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A Critique of Syndicalist Methods

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Introduction

Seen at a distance of more than twenty years this work contains some interesting forecasts. Nothing exceptional, but on this subject the capacity to foresee is essential to the notion of seeing.

Halfway through the Seventies the world was still tied to rigid forms of productivity. Castled in its new fortresses, capital defended itself by having recourse to the final returns of the old Taylorism. It tried to rationalise production in every possible way by applying new complicated techniques of control at the workplace, drastically reducing the mechanisms of defence that the working class had cut out for themselves during a century and a half of exploitation on the line.

In actual fact the results were not exactly brilliant. Capital's difficulties increased and continued to grow until half way through the Eighties. Then the organisational upheaval resulting from the introduction of information technology into the classical factory system led to theories of political economy based on flexibility and the breaking up of the big production units. The spreading of the latter throughout the country, along with a growth in the market due to advances in the tertiary sector and the continuing effects of the preceding petrol crisis, were to make quite a different set up possible.

Half way through the Seventies the working class, still a monolithic mass in their buttress the factory, considered Capital's manoeuvres (based on theories fifty years old) with suspicion, and began to prepare massive resistance at the workplace.

S.A.C. Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation (Swedish anarchist revolutionary tendency). Union formed in 1910.

In these far off days that have now disappeared completely the unions based their strength and their very possibility of survival on this. The fact that they represented the most advanced class in the struggle against the owners of the means of production within the framework of the European left (a different discourse is necessary as far as the USSR and the US are concerned), gave the

unions undeserved theoretical weight. That was the situation. The extreme rigidity of production costs (in the first place that of labour) facing Capital gave union representatives an air of rebelliousness which they exploited to the best of their ability.

Anarchists, (not understanding what they had inherited) did not go beyond a few bland discourses concerning claims for better conditions. All the members of the European organisations of synthesis accepted the idea of union representation more or less unanimously, looking on their Swedish comrades, architects of the success of the SAC and its almost a million members, with admiration. The Spanish comrades in exile in France pointed out the tragic mistakes of the Spanish civil war at CNT meetings, but did not have enough critical guts to put them on the carpet in no uncertain terms.

Things couldn't have been otherwise. To given conditions of the distribution of the means of production, corresponds a given capacity of the forces of resistance against exploitation to organise.

Deterministic thinking? Not at all. If you go into a sewer you do not smell the stink, that is the nature of things.

It was necessary to escape the overbearing workerist, resistentialist mentality that prevailed half way through the Seventies in order to elaborate a critical analysis of syndicalism, and in so doing not deceive oneself that one could affect things from the outside simply by virtue of the validity of one's argument. Basically, at that now far off time the trades union discourse was what people

wanted to hear. They wanted representatives in the factories capable of defending their struggles and able to guarantee results, even though in the best of cases everything concluded in a deal perked up with a few mere trifles and concessions that soon disappeared through increases in consumer prices.

Basically the Fordist (and Taylorist) ideologies were a last attempt to connect Capital and the State organically in such a way as to produce planning for centralised development capable of controlling market fluctuations. It was thought at the time, and still is, that any acceptation of Capital's proposals by the State could lead to the proletariat strengthening themselves, so this was considered an indispensable prelude to the successive jump to the great adventure of revolution. This reinforcing came first in the form of social security then, in exchange, worker mobility and the guarantee that there would be no extreme turbulence as workers' function became that of a shuttle to keep up adequate productivity levels.

Great compromises occurred in the Seventies, although they were not easily perceived, and the present pamphlet is an attempt to demonstrate this fact. The role of garantor and collaborator which the unions have always held on to like the dirty soul of the traitor came to the fore again as they supported the disbanding of the preceding model of participation, themselves becoming the producers of social peace. Aware of the limitations of seeing economic development as determinstic certainty the next step for the unions, incapable of putting a brake on the process in course (what sense would there be in putting a halt to history) but also with a real interest in letting things develop to the extreme, accepted the job of breaking up the workers' front. Here the tragic implications of the marxist thesis that no social movement can free itself from its destiny until it realises itself to the full, is laid bare. In the end nothing remains but the ashes of domesticated

Abbreviations

C.G.I.L. *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (General Italian Workers' Federation), left wing union, dominated by the Communist Party, with a Socialist minority.

C.I.S.L. *Confederation Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori* (Italian Confederation of Workers' Trades Unions), dominated by the Democrazia Cristiana.

U.I.L. *Unione Italiana Lavoratore* (Italian Workers' Union), smallest of the three largest federations, dominated by the Socialists.

C.I.S.N.A.L. 4th confederation after the C.G.I.L., C.I.S.L. and the U.I.L. Has a publicly acclaimed affinity with the neo-fascist National right wing party, the M.S.I.

C.G.T. *Confederation Generale du Travail* (General Confederation of Work), France, adherents from a broad and in some cases non-political spectrum, but in the hands of a Stalinist leadership.

D.G.B. *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (Confederation of German Trade Unions), grouping 16 federations. Adhesion to the union is organised according to factory as opposed to skill exercised within it. Sympathy with Christian Democrats, but call for apolitical unity

2. Organisation. This grows from the need for confrontation and verification. It differs greatly according to time and place, but is substantially unified on the basis of common interests in the production process. Nuclei grow up, each one on a different social, economic and political grounding, but all within the limits circumscribed by the reality of production. This is the essence of organisation which gives the possibility of a constant reference to something unitary.

3. Information. This must be gained through a gradual reversal of the relations of production, modifications in the division of labour and sabotage of production, with analyses of effects and limits. The gaining of information thus becomes the awakening of a political consciousness within the concrete dimension of the economy and production.

But these problems go beyond our task here and require far deeper analysis. It is to this that we recommend the reader.

bad intentions under the ostentation of a revolutionary language with no concrete reference to the struggle itself.

Excluded, fragmented, emarginated, precarious, broken up into a thousand perspectives, the proletariat as a figure of antagonism (if there ever was a time when this figure really had a precise role in the tremendous clash to free themselves from exploitation) is disappearing from the scene completely, leaving behind all the lost illusions, the dead comrades, the betrayed ideals, the flags in the mud.

The new conditions of production present a heterogeneity that would have been unthinkable a few decades ago. Active participants in this situation, the unions have lost no time in complying with it. In fact they have become its architects and advocates, accepting low intensity work in exchange for representation which is now no more than a cog in the wheels, and not even the main ones, of the capitalist mechanism. The work cycle is emerging at world level, beyond confines and borders, as the revolution from below is surpassed by restructuring from above.

I wrote the pamphlet that I am presenting again now in a climate that was anything but receptive to the argument and published it in “Anarchismo”, in issue 2 to be exact, a review that came out shortly before in 1975. It was received like a punch in the eye by the Italian anarchist movement. The following year the first English translation did not get a better reception.

The time was not ripe. Well, and now?

Now the time is ripe. So ripe that some of the ideas might seem quite obvious. But they are not. It is important to point out some of the reasons why a critique of syndicalism, necessarily brought up to date by the present conditions of the clash between included and excluded, is still valid today.

Perhaps the trade unions are more important today than ever before, not for the reasons that held them together in 1975 (and

continued to support them until half way through the 'Eighties}, but for quite opposite ones. If they once supported the working class in their resistance, while diverting revolutionary impulse down the road of dialogue and contractual recuperation, they now support Capital in order to guarantee production in a situation of generalised mobility of the workforce. The trade union's function today is to ensure that the mass of producers are mobile, by participating in producers' movements in each sector in order to supply labour on the basis of demand. That means trade union interference uphill and down dale. Uphill, in the agreements with Capital and the State, both for contracts and for keeping unemployment below danger level; down dale, in the organisation of claims, desires, dreams and even needs of those still tied to a living wage (it makes no difference whether this wage corresponds to actual productivity in the traditional sense).

So, almost imperceptibly (and anarchists, as always, have done their best not to see the phenomenon except in its marginal aspects) this has led to a more advanced concept of resistance at the base, that of the Cobas. My goodness, nothing exceptional, but it was still an indication. The aim was still that of claiming better conditions but here attention was put on methods, that is it emphasized the importance of the means used to reach certain aims. I don't know if the word "sabotage" has ever been pronounced at these good people's meetings, but certainly the distance that separates these base structures from the unions was marked precisely by this problem: attack Capital in order to rouse it to a better understanding, or simply mark the difference with more advanced bargaining?

There can be no doubt, as I have had said on more than one occasion, that the radical difference is always marked by the abandoning of methods of resistance and moving to methods of attack.

anism which not only increases needs artificially, but also the financial aspect of production).

To fight for an autonomous organisation of the struggle means to fight for the autonomous organisation of production at the same time. It is not possible to make a quantitative difference. In a sense, even a distinction in time phases is impossible. When workers organise their own autonomous production nuclei they are taking road that is quite different to that of the syndicalist organisation or the party. In so doing they have already taken a decisive step towards managing not only the struggle in the sense of the choice of instruments to be used, but also in the choice of aims to be reached, and not only the aims of the struggle, but also those of production.

During the revolutionary event the presence of a strong syndicalist organisation or party in the traditional sense has the immediate consequence of the proletariat being declared immature, and the conclusion that someone — syndicalist or party leaders — must decide for them. A structure for intervention is imposed on the base. Syndicalist or party meetings are always led by the same bureaucrats and specialists. Everything ends up passing over the heads of the workers. Any anarchist comrades who might eventually object to this should remember what happened in Spain at the time of the decision to enter the government, or of the struggle for the collectives.

The main operative elements of the base nuclei should therefore be:

1. The struggle. This is where the class spirit is born and developed. Here the real intentions of the parties and unions are also clarified. Methods of direct action are developed: sabotage, absenteeism, attempts at self-management, destruction of work, etc.

could be brought about in a communist economy, how he can come into possession of as many products as are his "real" needs and how he can participate in "useful" production according to his own potential.

In this perspective the question of an alternative form of organisation to the union or syndicalist structure becomes quite simple. In fact it is impossible to conceive of a program of direct struggle in terms of contact between the workshop and the various sectors including the conquest of technical information and the exchange and improvement of this information, except from within a dimension of workers organised autonomously at the base. To filter all this through the union, no matter how pure it had become, would result in the base receiving deformed information quite unsuitable to the aims to be achieved.

The primary necessity today is direct struggle organised by the base; small groups of workers who attack the centres of production. This would be an exercise in cohesion for further developments in the struggle which could come about following the obtaining of increasingly detailed information and the decision to pass to the final expropriation of capital, i.e. to the revolution. It would be the worker who established the terms of the relationship between labour and the product. This done he would have no other solution than to ignore any kind of organisation that asserts capitalist or any other kind of power and proceed to the construction of production nuclei, possibly making them last through the whole period of the struggle, to the final elimination of exploitation.

To put it more simply, given that the relationship between producer and product is the basis of the revolutionary project, it is clear that this must be egalitarian (to each according to his needs, from each according to his capabilities), managed by the base, and be simple and elementary (abolition of the market mech-

The first condition is necessary to put these methods of attack into effect (apart from claims, which can still be for improvements) is not delegating the decision-making of the struggle to trade union or syndicalist representatives. Conflict must be permanent. No base organisation (Cobas or other) fully accepts this thesis, which is essential to any real change in methods.

