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# What is Anarcho- Syndicalism?

A Selection of Writings  
by Rudolf Rocker





*mass of manual workers belonged to the C.N.T. The U.G.T. membership was more of the type of the 'white-collar' worker... I was immensely impressed by the constructive revolutionary work which is being done by the C.N.T. Their achievement of workers' control in industry is an inspiration. One could take the example of the railways or engineering or textiles... There are still some Britishers and Americans who regard the Anarchists of Spain as impossible, undisciplined, uncontrollable. This is poles away from the truth. The Anarchists of Spain, through the C.N.T., are doing one of the biggest constructive jobs ever done by the working class. At the front they are fighting Fascism. Behind the front they are actually constructing the new Workers' Society. They see that the war against Fascism and the carrying through of the Social Revolution are inseparable. Those who have seen and understand what they are doing must honour them and be grateful to them. They are resisting Fascism. They are at the same time creating the New Workers' Order which is the only alternative to Fascism. That is surely the biggest thing now being done by the workers in any part of the world." And in another place: "The great solidarity that existed amongst the Anarchists was due to each individual relying on his own strength and not depending on leadership. The organisations must, to be successful, be combined with a free-thinking people; not a mass, but free individuals."*

2. See the book *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* by the author.

# What is Anarcho-Syndicalism?

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This collection of writings by one of the leading theorists of Anarcho-Syndicalism, Rudolf Rocker (March 25, 1873 – September 19, 1958), is taken from two of his books, namely *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* and his shorter work, *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*.

*Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* was first published in London in 1938. In 1937, Emma Goldman had asked Rocker to write an introduction for the general public on the ideals fuelling the Spanish social revolution that was then in full swing. Within the book, Rocker offered an introduction to anarchist ideas, a history of the international workers' movement, and an outline of the syndicalist strategies and tactics embraced at the time (direct action, sabotage and the general strike). The chapters from the book on *The Objectives of Anarcho-Syndicalism* and *The Methods of Anarcho-Syndicalism* have been included in this collection.

In 1946, Rocker wrote an abridged version of the book, entitled *Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism*. It was published for the first time with the same title in New York in 1948. It consists of slightly revised passages from different parts of the book *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*. This Zabalaza Books collection includes the chapters from the book on *The Role of the Trade Unions: Anarcho-Syndicalist View* and *The Political Struggle: Anarcho-Syndicalist View*.

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## Footnotes:

1. Here are just a few opinions of foreign journalists who have no personal connection with the Anarchist movement. Thus, Andrea Oltmares, professor in the University of Geneva, in the course of an address of some length, said: *"In the midst of the civil war the Anarchists have proved themselves to be political organisers of the first rank. They kindled in everyone the required sense of responsibility, and knew how, by eloquent appeals, to keep alive the spirit of sacrifice for the general welfare of the people."* *"As a Social Democrat I speak here with inner joy and sincere admiration of my experiences in Catalonia. The anti-capitalist transformation took place here without their having to resort to a dictatorship. The members of the syndicates are their own masters and carry on the production and the distribution of the products of labour under their own management, with the advice of technical experts in whom they have confidence. The enthusiasm of the workers is so great that they scorn any personal advantage and are concerned only for the welfare of all."* The well-known anti-Fascist, Carlo Roselli, who before Mussolini's accession to power was Professor of Economics in the University of Genoa, put his judgement into the following words: *"In three months Catalonia has been able to set up a new social order on the ruins of an ancient system. This is chiefly due to the Anarchists, who have revealed a quite remarkable sense of proportion, realistic understanding, and organising ability... all the revolutionary forces of Catalonia have united in a program of Syndicalist-Socialist character: socialisation of large industry; recognition of the small proprietor, workers' control... Anarcho-Syndicalism, hitherto so despised, has revealed itself as a great constructive force... I am not an Anarchist, but I regard it as my duty to express here my opinion of the Anarchists of Catalonia, who have all too often been represented to the world as a destructive, if not criminal, element. I was with them at the front, in the trenches, and I have learnt to admire them. The Catalan Anarchists belong to the advance guard of the coming revolution. A new world was born with them, and it is a joy to serve that world."* And Fenner Brockway, Secretary of the I.L.P. in England who travelled to Spain after the May events in Catalonia (1937), expressed his impressions in the following words: *"I was impressed by the strength of the C.N.T. It was unnecessary to tell me that it was the largest and most vital of the working-class organisations in Spain. The large industries were clearly, in the main, in the hands of the C.N.T. — railways, road transport, shipping, engineering, textiles, electricity, building, agriculture. At Valencia the U.G.T. had a larger share of control than at Barcelona, but generally speaking the*

after the so-called Kapp putsch and put an end to a government that had attained power by a military uprising, belongs to this category. In such critical situations the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprisings of the past. For the workers, the general strike is the logical outcome of the modern industrial system, whose victims they are to-day, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in the struggle for their social liberation, provided they recognise their own strength and learn how to use this weapon properly.

## Contents:

▶ The Objectives of Anarcho-Syndicalism .....	4
▶ The Methods of Anarcho-Syndicalism .....	24
▶ The Role of the Trade Unions: Anarcho-Syndicalist View .....	41
▶ The Political Struggle: Anarcho-Syndicalist View .....	46



# The Objectives of Anarcho-Syndicalism

*Anarcho-Syndicalism versus political socialism; Political parties and labour unions; Federalism versus Centralism; Germany and Spain; The organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism; The impotence of political parties for social reconstruction; The CNT in Spain: its aims and methods; Constructive work of the labour syndicates and peasant collectives in Spain; Anarcho-Syndicalism and national politics; Problems of our time.*

Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is a direct continuation of those social aspirations which took shape in the bosom of the First International and which were best understood and most strongly held by the libertarian wing of the great workers' alliance. Its present day representatives are the federations in the different countries of the revived *International Workingmen's Association* of 1922, the most important of which is the powerful Federation of Labour (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajo*) in Spain. Its theoretical assumptions are based on the teachings of Libertarian or Anarchist Socialism, while its form

only to injure the whole community for the advantage of the employers. They are compelled to make use of inferior and often actually injurious materials in the fabrication of their products, to erect wretched dwellings, to put up spoiled foodstuffs and to perpetrate innumerable acts that are planned to cheat the consumer. To interfere vigorously is, in the opinion of the Revolutionary Unionists, the great task of the labour syndicates. An advance in this direction would at the same time enhance the position of the workers in society, and in larger measure confirm that position.

Direct action by organised labour finds its strongest expression in the general strike, in the stoppage of work in every branch of production in cases where every other means is failing. It is the most powerful weapon which the workers have at their command and gives the most comprehensive expression to their strength as a social factor. The general strike, of course, is not an agency that can be invoked arbitrarily on every occasion. It needs certain social assumptions to give it a proper moral strength and make it a proclamation of the will of the broad masses of the people. The ridiculous claim, which is so often attributed to the Anarcho-Syndicalists, that it is only necessary to proclaim a general strike in order to achieve a socialist society in a few days, is, of course just a ludicrous invention of ignorant opponents. The general strike can serve various purposes. It can be the last stage of a sympathetic strike, as, for example, in Barcelona in 1902 or in Bilbao in 1903, which enabled the miners to get rid of the hated truck system and compelled the employers to establish sanitary conditions in the mines. It can also be a means of organised labour to enforce some general demand, as, for example, in the attempted general strike in the U.S.A. in 1886, to compel the granting of the eight-hour day in all industries. The great general strike of the English workers in 1926 was the result of a planned attempt by the employers to lower the general standard of living of the workers by a cut in wages.

But the general strike can also have political objectives in view, as, for example, the fight of the Spanish workers in 1904 for the liberation of the political prisoners, or the general strike in Catalonia in July 1909, to force the government to terminate its criminal war in Morocco. Also the general strike of the German workers in 1920, which was instituted

classes, parliamentary action is certainly an appropriate instrument for the settlement of such conflicts as arise, because they are all equally interested in maintaining the present economic and social order. Where there is a common interest mutual agreement is possible and serviceable to all parties. But for the workers the situation is very different. For them the existing economic order is the source of their exploitation and their social and political subjugation. Even the freest ballot cannot do away with the glaring contrast between the possessing and non-possessing classes in society. It can only give the servitude of the toiling masses the stamp of legality.

It is a fact that when socialist labour parties have wanted to achieve some decisive political reforms they could not do it by parliamentary action, but were obliged to rely wholly on the economic fighting power of the workers. The political general strikes in Belgium and Sweden for the attainment of universal suffrage are proof of this. And in Russia it was the great general strike in 1905 that forced the Tsar to sign the new constitution. It was the recognition of this which impelled the Anarcho-Syndicalists to centre their activity on the socialist education of the masses and the utilisation of their economic and social power. Their method is that of direct action in both the economic and political struggle of the time. By direct action they mean every method of the immediate struggle by the workers against economic and political oppression. Among these the outstanding are the strike in all its gradations, from the simple wage struggle to the general strike, organised boycott and all the other countless means which workers as producers have in their hands.

One of the most effective forms of direct action is the social strike, which was hitherto mostly used in Spain and partly in France, and which shows a remarkable and growing responsibility of the workers to society as a whole. It is less concerned with the immediate interests of the producers than with the protection of the community against the most pernicious outgrowths of the present system. The social strike seeks to force upon the employers a responsibility to the public. Primarily it has in view the protection of the consumers, of which the workers themselves constitute the great majority. Under the present circumstances the workers are frequently debased by doing a thousand things which constantly serve

of organisation is largely borrowed from revolutionary Syndicalism, which in the years from 1900 to 1910 experienced a marked upswing, particularly in France. It stands in direct opposition to the political Socialism of our day, represented by the parliamentary labour parties in the different countries. While in the time of this First International barely the first beginnings of these parties existed in Germany, France and Switzerland, today we are in a position to estimate the results of their tactics for Socialism and the labour movement after more than sixty years' activity in all countries.

