to all defenders of freedom being held in the fortresses of world capitalism. It invites the International Bureau, as its first act, to organise the defence of and assistance for all our imprisoned friends.”

The resolution is passed unanimously.

Discussion then immediately begins on the International Bureau. It is somewhat confused and a verbatim report would be difficult. Most of those in attendance participate in the debate, which goes on until midday.

It must be decided where to locate the Bureau. Some delegates initially propose Paris or Geneva, but these proposals, vigorously opposed by others, are abandoned. Brussels and Amsterdam...
tions by making the most of its still decidedly "mixed" nature.

As is well known, the various attempts - Brussels (1891), Zurich (1893) and London (1896) - came to no good. The majority at these congresses voted for the exclusion of the anarchists, though with sizeable minorities and for various reasons. However, despite the lack of success as far as the objective was concerned, these efforts to return to the international circuit were not without positive results. Contacts were renewed, debate was stimulated, ideas, discussion points and forms of struggle circulated (a typical example being the general strike) and the possibility was mooted of alliance with other revolutionary forces. As Christiaan Cornelissen recalled years later, Zurich and London had not just meant defeat for anarchists, they were also an opportunity to meet up, "dans l'ombre du Congrès ouvrier socialiste".

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

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

It is not easy to establish the reasons for this evolution. Perhaps it was the repeated exclusion from the Congresses of the International, the urgent need to counteract the rebellious, anti-organisationalist wave with something more solid, the heightening social and political tension in many countries, perhaps one or other (or all) of these had sparked off the desire to recompose the movement and, at the same time, to develop a project for it.

In 1900, when Bresci's assassination of Italy's King Humbert I brought to a close (at least in Europe) the "classic" phase of the individualist act, the turning point had been reached. The clearest sign was the calling by French libertarians with syndicalist leanings of an International Revolutionary Workers' Congress in Paris, from 19-23 September 1900. As the organising committee's circular-letter clarified, "there is a general revolutionary and anti-parliamentary tendency developing among the workers, and it seems useful that the trade unions which are rejected by social democracy can debate the questions which affect the proletariat in general". Despite the general tone and the assurances of the "worker" nature of the initiative, which was not - as Delesalle said - an attempt to hold "a little anarchist parliament", the congress had a definite anarchist flavour, both in its agenda and in its participants. But the Paris of the International Exposition was due to host a great many...
such deep impressions as to manifest themselves in inward or outward acts of revolt. From this point of view, acts of revolt are the socio-psychological consequences of an unacceptable system; and as such, they must, with their causes and motives, be understood rather than exalted or condemned.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOTION:

“The Anarchists, desiring the integral emancipation of humanity and the absolute liberty of the individual, are naturally the declared enemies of all armed forces in the hands of the State – army, navy or police. They urge all comrades, according to circumstances and individual temperament, to revolt and refuse to serve (either individually or collectively), to passively and actively disobey, and to join in a military strike for the destruction of all the instruments of domination.

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

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

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

But apart from the outcome, even the will to get together for a wide debate on a “worker” basis was of itself an important fact. It was evidence that, on the one hand, the isolation was coming to an end and, on the other hand, wide sectors of the anarchist movement were rapidly moving back to class-struggle positions.

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

In any event, the new century (at least from 1902-03 on) did seem to offer anarchists objective possibilities for a revival on an international level, though there were variances in the speed of growth in the various national movements as each had to adapt to the peculiarities of its own context. Undoubtedly the stimulus of greater homogeneity in the policies of the socialist parties produced, by way of response, a homogeneous opposition within those forces who were not prepared to accept those
policies. It was above all, however, the beginning of a cycle of struggles involving almost all of Europe which, despite rapidly fluctuating fortunes, influenced the composition of the anarchist movement. A movement which, by the way, had never divided itself according to geographic location. But due to its very instability - a result of government repression, internal fluctuations and the continually-changing militant personnel - it had split into factions, currents which regularly appeared in various places, sometimes due to external influences, but which at other times had developed spontaneously.

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

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

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

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

"Although a large number of libertarians have been thinking about the creation of an international organisation for quite some time now, it cannot be denied that this tendency - at least in certain countries - is currently stronger than ever before.

We are firm believers in the idea and we rejoice to see the progress it is making each day. We have decided that discussions are no longer enough, that we will not be content with the purely theoretical propaganda of the ideal, that we will resolutely plant the embryo of this International which will surely develop into something good - that much we can say. So it

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FOURTH MOTION: NACHT – MONATTE
Countersigned by Fuss, Dunois, Fabbri, Zielinska and Walter.

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

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

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

This last motion obtains 25 votes and is consequently passed.

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

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

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

Congress holds that acts of revolt, above all when they are directed against representatives of the State and the plutocracy, must be considered under a psychological profile, being the results of the deep impression made on the psychology of the individual by the terrible weight of social injustice. It could be established, as a general rule, that only the most noble, most sensitive and most delicate characters are subject to
for political rights (politischer Massenstreik), whose goal is unacceptable to Anarchism, but recognizes the economic and revolutionary General Strike, that is to say the refusal of the whole proletariat as a class to work, as a fitting means for the disorganisation of the economic structure of today’s society and for the emancipation of the proletariat from the slavery of the wage system. In order to achieve this general strike it is essential that the anarchist ideal penetrate the Syndicates. A Syndicalist movement that is animated by an Anarchist spirit can, through the revolutionary General Strike, destroy class domination and open the path to Anarchism’s final goal: the realisation of a society without authority.”

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

THIRD MOTION: DUNOIS
Countersigned by Monatte, Fuss, Nacht, Zielinska, Fabbri, Walter.

