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El Ferrol, Rio de Janeiro, Zimmerwald, and Beyond

Syndicalist Internationalism, 1914-1918

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developments, illuminated more than one irony. One was that the labour organizations that during the war itself most fully honoured the antiwar and internationalist principles of the Second International were not those of the social democrats, who comprised it, but those of the syndicalists, precisely those who were formally banned from it. Another was that the socialist, communist, and syndicalist labour movements, all of whom accepted as axiomatic that workers shared and needed jointly to act upon common class interests transcending national boundaries, were by 1923 locked into three mutually hostile labour Internationals. The war demonstrated yet again that common class interests are uncommonly difficult to discern.

syndicalist and then communist, Dirk Schilp, who left the Dutch Communist Party at this time, recalled the loss of his illusions about the Russian Revolution and the pain of leaving the communist movement as worse than losing a mother, but turned to the one thing he regarded as higher than the Party: his class.⁵⁸

Where there had been a single trade union International in 1914, there were two by 1921 and three by the end of 1922.⁵⁹ Historians sometimes find in the war itself the roots of the post-war divisions that so reduced the effectiveness and heightened the vulnerability of the international working class movement. But the story is more complicated, for at a time when the Bolsheviks were content to work within the Second Socialist International, the non-Gallic syndicalists, barred from existing Internationals, were already preparing to found their own. They hesitated in 1913 only in the hope that the French CGT would join their efforts. In their eyes, the war confirmed the urgency of action and the need to proceed with or without France. Although the war did not create the fault lines running through the international workers' movement, it revealed them with new and inescapable clarity. Nor did the war create the propensity in the international movement to consolidate authority, minimize dissent, and dismiss alternatives by expelling or excluding counter-advocates who were seen as threats. In the fifty years after Marx drove the anti-authoritarians from the First International in 1872, the Second and Third Internationals each succeeded its predecessor in organizational and procedural rigidity. The war, which accelerated but did not create these

⁵⁸ Dirk Schilp, *Dromen van de revolutie*, Amsterdam, Wereldbibliotheek, 1967, p. 113-114.

⁵⁹ In addition to these Internationals that claimed to speak for the Left, there was a fourth, founded in 1920, the International Federation of Christian Trade Unions. See Patrick Pasture, *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international. La difficile recherche d'une troisième voie*, Paris, Éditions L'Harmattan, 1999.

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the Party. Within the Party, the 'Workers' Opposition', which argued that keeping faith with the original revolution meant defending workers' autonomy and resisting bureaucratization, was broken in 1921, its ideas proscribed, its spokespersons dispersed and demoted. Outside the Party, those who spoke for the All-Russian Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists were imprisoned or exiled, their organization banned. It did not escape the attention of syndicalists outside Russia, who had long warned against the dangers of centralized power, even in the name of workers, that the first government forcibly and permanently to suppress a syndicalist organization was that of the Bolsheviks. Many foreign syndicalists found it hard to reconcile the fact that the same communists who asked them to cooperate in a revolutionary trade union International, the Profintern, founded in the summer of 1921, suppressed those who shared their values in Russia. By whatever route and for whatever combination of reasons, virtually all syndicalist organizations found what they saw as Moscow's insistence on the national subordination of trade unions to communist parties and the international subordination of the Profintern to the Comintern to be unacceptable.⁵⁶ Only then did they turn to their last option, that of a distinctively syndicalist International, founded in Berlin in December 1922. Between 1923 and 1939, organizations in 31 countries, 15 in Europe and 14 in Latin America, affiliated with the International Working Men's Association.⁵⁷ Of syndicalist organizations discussed in these pages, only the Dutch NAS did not. After long debate it joined the Profintern in 1925, but withdrew in 1927. The

⁵⁶ Many of the French minority, however, found their way into the large *Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire*, founded in 1921, which enrolled in the Profintern.