Participation in the politics of the bourgeois states has not brought the labour movement a hairs' breadth closer to Socialism, but, thanks to this method, Socialism has almost been completely crushed and condemned to insignificance. The ancient proverb: "Who eats of the pope, dies of him," has held true in this content also; who eats of the state is ruined by it. Participation in parliamentary politics has affected the Socialist labour movement like an insidious poison. It destroyed the belief in the necessity of constructive Socialist activity and, worst of all, the impulse to self-help, by inoculating people with the ruinous delusion that salvation always comes from above.

Thus, in place of the creative Socialism of the old International, there developed a sort of substitute product which has nothing in common with real Socialism but the name. Socialism steadily lost its character of a cultural ideal, which was to prepare the peoples for the dissolution of capitalist society, and, therefore, could not let itself be halted by the artificial frontiers of the national states. In the minds of the leaders of this new phase of the Socialist movement the interests of the national state were blended more and more with the alleged aims of their party, until at last they became unable to distinguish any definite boundaries between them. So inevitably the labour movement was gradually incorporated in the equipment of the national state and restored to this equilibrium which it had actually lost before.

It would be a mistake to find in this strange about-face an international betrayal by the leaders, as has so often been done. The truth is that we have to do here with a gradual assimilation to the modes of thought of capitalist society, which is a condition of the practical activities of the



labour parties of today, and which necessarily affects the intellectual attitude of their political leaders. These very parties which had once set out to conquer Socialism saw themselves compelled by the iron logic of conditions to sacrifice their Socialist convictions bit by bit to the national policies of the state. They became, without the majority of their adherents ever becoming aware of it, political lightning rods for the security of the capitalist social order. The political power which they had wanted to conquer had gradually conquered their Socialism until there was scarcely anything left of it.

Parliamentarianism, which quickly attained a dominating position in the labour parties of the different countries, lured a lot of bourgeois minds and career-hungry politicians into the Socialist camp, and this helped to accelerate the internal decay of original Socialist principles. Thus Socialism in the course of time lost its creative initiative and became an ordinary reform movement which lacked any element of greatness. People were content with successes at the polls, and no longer attributed any importance to social upbuilding and constructive education of the workers for this end. The consequences of this disastrous neglect of one of the weightiest problems, one of decisive importance for the realisation of Socialism, were revealed in their full scope when after the World War, a revolutionary situation arose in many of the countries of Europe. The collapse of the old system had, in several states, put into the hands of the Socialists the power they had striven for so long and pointed to as the first prerequisite for the realisation of Socialism. In Russia the seizure of power by the left wing of state Socialism, in the form of Bolshevism paved the way, not for a Socialist society, but for the most primitive type of bureaucratic state capitalism and a reversion to the political absolutism which was long ago abolished in most countries by bourgeois revolutions. In Germany, however, where the moderate wing in the form of Social Democracy attained to power, Socialism, in its long years of absorption in routine parliamentary tasks, had become so bogged down that it was no longer capable of any creative act whatsoever. Even a bourgeois democratic sheet like the *Frankfurter Zeitung* felt obliged to confirm that "the history of European peoples has not previously produced a revolution that has been so poor in creative ideas and so weak in revolutionary energy."

But according to their opinion the point of attack in the political struggle lies not in the legislative bodies but in the people.

Political rights do not originate in parliaments; they are rather forced upon them from without. And even their enactment into law has for a long time been no guarantee of their security. They do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrown habit of a people, and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance of the populace. Where this is not the case, there is no help in any parliamentary opposition or any Platonic appeals to the constitution. One compels respect from others when one knows how to defend one's dignity as a human being. This is not only true in private life; it has always been the same in political life as well.

All political rights and liberties which people enjoy to-day, they do not owe to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength. Governments have always employed every means in their power to prevent the attainment of these rights or render them illusory. Great mass movements and whole revolutions have been necessary to wrest them from the ruling classes, who would never have consented to them voluntarily. The whole history of the last three hundred years is proof of that. What is important is not that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but the reason why they had to do this. Of course, if one accepts Lenin's cynical phrase and thinks of freedom merely as a "bourgeois prejudice", then, to be sure, political rights have no value at all for the workers. But then the countless struggles of the past, all the revolts and revolutions to which we owe these rights, are also without value. To proclaim this bit of wisdom it hardly was necessary to overthrow Tsarism, for even the censorship of Nicholas II would certainly have had no objection to the designation of freedom as a bourgeois prejudice.

If Anarcho-Syndicalism nevertheless rejects the participation in the present national parliaments, it is not because they have no sympathy with political struggles in general, but because its adherents are of the opinion that this form of activity is the very weakest and most helpless form of the political struggle for the workers. For the possessing





## The Political Struggle: Anarcho-Syndicalist View

It has often been charged against Revolutionary Unionism that its adherents had no interest in the political structure of the different countries and consequently no interest in the political struggles of the time. This idea is altogether erroneous and springs either from outright ignorance or wilful distortion of the facts. It is not the political struggle as such which distinguishes the Anarcho-Syndicalists from the modern labour parties, both in principles and tactics, but the form of this struggle and the aims which it has in view. Revolutionary Unionists pursue the same tactics in their fight against political suppression as against economic exploitation. But while they are convinced that along with the system of exploitation its political protective device, the state, will also disappear to give place to the administration of public affairs on the basis of free agreement, they do not at all overlook the fact that the efforts of organised labour within the existing political and social order must always be directed against any attack of reaction, and constantly widening the scope of these rights wherever the opportunity for this presents itself. The heroic struggle of the C.N.T. in Spain against Fascism was, perhaps, the best proof that the alleged non-political attitude of the Revolutionary Unionists is but idle talk.

But that was not all: not only was political Socialism in no position to undertake any kind of constructive effort in the direction of Socialism, it did not even possess the moral strength to hold on to the achievements of bourgeois Democracy and Liberalism, and surrendered the country without resistance to Fascism, which smashed the entire labour movement to bits with one blow. It had become so deeply immersed in the bourgeois state that it had lost all sense of constructive Socialist action and felt itself tied to the barren routine of everyday practical politics as a galley-slave was chained to his bench.

Modern Anarcho-Syndicalism is the direct reaction against the concepts and methods of political Socialism, a reaction which even before the war had already made itself manifest in the strong upsurge of the Syndicalist labour movement in France, Italy, and other countries, not to speak of Spain, where the great majority of the organised workers had always remained faithful to the doctrines of the First International.

The term “workers’ syndicate” meant in France merely a trade union organisation of producers for the immediate betterment of their economic and social status. But the rise of revolutionary Syndicalism gave this original meaning a much wider and deeper import. Just as the part is, so to speak, the unified organisation for definite political effort within the modern constitutional state, and seeks to maintain the bourgeois order in one form or another, so, according to the Syndicalist view, the trade union, the syndicate, is the unified organisation of labour and has for its purpose the defence of the interests of the producers within existing society and the preparing for and the practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life after the pattern of Socialism. It has, therefore, a double purpose: 1. As the fighting organisation of the workers against the employers to enforce the demands of the workers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living; 2. As the school for the intellectual training of the workers to make them acquainted with the technical management of production and economic life in general so that when a revolutionary situation arises they will be capable of taking the socio-economic organism into their own hands and remarking it according to Socialist principles.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are of the opinion that political parties, even when they bear a socialist name, are not fitted to perform either of these two tasks. The mere fact that, even in those countries where political Socialism commanded powerful organisations and had millions of voters behind it, the workers had never been able to dispense with trade unions because legislation offered them no protection in their struggle for daily bread, testifies to this. It frequently happened that in just these sections of the country where the Socialist parties were strongest the wages of workers were lowest and the conditions of labour worst. That was the case, for example, in the northern industrial districts of France, where Socialists were in the majority in numerous city administrations, and in Saxony and Silesia, where throughout its existence German Social Democracy had been able to show a large following.

Governments and parliaments seldom decide on economic or social reforms on their own initiative, and where this has happened thus far the alleged improvements have always remained a dead letter in the vast waste of laws. Thus the modest attempts of the English parliament in the early period of big industry, when the legislators, frightened by the horrible effects of the exploitation of children, at last resolved on some trifling amelioration's, for a long time had almost no effect. On the one hand they ran afoul of the lack of understanding of the workers themselves, on the other they were sabotaged outright by the employers. It was much the same with the well-known law which the Italian government enacted in the middle 90's to forbid women who were compelled to toil in the sulphur mines in Sicily from taking their children down into the mines with them. This law also remained a dead letter, because these unfortunate women were so poorly paid that they were obliged to disregard the law. Only a considerable time later, when these working women had succeeded in organising, and thus forcing up their standard of living, did the evil disappear of itself. There are plenty of similar instances in the history of every country.