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

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

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

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

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

Invite comrades of all countries, without forgetting that Anarchist action is not limited only to the sphere of the Syndicate, to participate actively in the autonomous movement of the two countries, something which is not possible. But it must be said, contrary to what is commonly thought, that both Belgium and the Netherlands - and above all the Netherlands - were in reality anything but peripheral at the time, when compared to the “classical” zone of anarchism - Spain, France and Italy.

We can hazard one or two hypotheses. In both countries, the libertarian tradition had deep roots going back to the early years of the old International. In both countries anarchist federalism had a long history of local and regional autonomy. Both contained some of the most important ports in Europe and the importance of sailors in the spreading of propaganda cannot be underestimated. Both countries formed a cushion between great powers and were home to a deep pacifist tradition which was the basis for active anarchist anti-militarism. Neither should it be forgotten that Amsterdam was the seat of the International Anti-Militarist Association (Internationaal Anti-militaristische Vereeniging), formed in 1904 thanks to the drive and untiring activity of Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, one of the few European social democratic leaders to pass over to anarchism. Not that in Belgium, the natural place of refuge for French deserters, anti-militarist agitation in 1906 had reached intense levels, above all in the pages of the aggressive “L’action directe” newsheet, directed by Henri Fuss-Amoré 19.

Belgium and the Netherlands, indeed, were among the first countries to have national anarchist federations (a decidedly relevant fact, even though they were never huge) and to organise union opposition to reformism through separate organisations - the old Nationaal-Arbeids-Sekretariaat (founded in 1893 by Cornelissen and formerly the only union in the country, but later abandoned by the reformists) and the “tiny” CGT of the Liege region. Yet again, it was the Dutch who proposed, first in 1909 and again in 1913, the formation of a revolutionary syndicalist International.

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

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

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

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

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

The initiative of the congress also seemed to elicit a new pro-organisation drive in several countries. The Italians in the Federazione socialista anarchica del Lazio and the journals “Il Pensiero”, “La Gioventù Libertaia” and “La Vita Operaia” announced their intention to attend. Finally, various periodicals and individuals from Algeria, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, the USA, Great Britain, France, Greece, Argentina, Russia, Tunisia, Spain, Portugal, Brazil and elsewhere announced they would attend.

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The initiative of the congress also seemed to elicit a new pro-organisation drive in several countries. The Italians in the Federazione socialista anarchica del Lazio met in Rome on 25 March 1907 and called a national congress for the following June in order to create an organisation with a wider territorial reach 23. The Portuguese group, Conquista do Pão, announced in the same period a congress to be held in Lisbon following the Amsterdam congress 24. The Russians, too, were planning the formation of an Anarchist Federation, according to “Der freie Arbeiter” 24.

The quick reaction from large sectors of international anarchism was not, howev-
subject of anti-militarism. Comrade Aristide Ceccarelli, though, asks to say a few words on the Argentine workers’ and anarchist movement. He takes the floor.

ARISTIDE CECCARELLI: For some years now in Argentina a strong workers’ movement has been developing. There exists a group of militants who describe themselves as syndicalist. But, like the Italian syndicalists whom they greatly resemble, they have not renounced the methods of parliamentarianism; the only ones to carry out any serious work within the working class along revolutionary lines are the anarchists. It can be said that almost all the organisations in the Federación Obrera Regional Argentina show libertarian tendencies; and many of these carry out anarchist propaganda directly. The recent Argentine workers’ congress, described as a unification congress, approved with a large majority the proposal made to the unions to contribute to the propaganda of anarchist communism.

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

Errico Malatesta and several other delegates then observe that the resolution proposed by Aristide Ceccarelli merits special discussion, which congress cannot engage in at the moment as it must first finish dealing with the matter of syndicalism. Without deliberating on the problem raised by Ceccarelli, it is decided to move on to the vote on the motions relating to syndicalism and the general strike, of which there are four.

FIRST MOTION: CORNELISSEN – VOHRYZEK – MALATESTA

“The International Anarchist Congress considers the Syndicates as both fighting organisations in the class struggle for the betterment of working conditions and as unions of producers that can serve in the transformation of capitalist society into an Anarchist Communist society.

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

But Congress considers that it is the function of Anarchists to constitute the revolutionary element in these organisations and to propagate only those forms and manifestations of direct action (strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc.) that are inherently revolutionary and aimed at transforming society.
an “Anarchist Syndicalist” International 36 was not entirely insignificant. The only one to intervene on this subject, and who did so with great clarity, was Amédée Dunois, between December 1906 and July 1907. Dunois’ argument began with the awareness of the existence of two distinct currents within anarchism: “a certain type of theoretical anarchism, dealing in abstract generalisations” - the sort of anarchism that, for example, in the spring of 1906 opposed the fight for the eight-hour day - that he described as “pure”, and the “workerist anarchism” which, “without ever abandoning the firm ground of concrete reality, devoted itself consistently to the organisation of the proletarian in the light of the economic revolt, otherwise known as the class struggle”. This second sort, though, was not, in Dunois’ eyes, simply one of the varieties that anarchism seemed to have split into, but the true and authentic interpretation of “revolutionary anti-authoritarian communism”, the continuation of the collectivism of the Bakuninist International which, lost in the reactionary storm that followed the Commune and the “individualist” wave of the Nineties, had reappeared at the time of the first showings of revolutionary syndicalism, the “practical” aspect of anarchism 37.

It was therefore necessary to push aside all those non-genuine (not to mention anachronistic) forms of anarchism, and ensure that anarchism could root itself solidly in the class organisations and become a vanguard for the workers’ movement, whose task would not be to direct the movement, “but to understand it, to inspire it and to light up the darkness of its future” 38.