⁵⁷ The syndicalists chose the title of the First International to reflect continuity with it. Sometime well after the Second World War the name was altered to remove the gendered aspect: it is presently known as the International Workers Association (IWA).

in the drama of syndicalist internationalism during the war, could find a satisfactory shelter in Moscow.

The gap was too great. "The new International, should it be open to all schools or to one only?" Armando Borghi had asked at the end of 1917.⁵¹ The insistence of its Second Congress in July 1920 that only political parties accepting 21 rigorous conditions be admitted to the Communist International or Comintern imposed an exclusivism not seen in earlier Internationals. Nor did it escape the attention of the syndicalists, who had hailed the soviets, that the Bolsheviks extolled soviet power only until their own Party was firmly in control. The 1919 Bolshevik Party congress insisted that the Party must exercise "complete control in all organizations of the working people," above all "in the soviets".⁵² Thereafter the Bolsheviks would treat the claim "All Power to the Soviets" as "a slogan of the counter-revolution",⁵³ as those who invoked it would learn at enormous cost at Kronstadt in March 1921. Nor did it escape the attention of syndicalists that the Lenin who had insisted immediately before coming to power that the chief challenge of proletarian revolution was to establish country-wide "workers' control of the production and distribution of goods",⁵⁴ argued once in power that management of the economy by the trade unions was "syndicalist twaddle".⁵⁵ The syndicalists, moreover, saw the Bolsheviks suppress those who spoke for a greater role for workers in the Revolution, inside or outside

⁵¹ *Ce qu'il faut dire...*, 22 December 1917.

⁵² Robert H. McNeil, ed., *Resolutions and Decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, vol. 2, Richard Gregor, ed., *The Early Soviet Period*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1974, p. 88.

⁵³ Neil Harding, *Lenin's Political Thought: Theory and Practice in the Democratic and Socialist Revolutions*, Atlantic Heights, Humanities Press, 1983, p. 270.

⁵⁴ VI. Lenin, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power", in *Collected Works*, vol. 26, Moscow, Progress, 1964, p. 105 (italics in the original).

⁵⁵ Lenin in 1921, quoted in Jay Sorenson, *The Life and Death of Soviet Trade Unionism, 1917-1928*, New York, Atherton, 1959, p. 114.

"International syndicalism is our holy family".¹ Thus declared *Die Einigkeit*, the journal of the German syndicalist trade unions, on 25 July 1914, on the eve of the outbreak of war in Europe. This declaration constituted not only an identification with syndicalist organizations elsewhere but a pledge to honour labour internationalism in the event of war. Like the much more powerful social democratic movement, which found institutional expression in the Second Socialist International and the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), the syndicalist movement claimed that in the face of war it would place its duty to internationalism above its duty to a particular country, that it would not subordinate solidarity of class to the fraternity of the nation. But when war came, as is well-known, the majority of social democratic labour organizations rallied to the cause of their own belligerent or threatened states. Socialist parties nearly everywhere signaled their reversal by a symbolic act that they had long programmatically repudiated: the voting of military credits sought by their governments. The social democrats, taken as a whole, also embraced their particular country's version of civil truce - France's *union sacrée*, The Netherlands *godsvrede*, Germany's *Burgfrieden* - whereby all sectoral interests and disputes were to be subordinated to the higher interests of the endangered country. They often violated another principle of the Socialist International as well: the entry of socialist representatives into bourgeois cabinets and government posts. Few socialist parties declined to endorse the active military defense measures of their governments.

By contrast, the syndicalist labour movement, taken as a whole, honoured its internationalist commitment throughout 1914-1918, refusing to lend support to the war or defense efforts of governments or to endorse civil truce. To be sure, some individual syndicalists supported war, just as some individual

¹ *Die Einigkeit*, 25 July 1914.

socialists opposed it, but the larger picture of the distinctiveness of syndicalist organizations in refusing to support war remains. While support for their embattled or imperiled country often brought social democrats a new sense of civic unity, antiwar syndicalist organizations confronted antagonistic governments and hostile co-nationals. Each of them had its own tale to tell of domestic challenge and adversity: of newspapers censored and suppressed, editors imprisoned, activists arrested and leaders interned.² But in addition to these individual narratives, a larger, collective story remains: that of the international efforts, aspirations and views of the trade union movement that proved most fully faithful to its prewar internationalism.