But even the legal authorisation of a reform is no guarantee of its permanence unless there exist outside of parliament militant masses who are ready to defend it against every attack. Thus the English factory owners, despite the enactment of the ten-hour law in 1848, shortly

of the proletariat is meant. In Russia the Bolshevik dictatorship stood helpless for almost two years before the economic problems and tried to hide its incapacity behind a flood of decrees and ordinances most of which were buried at once in the various bureaus. If the world could be set free by decrees, there would long ago have been no problems left in Russia. In its fanatical zeal for power, Bolshevism has violently destroyed the most valuable organs of a socialist order, by suppressing the Co-operative Societies, bringing the trade unions under state control, and depriving the Soviets of their independence almost from the beginning. So the dictatorship of the proletariat paved the way not for a socialist society but for the most primitive type of bureaucratic state capitalism and a reversion to political absolutism which was long ago abolished in most countries by bourgeois revolutions. In his Message to the Workers of the West European countries Kropotkin said, rightfully: "Russia has shown us the way in which Socialism cannot be realised, although the people, nauseated with the old regime, expressed no active resistance to the experiments of the new government. The idea of workers' councils for the control of the political and economic life of the country is, in itself, of extraordinary importance ... but so long as the country is dominated by the dictatorship of a party, the workers' and peasants' councils naturally lose their significance. They are hereby degraded to the same passive role which the representatives of the Estates used to play in the time of the absolute Monarchy."

are combined in general industrial and agricultural alliances. It is their task to meet the demands of the daily struggles between capital and labour and to combine all the forces of the movement for common action where the; necessity arises. Thus the Federation of the Labour Chambers and the Federation of the Industrial Alliances constitute the two poles about which the whole life of the labour syndicates revolves.

Such a form of organisation not only gives the workers every opportunity for direct action in the struggle for their daily bread, but it also provides them with the necessary preliminaries for the reorganisation of society, their own strength, and without alien intervention in case of a revolutionary crisis. Anarcho-Syndicalists are convinced that a socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of any government, but only by the unqualified collaboration of the workers, technicians and peasants to carry on production and distribution by their own administration in the interest of the community and on the basis of mutual agreements. In such a situation the Labour Chambers would take over the administration of existing social capital in each community, determine the needs of the inhabitants of their districts and organise local consumption. Through the agency of the Federation of Labour Chambers it would be possible to calculate the total requirements of the whole country and adjust the work of production accordingly. On the other hand it would be the task of the Industrial and Agricultural Alliances to take control of all the instruments of production, transportation, etc., and provide the separate producing groups with what they need. In a word:

1. Organisation of the total production of the country by the Federation of the Industrial Alliances and direction of work by labour councils elected by the workers themselves;
2. Organisation of social contribution by the Federation of the Labour Chambers.

In this respect, also, practical experience has given the best instruction. It has shown that the many problems of a socialist reconstruction of society cannot be solved by any government, even when the famous dictatorship

afterward availed themselves of an industrial crisis to compel workers to toil for eleven or even twelve hours. When the factory inspectors took legal proceedings against individual employers on this account, the accused were not only acquitted, the Government hinted to the inspectors that they were not to insist on the letter of the law, so that the workers were obliged, after economic conditions had revived somewhat, to make the fight for the ten-hour day all over again on their own resources. Among the few economic improvements which the November Revolution of 1918 brought to the German workers, the eight-hour day was the most important. But it was snatched back from the workers by the employers in most industries, despite the fact that it was in the statutes, actually anchored legally in the Weimar Constitution itself.

But if political parties are absolutely incapable of making the slightest contribution to the improvement of the standard of living of the workers within present day society, they are far less capable to carry on the organic upbuilding of a Socialist community or even to pave the way for it, since they utterly lack every practical requirement for such an achievement. Russia and Germany have given quite sufficient proof of this.

The lancehead of the labour movement is, therefore, not the political party but the trader union, toughened by daily combat and permeated by Socialist spirit. Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full social strength, for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure, and guarantees the existence of society at all. In any other field they are fighting on alien soil and wasting their strength in hopeless struggles which bring them not an iota nearer to the goal of their desires. in the field of parliamentary politics the worker is like the giant Antaeus of the Greek legend, whom Hercules was able to strangle after he took his feet off the earth who was his mother. Only as producer and creator of social wealth does he become aware of his strength; in solidaric union with his fellows he creates in the trade union the invincible phalanx which can withstand any assault, if it is aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice.

For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the trade union is by no means a mere transitory phenomenon bound up with the duration of capitalist society,

it is the germ of the Socialist society of the future, the elementary school of Socialism in general. Every new social structure makes organs for itself in the body of the old organism. Without this preliminary any social evolution is unthinkable. Even revolutions can only develop and mature the germs which already exist and have made their way into the consciousness of men; they cannot themselves create these germs or create new worlds out of nothing. It therefore concerns us to plant these germs while there is still yet time and bring them to the strongest possible development, so as to make the task of the coming social revolution easier and to ensure its permanence.

All the educational work of the Anarcho-Syndicalist is aimed at this purpose. Education for Socialism does not mean for them trivial campaign propaganda and so-called "politics-of-the-day," but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their rôle of re-shapers of economic life, and give them the moral assurance required for the performance of the task. No social body is better fitted for this purpose than the economic fighting organisations of the workers; it gives a definite direction to their social activities and toughens their resistance in the immediate struggle for the necessities of life and the defence of their human rights. This direct and unceasing warfare with the supporters of the present system develops at the same time the ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows-in-destiny and moral responsibility for their own actions.

Just because the educational work of the Anarcho-Syndicalists is directed toward the development of independent thought and action, they are outspoken opponents of all those centralising tendencies which are so characteristic of all political labour parties. But centralism, that artificial organisation from above which turns over the affairs of everybody in a lump to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; and this crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification, and permits no independent action. The organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism is based on the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below

Just because the educational work of Anarcho-Syndicalists is directed toward the development of independent thought and action, they are outspoken opponents of all centralising tendencies which are so characteristic of most of the present labour parties. Centralism, that artificial scheme which operates from the top towards the bottom and turns over the affairs of administration to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; it crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification. For the state, centralism is the appropriate form of organisation, since it aims at the greatest possible uniformity of social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment and on the independent thought of its supporters, centralism is a curse which weakens its power of decision and systematically represses every spontaneous initiative.

The organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism is based upon the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every union above everything else and recognising only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common conviction. Their organisation is accordingly constructed on the following basis: The workers in each locality join the unions of their respective trades. The trade unions of a city or a rural district combine in Labour Chambers which constitute the centres for local propaganda and education, and weld the workers together as producers to prevent the rise of any narrow-minded factional spirit. In times of local labour troubles they arrange for the united co-operation of the whole body of locally organised labour. All the Labour Chambers are grouped according to districts and regions to form the National Federation of Labour Chambers, which maintains the permanent connection among the local bodies, arranges free adjustment of the productive labour of the members of the various organisations on; co-operative lines, provides for the necessary co-ordination in the work of education and supports the local groups with council and guidance.

Every trade union is, moreover, federatively allied with all the organisations of the same industry, and these in turn with all related trades, so that all

1. To enforce the demands of the producers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living;
2. To acquaint the workers with the technical management of production and economic life in general and prepare them to take the socio-economic organism into their own hands and shape it according to socialist principles.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are of the opinion that political parties are not fitted to perform either of these two tasks. According to their conceptions the trade union has to be the spearhead of the labour movement, toughened by daily combats and permeated by a socialist spirit. Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full strength; for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure and guarantees the existence of society. Only as a producer and creator of social wealth does the worker become aware of his strength. In solidary union with his followers he creates the great phalanx of militant labour, aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice. For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the labour syndicate are the most fruitful germs of a future society, the elementary school of Socialism in general. Every new social structure creates organs for itself in the body of the old organism; without this prerequisite every social evolution is unthinkable. To them Socialist education does not mean participation in the power policy of the national state, but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their role of re-shapers of economic life and give them the moral assurance required for the performance of their task. No social body is better fitted for this purpose than the economic fighting organisation of the workers; it gives a definite direction to their social activities and toughens their resistance in the immediate struggle for the necessities of life and the defence of their human rights. At the same time it develops their ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows in destiny and moral responsibility for their actions.

upward, putting the right of self-determination of every member above everything else and recognising only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common convictions.

It has often been charged against federalism that it divides the forces and cripples the strength of organised resistance, and, very significantly, it has been just the representative of the political labour parties and of the trade unions under their influence who have kept repeating this charge to the point of nausea. But here, too, the facts of life have spoken more clearly than any theory. There was no country in the world where the whole labour movement was so completely centralised and the technique of organisation developed to such extreme perfection as in Germany before Hitler's accession to power. A powerful bureaucratic apparatus covered the whole country and determined every political and economic expression of the organised workers. In the very last elections the Social Democratic and Communist parties united over twelve million voters for their candidates. But after Hitler seized power six million organised workers did not raise a finger to avert the catastrophe which had plunged Germany into the abyss, and which in a few months beat their organisation completely to pieces.

But in Spain, where Anarcho-Syndicalism had maintained its hold upon organised labour from the days of the First International, and by untiring libertarian propaganda and sharp fighting had trained it to resistance, it was the powerful C.N.T. which by the boldness of its action frustrated the criminal plans of Franco and his numerous helpers at home and abroad, and by their heroic example spurred the Spanish workers and peasants to the battle against Fascism — a fact which Franco himself has been compelled to acknowledge. Without the heroic resistance of the Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions the Fascist reactions would in a few weeks have dominated the whole country.

When one compares the technique of the federalist organisation of the C.N.T. with the centralistic machine which the German workers had built for themselves, one is surprised by the simplicity of the former. In the smaller syndicates every task for the organisation was performed voluntarily. In the larger alliances, where naturally established official representatives were necessary, these were elected for one year only and



received the same pay as the workers in their trade. Even the General Secretary of the C.N.T. was no exception to this rule. This is an old tradition which has been kept up in Spain since the days of the International. This simple form of organisation not only sufficed the Spanish workers for turning the C.N.T. into a fighting unit of the first rank, it also safeguarded them against any bureaucratic regime in their own ranks and helped them to display that irresistible spirit of solidarity and tenaciousness which is so characteristic of this organisation, and which one encounters in no other country.