All this did not mean that it would be superfluous for there to be “an opinion group”, “a particularly ideological movement”, in other words a specific movement, distinct from the workers’ organisations. On the contrary. Dunois was convinced that syndicalism in itself was not sufficient, and was proposing the setting-up of a network of anarchist groups (and therefore with a precise ideological position) which would be able to fulfil the particular function of the vanguard without in any way damaging the autonomy of the workers’ organisations 39.

Dunois’ articles were forceful enough to be seen even as being somewhat provocative. But even they did not elicit any response. But then, apart from a certain exclusivist tone, there was nothing in them that was not shared by a large part of the movement. For some time already, both in Italy (above all through the work of Luigi Fabbri) and in France (Caughy, Pierrot, Goldsmith), the continuity between the Bakuninist International and revolutionary syndicalism was being openly stated 40.

Even Kropotkin had supported this idea 41 just before the Congress opened. If anything, the polemics were centred on those forms of syndicalism of Marxist origin (Leone, Labriola, etc. in Italy and Lagardelle in France) that denied any connection between syndicalism and anarchism. Certainly, Dunois seemed to give great priority to union organisation over specific organisation, but then even Fabbri agreed 42 and Bertoni and Pierrot were not far off sharing the notion 44.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, we can make out a series of differences in the various trends, which existed not so much in what was said, but in what was not said. If we take into account his later development, Dunois probably considered it of secondary importance, even though he did not question the ideological aspect, whose reproached for sacrificing anarchism and the revolution to syndicalism and the general strike. Well then, I can personally tell you that our anarchism is worth just as much as yours and we have no intention whatsoever of hauling down our flag, just like you. Like everyone else here, anarchism is our final goal. It is just that as the times have changed, we too have changed our conception of the movement and the revolution. Revolution can no longer be carried out as it was in ‘48. As for syndicalism, while it may in practice have given rise to errors and deviations in some countries, experience will stop us from repeating them. Instead of criticizing syndicalism’s past, present and even future defeats from on high, if anarchists became more closely involved with its work, the dangers that syndicalism can hide will be averted for ever.

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

If anything, I believe that there are simply differences of judgement between the “young” on one side and the “old” on the other, differences which are not enough to divide the anarchist army into two rival camps.

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

Notes:
78. In actual fact, “L’Humanité” did carry news from the agencies in its 28 and 29 August issues.
80. Malatesta was referring to the general strike which broke out in Barcelona that year.
81. M. Nettlau (Bibliographie de l’anarchie, Brussels-Paris, 1897, p. 70) attributes both pamphlets, which came out in 1885 in Geneva and 1887 in Paris respectively, to Élisée Reclus and an anonymous helper. In the report carried by “Publication Sociale” a note attributes them only to Reclus’ helper.

Thirteenth session – Friday 30 August – Morning session

It is nine o’clock when Lange, who has remained as chairman, declares the session open. The debate on syndicalism and the general strike is finished and there remains only to vote on the various motions that have been presented, before moving on to the
VOHRYZEK: I am hoping to propose a specific motion on the political general strike to Congress. The idea of this general strike is gaining ground day by day in the German countries, especially since the social democrats have made it their own, no doubt believing they can thus damage the economic general strike supported by the anarchists.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is past midnight when comrade Ramus finishes his speech. Those present at the Congress are very tired and the atmosphere in the hall has gradually become more and more heated and agitated. There is a general desire to bring the debate on syndicalism to a close at any cost and Dunois vainly requests that Monatte’s reply be postponed to the next day.

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

Furthermore, the revolutionary syndicalists here this evening have been widely
organisation - was able to throw Second-Internationalist socialist strategy into crisis. This led to the conclusion drawn by certain sectors of the movement, that anarchism had to be syndicalist or else risked extinction.

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

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

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

It is an interpretation which in reality provides little comfort. Monatte’s speech was certainly entirely wrapped up in the question of syndicalism, a sort of hymn to syndicalism and the CGT. But it was the same Monatte who, during the next debate, stated “Like everyone else here, our final goal is anarchism” and who several times reaffirmed the validity of “his” anarchism. As for Malatesta, he actually declared in an article that was published in various journals and appended as a preface to Fabbrri’s congressional report: “I am convinced, ..., that Monatte and the ‘young’ group are sincerely and profoundly anarchist as much as any ‘bearded old comrade’.

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

In fact, we can say that the viewpoints of the French syndicalist anarchists, the
a two-edged sword that must be used with prudence. The subsistence services would not be able to cope with a prolonged stoppage. It will be necessary to take control of food supplies by force, and straight away – without waiting for the strike to turn into insurrection.

Rather than inviting the workers to stop working, what we should be doing is asking them to go on working, but for their own benefit. Unless that happens, the general strike will soon become a general famine, even if we were strong enough to commandeer all the produce in the warehouses straight away. The idea of the general strike has its origins in a completely erroneous conviction: the conviction that humanity could consume the produce accumulated by the bourgeoisie for months and years without having to produce anything. This conviction inspired the authors of two propaganda pamphlets published about twenty years ago: "Les produits de la Terre" and "Les produits de l'Industrie"*, pamphlets that have done more harm than good in my opinion. Today's society is not as rich as is thought. In one piece, Kropotkin showed that if there were to be a sudden interruption in production, England would survive for only one month, and London no more than three days. I am fully aware of the phenomenon of over-production. But every over-production is immediately corrected by crises that quickly restore order to industry. Over-production is always temporary and relative.