But the problem does not end there. Contrary to what happened half way through the Seventies, it is clear today that Capital has set out on the road of no return. Information technology has led to the final breaking up of the working class. This is also visible with the disappearance of the great industrial complexes which were often strategically located in underdeveloped areas (the cathedrals in the desert). These are now in the course of being broken down and spread over the whole country as the fragmentation has become even more profound, I would say more intimate. It has penetrated proletarian consciousness to the point of making the latter well disposed, maleable and open to all the perspectives suggested by the unions to the benefit of Capital.

The new producer to have emerged from this upheaval in the traditional capitalist set up is left to himself. He no longer has any class consciousness, does not see around the corner and is incited to participate in a false conflictuality within the various stages of production. He is offered incentives to push him to act the cop or the spy concerning any unproductive behaviour by his ex-workmates. He no longer has any hold on the tools of work which have never belonged to him and which he once wanted to take over (now nearly all virtualised by computer technology). He no longer dreams of a world freed from forced labour, a world where the means of production, finally expropriated from the boss, would create the base for a happy life in common, collective well-being. He gets by, taking care not to be thrown out of the round of flexibility: today solderer, tomorrow gardener, then gravedigger,

baker, and finally, janitor. He gets by, hoping for nothing better than a wage, any wage whatsoever, for his offspring, in a perspective of cultural degeneration he is not even aware of. The dreams of yesteryear, the dreams of revolution, the final destruction of all exploitation and power, have ended. Death has now reached the heart, death and survival.

Today, if we want to move ahead at a time when nearly everything that needs to be done will have to be changed from top to bottom as the invisible mist of the technological swindle settles on humanity, it is indispensable to get rid of the obstacle of the trade union or syndicalist mentality. And so this text, that marked throwing suspicion on the unions, all unions including the so-called anarchist ones, has become topical once again.

Catania, 6 January 1998

The worker must live revolution through the reality of the economy. The difference between a trade union or syndicalist organisation and autonomous groups at the level of the base can only be understood at the concrete level of economic relations, not through the filter of an ideological interpretation. In this sense there is an element of guarantee in the above suggestion that one should work to cut the worker off from his union, or to disorganise it, but to make him see the limits of all unions and their essence as a public service.

The economic situation could be organised without any oppressive structure controlling or directing it or deciding on the aims to be attained. This the worker understands very well. He knows exactly how the factory is structured and that, this barrier overcome, he would be able to work the economy in his own interest. He knows perfectly well that the collapse of this obstacle would mean the transformation of relationships both inside and outside the factory, the school, the land, and the whole of society. For the worker the concept of proletarian management is above all that of the management of production. Capitalist or State management on the contrary means the exploitation of production on behalf of someone else, on behalf of small groups of capitalists, party bureaucrats or managers. It is therefore control over the product which is lacking in this perspective, and with it decisions on lines of production, choices to be made, etc. Distribution is also linked to production. The worker knows it would be possible to establish a simple relationship between one's personal contribution to production and the product obtained, establish agreements between sec-tors correlating the workshops producing the same things. He also knows that this relationship could give him the right to the distribution of the products obtained. This reasoning is technically complex, but it is one which is alive in the workers' imagination. What is required is to explain to him the way this mechanism

organisations, even the so-called anarchist ones, that set off from a fixed point to determine a line of action has all their cards set for a speedy degeneration.

Given that the real place of revolution is the factory, the land, the school, the housing estate, etc., the general and particular conditions of exploitation must be identified at these levels of experience. All this requires periodical analyses of the relations concerning the living areas, those between different regions, within whole areas (the State) or between different States, and many other problems besides. But this alone will not lead to the workers to create alternative forms of organisation.

The worker must recognise not that this is a "revolutionary" necessity but that it is a natural one, one tied to his very possibility of survival, obliging him to work harder and even suffer a little more in order to be better off later on, not only himself but everyone else as well. The revolutionary discourse hardly ever touches the worker directly. That is why the unions are so successful: they reach the worker in his immediate interests, and above all in what concerns him most, his work. The worker is attached to the union dimension not so much because it gives him a certain amount of security within the factory, but because his union assembles all the workers of his sector, people with problems similar to his own with whom he can talk competently and among whom he can feel competent. This is not corporate pettiness but a direct consequence of the division of labour which cannot be abolished in a day. To snatch him from his environment and force him to listen to vague arguments that go on for hours and hours with people using an incomprehensible language, almost inevitably ends up making him refuse any opening towards what is new and different and prefer the noise of the workshop or the uproar of the children at home.

A Critique of Syndicalist Methods

Workers are disillusioned with trade union organisations, yet a curious residual of what we might call a trade union or syndicalist ideology still persists today.

The roots of this mistrust are to be found in events themselves. The abandonment of the strike, the development of a corporative mentality and the renunciation of the struggle have turned the unions into a malleable instrument in the hands of the bosses. On the contrary, defect in perspective, lack of analysis and a workerist attitude have been the cause of the persistence of the trade union or syndicalist ideology among many comrades.

In our opinion it is time we made every effort to clarify a few essential points so that anarchist comrades understand that it is not enough to declare oneself "anarcho-syndicalist" to be "within the reality of the workers' struggle". We must know and understand what is really revolutionary not only in trade unionism, but also in revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalism. In this way we will be able to see that formulae now devoid of any meaning merely serve to cover up the ineptitude of certain efforts, not through lack of good will or revolutionary capacity, but due to error in perspective and ignorance of the limitations of such instruments.

We will try to demonstrate that the limitations of trade-unionism and syndicalism are not determined by a degeneration in structure alone (related to increase in tasks and number of

adherents), but are a consequence of the way the latter relate to capitalism. We will look at this problem in the light of the unions' objectives today, in relation to traditional criticisms of trade-unionism and the different ways the problem is presented in relation to the changes in capitalist administration. We will then look at the limitations of revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalism and point out some of the defects that are inherent in this kind of solution.

We will end up with a critique which we consider to be destructive of syndicalism as it is today, a critique aimed at showing that the use of direct action by grass roots nuclei at the level of production is impossible within the dimension of trades union or syndical organisations. Not only will the consequences of such an impossibility be very serious at a time of revolution, they also have serious aspects in the pre-revolutionary phase.

We maintain that the workers' fundamental task is to destroy the system of exploitation and create the foundations for an organisation of production that starts from man. Naturally, in order to do this one must survive, and to survive it is necessary to snatch what is necessary from capitalist greed. But this must not obscure or render secondary the struggle for the abolition of exploitation.

Trade-unionism today: its programmes

These could be summed up as collaboration with the structures of capitalism. We should not see anything strange in that. Given that the job of the unions is to claim better conditions, in order to do so they must first save the life and increase the efficiency of the counterpart otherwise the concrete terms of the claims would be lacking, and with them the unions' very reason to exist.

never (or hardly ever) been revolutionary, into one that is, we can only hope that the exploited will themselves work to "disorganise" the unions, then try to create an instrument fit for the task of the revolution.» ("Corale").

Conclusion

We do not agree with the Corale comrades completely. A project to disorganise the unions would require a destructive logic that is incompatible with that of the latter's perspective of minor interests and needs. It would be dispersive to put energy (which we do not possess) into such a perspective, and not the right way to look at the problem of worker organisation. Quicker and better results would be obtained by making a radical critique of the unions and extending it equally to revolutionary and anarcho-syndicalism. Workers will become more aware of the union's limitations if they are presented with a possible alternative: that of leaving this public service to its own fate and preparing to create small autonomous base organisations dedicated to the radical struggle against the present structures of production.

These groups should assume the form of production nuclei. There is no alternative to this. The worker is part of the machinery and the factory. Capitalist exploitation continues to brutally condemn him to the almost total alienation of his personality, still today in the era of advanced technology. Once outside the factory the worker is a poor tired man who can only go to bed, make love and fall asleep. His fighting potential is drained out of him. To drag him out into revolutionary "broods" would be a psychological as well as tactical error. Only a small highly sensitised minority are able to do this, and always with great limitations. That is why any

them will be forced to make mortal ideological jumps to try to bring the devil and saints together.

It is certainly not possible to forecast what state the economy will be in after the revolution. Events of immense importance come into force at the moment of the decisive crisis. Events of lesser importance, but nevertheless determining ones, remain within the whole system making any analytical attempts other than those of great approximation impossible. It is not possible to draw up a detailed program but a few things can be seen clearly. The presence of State control is negative. It cannot avoid determining social conditions because it sets up the economy in a planned way. The post-revolutionary economy, on the other hand, must be a natural economy where production and distribution are assured through horizontal agreements between producers who are also consumers.

It is easy to see how the syndicalist bodies could play a very serious role once the productive phase of a post-revolutionary economy is in act. They could continue to be intermediaries with centralised power, and where this does not exist they could invent it in order to continue to develop their eternal function of transmission. The objectively counter-revolutionary role they play under a regime of capitalist economy would evolve into an active counter-revolutionary one in a communist regime.

Some comrades draw the conclusion that the syndicalist body or union should be considered a "public service": «Actually only a small part of the proletariat become conscious of the cycle "produce, consume, be alienated" imposed by capitalism, but this small part is recuperated by capitalism (with the help of the unions). This has been reconsidered by certain young people, drop-outs, communes, etc., as well as various other strata

«We cannot destroy the union, but we do not want to work within it. Rather than try to transform an organisation which has

«The political proposal of the eighth congress of the C.G.LL. expresses itself in the adoption of a programme of economic and social development and political transformation to ensure the country fully employs its resources; a phase of a renewed impulse in productive and moral energy, an undertaking no longer built on the sacrifice and super-exploitation of the masses». (C.G.I.L.)

This is something the capitalists could subscribe to, of course, its only defect being that it is unrealistic. Not so much because the (bad, ugly) capitalists don't want it, but because it is impossible. Economic and social development can only come about (in a capitalist system of production) through a more intense exploitation of the worker. Any alternative to this is yet to be found by bourgeois economists, who have been doing their utmost from Keynes onwards, and the unions know that very well.

«We well know that two factors act on prices. One is of an external character, so is reflected from abroad, especially from the countries we have financial relations with. The other is composed of monetary manoeuvres and prices operated in this country by the employers and the government directly.

«We have not been able to act effectively concerning what affects us from abroad. What strikes us is the nonchalance with which employers and government are operating in a threefold sector: a) making the workers pay the consequences of the crisis through price increases and monetary devaluation; b) regaining strength, still with the preceding manoeuvre, through wage increases and pensions the workers manage to gain through hard struggle; c) then pointing to the workers and their claims as being the cause of the crisis and the increase in the cost of living.» (C.G.I.L.)

Even in this statement (seemingly so concrete) there is a shadow of something unsaid. The phenomenon of price increases is inherent in capitalist economy. It derives great benefits

from it in its growing phase only to feel all the consequences later. Persistence in savings, the incapacity to select essential investments and the necessary opening to consumerism (where the unions collaborated for the workers' inclusion) — had it not been for all this the present crisis would have come about much earlier (from the end of the Fifties). Price increases are a necessary, not an accidental, phenomenon of capitalism. They are not due to bad administration or an unfavourable time (the oil crisis should be examined more closely in this sense) nor are they due to a monetary manoeuvre for the pleasure of printing banknotes. They are intrinsic to the capitalist system. The unions, being partners of capitalism, are not sorry about this but about the fact that their accomplices are blaming them for something they collaborated in determining together.