For the state centralisation is the appropriate form of organisation, since it aims at the greatest possible uniformity in social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment and on the independent thought and action of its supporters, centralism could but be a curse by weakening its power of decision and systematically repressing all immediate action. If, for example, as was the case in Germany, every local strike had first to be approved by the Central, which was often hundreds of miles away and was not usually not in a position to pass a correct judgement on the local conditions, one cannot wonder that the inertia of the apparatus of organisation renders a quick attack quite impossible, and there thus arises a state of affairs where the energetic and intellectually alert groups no longer serve as patterns for the less active, but are condemned by these to inactivity, inevitably bringing the whole movement to stagnation. Organisation is, after all, only a means to an end. When it becomes an end in itself, it kills the spirit and the vital initiative of its members and sets up that domination by mediocrity which is the characteristic of all bureaucracies.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are, therefore, of the opinion that trade union organisation should be of such a character as to afford workers the possibility of achieving the utmost in their struggle against the employers, and at the same time provide them with a basis from which they will be able in a revolutionary position to proceed with reshaping of economic and social life.

Their organisation is accordingly constructed on the following principles: The workers in each locality join the unions for their respective trades,



## The Role of the Trade Unions: Anarcho-Syndicalist View

These were the considerations<sup>2</sup> which led to the development of Revolutionary Syndicalism or, as it was later called, Anarcho-Syndicalism in France and other countries. The term workers' syndicate meant at first merely an organization of producers for the immediate betterment of their economic and social status. But the rise of Revolutionary Syndicalism gave this original meaning a much wider and deeper import. Just as the party is, so to speak, a unified organization with definite political effort within the modern constitutional state which seeks to maintain the present order of society in one form or another, so, according to the Unionist's view, the trade unions are the unified organization of labour and have for their purpose the defence of the producers within the existing society and the preparing for and practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life in the direction of Socialism. They have, therefore, a double purpose:



workers of Sommerda resisted with great energy to the last, when their place were taken by members of the “free labour unions.”

As outspoken opponents of all nationalist ambitions the revolutionary Syndicalists, especially in the Latin countries, have always devoted a very considerable part of their activity to anti-militarist propaganda, seeking to hold the workers in soldiers’ coats loyal to their class and to prevent their turning their weapons against their brethren in time of a strike. This has cost them great sacrifices; but they have never ceased their efforts, because they know that they can regain their efforts only by incessant warfare against the dominant powers. At the same time, however, the anti-militarist propaganda contributes in large measure to oppose the threat of wars to come with the general strike. The Anarcho-Syndicalists know that wars are only waged in the interest of the ruling classes; they believe, therefore, that any means is justifiable that can prevent the organised murder of peoples. In this field also the workers have every means in their hands, if only they possess the desire and the moral strength to use them.

Above all it is necessary to cure the labour movement of its inner ossification and rid it of the empty sloganeering of the political parties, so that it may forge ahead intellectually and develop within itself the creative conditions which must precede the realisation of Socialism. The practical attainability of this goal must become for the workers an inner certainty and must ripen into an ethical necessity. The great final goal of Socialism must emerge from all the practical daily struggles, and must give them a social character. In the pettiest struggle, born of the needs of the moment, there must be mirrored the great goal of social liberation, and each such struggle must help to smooth the way and strengthen the spirit which transforms the inner longing of its bearers into will and deed.

and these are subject to the veto of no Central but enjoy the entire right of self-determination. The trade unions of a city or rural district combine in a so-called labour cartel. The labour cartels constitute the centres for local propaganda and education; they weld the workers together as a class and prevent the rise of any narrow-minded factional spirit. In times of local labour trouble they arrange for the solidaric co-operation of the whole body of organised labour in the use of every agency available under the circumstances. All the labour cartels are grouped according to districts and regions to form the National Federation of Labour Cartels, which maintain the permanent connection between the local bodies, arranges for free adjustment of the productive labour of the members of the different organisations on co-operative lines, provide for the necessary co-operation in the field of education, in which the stronger cartels will need to come to the aid of the weaker ones, and in general support the local groups with council and guidance.

Every trade union is, moreover, federatively allied with all the same organisations in the same trade throughout the country, and these in turn with all related trades, so that all are combined in general industrial alliances. It is the task of these alliances to arrange for the co-operative action of the local groups, to conduct solidaric strikes where the necessity arises, and to meet all the demands of the day-to-day struggle between capital and labour. Thus the Federation of Labour Cartels and the Federation of Industrial Alliances constitute the two poles about which the whole life of the trade unions revolves.

Such a form of organisation not only gives the workers every opportunity for direct action in their struggles for daily bread, it also provides them with the necessary preliminaries for carrying through the reorganisation of social life on a Socialist plan by their own strength and without alien intervention, in case of a revolutionary crisis. Anarcho-Syndicalists are convinced that a Socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of a government, but only by the solidaric collaboration of the workers with hand or brain in each special branch of production; that is, through the taking over of the management of all plants by the producers themselves under such form that the separate groups, plants and branches of industry are independent members of

the general economic organism and systematically carry on production and the distribution of the products in the interest of the community on the basis of free mutual agreements.

In such a case the labour cartels would take over the existing social capital in each community, determine the needs of the inhabitants of their districts, and organise local consumption. Through the agency of the national Federation of Labour Cartels it would be possible to calculate the total requirements of the country and adjust the work of production accordingly. On the other hand, it would be the task of the Industrial Alliances to take control of all the instruments of production, machines, raw materials, means of transportation and the like, and to provide the separate producing groups with what they need. In a word:

1. Organisation of the plants by the producers themselves and direction of the work by labour councils elected by them.
2. Organisation of the total production of the country by the industrial and agricultural alliances.
3. Organisation of consumption by the Labour Cartels.

In this respect, also practical experience has given the best instruction. It has shown us that economic questions in the Socialist meaning cannot be solved by a government, even when that is meant the celebrated *dictatorship of the proletariat*. In Russia the Bolshevik dictatorship stood for almost two whole years helpless before its economic problems and tried to hide its incapacity behind a flood of decrees and ordinances, of which ninety-nine percent were buried at once in the various bureaus. If the world could be set free by decrees, there would long ago have been no problems left in Russia. In its fanatical zeal for government, Bolshevism has violently destroyed just the most valuable beginnings of a Socialist social order, by suppressing the co-operatives, bringing the trade unions under state control, and depriving the soviets of their independence almost from the beginning. Kropotkin said with justice in his "Message to the Workers of the West European Countries":

a responsibility to the public. Primarily it has in view the protection of the consumers, of whom the workers themselves constitute the great majority. The task of the trade union has heretofore been restricted almost exclusively to the protection of the worker as producer. As long as the employer was observing the hours of labour agreed on and paying the established wage this task was being performed. In other words: *the trade union is interested only in the conditions under which its members work, not in the kind of work they perform*. Theoretically, it is, indeed, asserted that the relation between employer and employee is based upon a contract for the accomplishment of a definite purpose. The purpose in this case is social production. But a contract has meaning only when both parties participate equally in the purpose. In reality, however, the worker has today no voice in determining production, for this is given over completely to the employer. The consequence is that the worker is debased by doing a thousand things which constantly serve only to injure the whole community for the advantage of the employer. He is compelled to make use of inferior and often actually injurious materials in the fabrication of his products, to erect wretched dwellings, to put up spoiled foodstuffs, and to perpetuate innumerable acts that are planned to cheat the consumer.

To interfere vigorously here is, in the opinion of the Anarcho-Syndicalists, the great task of the trade unions of the future. An advance in this direction would at the same time enhance the position of the workers in society, and in large measure confirm that position. Various efforts in this field have already been made, as witness, for example, the strike of the building-workers in Barcelona, who refused to use poor material and the wreckage from old buildings in the erection of workers' dwelling (1902), the strikes in various large restaurants in Paris because the kitchen workers were unwilling to prepare for serving cheap, decaying meat (1906), and a long list of instances in recent times; all going to prove that the workers' understanding of their responsibility to society is growing. The resolution of the German armament workers at the congress in Erfurt (1919) to make no more weapons of war and to compel their employers to convert their plants to other uses, belongs also to this category. And it is a fact that this resolution was maintained for almost two years, until it was broken by the Central Trades Unions. The Anarcho-Syndicalist

of defending themselves, there will also come to them the understanding that it does not pay to make use of some particular hard situation of the workers of force harder conditions of living upon them.

The so-called *sit down strike*, which was transplanted from Europe to America with such surprising rapidity and consists of the workers remaining in the plant day and night without turning a finger in order to prevent the installing of strike-breakers, belongs in the realm of sabotage. Very often sabotage works thus: before a strike the workers put the machines out of order to make the work of possible strike-breakers harder or even impossible for a considerable time. In no field is there as so much scope for the imagination of the worker as in this. But the sabotage of the workers is directed against the employers, never against the consumers. In his report before the C.G.T. in Toulouse in 1897, Emile Pouget laid special stress on this point. All the reports in the bourgeois press about bakers who had baked glass in their bread, or farm hands who had poisoned milk, and the like, are malicious inventions, designed solely to prejudice the public against the workers.