These pages offer an overview of that collective story.³ The actors in it meet three criteria. First, they were syndicalist - that is, direct actionist and non-parliamentary - trade union organizations. Syndicalists, more fully than any other variety of trade unionism, stood for workers' democracy, the self-reliance of workers, and their right to and capacity for collective self-management. Second, they were organized as self-standing organizations before the outbreak of war. Third, they were already active supporters of syndicalist internationalism prior to the war. Indeed, all the actors had already taken the stage in the First International Syndicalist Congress in London in September 1913, in which 12 countries were represented. There were syndicalist organizations elsewhere, of course, such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the USA, but they did not participate in this larger international endeavour during the war.

² One of the national tales is considered in Wayne Thorpe, "Keeping the Faith: The German Syndicalists in the First World War", in *Central European History*, vol. 33, 2000, nr. 2, p. 195-216.

³ Here I try to develop more fully this theme, only touched on in W. Thorpe, "The European Syndicalists and War, 1914-1918", in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 10, 2001, nr. 1, p. 1-24, and W. Thorpe, "Keeping the Faith", *op. cit.*

newly-born in Moscow.⁴⁹ That story is far more familiar than that of syndicalist internationalism during the war itself, and can not be retold here, except to note that common opposition to war was never enough to bring Bolsheviks and syndicalist organizations under the umbrella of a single International.⁵⁰ Syndicalism stood both for revolution and for radical workers' democracy and self-management. The example of revolution in Russia and the appeal of communism as a new and dynamic force on the Left was strong. The commitment to revolution prompted many syndicalists, some of them well-known activists, to make the journey from syndicalism to communism. The commitment to workers' autonomy and self-management, on the other hand, prevented many other syndicalists from making the same journey. But it is more complicated to alter the views and values of organizations, collective ones, than the minds of individuals. To conclude the present story, it is noteworthy that not one of the national organizations represented in the London Syndicalist Congress of 1913, nor

⁴⁹ It should be noted in passing that Dutch and German syndicalists put in an appearance and challenged the delegates to the July 1919 Amsterdam conference resurrecting the IFTU, where they proposed and failed to win support for three propositions: 1) action by western labour organizations on behalf of the Russian and Hungarian Revolutions; 2) repudiation of the Versailles Treaty, which they characterized as an invitation to future war; and above all, 3) inclusivity within the new International Federation, through the admission of revolutionary minorities. "Bericht über den Internationalen Gewerkschaftskongress abgehalten im 'Concertgebouw' Amsterdam von 28. Juli bis 2. August 1919", *Die Internationale Gewerkschaftsbewegung: Organ der Internationalen Gewerkschaftsbundes*, Anhang II, July 1921, 29, 54-5.

⁵⁰ Regarding Bolshevik-syndicalist international relations two titles should be noted. Those relations play a large part in the meticulous and definitive work of Reiner Tosstorff, *Profintern: Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1920-1937*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2004. An earlier work, approaching the question from the syndicalist side, is Wayne Thorpe, "The Workers Themselves": *Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1989.

electoralism to unite. Borghi urged an International of all those "who want to struggle through class action for class redemption".⁴⁶