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

Twelfth session – Thursday 29 August – Evening session

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

FRIEDEBERG: As I agree with Malatesta on the question of the relationship between anarchism on the one hand and syndicalism and the general strike on the other, I would be wasting Congress' time if I spoke at any length.
anarchism had to be practically reborn continually within the process of the workers’ emancipation, that it was in other words “stuck” to the history of the class struggle. The terrain of the class struggle, as understood by the syndicalist anarchists, seemed too narrow to him. And anyway, as he himself explained, he did not believe in the existence of classes “in the proper sense of the term”, nor in the existence of “class interests”. The starting point of the struggle of the exploited must not and could not be shared class interests, even “ideal” identity with the aim of a “complete liberation of humanity, at present in servitude, from the economic, political and moral point of view”. Whereas the basis of the anarcho-syndicalist vision was production, society tied to the factory and the working class as a world of its own with its own specific existence, Malatesta based his own political vision on the mechanism for the reproduction of power, on the choice between freedom and authority.

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

Fabbri, too, contributed at the time by way of a letter of clarification to “La Protesta Umana”, minimizing the divergence and reporting how Malatesta believed that “if two tendencies did emerge from the congress on syndicalism, it was so barely perceptible that it would be hard to define them concretely into two agendas; and that in any event the difference lay in a diversity of theoretical appreciation and not in any real difference”.

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

violence during their strikes... against the police or the bosses? No, against the scabs who too are exploited and even more unfortunate, while the workers’ true enemies, the only real obstacle to social equality, are the police and the bosses.

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

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

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

Now, let us move on to the general strike. As far as I am concerned, I accept the principle and promote it as much as I can, and have done so for several years. The general strike has always struck me as...
all the force and breadth of the term. The workers’ movement is nothing more than a means – albeit obviously the best of all the means at our disposition. But I refuse to take this means as an end, and I would reject it if it were to make us lose sight of the other elements of our anarchist ideas, or more simply our other means of propaganda and action.

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

Now, even if it is reinforced by the pointless use of the adjective revolutionary, syndicalism is and always will be a legalitarian, conservative movement with no other possible goal – at best – than the improvement of working conditions. I need go no further for proof than the example offered by the great North American unions. Having presented themselves as radically revolutionary, at a time when they were still weak, once they grew in size and wealth these unions became markedly conservative organisations, solely occupied with creating privileges for their members in the factory, workshop or mine, and are much less hostile to the bosses’ capitalism than the non-organised workers, that ragged proletariat so maltreated by the social democrats! Now, this continually-growing proletariat of the unemployed, which counts for nothing with syndicalism, or rather which counts only as an obstacle, cannot be forgotten by us anarchists and we must defend it because it is subjected to the worst sufferings.

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

The reality is very different, in my view. The workers, like the bourgeoisie, like everyone, are subject to the law of universal competition that derives from the system of private property and that will only be extinguished together with that system. There are therefore no classes, in the proper sense of the term, because there are no class interests. There exists competition and struggle within the working “class”, just as there does among the bourgeoisie. The economic interests of one category of worker are implacably in contrast with those of another category. And indeed we sometimes see some workers much closer, economically and mentally, to the bourgeoisie than to the proletariat. Comelissen gave us some examples of this fact here in Holland. And there are others. I need not remind you that workers very often use

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

One month after the Congress, while “Les Temps Nouveaux” was publishing Malatesta’s first article, a long piece by Dunois appeared in “Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste” in which he pulled no punches in his criticism of Malatesta (though he did admit: “Malatesta is infinitely closer to us syndicalists than many of those who gave him their votes”), he repeated quite explicitly that anarchism and syndicalism were one and the same thing, and indicated the road anarchism should take: “It must, finally, stop trying to divide itself between the bourgeois sky and the working-class earth”, to paraphrase Bakunin’s neat expression, and become once again what, frankly, it should never have ceased being. In other words, it must become workerist anarchism again (…) It is from within that anarchism will be able to clarify, to enliven, to fertilize the workers’ movement, the workers’ practice. I do not see it going so far as to direct it, nor even to influence it from without (…) Anarchism must boldly penetrate the workers’ movement, mingle closely with its life, its daily activity, with its struggles, defeats or victories -, let it take its share of tasks and common responsibilities, let it impregnate the whole spirit and feelings of the working class, - and thus, only thus, will it find the strength to achieve all its revolutionary mission”.

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

It was not a question, though, of changing opinion and moving from anarchism to revolutionary syndicalism, since “revolutionary syndicalism is anarchism - but a regenerated anarchism, refreshed by the breeze of proletarian thought, a realistic and concrete anarchism which is no longer satisfied, as was the old anarchism, with abstract negations and statements, a workerist anarchism which trusts in a working-class strengthened by the struggle over the years, and no longer solely in its initiatives, for the realisation of its dreams”.

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

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

In late 1907 and early 1908, the respective positions seemed to have been clearly laid out. And yet it can be said that they provoked no particular reaction in anarchist circles. The problem of “syndicalism” continued to be discussed more or less everywhere, but without anything much new being said. The articles by Malatesta and Dunois did not seem to have exerted much influence, or rather, they did not seem to have moved the debate on to any extent. In France, Charles-Albert and Jean Grave recommenced their old criticism of syndicalism 58, whereas in Italy, various articles in “L’Allenza Libertaria” (a new journal which emerged from the Congress of Rome) mostly followed the pre-Amsterdam line 59 of prudent, if open, support for syndicalism. The same could be said for French-speaking Switzerland, where “Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste” firmly placed itself half-way between Dunois and Malatesta 60. In Germany, “Der Revolutionär” hosted a reasoned debate between certain elements for and against syndicalism 61. In Russian emigrant circles the clash between the tendencies went on as openly as before 62.