Sabotaging the consumers is the age old-privilege of the employers. The deliberate adulteration of provisions, the construction of wretched slums and insanitary tenements of the poorest and cheapest material, the destruction of great quantities of foodstuffs in order to keep up prices, while millions are perishing in direst misery, the constant efforts of the employers to force the subsistence of the workers down to the lowest point possible, in order to grab for themselves the highest possible profits, the shameless practice of the armament industries of supplying foreign countries with complete equipment for war, which, given the appropriate occasion, may be employed to lay waste the country that produced them, all these and many more are merely individual items in an interminable list of types of sabotage by capitalists against their own people.

Another form of direct action is the *social strike*, which will, without doubt, in the immediate future play a much larger part. It is concerned less with the immediate interests of the producers than with the protection of the community against the most pernicious outgrowths of the present system. The social strike seeks to force upon the employers

*“Russia has shown us the way in which Socialism cannot be realised, although the populace, nauseated with the old regime, opposed no active resistance to the experiments of the new government. The idea of the workers’ councils for the control of the political and economic life is, in itself, of extraordinary importance... But so long as the country is dominated by the dictatorship of a party, the workers’ and peasants’ councils naturally lose their significance. They are thereby degraded to the same passive rôle which the representatives of the estates used to play in the time of the absolute monarchies. A workers’ council ceases to be a free and valuable adviser when no free press exists in the country, as has been the case with us for over two years. Worse still: the workers’ and peasants’ councils lose all their meaning when no public propaganda takes place before their election, and the elections themselves are conducted under the pressure of party dictatorship. Such a government by councils (soviet government) amounts to a definite step backward as soon as the Revolution advances to the erection of new society on a new economic basis: it becomes just a dead principle on a dead foundation.”*

The course of events has proved Kropotkin right on every point. Russia is today farther from Socialism than any other country. Dictatorship does not lead to the economic and social liberation of the toiling masses, but to the suppression of even the most trivial freedom and the development of an unlimited despotism which respects no rights and treads underfoot every feeling of human dignity. What the Russian worker has gained economically under this regime is a most ruinous form of human exploitation, borrowed from the most extreme stage of capitalism, in the shape of the Stakhanov system, which raises his productive capacity to its highest limit and degrades him to galley slave, who is denied all control of his personal labour, and who must submit to every order of his superiors if he does not wish to expose himself to penalties life and liberty. But compulsory labour is the last road that can lead to Socialism. It estranges the man from the community, destroys his joy in his daily work, and stifles that sense of personal responsibility to his fellows without which there can be no talk of Socialism at all.

We shall not even speak of Germany here. One could not reasonably expect of a party like the Social Democrats — whose central organ *Vorwärts*, just on the evening before the November Revolution of 1918 warned the workers against precipitancy, “as the German people are not ready for a republic” — that it would experiment with Socialism. Power, we might say, fell into its lap overnight, and it actually did not know what to do with it. Its absolute impotence contributed not a little to enabling Germany to bask today in the sun of the *Third Reich*.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions of Spain, and especially of Catalonia, where their influence is strongest, have shown us an example in this respect which is unique in the history of Socialist labour movement. In this they have only confirmed what the Anarcho-Syndicalists have always insisted on: that the approach to Socialism is possible only when the workers have created the necessary organism for it, and when above all they have previously prepared for it by a genuinely socialistic education and direct action. But this was the case in Spain, where since the days of the International the weight of the labour movement had lain, not in political parties, but in the revolutionary trade unions.

When, on July 19, 1936, the conspiracy of the Fascist generals ripened into open revolt and was put down in a few days by the heroic resistance of the C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labour) and the F.A.I. (Anarchist Federation of Iberia), ridding Catalonia of the enemy and frustrating the plan of the conspirators, based as it was on sudden surprise, it was clear that the Catalonian workers would not stop halfway. So there followed the collectivising of the land and the taking over of the plants by the workers' and peasants' syndicates; and this movement, which was released by the initiative of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., with irresistible power overran Aragon, the Levante and other sections of the country, and even swept along with it a large part of the trade unions of the Socialist Party, organised in the U.G.T. (General Labour Union). The revolt of the Fascists had set Spain on the road to a social revolution.

This same event reveals that the Anarcho-Syndicalist workers of Spain not only know how to fight, but that they are filled with that great constructive spirit derived from their many years of Socialist education. It is the great merit of Libertarian Socialism in Spain, which now

reality we are dealing here with a method of economic petty warfare that is as old as the system of exploitation and political oppression itself. It is, in some circumstances, simply forced upon the workers, when every other device fails. Sabotage consists in the workers putting every possible obstacle in the way of the ordinary modes of work. For the most part this occurs when the employers try to avail themselves of a bad economic situation or some other favourable occasion to lower the normal conditions of labour by curtailment of wages or by lengthening of the hours of labour. The term itself is derived from the French word, *sabot*, wooden shoe, and means *to work clumsily as if by sabot blows*. The whole import of sabotage is exhausted in the motto: for bad wages, bad work. The employer himself acts on the same principle, when he calculates the price of his goods according to their quality. The producer finds himself in the same position: his goods are his labour-power, and it is only good and proper that he should try to dispose of it on the best terms he can get.

But when the employer takes advantage of the evil position of the producer to force the price of his labour-power as low as possible, he need not wonder when the latter defends himself as best he can and for this purpose makes use of the means which the circumstances put in his hands. The English workers were already doing this long before revolutionary Syndicalism was spoken of on the continent. In fact the policy of “*ca' canny*” (go slow), which, along with the phrase itself, the English workers took over from their Scottish brethren, was the first and most effective form of sabotage. There are today in every industry a hundred means by which the workers can seriously disturb production; everywhere under the modern system of division of labour, where often the slightest disturbance in one branch of the work can bring to a standstill the entire process of production. Thus the railway workers in France and Italy by the use of the so-called *grève perlée* (string-of-pearls-strike) threw the whole system of transportation into disorder. For this they needed to do nothing more than to adhere to the strict letter of the existing transport laws, and thus made it impossible for any train to arrive at its destination on time. When the employers are at once faced with the fact that even in an unfavourable situation, where the workers would not dare to think of a strike, they still have in their hands the means



becoming more and more manifest in every country, of itself compels them to look about for new methods for the effective defence of their interests and their eventual liberation from the yoke of wage slavery.

Another important fighting device for direct action is the boycott. It can be employed by the workers both in their character of producers and of consumers. A systematic refusal of consumers to buy from firms that handle goods not produced under conditions approved by the labour unions can often be of decisive importance, especially for those branches of labour engaged in the production of commodities of general use. At the same time the boycott is very well adapted to influencing public opinion in favour of the workers, provided it is accompanied by suitable propaganda. The union label is an effective means of facilitating the boycott, as it gives the purchaser the sign by which to distinguish the goods he wants from the spurious. Even the masters of the Third Reich experienced what a weapon the boycott can become in the hands of the great masses of people, when they had to confess that the international boycott against German goods had inflicted serious damage on German export trade. And this influence might have been greater still, if the trade unions had kept public opinion alert by incessant propaganda, and had continued to foster the protest against the suppression of the German labour movement.

As producers the boycott provides the workers with the means of imposing an embargo on individual plants whose managers show themselves especially hostile to trade unions. In Barcelona, Valencia and Cadiz the refusal of the longshoremen to unload German vessels compelled the captains of these vessels to discharge their cargoes in North African harbours. If the trade unions in the other countries had resolved on the same procedure, they would have achieved incomparably greater results than by Platonic protests. In any case the boycott is one of the most effective fighting devices in the hands of the working class, and the more profoundly aware of this device the workers become, the more comprehensive and successful will they become in their everyday struggles.

Among the weapons in the Anarcho-Syndicalist armoury is the one most feared by the employer and most harshly condemned as "unlawful." It

finds expression in the C.N.T. and F.A.I., that since the days of the First International it has trained the workers in that spirit which treasures freedom above all else and regards the intellectual independence of its adherents as the basis of its existence. The libertarian labour movement in Spain has never lost itself in the labyrinth of an economic metaphysics which crippled its intellectual buoyancy by fatalistic conceptions, as was the case in Germany; nor has it unprofitably wasted its energy in the barren routine tasks of bourgeois parliaments. Socialism was for it a concern of the people, an organic growth proceeding from the activity of the masses themselves and having its basis in their economic organisations.

Therefore the C.N.T. is not simply an alliance of industrial workers like the trade unions in every other country. It embraces within its ranks also the syndicates of the peasant and field-workers as well as those of the brain workers and the intellectuals. If the Spanish peasants are now fighting shoulder to shoulder with city workers against Fascism, it is the result of the great work of Socialist education which has been performed by the C.N.T. and its forerunners. Socialists of all schools, genuine liberals and bourgeois anti-fascists who have had an opportunity to observe on the spot have thus far passed only one judgement on the creative capacity of the C.N.T. and have accorded to its constructive labours the highest admiration. Not one of them could help extolling the natural intelligence, the thoughtfulness and prudence, and above all the unexampled tolerance with which the workers and peasants of the C.N.T. have gone about their difficult task.<sup>1</sup> Workers, peasants, technicians and men of science had come together for co-operative work, and in three months gave an entirely new character to the whole economic life of Catalonia.

In Catalonia today three-fourths of the land is collectivised and co-operatively cultivated by the workers' syndicates. In this each community presents a type by itself and adjusts its internal affairs in its own way, but settles its economic questions through the agency of its Federation. Thus there is preserved the possibility of free enterprise, inciting new ideas and mutual stimulation. One-fourth of the country is in the hands of small peasant proprietors, to whom has been left the free choice between joining the collectives or continuing their family husbandry.