A Glance Beyond the War

These issues remained unresolved at war's end. In the postwar period syndicalist organizations were everywhere expanding. In circumstances of sustained loss and privation, labour radicalization, and the example of the Russian Revolution, the syndicalists' anti-war, anti-collaborationist, and revolutionary ethos appealed to disaffected workers. Wherever organized syndicalists had confronted defensist social democrats - in Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, and Spain - their unions were expanding at a disproportionately greater rate than those of their rivals. Taking union membership in the prewar year of 1913 as equaling 100, their gains can be quickly illustrated by comparing the relative growth of syndicalist trade unions with social democratic trade unions (figures in parenthesis) in 1920: Spain 2977 (143); Germany 1861 (213); Sweden 871 (288); The Netherlands 578 (294). Only in Italy where the socialists also opposed the war, did syndicalist gains not keep up: 300 (657).⁴⁷

At war's end, when the Dutch NAS renewed its appeal for an international syndicalist congress,⁴⁸ few syndicalist internationalists could have guessed that the endeavours they had initiated even before the war would be extended, and the evolving issues surrounding them perpetuated, not only through four years of war but for another four years, above all by the need to assess the communist internationalism

⁴⁶ *Guerra di classe*, 13 April 1918.

⁴⁷ W. Thorpe, "European Syndicalists and War", *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴⁸ Stockholm, Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv, Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation Arkiv, Serie EXIII, I, NAS to the Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation, 23 November 1918.

The national syndicalist organizations, which had no formal international bonds among themselves,⁴ were banned from the Second International by the pledge requiring endorsement of political action. All those represented in London were also barred from the IFTU, which admitted no minority organizations. Only the *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT), the largest trade union in France and the largest syndicalist organization anywhere, enjoyed membership in the IFTU, which was one reason prompting the CGT to boycott the congress its fellow syndicalists sponsored in London.⁵ Not wishing to act without the French, the London assembly established only an International Syndicalist Information Bureau to sit in Amsterdam, deferring the founding of a syndicalist International to a pending congress. In 1914, the CGT, under Léon Jouhaux, responded like the social democratic affiliates of the IFTU in supporting war, rather than like its syndicalist counterparts in refusing to do so. The CGT majority continued to support the war, although an internationalist minority would emerge within it.

Several points are noteworthy here. The first is that the international dimension of the wartime story of the antiwar syndicalists is above all that of a series of individual national responses, imperfectly informed by efforts to remain in contact with one another. The second is that the exclusionary policies of the prewar Second International and the IFTU figured prominently in syndicalist discussions of international strategy during (and after) the war itself. The third is that, thanks in

⁴ A few organizations met in specifically syndicalist sessions at the 1907 Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam and founded the *Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste*. See *La Voix du Peuple*, 5 October 1907. On reflections on internationalism among anarchists of the period, see Constance Bantman's contribution to this issue, "Internationalism without an International?: Cross-Channel Anarchist Networks, 1880-1914".

⁵ On CGT-IFTU relations and the approach of war, see Susan Milner, *The Dilemmas of Internationalism: French Syndicalism and the International Labour Movement, 1900-1914*, New York, Berg, 1990.

part to the exclusionary policies of the social democrats, the impulses of syndicalist internationalism had come into being before 1914: the war strongly reinforced but did not create the drive of syndicalist internationalism. The fourth is that the response of the CGT to the war removed any hesitations that syndicalists elsewhere had about acting internationally on their own.

While those who during the war emerged as internationalist syndicalists had already signaled their distinctiveness in the prewar labour movement, their own international ties remained informal. From August 1914 onward, they pondered international strategy in entirely new circumstances. These pages take up three themes, notable but hitherto largely ignored in the literature, of the international activities and preoccupations of the syndicalists during the war. They focus, first, on the syndicalist-sponsored antiwar congress held in El Ferrol in Spain in April 1915; second, on the South American responses to the El Ferrol congress that manifested themselves in Buenos Aires in May 1915 and in Rio de Janeiro in October 1915; and third, on the syndicalists' assessment from 1915 onward of the character and prospects of the antiwar Zimmerwald movement of the Left socialists.