On the logical-economic level the union's proposals to achieve monetary stability are of the same value as the accusations by capital that the unions are the cause of the crisis: pure demagogy.

«In the sphere of agriculture it means radically reversing the policy followed until now that has led to the present ruinous situation in spite of the important financial measures taken.

«Absentee landlord property, unearned income and archaic contractual relations are no longer tolerable. It is inadmissible that vast expanses of land lie uncultivated in order to concentrate production in a few so-called first- rate firms, while great masses of workers are unemployed, forced to emigrate or live in misery as we spend millions on food imports and flood damage. Considerable financial resources need to be put into agriculture for:

a. investment related to land resources, water supply, tree planting, and the hydro-geological system.

If the revolution is eminently a bureaucratic event, a State crisis as in the Hungary of the councils, the syndicalist organisations become the State in first person. They guarantee the safe passage of production into the hands of the State, taking care to dampen any original, spontaneous attempts by the mass towards their ultimate liberation.

If the workers take the initiative spontaneously as they did in Russia, Germany and Italy, and form their own base organisations — their councils — and declare war on the structures of exploitation, the syndicalist bodies pass over on to the side of the State and try to negotiate (causing as little damage as possible) the passage to the subsequent phase of normalisation and centralisation. In the phase of centralisation such as that which took place in Russia at the time of the Stalinist debut, the unions lost ground before the party.

Some will say: but these are communist and social democratic unions, not anarchist ones; it would be impossible for anarchist comrades to behave that way. And we agree. It isn't possible… but it happens. It is impossible for anarchist comrades to join the government, for anarcho-syndicalists to propose becoming a part of the government, but it happens. It is impossible for anarchist newspapers to be forbidden by anarchist organisations, but it happens. It is not anarchism that makes men, but men who make anarchism.

In the case of anarcho-syndicalist organisations the most logical thing would be for them to disband in order to avoid falling into a narrow trade unionist logic, and if this were to happen our analysis would be pointless.

But it is possible for this to happen before the revolution, not just after it. On the other hand, if they continue the most logical thing for them to do will be to act like all the syndicalist organisations of this world, and the anarchist comrades who remain in

Events have always shown how workers need these analyses as they often want clarification concerning objectives to be reached and the means to defend themselves against the bosses and their "counsellors". And not knowing where to turn they themselves often seek a leader or party for advice and guidance, when not the return to power of the old exploiting set-up itself. The slave who has lived all his life in chains might well believe he has done so because of the latter rather than in spite of them and attack whoever tries to break them off. But this is part of the indispensable work that needs to be done now. It is not an insurmountable obstacle that leads to the inevitability of direction and command.

In the pre-revolutionary phase it must be recognised by the workers that the union is a collaborator of the employers, an intermediary that guarantees to gain certain limited rights but also fights in order continue the conditions that allow this struggle to take place. In the case of the contrary, it would be a question of an intermediary struggling for its own elimination.

Syndicalist organisations after the revolution

The ultimate proof of the limitations of the syndicalist organisation and its essential danger can be seen in the effects of its presence in the immediately post-revolutionary phase.

If the revolutionary event is steered by a party or realised by the military action of a minority capable of drawing in the mass but which stifles all their spontaneous activity, the action of the syndicalist organisation does no more than consign everything into the hands of the revolutionary party, thereby handing the workers over to the exploiting class.

b. indirect investment and credit facilities for the transformation of farming methods and crops orientation related to regional development.

c. the expansion of the zoo-technical sector, fruit and wine growing, the improvement of beet cultivation, olive and tobacco growing.

d. measures in favour of land workers' associations and cooperatives, and reforms of credit facilities.

e. State initiative in industrial elaboration and distribution of agricultural products.

f. a programme for public intervention in the field of food imports.» (C.G.LL.)

What is being requested is a compensated development scheme for industry and agriculture in order to eliminate the imbalance in the system. Pointless waste in the agricultural sector leads to an incredible increase in imports and a growth in migration from the country. Capitalism would treasure this plan of expansion if it could, its only defect being that it is utopian. It is not clear what they want to do — encourage the small proprietor (at the cost of the big landowners) or support the restructuring of the main agricultural industries through massive State intervention. The first alternative would clash with a European economic reality that has no space for marginal industries, the second would lead to an expansion in agricultural industrialisation and a consequent growth in the agricultural working class that would not be at all pleasing to the capitalists' palates. The bosses know that the creation of small farms would not solve the problem of agricultural supply, while the formation

of a network of large farms in the sector would defeat the traditional possibility of control through rural patronage. The unions realise that a struggle for small property (occupation of uncultivated land) would regain the peasants' trust, but they would prefer to bid for a more homogeneous class situation such as that of an agricultural working class given the difficulty in controlling the former. Strangely, interests which appear to be in contrast become compatible: they talk of peasants' associations but have in mind the cooperatives in Emilia run by the Communist Party, they talk of expropriation of uncultivated land, but have in mind the struggle for the land occupations relaunched by the Communist Party after the war.

In effect, what the union wants in its perspective of progressive power-wielding expansion, is to direct the national economy towards some kind of centralism. Here is what the C.G.LL. say concerning their relationship with the State controlled bodies.

«We certainly do not support the idea of those who say that the unions must remain outside State administrative bodies because these only concern political forces. Anyone who thinks that does not understand the new reality of the unions. Their role cannot restrict itself to the factory but must also develop throughout society, not as the guard dog of the social and economic structure but as both a fighter and a force that is active in modifying the structure itself, for the development of social and economic progress.

«But participation in State organisms at the level of co-responsibility with no capacity for action would not be acceptable to us either». (C.G.LL.)

The power it lays claim to is clear here: act on the levers of subgovernment because indirectly, it means giving more and more space to the unions in the running of the country.

The first case is not direct action. The use of sabotage is put into effect by the union organisation on the leaders' decision in view of a claim. In practice the use of such an instrument might become probable in the case of a revolutionary evolution of the unions, but always an evolution in the authoritarian sense. In the best possible case the result would be a Blanquist attempt at revolution with all the consequences that would ensue. Even if it were libertarian syndicalists to put such an action into effect, anarcho-syndicalists capable of silencing any tendency to authoritarianism determined by the structure of the organisation, the revolutionary tension would be something that was being imposed on the mass. Any decision to act, given the objective conditions, would not find fertile ground upon which to develop. For the sake of argument, take the case of a truly unique phenomenon such as finding syndicalist leaders of such dispassionate mental frankness and proved anarchist faith as to feel no particular attachment to their own tasks and position, the separation between these "angels" and the working masses, at times unable to understand even an angel's message, would become evident.

This would be a case of direct action. If the anarcho-syndicalist angel really is such, he will immediately abandon his own position to join the others in the concrete, specific task that began in one place and could spread to others. Of course the worker might never find the solution to the problem of the direct organisation of struggle on his own, and in the specific case he might not find the "moral" solution (not the technical one because he knows that a lot better than all the syndicalists and revolutionaries put together) of sabotaging a locomotive, and it is in this sense that the work of the revolutionary stands and is justifiable. But the worker will certainly never need someone to organise him in unions, parties, sects or anything else of the kind in order to bring about his liberation.

which apparently use methods typical of direct action but which do not contain the basic element of autonomy of the base.

Let us take a radical example, that of sabotage. The worker attacks the structure of exploitation with the tools of his work (his very strength of resistance, that is) thereby destroying both the ideology of work (fruit of the regime's servants) and the production output of the class that is oppressing him. Let us imagine that this method of struggle is applied in the railway, for example. We can foresee two possibilities:

1. The union, secretly using means that it does not possess at the moment but which it could develop to this end, gives the order to sabotage all the locomotives in the railways' possession. For their part the workers, obeying union directives, put all or some of the locomotives in question out of use. In this way strong union pressure is put on the counterpart (in this case the State, but the argument would not change much if it were taken into the private sector), which accepts the demands made.

2. Workers organise at the base discussing, even in isolated groups, the possibility of struggle against capitalist exploitation and union collaboration. They decide to sabotage (still in the case of the railways) some of the locomotives, even in one single area. The other workers (hence the hypothesis of the action spreading to other sectors) realise the validity of such actions and, guaranteeing themselves with a clandestine action or whatever other instrument they may decide upon according to the place and the needs of the moment, they extend their initiative. Propositions can be made to the counterpart, but not necessarily.

And the base? What relationship does the union develop with them? How are they involved in these decisions? How are decisions such as participation in the economic management of State-controlled bodies filtered from above, and what consequences do these decisions have on the workers?

«Union leaders must constantly be supported by the faith of those represented and must be capable of transforming this faith into a creative force).» (G. Ramal, Spanish Minister of Trade Union Relations. Declaration of 1971). As we can see, the problem is no different in the case of Spanish fascism [written in 1975]. The union leader is the mediator who must create the conditions so that capitalist administration can proceed in the best way possible.

It is in this sense that the problem the unions are most sensitive to is that of re-organisation. Inside the factories factory councils (managed by the unions of course) are taking the place of the old internal commissions, and outside there is a prospect of close links between factory and society. In this way housing associations are springing up, an experiment in structures outside the factory aimed at guaranteeing the presence of the unions in undertakings which might otherwise develop a dangerous autonomy.

Here competition between the various unions moves into second place: what counts is having power. What we find at the centre of the problem of the delegate is the preparation for tomorrow's great task of domination.

«We must courageously put forward new managerial cadres, especially workers and farm labourers».(C.G.LL.)

The figure of the delegate is essential to the union. Changing the relationship, he could be compared to the figure of the civil servant within the structure of capitalism. On the one hand the civil servant guarantees control over production, on the other he guarantees the requirements of science and the State. The dele-

gate does something similar. On the one hand he guarantees the persistence of union management in the dimension of the shop floor, a dimension which could very well, and in many cases does, find itself to be in contrast to what the union considers necessary. On the other, he appeases the capitalists' concern about having to deal with a tumultuous and contradictory mass that is incapable of using the language of the initiated and who might easily pass to the living deed.

Here is what Professor Carerlynck (professor at the Law Faculty of Paris) writes in his introduction to Statute of Delegates and Members of the Factory Committee (1964), a fundamental text of the French union, the C.G.T : «The point of conflict the factory constitutes cannot be balanced in law through imposed, organised discussion between employees and management alone, but through a close articulation between such personnel and the unions, thus extending their right of action within the factory. There is a monopoly of the list of candidates presented by the most important union organisations, permanent control with a possibility of recall during mandate, participation of a union representative at the factory committee sessions and at the meetings of the personnels' delegates: in short, factory agreements with the union representatives and not the employees.