In many instances their small holdings have even been increased in proportion to the size of their families. In Aragon an overwhelming majority of the peasants declared for collective cultivation. There are in that province over four hundred collective farms, of which about ten are under the control of the Socialist U.G.T., while all the rest are conducted by syndicates of the C.N.T. Agriculture has made such advances there that in the course of a year forty per cent of the formerly untilled land has been brought under cultivation. In the Levante, in Andalusia and Castile, also, collective agriculture under the management of the syndicates is making constantly greater advances. In numerous smaller communities a Socialist form of life has already become naturalised, the inhabitants no longer carrying on exchange by means of money, but satisfying their needs out of the product of their collective industry and conscientiously devoting the surplus to their comrades fighting at the front.

In most of the rural collectives individual compensation for work performed has been retained, and the further upbuilding of the new system postponed until the termination of the war, which at present claims the entire strength of the people. In these the amount of the wages is determined by the size of the families. The economic reports in the daily bulletins of the C.N.T. are extremely interesting, with their accounts of the building up of the collectives and their technical development through the introduction of machines and chemical fertilisers, which had been almost unknown before. The agricultural collectives in Castile alone have during the past year spent more than two million pesetas for this purpose. The great task of collectivising the land was made much easier after the rural federations of the U.G.T. joined the general movement. In many communities all affairs are arranged by delegates of the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., bringing about a rapprochement of the two organisations which culminated in an alliance of the workers in the two organisations.

But the workers' syndicates have made their most astounding achievements in the field in industry, since they took into their hands the administration of industrial life as a whole. In Catalonia in the course of a year the railroads were fitted out with a complete modern equipment, and in punctuality the service reached a point that had been hitherto

prevent them. Even the use of the army is, in such cases, directed at very different tasks from those of political revolt. In the latter case it suffices for the government, so long as it can rely on the military, to concentrate its troops in the capital and the most important points in the country, in order to meet the danger that threatens.

A general strike, however, leads inevitably to a scattering of the military forces, as in such a situation the important concern is the protection of all important centres of industry and the transport system against the rebellious workers. But this means that military discipline, which is always strongest when soldiers operate in fixed formations, is relaxed. Where the military in small groups faces a determined people fighting for its freedom, there always exists the possibility that at least a part of the soldiers will reach some inner insight and comprehend that, after all, it is their own parents and brothers at whom they are pointing their weapons. For militarism, also, is primarily a psychological problem, and its disastrous influence always manifests itself where the individual is given no chance to think about his dignity as a human being, no chance to see that there are higher tasks in life than lending oneself to the uses of a bloody oppressor of one's own people.

For the workers the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprising. It is for them a logical outcome of the industrial system whose victims they are today, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in their struggle for liberation, provided they recognise their own strength and learn how to use this weapon properly. William Morris, with the prophetic vision of the poet, foresaw this development in affair, when, in his splendid book *News from Nowhere*, he has the Socialist reconstruction of society preceded by a long series of general strikes of ever increasing violence, which shook the old system to its deepest foundations, until at last its supporters were no longer able to put up any resistance against this new enlightenment of the toiling masses in town and country.

The whole development of modern capitalism, which is today growing into an ever graver danger to society, can but serve to spread this enlightenment more widely among the workers. The fruitlessness of the participation of the organised workers in parliaments, which is today



general strike of the German workers in 1920, which was instituted after the so-called Kapp putsch and put an end to a government that had attained to power by a military uprising, belongs to this category; as do also the mass strikes in Belgium in 1903, and in Sweden in 1909, to compel the granting of universal suffrage, and the general strike of the Russian workers in 1905, for the granting of the constitution. But in Spain the widespread strike movement among the workers and peasants after the Fascist revolt in July, 1936, developed into a "social general strike" (huelga general) and led to armed resistance, and with this to the abolishment of the capitalist economic order and the reorganisation of the economic life by the workers themselves.

The great importance of the general strike lies in this: at one blow it brings the whole economic system to a standstill and shakes it to its foundations. Moreover, such an action is in no wise dependent on the practical preparedness of all the workers, as all the citizens of a country have never participated in a social overturn. That the organised workers in the most important industries quit work is enough to cripple the entire economic mechanism, which cannot function without the daily provision of coal, electric power, and raw materials of every sort. But when the ruling classes are confronted with an energetic, organised working class, schooled in daily conflict, and are aware of what they have at stake, they become much more willing to make the necessary concessions, and, above all, they fear to take a course with the workers which might drive them to extremes. Even Jean Jaurès who, as a Socialist parliamentarian, was not in agreement with the idea of the general strike, had to concede that the constant danger arising from the possibility of such a movement admonished the possessing classes to caution, and, above everything, made them shrink from the suppression of hard-won rights, since they saw that this could easily lead to catastrophe.

But at the time of a universal social crisis, or when, as today in Spain, the concern is to protect an entire people against the attacks of benighted reactionaries, the general strike is an invaluable weapon, for which there is no substitute. By crippling the whole public life it makes difficult mutual agreements of the representatives of the ruling classes and the local officials with the central government, even when it does not entirely

unknown. The same advances were achieved in the entire transport system, in the textile industry, in machine construction, in building, and in the small industries. But in the war industries the syndicates have performed a genuine miracle. By the so-called neutrality pact the Spanish Government was prevented from importing from abroad any considerable amount of war materials. But Catalonia before the Fascist revolt had not a single plant for the manufacture of army equipment. The first concern, therefore, was to remake whole industries to meet the war demands. A hard task for the syndicates, which already had in their hands the full setting up of a new social order. But they performed it with an energy and a technical efficiency that can be explained only by the workers and their boundless readiness to make sacrifices for their cause. Men toiled in the factories twelve and fourteen hours a day to bring the great work to completion. Today Catalonia possesses 283 huge plants which are operating day and night in the production of war materials, so that the fronts may be kept supplied. At present Catalonia is providing for the greater part of all war demands. Professor Andres Oltmares declared in the course of an article that in this field the workers' syndicates of Catalonia "had accomplished in seven weeks as much as France did in fourteen months after the outbreak of the World War."

But that is not all by a great deal. The unhappy war brought into Catalonia an overwhelming flood of fugitives from all the war-swept districts in Spain; their number has today grown to a million. Over fifty per cent of the sick and wounded in the hospitals of Catalonia are not Catalonians. One understands, therefore, with what a task the workers' syndicates were confronted in the meeting of all these demands. Of the re-organisation of the whole educational system by the teachers' groups in the C.N.T., the associations for the protection of works of art, and a hundred other matters we cannot even make mention here.

During this same time the C.N.T. was maintaining 120,000 of its militia, who were fighting on all fronts. No other organisation has thus far made such sacrifices of life and limb as the C.N.T.-F.A.I. In its heroic stand against Fascism it has lost a lot of its most distinguished fighters, among them Francisco Ascosa and Buenaventura Durruti, whose epic greatness made him the hero of the Spanish people.

Under these circumstances it is, perhaps, understandable that the syndicates have not thus far been able to bring to completion their great task of social reconstruction, and for the time being were unable to give their full attention to the organisation of consumption. The war, the possession by the Fascist armies of important sources of raw materials, the German and Italian invasion, the hostile attitude of foreign capital, the onslaughts of the counter-revolution in the country itself, which, significantly, was befriended this time by Russia and the Communist Party of Spain — all this and many other things have compelled the syndicates to postpone many great and important tasks until the war is brought to a victorious conclusion. But by taking the land and the industrial plants under their own management they have taken the first and most important step on the road to Socialism. Above all, they have proved *that the workers, even without the capitalist, are able to carry on production and to do it better than a lot of profit-hungry entrepreneurs*. Whatever the outcome of the bloody war in Spain may be, to have given this great demonstration remains the indisputable service of the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists, whose heroic example has opened for the Socialist movement new outlooks for the future.

If the Anarcho-Syndicalists are striving to implant in the working classes in every country an understanding of this new form of constructive Socialism, and to show them that they must, today, give to their economic fighting organisations the forms to enable them during a general economic crisis to carry through the work of Socialist upbuilding, this does not mean that these forms must everywhere be cut to the same pattern. In every country there are special conditions which are intimately intergrown with its historical development, its traditions, and its peculiar psychological assumptions. The great superiority of Federalism is, indeed, just that it takes these important matters into account and does not insist on a uniformity that does violence to free thought, and forces on men from without things contrary to their inner inclinations.

Kropotkin once said that, taking England as an example, there existed three great movements which, at the time of a revolutionary crisis would enable the workers to carry through a complete overturn of social economy: trades unionism, the co-operative organisations, and the

in Marseilles (1892), and the later congresses of the C.G.T. (General Federation of Labour) had by a large majority declared for the propaganda of the general strike, it was the political labour parties in Germany and most other countries which assailed most violently this form of proletarian action, and rejected it as "Utopian." "The general strike is general madness" was the trenchant phrase which was coined at that time by one of the most prominent leaders of the German Social Democracy. But the great strike movement of the years immediately following, in Spain, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Russia, and so on, showed clearly that this alleged "Utopia" lay wholly within the realm of the possible and did not arise from the imagination of a few revolutionary fanatics.

The general strike is, of course, not an agency that can be invoked arbitrarily on every occasion. It needs certain social assumptions to give it its proper moral strength and make it a proclamation of the will of the broad masses of the people. The ridiculous claim, which is so often attributed to the Anarcho-Syndicalists, that it is only necessary to proclaim a general strike in order to achieve a Socialist society in a few days, is, of course, just a silly invention of evil-minded opponents bent on discrediting an idea which they cannot attack by any other means.