Syndicalist Resistance to War

Except in France, syndicalist organizations in Europe were everywhere national minorities, sometimes tiny ones, as was the *Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften* in the face of the massive social democratic unions in Germany, sometimes substantial ones, as in Italy, where the 100,000 strong *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI) was at least one-third the size of its social democratic counterpart. The organizations in Germany, The Netherlands (*Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* - NAS), and Sweden (*Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation*

would inevitably prove to be less proletarian than dictatorial. Those who supported exclusive, centralized power in Russia, even if in the name of a class, he warned, should prepare for a Caesar.⁴⁴ On the international issue, *Syndikalisten* in June 1918 observed that the working class was not free of responsibility in having permitted international solidarity to be broken and the war to continue for four years. Efforts to revive the Second International lacked all moral authority. *Syndikalisten* candidly continued that the syndicalists themselves collectively constituted such a small part of the international proletariat that had they been able to meet in 1918, their meetings would have lacked significant international influence, just as the Zimmerwald meetings, it added, had contributed nothing internationally to shortening the war. The hope remained, however, that a future International would take on a revolutionary syndicalist character. A month later *Syndikalisten* reminded readers that Left-Zimmerwaldism and syndicalism could not be conflated. Zimmerwald strove for political power, the seizure of the centralized institutions of government and state. Syndicalism represented producers, workers' self-management, federalism, and wished "to dissolve political functions in the economic function".⁴⁵

In the same period in Italy, on the other hand, *Guerra di classe* explained that the USI had identified with Zimmerwald, but only as a possible step toward the cooperation of all revolutionary workers, toward a genuine "international unity of the internationalists". "The Social Democratic International would not be ours," Borghi added. "That of anarchy would evidently be that of the anarchists alone... But, the *International of workers*?" Such an International should be inclusive. Borghi noted that Marx's famous slogan called for unity as a class, for workers of the world to unite, not merely for workers who accepted

⁴⁴ *Syndikalisten*, 5 January 1918.

⁴⁵ *Syndikalisten*, 5 June, 6 July 1918.

well.⁴² But the USI could neither get passports nor make alternative arrangements. Other syndicalists were more sceptical. The Swedes, on the one hand, welcomed the emergence of a new Left socialism to contest what they saw as an old, authoritarian one, but reserved judgment about its willingness to shed old forms and dogmas. On the other hand, they saw little value in the proposed socialist congress, which would be dominated by the parties that had already failed to act against war. What would be gained if "some well-dressed gentlemen who call themselves socialists sing 'The International' with well-bred voices and shout hurrah for socialism and peace?" Instead, *Syndikalisten* called for an International established on syndicalist principles.⁴³

By the end of 1917 the chief representatives of the Zimmerwald Left, the Bolsheviks, had managed to put themselves at the helm of the Russian Revolution, although not until 1919 were they able to launch the new International they had long urged. Through 1918 Sweden and Italy continued to represent two poles in the syndicalist assessment of Zimmerwald. Close observers of events in Russia, some syndicalists in Sweden began warning early in 1918 of the dangers of a workers' revolution falling under the control of a Bolshevik dictatorship. Scandinavia's best-known syndicalist, Albert Jensen, observed that syndicalists had long argued against the Marxist idea of proletarian dictatorship on the grounds that it

⁴² In June the USI's General Council resolved to participate in Zimmerwald's Stockholm conference. *Guerra di classe*, 16 June 1917. In August USI representatives met in Rome with delegates of the Russian Soviet, who urged the USI to attend the Stockholm socialist congress, adding that the Soviet would support the admission of all revolutionary groups to it. *Guerra di classe*, 11 August 1917. Privately Borghi attempted to arrange USI representation in both the general and the Zimmerwaldian Stockholm meetings. Borghi Files, b. 755, f. 2, Report of the Prefect of Florence, 18 June 1917; USI to Robert Grimm of the Swiss-based Zimmerwald International Bureau, 26 June 1917; Mauricius to Sebastian Faure, 1 August 1917.

⁴³ *Syndikalisten*, 6 June 1917.