«The contrast in interests between employers and workers is something that cannot be masked by the creation of common organisations. Without doubt this apposition is sometimes violent but it does not exclude dialogue. On the contrary, the daily meeting place for worker and employer remains the factory, hence the absolute need for a personnel representative linked to the unions. «During strikes workers nearly always spontaneously nominate a few from among them to present their claims to the management… but the absence of a permanent mandate means that this is not considered legal worker delegation, albeit at an early stage.

clean hands and a white collar. He can meet the other intellectual, who has come through the same university and taken the place of the factory boss, on equal terms. If capitalism is in the process of escaping from the hands of the old lions, trade unionism has been free of the old union leaders for some time. It has met with the requirements of the future intelligently and earlier than expected. We firmly believe that even at the time when the old union representative scared the boss with his daring, the seeds of the present situation already existed just as the seeds of the managerial evolution of capitalism existed in the old entreprenerial capitalism. Degeneration in the social body is never a "new" event as anarchism has always taught, but is always an evolution, a modification of the situation that already existed. And it is the way means are used that conditions the ends achieved. Here again the use of means such as claiming better conditions or attempts by a minority to build a monolithic structure just like the one it is opposing, have contributed to the present incapacity to see the aims of the proletariat clearly.

Of course, the reader could easily object that this is not the perspective of anarcho-syndicalism. But it is one thing to talk about death, another to die. It is one thing to build beautiful social fantasies, another to come into contact with reality. It is one thing to want to save anarchist principles even within the syndicalist organisation, another to try to make them enter the partial claims that syndicalism, knowingly or unknowingly, is tied to, by force. And there is no point in insisting upon direct action here. When a struggle organisation really does build itself an direct action, either it is not a syndicalist one (in that it lacks the structure based on territory, representation, assistance and ideology typical of the syndicalist organisation, which would reduce the question to semantics), or it is simply a travesty of direct action, i.e. actions

vision of the revolution, or at least be incapable of putting it into practice.

We must understand that the labour movement in its traditional guise is a movement of workers and their leaders whose only interest is to insert themselves within the logic of capital in order to come off as well as possible. It is time we stopped creating illusions on this subject. The pre-revolutionary phase gives rise to specific situations which implicate subjective and objective maturation, but which cannot avoid what is the case: the syndicalist movement is not a revolutionary movement. When the instruments of this movement are used, (or are claimed to be used) in a revolutionary sense, it means violation by a minority. The results are usually worse than the evil they mean to exorcise.

The atmosphere of the trades unions is permeated with a spirit of class collaboration, a corporate vision of the economy uniting bourgeoisie and proletariat with the intention of assuring the maximum wellbeing for the workers.

Capitalism has come through crises in production in the past, has matured in the modern democratic school, become agile and its own master and is animated by a strong spirit of transformation and innovation. It is incapable of conceiving nationalistic rubbish and such like, being in the course of rising to international requirements through the abandoning of the old entreprenerial class. Old-style capitalism has given way to a new managerial version. It is perfectly well aware that its best friend and ally is the trade union. By substituting the myth of the businessman with that of the technocrat the great familiarity that exists between union leader and factory manager, their common aims, the parallel direction of their efforts and the similarity of their education becomes evident. The old union representative with the callused hands he was capable of shaking violently at the boss has been replaced by the intellectual who has come through university with

«Election with permanent office is still not enough to constitute a true workers' delegation, delegates must be recognised as such by the employees within the framework of the factory».

But things are quite different in reality. Workers are suspicious of the unions. They join them because they think they will be supported if they are sacked or if they have a fight with the foreman, and because they think they are "generically" under protection. The way the unions use the strike demonstrates the absurd role they have reduced themselves to playing. The latest comedy is the one they are acting out concerning the unemployment commissions.

«The question of unemployment commissions should be completely re-examined. We failed to make the commissions function as propulsive instruments not only in the struggle for work, but also in any other aspect of the problem, such as the structure and function of agricultural labour (non existence of offices in many areas and the latter not open in the evening which would mean, if the law were observed, not only loss of time for the employer but, above all, loss of working days for the agricultural workers).

«This does not mean going back to the market place. However, we must solve the problem. We cannot take on responsibilities that are not our concern. We cannot be managers of unemployment on the one hand and the windscreen of a bureaucratic structure that does not want to reform and face the needs of the moment on the other, saving face by unloading the workers' legitimate protests on to the unions instead of those really responsible for this state of affairs». (C.G.LL.)

It is always the same tale: we must not disturb the bosses with stupid problems, but we must not act out the comedy too undisguisedly. We must not let the worker see our inefficiency and supine acquiescence to the bosses' will: that is the crux of the story of the unemployment commissions.

For their part, workers and peasants have quite clear ideas about the unions' limitations. «The indifference towards the union is such that they have difficulty in finding workers who are prepared to become candidates for delegation. Often the delegate is not elected which would give cause to believe that there must be a given number of claimants equivalent to the posts vacant because in fact a number of delegates' posts become vacant after a short time as those elected hand in their demission as soon as the elections are over». (Andrieux Lignon, *L'Ouvrier d'aujourd'hui*, Paris. 1960).

On the other hand the system is so integrated today that it is able to do better than the unions themselves at times.

«Often… we meet in one of the union rooms to discuss problems raised by the workers. Once I managed to fix a meeting with the management for the next day, but the problem had already been solved and the union got no credit for having ended the dispute favourably. It has become a battle between loyalties… The factory now offers the workers everything we have been fighting for. What we need is to find things the worker wants but the boss doesn't give. We are looking for them». (United Automobile Workers — U.S.A.)

And so to end this discussion on collaboration, payment as it is due: «Once again we say to the comrades of the F.O. and the C.F.T.C.: We do not find that the government gives too much to the union organisations, but too little. We insist that the State pay its obligations to the union movement correctly.» ("*L'Humanite*", June, I964).

speech on his arrival at St Petersbourg is a clear example of this "readiness".

«there was not a revolution in Hungary in the true sense of the word. The State fell into the hands of the proletariat in the space of a night so to speak.» (Varga)

This explains why the Hungary of the councils saw private property pass directly from the capitalists into the hands of the State without any attempts at workers' self-management. Varga continues: «It is sufficient to give the workers the impression that they have production at their disposition and are in control of it; in truth that means little because it is we who have central control, and the net returns are determined by the prices politic.»

If the revolution was strangled in Russia, in Hungary (of the councils) it never took place.

It was different in Germany. The sailors rebelled when faced with the prospect of another futile massacre in the movement of 1918. They came ashore at Hamburg waving the red flag. Millions of workers united with them and in a few days the whole qf Germany was a network of workers' and peasants' councils. The parties and unions tried to attack this spontaneous movement and that explains why it did not progress. Exhausted by the struggle against the counter-revolution the proletariat had to surrender, thus determining the failure of the revolution itself. Similar phenomena have occurred in Italy and Spain and wherever tension between the leaders and the revolutionary mass has developed in the name of reformist farsightedness.

What we consider fundamental in the pre-revolutionary phase is the organisation of the base of the workers independently of any kind of political or syndicalist structure. The former would transfer precise class interests to a level so wide as to nullify them completely, the second would tie them to a progressive claiming of better conditions that would prevent the possibility of a radical

Syndicalism and the pre-revolutionary phase

Everything we have said up till now on the problem of syndicalism becomes particularly important in the pre-revolutionary phase. When the conditions for a radical transformation are ripe the masses find themselves faced with very complex problems, and the traditional workers' organisations are called upon to respond to the historical moment.

Here the discourse could be extended to the specifically political organisations such as the parties, which present similar problems, but we prefer to concern ourselves with syndicalist organisations alone for the sake of simplicity.

The Russian revolution developed on the basis of the Soviets. There is nothing to do with syndicalism in the idea of these base structures.

«The idea of the soviet is an exact expression of what we mean by social revolution; this corresponds to the constructive part of socialism. The idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat is of bourgeois origin and has nothing at all to do with socialism.» (R. Rocker)

The degenerative process they underwent is too well known to require mention here. What is important is that the role of the masses was decisive, and that that of the syndicalist organisations was not at the same level. It could be argued that this was due to an inadequate development of the instrument, or to unsuitable economic conditions, but that does not solve the problem. It was the masses who were ready for revolution and the consequent necessities. What the workers' organisations (in the first place the parties) did was to follow the evolution of the situation. Lenin's

Traditional criticisms of trade-unionism

These can be summed up as showing the limitations in the development of the unions. The latter were in fact born to oppose the capitalists' exploitation of the workers, i.e. were born in an objective historical situation which has evolved in time, so there has also been an evolution in the structure of their tasks.

A monopolistic concentration of capital and a union concentration of labour eventually oppose each other without either having the upper hand. The conflict has never been resolved and all delay is to the benefit of the exploiting class who are thus able to continue their exploitation even after the objective reasons for doing so no longer exist.

In itself this criticism is not mistaken. But it is generally used mistakenly, according to the political interests motivating the analyst.

By putting the critique of trade unions into relief we touch, perhaps involuntarily, on the objective differences that exist between the various confederations in Italy today. However, to go into these differences in depth would take us far from our problem. If the C.G.I.L. presented itself at the congress of July 1973 as a "demanding" union, one which puts forward claims, sometimes even presenting a challenge, during this congress they resolved to collaborate in the growth of production and full employment of available resources» (Luciano Lama, "*L'Unita*", 29th July, 1973). As far as the C.I.S.L. is concerned, its attitude of hanging on in its confrontations with the C.G.I.L., its links with the Christian Democrats and its collaborationism, can leave no room for doubt. Here is a criticism of the C.G.I.L. made by the C.I.S.L.: «The C.G.I.L.'s objective is not to keep claims within the limits of the economic apparatus but on the contrary, they are interested in forcing the situation beyond the point of equilibrium, with the aim of weakening it and

putting the political forces in difficulty, and if possible, in crisis». (E. Parri).

In recent years [1970] a certain hardening of the C.S.I.L.'s political line can be observed to a certain extent, particularly on the question of a possible fusion between the three big federations, hence the dispute with the Right of the C.I.S.L.

Less important from the contractual aspect is the U.I.L. which considers itself the third force between the authoritarianism of the C.G.I.L. and the pro-government C.I.S.L. No mention need be made here of the declaredly fascist union, the (CISNAL).

As we can see considerable differences exist in the perspectives and levels of intervention within the union ranks but in the light of events they all share the same logic: collaborationism. Be it in the haze of Marxist authoritarianism or Christian possibilism, the unions cannot escape their true vocation, that of an increasingly active role in the running of the State and the exploitation of the workers. Let us take Gramsci for example. He writes: «History has demonstrated that purely corporative resistance can be, and in fact is, the most useful platform for the organisation of the great masses. This, at a given moment, when it pleases capitalism, (which possesses in the State and the White Guard a very strong instrument of industrial coercion) can also appear as an inconsistent ghost. The organisation subsists, the proletariat do not lose their class spirit, but organisation and class spirit express themselves in a multiplicity of forms around the political party which the workers recognise as their own. Pure corporative resistance becomes pure political resistance.»

The conclusion to Gramsci's critique is the workers' party, i.e. the Communist Party. The struggle cannot be continued at a structural level, leading to a transposition to the superstructural one. A marxist project like any other, which does not interest us here.

was different to the rest of Spain, collectivisation was promulgated in October 1936 for the whole of industry. The collectives were only tolerated in the services sector and agriculture. Instead of bearing in mind the historic lessons of Spartakist and double-faced bourgeois power in Germany in 1919 and the Makhnovists and communists in the Ukraine in 1919, they crushed the revolutionaries, thereby eliminating the workers' conquests: the anarco-syndicalists, with the masses at their disposition, took political power for themselves.» ("Corale")

There are not many analyses of this. Sometimes particular questions are gone into (for example the military problem) and others are forgotten. Often a summary balance sheet is drawn up and the positive phenomena are brought to light while, perhaps for love of country; the negative ones are kept quiet. We think it is time, limiting ourselves to the problem of syndicalism, to put some of the negative aspects of the structure into relief.