The general strike can serve various purposes. It can be the last stage of a sympathetic strike, as for example, the general strike in Barcelona in February, 1902, or that in Bilbao in October, 1903, which enabled the mine workers to get rid of the hated truck system and compelled the employers to establish sanitary conditions on the mines. It can as easily be a means by which organised labour tries to enforce some general demand, as, for example, in the attempted general strike in the U.S.A. in 1886, to compel the granting of the eight-hour day in all industries. The great general strike of the English workers in 1926 was the result of a planned attempt by the employers to lower the general standard of living of the workers by a cut in wages.

But the general strike can also have political objectives in view, as, for example, the fight of the Spanish workers in 1904, for the liberation of political prisoners, or the general strike in Catalonia in July, 1909, to compel the government to terminate the war in Morocco. And the

set themselves. For this reason the sympathetic strike is one of their choicest weapons, and has developed in Spain to a compass it has not attained in any other country. Through it the economic battle becomes a deliberate action of the workers as a class. The sympathetic strike is the collaboration of related, but also of unrelated, categories of labour, to help the battle of a particular trade to victory by extending the strike to other branches of labour, where this is necessary. In this case the workers are not satisfied with giving fighting assistance to their striking brethren, but go further, and by crippling entire industries cause a break in the whole economic life in order to make their demands effective.

Today, when by the formation of national and international cartels and trusts private capitalism grows more and more into monopoly capitalism, this form of warfare is in most cases the only one by which the workers can still promise themselves success. Because of the internal transformation in industrial capitalism the sympathetic strike becomes for the workers the imperative of the hour. Just as the employers in their cartels and protective organisations are building an ever broader basis for the defence of their interests, so also the workers must turn their attention to creating for themselves by an ever wider alliance of their national and international economic organisations the required basis for solidaric mass action adequate for the demands of the time. The restricted strike is today losing more and more of its original importance, even if it is not doomed to disappear altogether. In the modern economic struggle between capital and labour the big strike, involving entire industries, will play a larger and larger part. Even the workers in the old craft organisations, which are as yet untouched by Socialist ideas, have grasped that, as is shown clearly enough by the rapid springing up of industrial unions in America in contrast with the old methods of the A.F. of L. (American Federation of Labour - ZB)

Direct action by organised labour finds its strongest expression in the general strike, in the stoppage of work in every branch of production by the organised resistance of the proletariat, with all the consequences arising from it. It is the most powerful weapon which the workers have at their command, and gives the most comprehensive expression to their strength as a social factor. After the French trade union congress

movement for municipal Socialism; provided that they had a fixed goal in view and worked together according to a definite plan. The workers must learn that, not only must their social liberation be their own work, but that liberation was possible only if they themselves attended to the constructive preliminaries instead of leaving the task to the politicians, who were in no way fitted for it. And above all they must understand that however different the immediate preliminaries for their liberation might be in different countries, the effect of capitalist exploitation are everywhere the same and they must, therefore, give to their efforts the necessary international character.

Above all they must not tie up these efforts with the interests of the national states, as has, unfortunately, happened in most countries hitherto. The world of organised labour must pursue its own ends, as it has its own interests to defend, and these are not identical with the state or those of the possessing classes. A collaboration of workers and employees such as was advocated by the Socialist Party and the trade unions in Germany after the World War can only result in the workers being condemned to the role of the poor Lazarus, who must be content to eat the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table. Collaboration is possible only where the ends and, most importantly of all, the interests are the same.

No doubt some small comforts may sometimes fall to the share of the workers when the bourgeoisie of their country attain some advantage over that of another country; but this always happens at the cost of their own freedom and the economic oppression of other peoples. The worker in England, France, Holland, and so on, participates to some extent in the profits which, without efforts on their part, fall into the laps of the bourgeoisie of his country from the unrestrained exploitation of colonial peoples; but sooner or later there comes the time when these people, too, wake up, and he has to pay all the more dearly for the small advantages he has enjoyed. Events in Asia will show this still more clearly in the near future. Small gains arising for increased opportunity of employment and higher wages may accrue to the worker in a successful state from the carving out of new markets at the cost of others; but at the same time their brothers on the other side of the border have to pay for them by

unemployment and the lowering of their standard of living. The result is an ever widening rift in the international labour movement, which not even the loveliest resolutions by international congresses can put out of existence. By this rift the liberation of the workers from the yoke of wage-slavery is pushed further and further into the distance. As long as the worker ties up his interests with those of the bourgeoisie of his country instead of with those of his class, he must logically also take in his stride all the results of that relationship. He must stand ready to fight the wars of the possessing classes for the retention and extension of their markets, and to defend any injustice they may perpetrate on other peoples. The Socialist press of Germany was merely being consistent when, at the time of the World War, they urged the annexation of foreign territory. This was merely the inevitable result of the intellectual attitude and the methods which the political labour parties had pursued for a long time before the war. Only when the workers in every country shall come to understand clearly that their interests are everywhere the same, and out of this understanding learn to act together, will the effective basis be laid for the international liberation of the working class.

Every time has its particular problems and its own peculiar methods of solving these problems. The problem that is set for our time is that of freeing man from the curse of economic exploitation and political and social enslavement. The era of political revolution is over, and where such still occur they do not alter in the least the bases of the capitalist social order. On the one hand it becomes constantly clearer that bourgeois democracy is so degenerate that it is no longer capable of offering effective resistance to the threat of Fascism. On the other hand political Socialism has lost itself so completely on the dry channels of bourgeois politics that it no longer has any sympathy with the genuinely socialistic education of the masses and never rises above the advocacy of petty reforms. But the development of capitalism and the modern big state have brought us today to a situation where we are driving on under full sail toward a universal catastrophe. The last World War and its economic and social consequences, which are today working more and more disastrously, and which have grown into a definite danger to the very existence of all human culture, are sinister signs of the times which no man of insight can misinterpret. It therefore concerns us today to reconstruct the economic

experiences and occurrences of the everyday struggles of the workers find an intellectual precipitate in their organisations, deepen their understanding, and broaden their intellectual outlook. By the constant intellectual elaboration of their life experiences there are developed in individual's new needs and the urge for different fields of intellectual life. And precisely in this development lies the great cultural significance of these struggles.

True intellectual culture and the demand for higher interests in life do not become possible until man has achieved a certain material standard of living, which makes him capable of these. Without this preliminary any higher intellectual aspirations are quite out of the question. Men who are constantly threatened by direst misery can hardly have much understanding of the higher cultural values. Only after the workers, by decades of struggle, had conquered for themselves a better standard of living could there be any talk of intellectual and cultural development among them. But it is just these aspirations of the workers which the employers view with deepest distrust. For capitalists as a class, the well-known saying of the Spanish minister, Juan Bravo Murillo, still holds good today: "*We need no men who can think among the workers; what we need is beasts of toil.*"

One of the most important results of the daily economic struggles is the development of solidarity among the workers, and this has for them a quite different meaning from the political coalition of parties whose following is composed of people of every social class. A feeling of mutual helpfulness, whose strength is constantly being renewed in the daily struggle for the necessities of life, which is constantly making the most extreme demands on the co-operation of men subjected to the same conditions, operates very differently from abstract party principles, which for the most part are of only Platonic value. It grows into the vital consciousness of a community of fate, and this gradually develops into a new sense of right, and becomes the preliminary ethical assumption of every effort at the liberation of an oppressed class.

To cherish and strengthen this natural solidarity of the workers and to give to every strike movement a more profoundly social character is one of the most important tasks which the Anarcho-Syndicalists have

By direct action the Anarcho-Syndicalists mean every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors. Among these the outstanding are: the strike, in all its gradations from the simple wage-struggle to the general strike; the boycott; sabotage in its countless forms; anti-militarist propaganda; and in particularly critical cases, such, for example, as that in Spain today, armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty.

Among these fighting techniques the strike, that is, organised refusal to work, is the most used. It plays in the industrial age the same role for the workers as did their frequent uprisings for the peasants in the feudal era. In its simplest form it is for the workers an indispensable means of raising their standard of living or defending their attained advantages against the concerted measures of the employers. But the strike is for the workers not only a means for the defence of immediate economic interests, it is also a continuous schooling for their powers of resistance, showing them every day that every least right has to be won by unceasing struggle against the existing system.

Just as are the economic fighting organisations of the workers, so also are the daily wage-struggles a result of the capitalist economic order, and consequently, a vital necessity for the workers. Without these they would be submerged in the abyss of poverty. Certainly the social problem cannot be solved by wage-struggles alone, but they are the best educative equipment for making the workers acquainted with the real essence of the social problem, training them for the struggle for liberation from economic and social slavery. It may also be taken as true that so long as the worker has to sell hands and brain to an employer, he will in the long run never earn more than is required to provide the most indispensable necessities of life. But these necessities of life are not always the same, but are constantly changing with the demands which the worker makes on life.

Here we come to the general cultural significance of the labour struggle. The economic alliance of the producers not only affords them a weapon for the enforcement of better living conditions, it becomes for them a practical school, a university of experience, from which they draw instruction and enlightenment in richest measure. The practical

life of the peoples from the ground up and build it up anew in the spirit of Socialism. But only the producers themselves are fitted for this task, since they are the only value-creating element in society out of which a new future can arise. Theirs must be the task of freeing labour from all the fetters which economic exploitation has fastened on it, of freeing society from all the institutions and procedures of political power, and of opening the way to an alliance of free groups of men and women based on co-operative labour and a planned administration of things in the interests of the community. To prepare the toiling masses in city and country for this great goal and to bind them together as a militant force is the objective of modern Anarcho-Syndicalism, and in this its whole purpose is exhausted.