- SAC) each numbered fewer than 10,000 members in 1914, while the Spanish *Confederation National del Trabajo* (CNT), which comprised about 30,000 members when it was placed under a judicial ban in 1911, operated clandestinely in 1914. Syndicalism made itself felt in the Americas as well, and organizations in Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba were represented in London in 1913.

A full explanation why a particular national syndicalist organization, whether in a warring or neutral country, took a stronger anti-war stand than its social democratic counterpart in 1914-1918 must be left to the expertise of national labour specialists. But that the majority of syndicalist organizations opposed the war - or the defense - efforts of their governments, while the majority of social democratic ones supported them, invites wider conjecture. To speak of anti-war syndicalists in Europe, the fact that they were everywhere minorities confronting larger social democratic rivals is arguably highly relevant here. In France, where syndicalism was *sui generis*, the CGT confronted no social democratic rival and sought to unite all workers, revolutionary and reformist alike, who contested and jointly shaped its policies.⁶ Only in France, where workers were the heirs of a tradition of revolutionary patriotism and where reformist impulses were powerful within it, did a syndicalist organization take up the banner of national defense. Elsewhere, syndicalists had constituted themselves as relatively undiluted revolutionary minorities,

⁶ The work of Jacques Julliard, *Autonomie ouvrière. Études sur le syndicalisme d'action directe*, Le Seuil, 1988, constitutes the leading French commentary on the CGT. Important recent English-language monographs include Kenneth H. Tucker, Jr., *French Revolutionary Syndicalism and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996; Bruce Vandervort, *Victor Griffuelhes and French Syndicalism 1895-1922*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1996; and Jeremy Jennings, *Syndicalism in France: A Study of Ideas*, New York, St. Martin's, 1990. Paul B. Miller, *From Revolutionaries to Citizens: Antimilitarism in France, 1870-1914*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2002, puts prewar antimilitarism in a wider context.

self-defined and self-legitimated by their opposition not only to capitalism and the existing state, but to the dominant and in their view collaborationist social democratic labour majority as well. Circumstances (the experience of the adversities of this double opposition) and creed (their programmatic emphasis on workers' autonomy and independence) combined to foster in syndicalist organizations an ethos of minority self-consciousness and self-reliance that enabled them to sustain in the additional adversities of wartime the same internationalism they espoused in peacetime. Syndicalist organizations outside of France lamented what they viewed as the defection in 1914 of the oldest brother in the syndicalist family, the CGT, but declined to follow its example.⁷ They attributed the CGT's response to the prewar growth of reformism and welcomed the later emergence of an antiwar minority within the organization.

Put differently, the response of the non-French syndicalists to the war demonstrated that they were less integrated into national life than their socialist co-nationals or the CGT. They were subject to many of the same factors that contributed to integrating the working class in their countries, such as capitalist accumulation, growing interregional connections, the expansion of mandatory education, and obligatory military service.⁸ But they remained programmatically resistant to some of the most important of these factors: collective bargaining with employers, government social welfare schemes, and above all active participation in the formal political life

⁷ On relations between the CGT and syndicalists elsewhere in Europe to 1914, see Wayne Thorpe, "Une famille agitée. Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire en Europe de la charte d'Amiens à la Première Guerre mondiale", in *Mil neuf cent: Revue d'histoire intellectuelle*, 2006, nr. 24, p. 123-152.