«Fascism in the broad sense of the word does not consist of the symbols or types of regime we define as such… it is authority in all its various forms and manifestations that gives rise to fascism.

«We have built an army identical to that of the State and the classical organs of repression. As before, the police are acting against the workers who are trying to do something socially useful. The people's militias have disappeared. In a word: the Social Revolution has been strangled". (Colonna di Ferro, in "*Linea de Fuego*").

The conditions for military defeat were now firmly established. To this was added the defeat of morals and principles, essentially the defeat of a foreign body in the form of a directing mentality that had infiltrated the anarchist syndicalist organisation thanks to the particular composition of these organisations.

those who were not declaredly anarchist, but were influenced by the latter) were for direct action, egalitarianism and the immediate organisation of the new society, so a form of struggle developed between the C.N.T and the F.A.I. on the one hand and these other groups on the other.

In March 1937 incidents broke out in Vilanese, near Valence, because of a government decree voted in by anarchist minister Lopez which was harmful to the local collectives (which had been formed by the C.N.T. and the socialist U.G.T).

In May 1937 a clash between anarchists and the C.P in Barcelona led to a series of fights which lasted over a week and extended to a number of neighbouring towns. Alongside the anarchists of the Los Amigos de Durruti groups were the groups of the P.O.U.M. (dissident communists) and the Libertarian Youth. Condemned by the C.N.T, Los Amigos de Durruti were obliged to suspend the fighting. The C.P. immediately sent out an armed column and began the repression, killing numerous comrades. The newspaper "Los Amigos de Durruti" went clandestine.

When Lister's communist division began the systematic destruction of the Aragon collective in 1937, comrades wanted to organise the resistance but were prevented by a precise order from the C.N.T. The newspaper "Espagne Nouvelle", printed clandestinely in France because it was forbidden in Spain, reads, «We should have defended our Councils with arms in spite of the defeatest attitude of the C.N.T.» (29th October 1937)

The comrades of the Corale group write: «It goes without saying that in 1936 anarcho-syndicalism in Spain found itself confronted with the same phenomenon that occured in France in 1906: the integration of the movement because of its acceptation of the claims of bourgeois society. When necessary the republican bourgeoisie accept the collectivisation of heavy industry in order to control it later as a war industry. In Catalonia, where jurisdiction

What matters is that this critique of trade unionism is an authoritarian critique which supports the ideology of the guiding party.

One criticism of trades union structures today is that made by the revolutionary syndicalists. The union is accused of becoming bureaucratic and power-hungry. «In the International there can be no problem of venal corruption because the Association is too poor… But there is another kind of corruption which unfortunately the International Association cannot escape from: that of vanity and ambition.» (Bakunin)

In fact quantitative growth in the union structure opens up horizons for power (or vanity as Bakunin mentioned) that were unthinkable at the dawn of union struggles, but which, as we shall see further on, were perhaps credible even then. The theory that takes the place of Sorel's myth is that expressed by Maurice Jouhaux (French Anarchist Federation): «Revolutionary action consists of realising the maximum number of achievements, not reform but social transformation… Not just because this means an immediate improvement in the workers' conditions, but also because such achievements contain the possibility of social progress, education and intellectual elevation, because they are a step towards the revolution, a victory over the forces of the past.»

If the Gramscian critique led to the Party as a solution, the revolutionary syndicalist critique, heir of Pelloutier and Delesalle, ends up in syndicalism itself. The presumption of efficiency falls and only the syndicalist ideology remains: the embryo of a State within the bourgeois State. They will not understand that the syndicalist organisation, like the political party, cannot lead to social revolution although it may determine revolutionary conditions (parallel to the development of other conditions) just as capitalism does (through its very process of exploitation). On the morrow of the revolution if we really want it to be such, there can be no such thing as party or syndicalist organisation, just as there can be no

capitalism. The structures of the future will be simply economic, not political, federations of base organisations otherwise the work will have to begin all over again.

Here another criticism (indirectly contained in that of bureaucratisation) falls: the critique of trade union efficiency. The bureaucrats are accused of being opposed to pressure from the base because the latter move in a certain direction, generally that of using tougher forms of struggle (such as the wildcat strike) and direct action. This fact can easily be substantiated. The present writer has personally had collisions and observed others with the "union police" during demonstrations-collisions of such brutality (and dull-wittedness) as to make the most warlike (and dull-witted) riot police envious. In any case what should be noted is that the union management's inefficiency is not simply due to a mistaken outlook on their part but is one of their essential features. Even direct action, if realised within the dimension of the union to imagine in the extreme, would lose its significance and end up easy prey to the inefficiency typical of the structure in question. Let us look at a few examples:

«We quite understand the repulsion of the mass of young people avid for justice, honour and purity as a consequence of the decadence of the regime and all that it represents in scandal, sin, pornography and even criminality.

«We are witnessing a true influx of perversion, corruption and amorality. Nothing escapes it, be it the press, literature or the cinema.

«In certain circles creative freedom comes to be confused with intellectual decadence. Perhaps we will be accused of puritanism-it matters little, but for a long time now those of us who are still attached to moral, cultural and human values have been standing up without distinction, in political opinion or religious faith, in order to maintain them.» (G. Seguy, 6th September, 1973)

socialist and communist politicians. I am also talking about well known anarchist militants, those who in everyday words we could call leaders.» (G. Leval)

«The truth is that the base was not consulted, only a few of the best known elements of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were present at meetings. That was a further swindle.» (Los Amigos de Durruti) in "Le Combat Socialist'", 1971)

The leaders on one side and the masses on the other. The result: the latter take on the great collectivist and communitarian constructions, resolve economic problems of considerable importance, fight in the streets against the fascists and against the no less dangerous "red fascists"; the leaders keep themselves apart, either in government or totally incapable of doing anything.

Certainly Leval cannot be accused of being against syndicalist organisation, either in general or in the particular case of the C.N.T., yet let us see what he writes:

«Spanish anarchism had many "leaders" who did not take on any role. They were absorbed by the official posts they had taken up from the start… That prevented them from continuing with their task as leaders. They remained outside this great undertaking of reconstruction where the proletariat were to learn precious lessons for the future… Various intellectuals on the margins of official tasks were far from the radical transformation of society.» (Leval)

As we can see Leval does not dispute the presence of a syndicalist "leader", and perhaps even less that of the political one, but he cannot but note, honest observer that he is, that events went in such a way that the masses managed themselves on the one side, the leaders on the other.

The consequences did not take long to make themselves felt. So began the contrasts, the fights, the emargination and also the repression. All over Spain numerous anarchist groups (and also

The situation is clear: in the presence of a structure a fracture often (let us say always) appears between the workers' economic interests (which the latter are quite distinctly aware of), and the view of the workers' managers or syndicalist representatives with their own perspectives which are often not only deformed and objectively dangerous for the workers but are also ridiculously behind the times.

Let us look at the classical case of anarcho-syndicalism in Spain. Anarchists in government. The C.N.T. has four ministers out of the fifteen who make up the government. Here is what "Solidaridad Obrera" wrote in 1936:

«The entry of the C.N.T into the government of Madrid is one of the most important facts of the political history of our country. The C.N.T. has always on principal and by conviction been anti-State and the enemy of every form of government. But circumstances, nearly always superior to the human will although determined by it, have transformed the nature of government and the Spanish State. At the present time the government as a regular instrument of the State is no longer an oppressive force against the working class.»

Poor Bakunin (which is nothing), and poor working class (which is serious). These anarchists who try to hide their own personal incapacity to act behind the apparent "realism" of the anarcho-syndicalist banner can never meditate enough on this passage. With these lines not only anarchist anti-Statism, but also voluntarism, bitterly reduced to the simple jargon of a not very bright penny-a-liner, fell in Spain.

«All the most prominent men of the syndicalist and anarchist groups were present… We have joined the government, but the streets have escaped us-…» (Federica Montseny)

«I want to point to a curious fact: the fiasco of the summit, of the directing minority, the leaders. I am not just talking about the

We know from the writings of so many holy fathers how the acknowledged revolutionary needs of the people are deviated towards the defence of abstract moral values. We know that these arguments are all the same whether they come from the inquisition, fascism, the president of the industrial union or the most representative of the French unions today, the powerful C.G.T.

The union leaders' concern not to jeopardise relations with the counterpart is always evident. For example, we saw in the jeremiads above concerning the malfunctioning of the employment commissions that one of the points the unions complained about was that they lose time for the employers.

«The development or rather the degeneration of modern union structures all over the world have one aspect in common: their reconciliation and fusion with the State.

«This process is characteristic of all unions be they neutral, social democratic, communist, or anarchist. This alone shows that the tendency to amalgamate with the State is not inherent in one particular doctrine, but is a result of the social conditions common to all unions and syndicalist organisations.» (L. Trotsky)

This affirmation is correct, even though it sees the party as a solution. It is not a question of inefficiency, but of collaboration. The union is no more than a public service and as such can differ in efficiency according to how its bureaucracy functions, but it cannot develop any other perspectives let alone revolutionary ones. It is interesting to see how the mechanisms to put a brake on the base of the workers work. Here for example is what Daniel Mothe writes in "*Socialisme ou Barbarie*" (no 13) concerning the strike in the Renault factory in August 1953.

«Four months earlier the union's tactic was that of repeated strikes. This reached a peak at the time of the strike in Section 74, causing the lockout of the whole industry. The workers were prepared to act, but on condition that their action not be confined

to one or two sections. They wanted a general strike or nothing. They took the initiative, believing that the other sections would follow them. It was only when they realised not only that there was no following but that the unions were doing everything in their power to isolate them, that they rejected the strike.

«For years the methods of struggle used by the unions were work suspensions limited to half a day, an hour, half an hour or even a quarter of an hour, mass petitions, or a delegation of a handful of men to go before the head of the section. In the month of August the workers realised they would have to stop everything if they wanted their wages reconsidered. But even there the unions opposed themselves, and tried to keep the strike within a legal framework.

«At a general assembly the workers voted in favour of a proposal to send a delegation to the Ministry. Once again the unions took on the task of forming the delegation, limiting it to a few workers. No mass demonstration could be permitted by a bureaucracy with no interest whatsoever in seeing a movement go beyond the limits of its own objectives.»

This kind of operative inefficiency could be defined procrastination. It is not one of the union's aims to radicalise the struggle: the consequences (positive or negative) would be paid by the union bureaucrats in first person. Their inefficiency is a reflex, it contains an innate collaborationism, a congenital elephantiasis.

But there exists another kind of inefficiency, that of "silence", of restricting information. The rank and file being kept away from any control of information, the mechanism is quite simple. Let us return to Mothe's analysis.

«The first means of opposing workers' spontaneous action is that of not giving directions: by remaining silent. This silence is all the easier as factory publications are in the hands of the union bureaucrats. The workers have no control over them whatsoever.

organisation S.A.C. (Sveriges Arbetaren Centralorganisation) is quite well-spread and representative. Let us see how this change of syndicalist tactics in the direction of the stalest revisionism is justified.