# The Methods of Anarcho-Syndicalism

*Anarcho-Syndicalism and political action; The Significance of political rights; Direct Action versus Parliamentarism; The strike and its meaning for the workers; The Sympathetic Strike; The General Strike; The Boycott; Sabotage by the workers; Sabotage by capitalism; The social strike as a means of social protection; Anti-militarism.*

It has often been charged against Anarcho-Syndicalism that it has no interest in the political structure of the different countries, and consequently no interest in the political struggles of the time, and confines its activities to the fight for purely economic demands. This idea is altogether erroneous and springs either from outright ignorance or wilful distortion of the facts. It is not the political struggle as such which distinguishes the Anarcho-Syndicalists from the modern labour parties, both in principle and in tactics, but the form of this struggle and the aims which it has in view. They by no means rest content with the ideal of a future society without lordship; their efforts are also directed, even today, at restricting the activities of the state and blocking its influence

It would, therefore, be absurd for them to overlook the importance of the political struggle. Every event that affects the life of the community is of a political nature. In this sense, every important economic action, such, for example, as a general strike, is also a political action and, moreover, one of incomparably greater importance than any parliamentary proceeding. Of a political nature is likewise the battle of the Anarcho-Syndicalists against Fascism and the anti-militarist propaganda, a battle which for decades was carried on solely by the libertarian Socialists and the Syndicalists, and which was attended by tremendous sacrifices.

The fact is that, when the Socialist labour parties have wanted to achieve some decisive political reform, they have always found that they could not do so by their own strength and have been obliged to rely wholly on the economic fighting power of the working class. The political general strikes in Belgium, Sweden and Austria for the attainment of universal suffrage are proof of this. And in Russia it was the great general strike of the working people that in 1905 pressed the pen into the tsar's hand for the signing of the constitution. What the heroic struggle of the Russian intelligentsia had not been able to accomplish in decades, the united economic action of the working classes quickly brought to fulfilment.

The focal point of the political struggle lies, then, not in the political parties, but in the economic fighting organisations of the workers. It is the recognition of this which impelled the Anarcho-Syndicalists to centre all their activity on the Socialist education of the masses and on the utilisation of their economic and social power. Their method is that of direct action in both the economic and the political struggles of the time. That is the only method which has been able to achieve anything at all in every decisive moment in history. And the bourgeoisie in its struggles against absolutism has also made abundant use of this method, and by refusal to pay taxes, by boycott and revolution, has defiantly asserted its position as the dominant class in society. So much the worse if its representatives of today have forgotten the story of their fathers, and howl bloody murder at the "unlawful methods" of the workers fighting for liberation. As if the law had ever permitted a subject class to shake off its yoke.



interest exists, a mutual agreement is possible and serviceable to all parties. But for the working class the situation is very different. For them the existing economic order is the source of their economic exploitation, and the organised power of the state the instrument of their political and social subjection. Even the freest ballot cannot do away with the glaring contrast between the possessing and non-possessing classes in society. It can only serve to impart to a system of social injustice the stamp of legal right and to induce the slave to set the stamp of legality on his own servitude.

But, most important of all, practical experience has shown that the participation of the workers in parliamentary activity cripples their power of resistance and dooms to futility their warfare against the existing system. Parliamentary participation has not brought the workers one iota nearer to their final goal; it has even prevented them from protecting the rights they have won against the attacks of the reaction. In Prussia, for example, the largest state in Germany, where the Social Democrats until shortly before Hitler's accession to power were the strongest party in the government and had control of the most important ministries in the country, Herr von Papen, after his appointment as Reichskanzler by Hindenburg, could venture to violate the constitution of the land and dissolve the Prussian ministry with only a lieutenant and a dozen soldiers. When the Socialist Party in its helplessness could think of nothing to do after this open breach of the constitution except to appeal to the high court of the Reich instead of meeting the perpetrators of the *coup d'état* with open resistance, the reaction knew they had nothing more to fear and from then on could offer the workers what they pleased. The fact is that von Papen's *coup d'état* was merely the start along the road to the Third Reich.

Anarcho-Syndicalists, then, are not in any way opposed to the political struggle, but in their opinion this struggle, too, must take the form of direct action, in which the instruments of economic power which the working class has at its command are the most effective. The most trivial wage fight shows clearly that, whenever the employers find themselves in difficulties, the state steps in with the police, and even in some cases with the militia, to protect the threatened interests of the possessing classes.

in every department of social life wherever they see an opportunity. It is these tactics which mark off Anarcho-Syndicalist procedure from the aims and methods of the political labour parties, all of whose activities tend constantly to broaden the sphere of influence of the political power of the state and to extend it in ever increasing measure over the economic life of society. But by this, in the outcome, the way is merely prepared for an era of state capitalism, which according to all experience may be just the opposite of what Socialism is actually fighting for.

The attitude of Anarcho-Syndicalism toward the political power of the present-day state is exactly the same as it takes toward the system of capitalist exploitation. Its adherents are perfectly clear that the social injustices of that system rest, not on its unavoidable excrescences, but in the capitalistic economic order as such. But, while their efforts are directed at abolishing the existing form of capitalist exploitation and replacing it by a Socialist order, they never for a moment forget to work also by every means at their command to lower the rate of profit of the capitalists under existing conditions, and to raise the producer's share of the products of his labour to the highest possible.

Anarcho-Syndicalists pursue the same tactics in their fight against that political power which finds its expression in the state. They recognise that the modern state is just the consequence of capitalist economic monopoly, and the class divisions which this has set up in society, and merely serves the purpose of maintaining this status by every oppressive instrument of political power. But, while they are convinced that along with the system of exploitation its political protective device, the state, will also disappear, to give place to the administration of public affairs on the basis of free agreement, they do not all overlook that the efforts of the worker within the existing political order must always be directed toward defending all achieved political and social rights against every attack of reaction, constantly widening the scope of these rights wherever the opportunity for this presents itself.

For just as the worker cannot be indifferent to the economic conditions of his life in existing society, so he cannot remain indifferent to the political structure of his country. Both in the struggle for his daily bread and for every kind of propaganda looking toward his social liberation he

needs political rights and liberties, and he must fight for these himself in every situation where they are denied him, and must defend them with all his strength whenever the attempt is made to wrest them from him. It is, therefore, utterly absurd to assert that the Anarcho-Syndicalists take no interest in the political struggles of the time. The heroic battle of the C.N.T. in Spain against Fascism is, perhaps, the best proof that there is not a grain of truth in this idle talk.

But the point of attack in the political struggle lies, not in the legislative bodies, but in the people. Political rights do not originate in parliaments; they are, rather, forced on parliaments from without. And even their enactment into law has for a long time been no guarantee of their security. Just as the employers always try to nullify every concession they had made to labour as soon as opportunity offered, as soon as any signs of weakness were observable in the workers' organisations, so governments also are always inclined to restrict or to abrogate completely rights and freedoms that have been achieved if they imagine that the people will put up no resistance. Even in these countries where such things as freedom of the press, right of assembly, right of combination and the like have long existed, governments are constantly trying to restrict these rights or to reinterpret them by juridical hair-splitting. Political rights do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrown habit of a people, and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance of the populace. Where this is not the case, there is no help in any parliamentary Opposition or any Platonic appeals to the constitution. One compels respect from others when he knows how to defend his dignity as a human being. This is not only true in private life, it has always been the same in political life as well.

The peoples owe all the political rights and privileges which we enjoy today in greater or lesser measure, not to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength. Governments have employed every means that lay in their power to prevent the attainment of these rights or to render them illusory. Great mass movements among the people and whole revolutions have been necessary to wrest these rights from the ruling classes, who would never have consented to them voluntarily. One need

only study the history of the past three hundred years to understand by what relentless struggles every right has to be wrested inch by inch from the despots. What hard struggles, for example, had the workers in England, France, Spain, and other countries to endure to compel their governments to recognise the right of trade union organisation. In France the prohibition against trade unions persisted until 1886. Had it not been for the incessant struggles of the workers, there would be no right of combination in the French Republic even today. Only after the workers had by direct action confronted parliament with accomplished facts, did the government see itself obliged to take the new situation into account and give legal sanction to the trade unions. *What is important is not that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but the reason why they have had to do this.* To him who fails to understand the connection here history will always remain a book with seven seals.

Of course, if one accepts Lenin's phrase and thinks of freedom as merely a "bourgeois prejudice," then, to be sure, political rights and liberties have no value at all for the workers. But then all the countless struggles of the past, all the revolts and revolutions to which we owe these rights, are also without value. To proclaim this bit of wisdom it would hardly have been necessary to overthrow Tsarism, for even the censorship of Nicholas II would certainly have had no objection to the designation of freedom as a "bourgeois prejudice." Moreover, the great theorists of reaction, Joseph de Maistre and Louis Bonald, has already done this, though in different words, and the defenders of absolutism had been very grateful to them.

But the Anarcho-Syndicalists would be the every last to mistake the importance of these rights to the workers. If they, nevertheless, reject any participation in the work of bourgeois parliaments, it is not because they have no sympathy with political struggles in general, but because they are firmly convinced that parliamentary activity is for the workers the very weakest and the most hopeless form of the political struggle. For the bourgeois classes the parliamentary system is without a doubt an appropriate instrument for the settlement of such conflicts as arise, and for making profitable collaboration possible, as they are all equally interested in maintaining the existing economic order and the political organisation for the protection of that order. Now, where a common