So, no exaggerated responses. In fact, even the distancing of the French syndicalist anarchists (but not all) was gradual. Their main worry was not so much clashing with other anarchists as trying to form a unitary front with the other tendencies within syndicalism. In early 1908, there appeared in Paris “L’action directe”, designed as an attempt to bring together elements of varying origin - pure syndicalists, syndicalist socialists, syndicalist anarchists, as Monatte himself wrote (apart from him, the other collaborators included Griffuelhess, Merrheim, Pouget, Delesalle, Lagardele, Dunois and Cornelissen) 63. Then, towards the end of 1908, Dunois contributed to the “Bulletin de l’Internationale Anarchiste” in his capacity as member of the International itself, though by this stage, as he himself confessed, he was increasingly led to believe that specific groups were “pointless and superfluous” 64.

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

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

Discussion of the general strike and syndicalism then resumed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I intend to condense these ideas into the form of a motion that will set out which prehension that we have highlighted, the Amsterdam event had, and still has, important repercussions (repercussions which were not as immediate as Malatesta had predicted) on the anarchist movement. Amsterdam did not lead to the definitive liquidation of “traditional” anarchism as the syndicalist anarchists had hoped, in order that anarchism could regain its leading role in the process of the proletariat’s emancipation.

Establishing whether their alternative would have met with greater success, or at least attempting to establish it, would be outside the scope of this work. One thing, though, does emerge from a close analysis of the goings on which provide the backdrop to the Amsterdam Congress: it is no longer possible to limit ourselves to accepting uncritically the lines of the Monatte-Malatesta clash, on the basis of what is frequently distorted tradition or historiography. If we look at Amsterdam in its true context, taking into consideration the situation at the time this initiative came about, we can find many answers to the questions that the history of the anarchist movement continues to throw up.

Maurizio Antonioli
vitalism; the general strike; the attitude of anarchists towards co-operatives, anti-militarism, Semitism, Zionism, Tolstoyism; the question of women; the various means of propaganda; organisation between revolutionary communist groups from the same country or from different countries; the attitude of anarchists in the case of war, uprising or insurrection; the organisation of solidarity; aid funds; publication of an international journal. Participants included the Étudiants Socialistes Revolutionnaires Internationlistes, many French libertarian libraries and study groups, some local trade unions, the newspapers "Le Père Peinard", "le Libertaire", "Les Temps Nouveaux", the Parisian anti-militarist group, the Parisian Italian group, Bulgarians, Czechs and Belgians.

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


22. Ibid, avril 1907.


27. Le Congrès d'Amsterdam, cit.


32. G. HERZIG, cit.


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

35. C. CORNELISSEN, cit.

36. See the reference is to the famous strikes of April-May 1906, promoted by the CGT in demand of an 8-hour working day.


40. In this regard, see my Bakunin tra sindicalismo rivoluzionario e anarchismo, in Bakunin
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of revolution”.
74. “La Voix du Peuple” was the mouthpiece of the CGT and began publication on 10 December 1900. The pre-war series ended on 3 August 1914, when hostilities broke out. Émile Pouget (1860-1931), who had been behind the old “Père Peinard” journal, was its chief editor until 1909. His place was taken by Yvetot (1909-1912), who was in turn succeeded until 1914 by Dumoulin.
75. In 1898 Alexandre Millerand, an independent socialist, accepted the post of Minister of Industry and Trade in the Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet.
77. 8-16 October 1906.

Tenth session – Thursday 29 August – Morning session

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

MALATESTA: Rather than regret this unanimous silence, I would be happy about it, personally speaking. In the past, every time the social-democratic press has dealt with anarchists it has been to slander them. Now it says nothing: that at least is a step forward.

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

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

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43. With regard to Fabbri, see my introduction to L. FABBRI, L’organizzazione operaia e l’anarchia, Crescita Politica Editrice, Florence 1975.
44. See for example by Pierrot, Le syndicalisme, in “Les Temps Nouveaux”, 11 mai 1907 and by Bretoni, Gli anarchici e l’organizzazione operaia (extract from the report sent to the Rome anarchist congress), in “Il Pensiero”, 16 giugno 1907.
47. ibid.
49. See Bakunin tra sindicalismo rivoluzionario e anarchismo, already cited.
51. See Resoconto generale ..., cit., p. 5.
52. L. FABBRI, op. cit.
53. L. BERTONI, Anarchismo e syndicalismo, in “Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste”, 30 novembre 1907 (the article was concluded in the following 8th August issue).
55. A. DUNOIS, Le Congrès d’Amsterdam et l’anarchisme, in “Pages libres”, 23 novembre 1907.
56. “Bien-être et liberté” was the motto of the Confédération Générale du Travail.
58. CHARLES-ALBERT, Après le Congrès, in “Les Temps Nouveaux”, 7 décembre 1907. J. GRAVE, Syndicalisme e anarchie, in “Les Temps Nouveaux”, 1, 8, 15 février 1908. There is a curious comment by Malato in “La Guerre Sociale”, du 28 août au 3 septembre 1907, where he talks about two tendencies, one “objective” and one “subjective”, the former seeking to change the environment in order to transform the individual, the latter aiming to perfect the individual. The two tendencies that appeared, however, do not seem to us to be distinguished in this way.
59. See for example A. BORIGH, Anarchismo e sindicalismo, in “L’Alleanza Libertaria”, 1 e 8 maggio 1908; E. SOTTOVIA, L’influenza sindacalista nel movimento anarchico, ivi, 17 luglio 1908; L. FABBRI, Come e perché siamo sindacalisti, ivi, 28 agosto 1908, etc.
61. See the debate entitled Syndikalismus und Anarchismus, between Luigi (Fabbri) and Karl Hoffmann and G. Stine in “Der Revolutionär”, in the issues of 16 and 20 November and 7 and 21 December 1907.
63. The first issue of “L’action directe” came out on 15 January 1908, the last issue coming out on 3 October of the same year.
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held at the Plancius Hall in Amsterdam,
26-31 August 1907

