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Obituary: Maximilien Rubel

Anarchist Communist Federation

1996

Maximilien Rubel died in Paris at the age of 82 in late February. He had originally arrived in Paris in 1931 to finish his studies in philosophy, sociology and law that he had started in his home town of Czerlowitz, which had been first ruled by the Austro-Hungarians, then by the Romanians, and is now in the Ukraine. He began to frequent radical circles and to express solidarity with the struggle for social emancipation., particularly from 1936 when he gave support to the efforts of the Spanish Anarchists. This activity put him in contact with unorthodox Marxists, Anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists. His militant activity began in earnest during the Second World War when he wrote a number of leaflets in German (his mother tongue) distributed among the German forces of occupation by the tiny Revolutionary Proletarian Group in which he was active alongside Roger Bossiere, still a militant today! The leaflets denounced both Nazism and the Western imperialist powers. He took the double risk in this very dangerous work of being both a Jew and a revolutionary.

A supporter of council communism, he participated in the late forties and the fifties in the activities and the debates of that current, scattered to the four corners of the world by Stalinism, in

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particular his published correspondence with Anton Pannekoek. He began a critical examination of the work of Marx, and indeed began to produce a Complete Works of Marx. He ferociously denounced both capitalism and what he saw as the false socialism of Leninism. His essay Marx-Theoretician of Anarchism horrified both orthodox Marxists and anarchists. His critique of the Soviet Union and its satellites directed the fire of the Stalinists of the French Communist Party upon him. Unlike others who started out as anti-authoritarian critics of Stalinism, he did not change into a defender of capitalism and Cold War 'anticommunism'. He had contacts with the libertarian socialists of Socialisme ou Barbarie (who in their turn had a great influence on the British group Solidarity) and the anarchist communists of the excellent magazine Noir et Rouge. He was closely allied to Rene Lefevre whose Spartacus publishing house brought out a vast series of anarchist, council communist and critical Marxist books and pamphlets. He remained a convinced anti-capitalist and anti-statist right up to his death.