⁸ On potentially integrating factors in comparative perspective, see Marcel Van der Linden, "The National Integration of European Working Classes (1871-1914). Exploring the Causal Configuration", in *International Review of Social History*, vol. 33, 1988, nr. 3, p. 285-311.

arrange our own affairs ourselves, completely outside every parliamentary party".⁴⁰

Two revolutions were yet to come in Russia, which the syndicalists would hail and with which they declared solidarity. They attached particular importance to the role of workers' councils, or soviets, which they saw as a new form of workers' representation and administration. The appeal of the Petrograd Soviet at the end of March 1917 for a peace without indemnities or annexations, moreover, was consonant with their own views, as well as those of Zimmerwald. The All-Russian Congress of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in June appealed for participation in an international socialist peace congress in Stockholm being organized by the socialist parties of the northern neutrals - the Scandinavian countries and The Netherlands - while the Zimmerwald movement planned its own pre-congress conference also for Stockholm. The reluctance of socialist parties from belligerent nations, even more the refusal of Entente governments to grant passports, either nullified or minimized the importance of these efforts. The larger socialist congress was never held and only a rump Zimmerwald conference met in Stockholm in September 1917. But the prospective gatherings raised the issue of syndicalist attitudes towards them. In May 1917 *Solidaridad Obrera*, though imperfectly informed of what was being planned for Stockholm, declared that "the CNT is for revolutionary internationalism".⁴¹ The USI hoped to win admission to the Zimmerwald conference in Stockholm, but also - attempting to coordinate its efforts with the French minority and encouraged directly by representatives of the Petrograd Soviet visiting Italy - to win the admission of revolutionary groups to the larger Stockholm meeting as

⁴⁰ *De Arbeid*, 20 January, 3 March 1917 (italics in the original).

⁴¹ Quoted in Gerald H. Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain 1914-1923*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1974, p. 59.

modating other than political parties. They - and the USI also joined them in this - continued to hope to convene a congress of revolutionary workers' organizations, perhaps before the war was over but more likely afterward, preferably with the support of France, but without it if necessary. In October 1916, the USI observed that "the idea of an international syndicalist congress was in the minds of all our comrades of other countries".³⁷ The archives and other sources suggest that this had long been true. A year earlier the Portuguese Syndicalist Federation, invoking the International Committee established by the El Ferrol congress, was in contact with the Italian USI on the theme; in December 1915 Bernard Lansink raised the issue in the Executive meetings of the Dutch NAS; in the summer of 1916 the Italian USI called for a congress; at virtually the same time Fritz Kater of the German *Freie Vereinigung*, within which the matter had been discussed, had written to the Dutch NAS urging international action.³⁸ Noting support for such a congress from other countries, the USI lamented the nationalist deviations of the CGT but hoped for more from those syndicalists in France who "have not followed Jouhaux".³⁹ In January 1917 the Dutch NAS canvassed syndicalist opinions on convening an international conference at war's end. To complaints that the circular was addressed only to revolutionary unions, *De Arbeid* responded bluntly: "We want to be and to remain an independent revolutionary trade union movement. We want to consider, discuss and

³⁷ *Guerra di classe*, 21 October 1916.

³⁸ Borghi Files, b. 755, f. 2, Joaquim da Silva (Secretary of the Portuguese organization) to Borghi, 24 October 1915. On the NAS's Executive Committee meetings in December 1915, International Institute of Social History, *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* Archives, "Notulen bestuursvergadering op Donderdag 11 December 1915," Notulenboek 14, and on Fritz Kater's communications with the NAS, "Notulen bestuursvergadering op Donderdag 31 Augustus 1916," Notulenboek 14. On related discussions within the German organization, *Guerra di classe*, 21 October 1916.

³⁹ *Guerra di classe*, 21 October 1916.

of the state. Viewed internationally, creed and circumstance combined to distinguish the pre-war syndicalists from every other strand within the organized trade union movement by their unique constellation of resistances: economically to capitalism, politically to the state, and culturally to nationalism. The CGT, of course, followed its own path when war came. In temporarily neutral Italy, moreover, the legacies of *risorgimento* nationalism helped to encourage some syndicalists - joined by dissident socialist nationalists like Mussolini - to urge intervention in the war. The issue split the USI with perhaps 30% of the pre-war membership embracing interventionism. But the *Unione* itself continued to endorse internationalism, as did all non-French organizations on the continent.