First session – Monday 26 August – Morning session

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

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

Second session – Monday 26 August – Afternoon session

This session is devoted to the reports on the state of the anarchist movement in Belgium, Bohemia, the Netherlands, Romandy (Francophone Switzerland), the USA and Vienna (Austria).
Where strikes have proved useless, sabotage has managed to break the bosses’ resistance. A recent example: the sabotage that followed the strike and defeat of the Parisian building workers in 1906. The building workers went back to their sites determined that their peace with the bosses would be more terrible than their war. And so, tacitly and unanimously in agreement, they began to slow production down; as if by chance, sacks of plaster or cement were found to be ruined, etc., etc. This war is still continuing today and, I repeat, the results have been impressive. Not only have the bosses often had to concede, but the construction workers have come out of this campaign much more conscious, more independent, more rebellious.

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

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

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

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

As with every human endeavour, the syndicalist movement is not without its faults,
the past twenty-five years. If socialism as a whole, as a revolutionary idea, has sur-
vived the progressive bourgeoisisation of social democracy, it is undoubtedly due to the anarchists.

Why have anarchists not been content to support the principle of socialism and federalism against the bare-faced deviations of the cavaliers of the conquest of political power? Why has time brought them to the ambition of re-building a whole new ideology all over again, faced with parliamentary and reformist socialism?

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

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

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

It is true that there existed among us “social study groups”, but we know how ephemeral and precarious they were: born out of individual caprice, these groups were destined to disappear with it; those who made them up did not feel united enough, and the first difficulty they encountered caused them to split up. Furthermore, these groups do not seem to have ever had a clear notion of their goal. Now, the goal of an organisation is at one and the same time thought and action. In my experience, however, those groups did not act at all: they disputed. And many reproached them for building all those little chapels, those talking shops.

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

There are two reasons for this:

The first is the example from abroad. There are small permanent organisations in England, Holland, Germany, Bohemia, Romandy and Italy which have been operat-
so popular today, is an idea from the International, where its innate power was first understood.

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

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

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

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ing for several years now, without the anarchist idea having visibly suffered for this. It is true that in France we do not have a great deal of information on the constitution and life of these organisations; it would be desirable to investigate this.

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

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

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

Another result of our participation in the movement, this too very important, has been that theoretical anarchism itself has gradually sharpened itself and become alive through contact with real life, that eternal fountain of thought. Anarchism in our eyes is no longer a general conception of the world, an ideal for existence, a rebellion of the spirit against everything that is foul, impure and beastly in life; it is also and above all a revolutionary theory, a concrete programme of destruction and social re-organisation. Revolutionary anarchism – and I emphasise the word “revolutionary” – essentially seeks to participate in the spontaneous movement of the masses, working towards what Kropotkin so neatly called the “Conquest of Bread”.

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

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

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

Even Marx himself, whose disciples now seek to hide the anarchist side to his doctrine, defined anarchy thus: “All Socialists understand by Anarchy the following: that once the goal of the proletarian movement – the abolition of classes – is reached, the power of the State – which serves to maintain the large producing majority under
the yoke of a small exploiting minority – disappears and the functions of government are transformed into simple administrative functions”. In other words, anarchism is not the negation of organisation but only of the governing function of the power of the State.

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

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

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

Let us examine their objections. The existence in France of a workers’ movement with a revolutionary and almost anarchist outlook is, in that country, currently the greatest obstacle that any attempt at anarchist organisation risks founndering on – I do not wish to say being wrecked on. And this important historical fact imposes certain precautions on us, which do not affect, in my opinion, our comrades in other countries.

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

Now, the syndicalists continue, it is there in the workers’ unions that anarchists must be. The workers’ union is the living bud of the future society; it is the former which will pave the way for the latter. The error is made in staying within one’s own four walls, amongst the other initiates, chewing the same questions of doctrine over and over again, always moving within the same circle of ideas. We must not, under any pretext, separate ourselves form the people, for no matter how backward and limited the people may be, it is they, and not the ideologue, who are the indispensable driving force of every social revolution. Do we perhaps, like the social democ-

over recent years. Its autonomy is its strength and it intends to remain autonomous. This attitude of the CGT of refusing to deal with parties has led its exasperated enemies to label it anarchist. But nothing is further from the truth. The CGT is a wide group of syndicates and workers’ unions and has no official doctrine. All doctrines are represented within it and are equally tolerated. The confederal committee does contain a number of anarchists, who meet and co-operate with socialists, the majority of whom – it is worth emphasizing – are no less hostile than the anarchists to the idea of agreements between the unions and the socialist party.

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

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

The life of the Confederation is co-ordinated by the confederal committee which is made up of delegates from both the bourses and the federations. Some of its members go on to form commissions which function in parallel – the newspaper commission (“La Voix du Peuple”), the control commission dealing with financial matters, and the strikes and general strike commission.

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

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

But the French workers’ movement has not become what it is today without effort and time. Over the last thirty-five years – since the Paris Commune – it has gone through various phases. The idea of the proletariat, organised into “resistance societies”, being the agent of the social revolution was the idea that lay at the heart of the great International Working Men’s Association founded in London in 1864. The International’s motto was, you will recall, “the emanicipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves”, and it is still our motto, all of us, the promoters of direct action and enemies of parliamentarianism. The ideas of autonomy and federation, so popular amongst us, once inspired all those in the International who rose up against the abuse of power by the general council and who took sides with Bakunin after the Hague congress. Furthermore, even the idea of the general strike,
national anarchist periodicals. These correspondents, according to the instructions received from their groups and federations, shall remain in constant contact with the correspondents from other countries. The publication of an International Bulletin is hereby established."