«The population are aware of having created a particular situation because security from birth to death has prevented them from listening to the prophets of revolution who impart the idea of fighting on the barricades and the total destruction of the existing social system.

«The anarcho-syndicalists have lived their experiences and drawn conclusions which we consider valid only in situations such as Sweden. If the S.A.C. has abandoned insurrectional propaganda and no longer wants to conduct agitation aimed at the destruction of all the other social forces, they have done so because it is impossible to proceed any other way in this country The population think along peaceful lines and if we were to try to lead them to revolutionary action we would make ourselves ridiculous and provoke general ill-feeling. If we were to propose violent action in a peaceful society we would become the equivalent of bulls in a china shop.» (E. Arvidsson)

End of transmission! There are no alternatives. Meanwhile the base of the Swedish workers are seeking a new road aimed at the destruction of work, demanding completely free time and the destruction of a State which imposes collective wellbeing by obliging people to continue in a given way and prevents them from choosing what they want to do. While the base of the workers, in complete darkness in an anguish even more terrible than that of poverty (let us not forget the suicides and other phenomena), are looking for new methods fitting to the power structure they have to fight, the obtuse anarcho-syndicalist leaders are still talking in terms of insurrection as "bulls in a china shop".

have their own very precise ideas about what self-management of the factory should mean within the perspective of capitalist administration. That is to say it could be that they want to "demonstrate" something more, something of perhaps greater political value than the mere continuation of wages for a restricted number of people but still something which never goes "beyond" certain objective and contingent interests in our opinion. Of course, this some-thing could contribute to expanding the movement as a whole, but it must not become an alibi for smuggling the leadership's decisions beyond the shaky border of the workers' interests. In short, bearing in mind that only a restricted number of comrades have clear ideas on problems that go beyond the immediate area of the economic sector (which often require laborious analyses) and bearing in mind that these comrades (in the best of faith as anarchists and individuals) cannot but fight for the triumph of their ideas, we are certain that when this happens within a syndicalist structure it inevitably opens up the way to compromise or authoritarianism.

In the case where no structure exists, where the more prepared comrades speak in the name of a group of producers with precise interests and means of obtaining them by coordinated actions supported by the intervention of comrades from outside, anything can happen. The discourse can widen beyond measure, become social and political and draw in a total vision of the world just the same. Here no one will speak in the name of an organisation which would have to live and defend itself as such.

Let us take a look at Swedish anarcho-syndicalist revisionism. Sweden, like other Scandinavian countries (Norway, Denmark and Holland), is a State where an ideology of "guaranteed wellbeing" exists at a superficial level. There is social tutelage by the State. Something similar exists in an even more rational form in New Zealand and Australia. The anarcho-syndicalist

«It often happens that workers who are prepared to go on strike change their minds because they realise that they will not be supported by the unions.

«If this form of passivity is not enough to dampen the workers' will, they spread defeatism or demoralise the combative ones. "The union bureaucracy's methods are not very different to those of the bosses.

«Above a11 it means dividing. Suspicion and mistrust is spread among the workers." You will go on strike but others won't follow you even if they say they will. They will desert you in the middle of it."

«They throw suspicion on the most combative among them. "You, you are for the strike because you don't have children to feed." They accuse those wanting to go on strike of not having done so in the past.

«They try to dissuade those in favour of the strike with political arguments. They give false information on the situation in other sectors and have it believed that the workers are not in agreement.»

There are many ways to qualify such behaviour. We do not intend to make a list of them. We are not surprised by the methods used to put a brake on the base — on the contrary, we are surprised to find people who still believe the unions are in good faith. The problem is not so much how to make workers understand the unions' defects as that of studying means to contrast these defects with a view to creating an offensive among them. Now the problem is that of building an efficient workers' structure based on direct action, in another direction altogether, from a healthy base far from the unions and organised horizontally.

What can workers actually do within the unions? Not only are they centralised organisations, but only delegates from the shop floor have the right to move around and inform themselves, and

we know that delegates represent the union structure, not the base. It is a characteristic union manoeuvre to cry their strength to the winds when they are trying to persuade workers to join but this same strength is passed off as being incapable of cohesion and fighting when the leadership turn against the base of the workers.

Another traditional criticism of the unions is one that some anarchists use against the anarcho-syndicalist tendency which unconditionally supported revolutionary syndicalism without attempting to see the limitations and dangerous contradictions of trade unionism and syndicalism in general.

Perhaps one of the clearest debates on this problem is that which took place between Monatte and Malatesta at the Amsterdam Congress in 1907. Monatte supports a program where syndicalism and anarchism would complement each other. On the daily task of claiming better conditions syndicalism coordinates the workers' strength and the growth in their wellbeing by gaining immediate improvements:.. preparing for their complete emancipation which is impossible without the expropriation of capital.» (Monatte)

Malatesta, with basic clarity on the problem, says «Syndicalism can be accepted as a means, not as an end. Even the general strike, which for syndicalism is synonymous with revolution, cannot be considered anything but a means.»

The same year he wrote in "*Les Temps Nouveau*",«In spite of the declarations of its most ardent partisans syndicalism contains by its very nature all the elements of degeneration that have corrupted the workers' movement in the past. In fact, being a movement which proposes to defend the workers' interests, it must necessarily adapt to the conditions of the present day.»

As we shall see further on, Malatesta's position is a radical one, but we do not agree with him completely. There can be no doubt that syndicalism is not an end in itself, but the fact that it can be

"degenerations" of the Swedish or (within certain limits) Spanish kind. It cannot happen because it is not the workers themselves who decide what their objective interests are, but the syndicalist leadership who, as we shall see, cxist and have the capacity to select aims and interests, even in anarcho-syndicalism.

We must not forget that syndicalism is a producers' organism therefore of a high economic index, but it is also an organism managed by men who are highly politicised even if only at a personal level. In the case of an anarcho-syndicaiist organisation these men would be anarchists, so would refuse their rights as syndical "leaders". Very well, in that case the organisation would either split up or die, to reappear in a series of initiatives directed by the base without necessarily having any centralised line apart from their common economic and revolutionary interests. But in that case we would no longer be within the concept of anarcho-syndicalism. The latter foresees the structure's existence independently of the economic perspective. It is aimed at defending the workers' interests (economic and non-economic) but above all it exists and is more significant the bigger it is and the more members it has. The same should be said of the men and women who work within the anarcho-syndicalist structure. Their ideas do not come from the economic and historically determined interests of the members or the whole of the working class, but exist in their own right and are in a sense much wider. They go as far as to outline a complete vision of the world (an anarchist or libertarian one) which will necessarily influence the choice of work to be done in particular questions, or political or economic alternatives, in no small way.

Let us imagine that the question of a factory occupation is being discussed. The workers' immediate interest — at least in a dimension such as that which we are living in in Italy today — is the continuation of their wages, a limited interest which in no way puts the work ethic in question. The syndicalist comrades might

Limitations of anarcho-syndicalism

The same argument, with specific elements, applies to anarcho-syndicalism. Here we have an anarchist solution to syndicalism, the solution that took root in the International Workingmen's Association according to the principles of Bakunin, but which still has defects that are intrinsic to all. trade union and syndicalist organisations, be they revolutionary syndicalist, authoritarian communist or the reformist ones of social democracy. Anarcho-syndicalism. if not kept within the limits of "means" as Malatesta appropriately pointed out, runs the risk (as syndicalism, not anarchism) of evolving either towards revisionism (see Sweden), or authoritarianism (see Spain).

But let us try to clarify this problem before we run into serious misunderstandings. Anarcho-syndicalism knows perfectly well that the revolution can only be brought about by the working masses organised in their economic structures to prepare the society of the future. This can only come about if these organisations are separate from the political parties, indeed «if they are not only aparliamentary, but principally anti-parliamentary» (Lehning)

«Whoever is against both private and State capitalism must oppose this with another kind of social reality and other kinds of economic organisation. And this can only be done by the producers grouped together in organisations in the workshop, industry, etc. They must organise in such a way as to own the means of production and organise the whole of economic life on an associative basis.» (Lehning)

But these producers' organisations must be in the hands of the producers themselves and organised so that their actions, which they have chosen and determined themselves, cannot be impeded. If we look carefully we will see that this cannot happen in syndicalism, even anarcho-syndicalism. It cannot happen in the so-called

considered a means must imply a means for preparing the revolution, not for continuing exploitation, or worse still, preparing the counter-revolution. That is the problem. The problem of trade unionism and syndicalism is a political problem of power the same as that concerning any other organisation that is in competition with the State. The dynamics of this organisation sometimes assume such particular characteristics as to make it difficult to see the contradictions on the surface; but that does not change its real essence.

«It is essential therefore for the worker to make conquests in society as well as in the factory, in order to bring about the social transformation that is necessary. In turn the union is obliged to accept the burden of this necessity not just for the workers, but also for the popular masses, as well as for the more general of the demands of the economic, civil, and democratic development of the whole country. »(C.G.I.L.)

For the C.G.I.L. it is not a question of discovery but is the logical development of a whole political tradition which has always seen this federation, particularly at the most difficult times, become the interpreter of national demands, making political proposals to renew work and economic and social development.

Malatesta's argument is hardly applicable, but we must not forget it concerned the turbulent atmosphere of the French syndicalists before the first world war, a time when anarchists were very active, and which also saw the work of Pelloutier, founder of the "Bourse". Perhaps today in a situation different not in substance but in the disgusting form this substance has taken, he would have changed his ideas.

Here the program is clear: the union is to look after the running of the State. In the face of the manifest incapacity (according to the union bureaucracy) of the political operators in government,

they consider it indispensable — in the workers' interests -that they take over and manage exploitation themselves.

The relationship between union and political power appears in its most frightful manifestation: union and capitalism. Economic power keeps the union management conditioned within the parametres of reformism and in so doing directs its strength towards that "co-management" of power which is a future that is very close at hand.

Trade-unionism and capitalism old and new

The unions' collaboration in the difficult life of capitalism has taken various forms during the various stages of its growth. To the "old-style" manufacturing factory capitalism tied to a restricted vision of the market and no clear multinational orientation, there corresponded (and still corresponds today in the less developed areas) an "old-style" corporate kind of trade unionism with an ideology that exalts work. It aimed for wage increases but mainly concerned itself with environmental questions (the situation inside the factory, safety at work, relations with superiors). Today, to a "new-style" trade unionism there corresponds (in the most developed areas) a multinational technocratic capitalism, a capitalism we could define as "new-style" which is managed by the State indirectly through financiers doted with a quite peculiar arithmetical logic (for example in questions of profit tax), capable of weaving a thick web of international support. They are fascinated by the possibility of a confederal discourse at a European and international level, and although they are not yet fully aware of the possible power such a discourse could lead to they have nevertheless decided not to let it escape them when it comes about. Just as

«The working class must look beyond capitalism, as syndicalism is quite confined to within the limits of the capitalist system.» (Pannekoek)

We shall see what this "looking beyond" consists of later. It is important to note here that the theoretician of workers' councils saw the intrinsically reformist nature of the syndicalist organisation clearly and had no illusions about revolutionary potential or any other such claims.