And thus came about the founding of the Anarchist International that so many comrades in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Bohemia had been looking forward to for so long. On the announcement of the result of the vote, unanimous applause broke out. It was seven o’clock and the session drew to a close with the singing of "The Internationale".

Ninth session – Wednesday 28 August – Evening session

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

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

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

It is among the ranks of the Confédération Générale du Travail in France that revolutionary syndicalist ideas have taken form and developed. The Confederation occupies a place all of its own within the international workers’ movement. It is the only organisation that, while declaring itself openly revolutionary has no links with political parties, even the more advanced ones. In most other countries, social democracy plays the leading role. In France, the CGT leaves the socialist party in its wake, thanks to its sheer numbers and the influence it exerts; it expects to represent alone the working class and has openly rejected all the advances made to it rats, have any interests we wish to promote other than those of the great working mass? Party, sect or factional interests? Is it up to the people to come to us or is it we who must go to them, living their lives, earning their trust and stimulating them with both our words and our example into resistance, rebellion, revolution?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In other words, will they have their own action to carry out directly? I believe so.

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

Now for the principal, regular, continuous aim of our groups. It is (you will by now have guessed) anarchist propaganda. Yes, we will organise ourselves above all to spread our theoretical ideas, our methods of direct action and universal federalism. Until today our propaganda has been made only or almost only on an individual basis. Individual propaganda has given notable results, above all in the heroic times when anarchists were compensating for the large number they needed with a fever of proselytism that recalled the primitive Christians. But is this continuing to happen? Experience obliges me to confess that it is not.

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

There are many anarchists in France. They are much divided on the question of theory; but even more so on practice. Everyone acts in his own way whenever he wants; in this way the individual efforts are dispersed and often exhausted, simply wasted. Anarchists can be found in more or less every sphere of action: in the workers’ unions, in the anti-militarist movement, among anti-clericalist free thinkers, in the
order to avoid gate-crashers – only a small number of observers was present in the hall, amongst whom Fritz Kater, president of the Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften who had been following the Congress proceedings for two days from the ranks of the German delegates, and several comrades from Amsterdam known to the organisers.

At the start of the session the organising committee of the Congress presented its financial report, from which it could be seen that expenses had exceeded the funds in hand and a deficit of around 250 francs was foreseen. After a short exchange of views, it was decided to have a collection among those in attendance at the end of the session and that an appeal for solidarity to comrades from every country would be made as soon as possible by the Congress’ treasurer (J. De Bruijn) to all anarchist newspapers.

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

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

Lange proposed the creation of an International Bureau of Correspondence of five members, based in London with the task of acting as intermediary between the groups and this proposal, as will be seen, was accepted by Congress. Then Friedeberg asked that the Bureau remain in permanent contact with the groups and set up the archives of international anarchism with the newspapers and written reports that it would receive. Emma Goldman opposed the idea of a Bureau of Correspondence. She thought
mining the size of the various opinions that are being confronted.

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

**Fifth session – Tuesday 27 August – Afternoon session**

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIEGFRIED NACHT: I will not follow Croiset onto the terrain where he has ventured. What seems to me to require clarity above all is the relationship between anarchism, or more exactly anarchist organisations, and the workers’ unions. It is in order to facilitate the task of the latter that we, as anarchists, must create special groups for preparation and revolutionary education.

The workers’ movement has a mission of its own, which arises out of the living conditions that today’s society imposes on the proletariat: this mission is the con-

the strength of the national or international movement depends on its constitution on an international level, as the means of emancipation can only derive from combined international action.”

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

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

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

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

“The Amsterdam resolution is not without importance: now it will no longer be possible for our social-democratic enemies to invoke our old hatred of any sort of organisation in order to banish us from socialism without any further trial. The legendary individualism of anarchists has been publicly put to death in Amsterdam by the anarchists themselves, and all our enemies’ bad faith will not be able to resuscitate it.”

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

**Eighth session – Wednesday 28 August – Afternoon session**

This was a private session. The press was forewarned that it would not be admitted and did not turn up. Apart from those attending the congress – and a roll was called by nationality in
or producers;
considering that individual action, important as it may be, cannot make up for the lack of collective action of a combined movement, to the same degree that collective action cannot make up for the lack of individual action;
considering that the organisation of militant forces would ensure new development of propaganda and could only accelerate the penetration of the ideas of federalism and revolution into the working class;
considering that workers’ organisation, based on common interests, does not exclude an organisation based on shared aspirations and ideas;
are of the opinion that comrades from every country should proceed to form anarchist groups and federate the groups once they have been formed.”

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

RAMUS MOTION:
“The Anarchist Congress at Amsterdam proposes that the groups from all countries unite in local and regional federations, according to the various geographical divisions.
We declare that our proposal is inspired by the very principles of anarchism, as we cannot see the possibility of initiative and individual action outside the group, which, founded according to our wishes, only provides a practical terrain for the free expansion of all individuality.
The federative organisation is the most suitable form for the anarchist proletariat. It unites existing groups into an organic whole that grows through the addition of new groups. It is anti-authoritarian. It does not allow for any central legislative power which can make obligatory decisions for the groups and individuals, who have the right to develop freely within our common movement and to act in an anarchist and economic sense without any orders or obstacles. The federation does not exclude any group and every group is free to leave with any funds it has paid over or to join again, whenever it considers it necessary.
We likewise recommend that our comrades form groups according to the needs of their respective movements and not forget that
quest of economic power, the collective appropriation of all the sources of production and of life. Anarchism too has the same aspiration: but it would not be able to bring it about with only its ideological propaganda groups. Valid as it may be, our theory does not penetrate among the people and it is above all through action that the people can educate themselves. Little by little, action will give them a revolutionary mentality.
The ideas of the general strike and direct action exert a great attraction on the consciousness of the working masses. In the future revolution, these masses will in some form or other constitute the infantry of the revolutionary army. Our anarchist groups, specialized in technical matters will, so to speak, form the artillery which, though less numerous, is no less necessary than the infantry.
THONAR: Communism and individualism are equal and inseparable within the complex whole of the anarchist idea. Organisation, joint action, is indispensable to the development of anarchism and does not contradict its theoretical premises. Organisation is a means, not a principle; but it follows that in order to be acceptable it must be constituted in a libertarian way.
Organisation proved useless when we were just a tiny number of anarchists who knew each other and frequented each other regularly. We have become a legion and we must take care not to disperse our forces. So let us organise ourselves, not just for anarchist propaganda, but also and above all for direct action.
I am not at all hostile to syndicalism above all when it is of a revolutionary tendency. But workers’ organisation is not anarchist and consequently we will never be completely ourselves within it: our activity can never be totally anarchist. Thus the need to create libertarian groups and federations, founded on the respect for the freedom and initiative of each and everyone.

KAREL VOHRYZEK: It is as an individualist that I wish to defend the cause of organisation! It is impossible to demand that anarchism cannot allow organisation by reason of its principles. Not even the most dyed-in-the-wool individualist condemns the association of individuals outright.
Saying, as sometimes is said, either Stirner or Kropotkin, thereby opposing these two thinkers, is wrong. Kropotkin and Stirner cannot be opposed against each other: they expounded the same idea from different points of view. That is all. And the proof that Max Stirner was not the crazed individualist that he is made out to be is that he pronounced himself in favour of “organisation”. He even dedicated a whole chapter to the association of egoists.
As our organisation has no executive power it will not run contrary to our principles. In the workers’ unions we defend the economic interests of the workers. As for the rest, we must be a distinct group and create organisations on a libertarian basis.

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

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

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

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

Sixth session – Tuesday 27 August – Evening session

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

MALATESTA: I have listened attentively to everything that has been said before me on the problem of organisation and I have the distinct impression that what separates us is the different meaning we give words. Let us not squabble over words. But as far as the basic problem is concerned, I am convinced that we are in total agreement. All anarchists, whatever tendency they belong to, are individualists in some way or other. But the opposite is not true; not by any means. The individualists are thus divided into two distinct categories: one which claims the right to full development for personalities. In Holland, for example, the existing Federation far from satisfies everyone; but it is also true that those who do not approve can simply choose not to join.

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

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

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

ISAK SAMSON: Here in Holland there is a Federation of Libertarian Communists to which I belong. Undoubtedly, as comrade Rijnders was saying a short while ago, many comrades have refused to join. For reasons of principle? No, for reasons that are exclusively personal. We do not exclude, nor have ever excluded, anyone. Let them come to us, then, if they want to. In fact, I do not hide from the view that, whatever the form of organisation, they will always be malcontent. They are so by nature and we should not worry too much about their criticism.

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

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

DUNOIS MOTION:

“The anarchists meeting in Amsterdam, 27 August 1907, considering that the ideas of anarchy and organisation, far from being incompatible as is often stated, complement and clarify each other, as the very principle of anarchy lies in the free organisation...”
the expression of the single energies.

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

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

The embryo of this organisation can be found in the type of syndicalism that has freed itself from centralisation, bureaucracy and discipline, that encourages autonomous, direct action by its members.

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

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

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

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

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

GERHART RIjnders: Neither am I hostile to organisation. In fact, there is not one anarchist who is against it, underneath it all. Everything depends on the way in which the organisation is conceived and set up. What we must avoid above all are all human individuality, their own and that of others; the other which only thinks about its own individuality and has absolutely no hesitation in sacrificing the individuality of others. The Tsar of all the Russias belongs to the latter category of individualists. We belong to the former.

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

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

An example: there are certain French newspapers whose pages are closed to all those whose ideas, style or simply person have the misfortune to be unwelcome in the eyes of the editors. The result is: the editors are invested with a personal power which limits the freedom of opinion and expression of comrades. The situation would be different if these newspapers belonged to all, instead of being the personal property of this or that individual: then all opinions could be freely debated.

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

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

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

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

If proof be needed of what I say; in Italy all the comrades who are currently active in the struggle refer to my name, both the “individualists” and the “organisers”, and I
believe that they are all right, as whatever their reciprocal differences may be, they all practise collective action nonetheless.

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

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

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

Seventh session – Wednesday 28 August – Morning session

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

MAX BAGINSKY: An error that is too often made is believing that individualism rejects organisation. The two terms are, on the contrary, inseparable. Individualism more specifically means working for inner mental liberation of the individual, while organisation means association between conscious individuals with a goal to reach or an economic need to satisfy. We must not however forget that a revolutionary organisation requires particularly energetic and conscious individuals.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is the harmony of organic development that produces the variety of colours and forms, the combination that we so admire in a flower. In the same way, the organised activity of free human beings imbued with the spirit of solidarity will result in the perfection of social harmony, which we call anarchy. Indeed, only anarchy makes the non-authoritarian organisation of common interests possible, since it abolishes the antagonism that exists between individuals and classes.

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

There exists an erroneous conviction that organisation does not encourage individual freedom and that, on the contrary, it causes a decay of individual personality.

The reality is, however, that the true function of organisation lies in personal development and growth.

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

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