«Instead of leaders or all-knowing cadres we propose the concept of "political animators" capable of proposing initiatives to stimulate the development of the individual and to help coordinate these initiatives, thus putting hitherto unsuspected forces into motion».(*Ouvriers face aux appareils*)

But this does not emerge from the union or syndicalist organisation. This political figure is very different to that of the union agitator, now a privileged delegate or salaried bureaucrat. The change in the human or social figure is accompanied by changes in the results of the action they accomplish within the labour movement. Obviously this activist must work in the direction of the workers' needs. They cannot set themselves up as a self-determining activity, creating problems that do not exist or magnifying existing ones for the sole end of perpetrating themselves. Moreover, it is the dynamic of direct action that moves the workers' reality move in a direction that is different to the one "consecrated" by the union.

«I am an anarchist before anything else, then a syndicalist, but I think that many are syndicalists first, then anarchists. There is a great difference… The cult of syndicalism is as harmful as that of the State: it exists and threatens to grow each day. It really seems that men cannot live without divinity: no sooner do they destroy one than another comes forth.» (E Domela Nieuwenhuis)

porary economic evolution of the two great tendencies that exist in the labour movement today they are in favour of the revolutionary one which, as the Charter of Amiens states, aims for "the suppression of the wages system".»(M. Joyeux)

In our opinion the only way to form effective militant revolutionaries is to build methods of struggle which can develop actively starting from the base of the workers. This also means showing up the difficulties, approximations, and principally the objective limitations that "anarchist" activity meets within syndicalist organisations. It is not true that syndicalism is the great popular university that leads workers to understanding their problems or, if that is no longer the case, that all efforts should be made to make it so. This is an old illusion which may have contained a grain of truth in the past but which is quite useless as far as the problems of today are concerned.

At an operational level the reformist and revolutionary syndicalist ideologies are one and the same. They both struggle for the preservation of the syndicalist structure before anything else. In the case of the contrary the problem would not even exist. The reformists struggle for limited gains (wages and regulations) because that should lead to a progressive socialisation of the means of production, up to their complete socialisation in peaceful coexistence. The revolutionaries struggle for limited gains (wages and regulations) because this becomes a school for the revolution and because the strike is a preparation (a training) for the general suspension of work that is identified with revolution. In reality, both are struggling for limited demands and are doing so in a very precise, more or less pyramidal organisation which has its own rules, the essential one of which being its own survival as an organisation.

the technocratic capitalist has an equivalent in the technocratic trades unionist, the big international director has his in a big international trade unionist.

In Italy these two realities co-exist, and here, from the point of view of the unions, lies the problem of the South.

For the South they are asking for:

«The preparation of great infra-structural supports — irrigation, water supply, reinforcement of mountains, main communication lines (roads and ports), preparation of urban planning indispensable for political and industrial take-off:

«The consolidation and qualification of selectively orientated Southern agriculture.

«Industrialisation programs that comply with the economic and social characteristics of the South, to be inserted in an integrated plan of economic and territorial development.

«For this purpose an increase in public expenditure, investment, a policy of incentive and support, academic and professional preparation, and a program for State participation in the development of industry.

«Improvement in the work of the underclass of producers in the South: most of what they do today is humiliating either due to processes or due to unification in the country, or through the use of purely speculative outlets in the South itself.»

For the North they state: «Two essential problems are: the internal configuration of Europe, and its relations with the USA and the USSR.

«The process of European economic integration has been guided by contracting groups; political intervention, when there has been any, has always consisted of a mediation of interests, never any autonomous propositions or any incisive availability of instruments; the union's presence has been of little effect here.

«The race for efficiency has a controlling, authoritarian side to it; the modern techniques of factory programming consider the men who work in the factory to be robots who can be regulated to fixed times and rhythms. International planning projects consider wages to be a fixed price that should be regulated ex ante on the basis of industrial forecasts of productivity levels. The union cannot continue to look on passively in the face of these stabilising tendencies of industrial society.)» (F.LL.TE.A.-C.G.LL.)

Let us look at the (apparently contradictory) question of the behaviour of the various union tendencies.

Let us take the agricultural problem in the South for example. It means nothing to ask for the "consolidation and qualification of Southern agriculture". Basically we have to deal with two kinds of product in agriculture, one of elastic demand, the other rigid. The first are "poor" products, the second rich. The first have certain characteristics: prices tend to decrease and must be supported by the system (basic investments lost by the State) if production per hectare is to be increased. The industries connected with these products (e.g. the mills related to grain production) have almost stable demands. This concerns products that do not require a large work force, so unemployment is endemic in areas where there is this kind of cultivation alone.

The second kind of product, the "wealthy" ones, have diametrically different characteristics. This concerns fruit, vegetables, and citrus fruits. These products require irrigation. The question is that the production of the first kind of product is easier in the backward regions as it requires only very primitive instruments, not much irrigation and little attention. Change can come about — still from the capitalist point of view — through the creation of huge agricultural complexes capable of exploiting the rich products. None of that has been done in Sicily, apart from a few isolated cases to the exclusive benefit of the big magnates or landowners.

to the initial program which becomes nothing but an empty formula.» (1925)

«It would be a great and fatal illusion to believe, as many do, that the workers' movement can and must in itself, by its very nature, lead to revolution. Hence the impelling need for really anarchist organisations to fight inside as well as outside the unions for the total realisation of anarchism, seeking to sterilise all the germs of degeneration and reaction.» (1927)

As we have already said, we consider it a mistake to speak of a degeneration in syndicalism. Often the criticisms of old militants contain this aspect: they remember better times when production relations gave space to revolutionary discussions within the syndicalist structure, and compare them to the present where the nature of economic power has become rationalised, putting this down to a decadence in syndicalism.

«The C.G.T. has sunk beneath reformism, it has become a cog in the wheels of the government and turned its back on the revolution. Each time workers look at the men who incarnate the capitalist regime they see their own leaders alongside them.

«What is essential for us in the Charter of Amiens is our concept of syndicalism: the great artisan of the revolution capable of doing everything and, if possible, of organising everything on the morrow of the revolution.»(Monatte)

The critique is developed but the illusion persists. It is the same as the argument that the "reformists" of the French anarchist federation are proposing today.

«For we anarchists it is not a question of compromise or political manoeuvres, or even positions to be gained. The syndicalists of the anarchist federation must simply say, even if they are the only ones to say it (and perhaps it is preferable that they be the only ones), that syndicalism is moving in a dangerous direction and that, basing themselves on the principles, history and contem-

peaceful, instantaneous subversion realised through the universal, simultaneous suspension of work.»

In 1888 at the Congress of Bouscat various decisions were made concerning the strike and the passage from general strike to revolution:

«The limited strike can only be a means of local agitation and organisation. Only the general strike, that is the complete stoppage of every type of work, or the revolution, can take the workers to their emancipation.»

The passage from these old formulae to successive arguments is clear. No longer alternative, but analogy; violent rupture (in the case of the anarchists such as Griffuelhes) or peaceful passage (the reformists such as Briand), nothing changes.

In this perspective syndicalism becomes an end in itself. Many anarchist militants, capable like Pouget of making a precise distinction between anarchism and syndicalism, are no longer able to some years later when they become merely syndicalists, without either knowing or desiring it.

In our opinion anarchists must recognise that it is not necessary to call for the destruction of the trade union or syndicalist organisation, but this should not lead them to the — excessively facile — conclusion that they can work within the latter to prepare comrades for the revolution. The qualitative leap is radical and leaves no room for quantitative gradations.

In this sense the Malatesta who has lived through the experience of fascism and the unions' incapacity to confront it is better orientated:

«The union is reformist by nature… The union can emerge with a social, revolutionary or anarchist program, and that is what usually happens. But loyalty to this program only lasts as long as it is weak and impotent, a mere propaganda group. The more it attracts workers and strengthens them, the less it is able to keep

To propose such perspectives to the State would be like talking to the skeleton in their cupboard. They are well aware of the deficiencies of the past and the objective impossibility of any development program in the South due to the precise interests of cliques involved in local exploitation who supply large numbers of votes to the parties in power. To do today what has not been done in the past thirty years would require a change in the power structure, management through a different kind of political leadership, and this is what the Italian unions want. They want exploitation of the workers in a different perspective, new forms of economic development and structural transformations at the cost of the latter. And this time they want to hold the reins like their Swedish and German colleagues.

What have been referred to as "coherent industrialisation programs" are so vague as to be useless. The creation of new industrial complexes in the South gives precise results which are very different to those in developed areas when similar complexes are created. The cost of land to be used for factories rises, and there is speculation in the building industry. There is intermittent growth in the latter which contributes nothing to the needs of the working class. The machinery and plants arrive from the North, so there is no acceleration in that sector; the same can be said for durable consumer goods. There is growth in employment in the services sector, State bureaucracy, commerce and building. Only in the last analysis is there any growth in the industrial sector as such (the closure of the old industries and whole industrial sectors having to be compensated first). Not to mention the serious effects of the various environmental problems that would be caused by the insertion of industrial complexes in agricultural regions.

All this is part of the union's management perspective. The fundamental reality of exploitation is not taken into consideration. In the South they find good game in ex-labourers accustomed to

working fourteen hours in the fields, who consider eight hours in the factory a far lighter burden. The union uses this technique in areas rife with hunger and poverty, developing quite a different logic in the more highly developed regions.

The question of technocracy and the multinational fascinates not only trade unionists but also many comrades who end up losing sight of capitalist reality which is, and always will be, contradictory. Theses of capitalist accumulation such as those elaborated by Hilferding become of dubious value in the face of the revolts that are tainting the capitalist logic in the factories, schools and on the land, making medium and long-term forecasts impossible.

In our opinion it is important to see certain characteristics clearly: the technological level of the various industrial sectors, the internal structure of the European countries, the science politics of the militarily strong nations, new developments in energy sources, etc. Other observations emerge: notable discrepancies between the more advanced countries (hence the great number of degrees and amount of Knowhow), which are not only technological but also organisational, between the different companies; differences in the amount of industrial research financed not only by the State but also by industry itself or other bodies (universities etc); contradictions between science politics and financial politics, and so on.

All this implies important changes in the problem of management, a transformation of "the broad economy" for countries at a time such as this in order to come through the crisis. The unions know this very well, and it is in this sense that they are also preparing their structural transformation. Wage levels, conditions inside the factories, contracts, regulation of unemployment, the forms and aims of production in a multinational dimension, are all decisions that will be made by the leadership, or rather by a small number of mobile bureaucrats against whom it will not be easy

«This charter that we hear so much about was at best drawn up on a cafe terrace, without there having been any discussion about it within the syndicalist movement.» (Corale. *Capitalisme-Syndicalisme, meme combat*).

The essential element in anarchist syndicalism was the concept of direct action, a logical consequence of their being apolitical (in the party sense), and of the spontaneity of syndicalist organisation. The errors are to be found in this final part. The syndicalist organisation cannot base itself on mass spontaneity any more than. a political party can, even if it defines itself "revolutionary". In the same way the syndicalist organisation cannot remain separate from the vicissitudes of party politics and sooner or later ends up feeling their influence. Lastly, in the perspective of the syndicalist structure the problem of direct action is transformed from a means of struggle in the hands of the base to a means of instrumentalising the latter. This was the significance of the Sorellian "myth" of the general strike, an effective transposition of a political concept into the field of the workers' struggle. All that arises out of this field can be produced by the base (direct action, spontaneity, producers' organisations), or by the union (delegates, committees, official requests, bargaining, scattered strikes… up to the general strike). The difference is essential.

The fundamental error of revolutionary syndicalism is clearly visible in the words of Griffuelhes:

«Direct action is a practice that is growing daily. Consequently, at a certain stage in its development it will no longer be possible to call it direct action, it will be a widespread explosion that we will call general strike and which will conclude in social revolution.»

In the same way Aristide Briand:

«…revolution? …alternative? …analogy? The tendency is to identify the general strike with revolution. That is the myth of

to be a statement of the struggle that workers are opposing on economic terms against all forms of exploitation and oppression, both material and moral, carried out by the capitalist class against the working class.

«The Congress states its theoretical position in the following points:

«In the daily work of claiming better conditions the union is aiming for a coordination of the work forces, a growth in the well-being of the workers by gaining immediate improvements such as reduction in working hours, increase in salary, etc.

«But this necessity is part of the work of syndicalism: it is a preparation for complete emancipation which can only come about through the expropriation of capital. This requires the general strike as a mode of action, and considers that the syndicalist organisation, today in the form of resistance groups, will tomorrow be groups of production and distribution, the basis of future social organisation…

«Consequently, as far as individual members are concerned the congress affirms complete freedom for anyone to participate in whatever kind of struggle corresponds to their philosophical or political ideas, asking them in return not to introduce these opinions into the syndicalist organism.

«The union aims for the complete liberation of the worker through the suppression of the exploitation of man by man, and the abolition of private ownership and the wages system.» (The Charter of Amiens, 1906).

But reality was somewhat different. Here is what Delesalle, a member of the confederal office, declared. «The Charter of Amiens represents the point of view and is the emanation of the confederal office alone. This curiously unites anarcho-syndicalists (Pouget, Griffuelhes) and reformists (Niel), against the Guesdistes.»

to fight The workers on the other hand — according to the unions — are mature enough to manage their work and continue production (clearly in a centralised set-up, which would mean the self-management of their own misery) so we must assure them the continuation of work (read exploitation) and assure ourselves survival as an organisation (read recompensed work).

Here is what Charles Levinson, general secretary of the International Chemical Federation writes in the revue "*Preuves*" (September, 1972): «The unions will be making a mistake if they remain closed within the national framework negotiating in the micro-economic sphere that reflects the economic evolution all over the country. This attitude is unfavourable to the conditions of the workers today; for example, it tends to put wages in the most advanced sectors in line with those in difficulties. Claims should be organised sector by sector and at a multinational level by each company individually.

«On the other hand, in negotiations at national level the unions are at a disadvantage. They know nothing of the real financial situation of companies with world ramifications… It is at the level of the individual plant that the struggle should develop within the single multinational company, with the participation of the whole production unit spread throughout the world. This kind of union action would be more effective than that which spreads throughout the whole of industry but confines itself to the national framework. The big union confederations are often suspicious of such a prospect. But in the long run they will clearly become powerless if they refuse to attack the multinational on its own ground. If, for example, the C.G.T. and the C.F.D.T. carry out an action against the Rhone-Poulenc in France, they can certainly expect to get somewhere. But they are tied to national considerations, and during negotiations they are forced to accept wage levels that exist in the thousands of small,

backward factories into account. They cannot obtain the results they would gain from a union action against all the branches of Rhone-Poulenc in one go.

« In this context of coordinating union activity at world level it is necessary to depart from the traditional schema. It is not just a question of organising international strikes. We must act on the sensitive points of the multinational company, reinforcing the movement's pressure points… We are entering a trial period in the attempt to put these structures into effect. In the chemicals industry, for example, we have begun to select the most important multinational companies and have very up-to-date information on them: systematic studies of their financial limitations, their business and production politics, their structure, directorship, links with other companies, personality of directors, etc… This data will be fed into two computers, one in the USA, and another in Germany. Thanks to this we will gradually be able to speak to branch managers as well as to the main company as equals, without them being able to "spin us tales".

It is not a question of unifying world claims yet, but of supporting the union's actions in one country, or part of it. So we must restructure the union movement by creating permanent commissions for each multinational company where the branches in each country, or at least many of them, are represented.»

Another future project, this time at an international level, is a coalition between capital and unions. It remains to be seen how all this will highlight the claim the unions are still making today of being on the workers' side, and whether they will not rather be getting closer to participating in the management of capitalism and consequent exploitation of the working class. How should this new organ which is being proposed — the permanent international company commission — be interpreted? These commissions are aimed to function by working out a plan of action based on col-

a. an accentuation in authoritarianism (of the Blanquist type) which reached a kind of compromise in the Boulangist experience.

b. a "reformist" tendency led by Brousse which was to decline in importance except in the Book Federation where it is still strong today.

c. the anarcho-syndicalist tendency (the most important) which created the Bourse de Travail.

d. the revolutionary syndicalist tendency which was mixed with the preceding one, perhaps more politicised, violent, aimed at insurrection.

It was Sorel who, perhaps involuntarily, theorised revolutionary syndicalism. The general strike was to be used as a myth to take the place of the myths of Progress, Equality and Freedom: a final perspective that was to coincide with revolution. On the contrary, the limited strike comes to be seen as a "revolutionary exercise". The revolutionary elite were to use this exercise to lead the masses to rebelling against the State, starting off with claims and gradually proceeding to the construction of the new society from the syndicalist model.

Let us begin with the Charter of Amiens, the constant point of reference of revolutionary syndicalism. In 1906 this was voted in with 834 votes in favour, and 8 against. This means that its principles were (and are) so vague as to be voted by revolutionaries and reformists alike. Thus Monatte says: "It was not the expression of a majority but was accepted by the whole movement".

In this paper both the principles of syndicalist apoliticism and the principles of the struggle against the bosses for the abolition of wages were established. «The Congress considers this declaration

the United States and Sweden (Saab and Volvo). Here is what resulted: intelligent work (not sectorialised), less fatigue, less degradation, return to a craft kind of industry, disappearance of absenteeism, fewer obligations, better quality work, elimination of non-productive sectors (small bosses and controllers), higher profits, increase in the production of capital.»

Perhaps there will never be enough said about the dangers of this perspective, which is why we consider the study of the problems of self-management to be of great importance. Perhaps we should denounce the theoreticians of the work ideology more vehemently, show up their covert collaboration in capitalist exploitation, demonstrating how even anarchists often fall into this perspective.

Here it is sufficient to see the process of transformation the unions are putting into effect concerning the changes in the economic structure they are operating on. Like every structural transformation in capitalism this is functional to certain requirements and comes to be conditioned by them. It has been the specific illness of a number of revolutionary movements to see interesting perspectives and content in this. And, starting off from syndicalism, they have lost their original libertarian matrix along various roads.

Limitations of revolutionary syndicalism

Around 1880 various currents could be seen in the syndicalist tendencies of more or less anarchist inspiration:

lective international conventions with common claims. The next step will be a participation of these organs in company decision-making: a form of co-management from above. The strike, traditional arm in the struggle till now, would lose its importance in such a perspective. The idea of computers opposed to other computers is a sign of the increasingly collaborationist attitude of the unions.

The skill of the union officials lies exactly here: being capable of working in so many different perspectives, insisting on archaic forms of struggle (occupation of the land in Sicily for example) when it suits them because the thrust to rebellion from the base is almost uncontrollable; then passing to wider demands, so wide as to be absurd, in a perspective of comparative development (North-South) that suits both the industrial capitalism of the North and the agricultural version of the South. Finally, their demands become so wide as to reach the management of complex situations such as the multinational.

Let us take a look at the situation in Germany. The law on co-management came into being in 1951. In order to have it approved by the union Confederation (D.G.B.) they had to threaten a general strike (for the first time in history). Let us see what Heinz Zimmermann ("Interrogations") says: often is not difficult to see that egalitarian co-management is a question of bureaucratic apparatus — employers and union — and that the important decisions are made without consulting the wage-earners.

«In the eyes of the union officials co-management means reaching two essential objectives, in our opinion. The first reflects the concept of the whole social democratic party (allied to the unions not at a formal level but due to a symbiosis in personnel and mentality between the two organisations): it concerns reaching a "regulation" of social relations with the aim, says a union official, of attenuating the social injustices resulting from

the economic process as far as possible. The second allows for the integration of a whole social class of union "officials" into the economic process. They are becoming part of the economic and social system in order not to leave this area of activity open to the "directors" from the country's managerial class.»

So, elimination of discord and conflict as far as possible, participation in economic management in first person and, finally, integration of the preceding anti-system structure into the system. It would obviously be superfluous to explain that this integration is made possible not because of the union's degeneration, but is due to their essential characteristics which have become more accentuated as capitalism has developed away from its traditional origins.

«Co-management means that the firm must answer not only to the shareholders but to the workers and the nation as a whole. True democracy does not limit itself to the political sectors, but must apply democratic principles to the economy. "Partnership" cannot replace co-management, but real partnership requires co-management. The unions do not want to reduce capital and shareholders' rights. But capital, when it invests in production, cannot decide alone. The work force are more important.» (D.G.B.)

The German unions do not need to produce smokescreens like the French and Italian ones, because they have had this door to power open to them for the last twenty-five years. Today all firms employing more than 2,000 people are co-managed with the unions in Germany. This means great power in decision-making for the organisation.

In France, on the contrary, one can still hear from the C.F.D.T., «The pyramidal concept of power structures, either in the form of workers' councils or democratic centralism, must be refused. Experience shows that this way of managing power based on the rigid and hierarchical conception of the delegate rapidly gives rise to

a process of bureaucratisation and technocratisation.» But this is pure rhetoric adapted to the moment, which will shortly be substituted by quite a different form. Just imagine a union openly admitting to the need for bureaucratisation? We must have no illusions. The need to collaborate is essential for the unions: any rupture must be controlled and programmed. The strike must be a precise weapon: the more it threatens to become efficient the more it must be used in small doses. On the contrary, if its efficiency diminishes, it be used widely — as in the case of the postal strike in France which lasted for more than two months without any result at the end of 1974. Here is a passage that is characteristic of this collaboration, published in the review "Syndicalismo" (special "Self-management" n. 1415):

«No matter what the level of democratisation is within the company or the economy as a whole, trade unionism continues to have autonomy in its function as a force of impact to protect the workers against the will of the employers. The union continues to be a school for the formation of militant workers, a place for elaborating social criticism and an agent of transformation to be used and perfected. The autonomy of the union and a recognition of its modes of action including the strike are therefore both a necessity and a fundamental guarantee of self-management.

«The problem of remuneration comes last in industry, along with that of the hierarchy and the distribution of production. That is why, on the other side of the barricade, the bosses managing capital do not work from a humanitarian point of view, (the worker is alienated, we must free him) but from questions related to production (degradation, fatigue, so many working days lost, so much work badly done, so much wastage, lack of re-investment, etc.). These are the elements that the employers use to estimate the problem of the modes of production. Not only do they not give any respite, they also experiment. The first examples took place in