The International Peace Congress of El Ferrol

For the internationalist syndicalists - or hereafter simply 'syndicalists'⁹ - the outbreak of war only underscored the failure of existing labour Internationals and reinforced the need to work for a genuinely revolutionary and anti-militarist international policy. The appeal for the establishment of a new, revolutionary labour International that issued from the Swedish newspaper *Syndikalisten* in mid-September 1914 was only an early expression of a conviction that soon became evident within the wider syndicalist movement. The European social democratic movement taken as a whole - although *Syndikalisten* editor Gustav Sjöström noted the occasional exception, as in Russia - had demonstrated the bankruptcy of

⁹ For the sake of convenience, the term "syndicalists" will be used hereafter to designate internationalist revolutionary syndicalists, as distinguished from the pro-war or interventionist revolutionary syndicalists, such as the CGT majority or the minority syndicalists in Italy.

its purported antimilitarism and international brotherhood, symbolized by the voting of military budgets by the German, Austro-Hungarian, French, Danish and Swedish social democratic parties, supported by their national trade union counterparts. The social democratic response to war in 1914 constituted a massive setback for the workers' movement, a proletarian Sedan. Syndicalists should respond by working to diffuse syndicalism, to expand their organizations nationally, and towards a new syndicalist International whose cornerstone, the Swedes argued, had already been laid by the London Congress of 1913.¹⁰ But the difficulty of pursuing an active internationalist policy among labour unions in time of war was soon felt by the Dutch, charged by the 1913 congress with administering the International Syndicalist Information Bureau. The difficulty of disseminating the *Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste*, which the Dutch activist Christiaan Cornelissen had edited from Paris since 1907, but for which the Bureau assumed responsibility early in 1914, had led to its suspension. Its last issue, in January 1915, noted that the war and nationalism had prompted the collapse of three institutions with international pretensions: Christianity, the Socialist International, and the IFTU.

But if the syndicalists in northern and central Europe saw few prospects of advancing the cause of a new revolutionary International prior to the return of peace, those of the Iberian peninsula were less daunted by circumstances. Spanish libertarians were able to organize an international antiwar congress, which met in the face of government resistance in El Ferrol in late April 1915. The intervention of the Spanish authorities, the expulsion of foreign delegates and the absence of a protocol has created a good deal of confusion around this little-noted gathering, which is often misdated, described as planned but canceled, or simply cited in passing. But despite the government's prohi-

¹⁰ *Syndikalisten*, 19 September 1914.

could not break through to a more inclusive conception, "our past will kill our future".³² The northern syndicalists were equally critical. Regarding joint antiwar prospects, the German syndicalists saw the presence of socialist delegates from Germany and syndicalists from France as promising.³³ Regarding longer-term prospects for revolutionary internationalism, however, the German and Dutch syndicalists invoked not Zimmerwald, which they saw as too narrow, too dominated by parliamentarists, and too bound to the old International, but the pre-war, pre-Zimmerwaldian International Syndicalist Bureau.³⁴ Musing more broadly in January 1917, the Germans observed that an International that truly served socialism must be one "into which all revolutionary socialist streams and brooks flow," one in which the peculiarities and interests of individuals, parties or movements were subordinated to socialism itself, one not limited to parliamentary parties, one "that was capable of action and that encompassed all social revolutionaries".³⁵

The syndicalists continued to ponder an international path for themselves. The USI, which wished to participate in its sessions, in particular regretted that despite the nod to the French CGT minority, Zimmerwald was not open to greater syndicalist participation.³⁶ Nevertheless, it long continued to invoke Zimmerwald and to hope that it betokened the beginning of a movement in which syndicalists could participate with other revolutionaries. Other syndicalist organizations were more sceptical of the prospects of Zimmerwald accom-

³² *Guerra di classe*, 23 October 1915.

³³ *Rundschreiben an die Vorstände und Mitglieder aller der Freien Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften angeschlossenen Vereine* (hereafter, *Rundschreiben*), 15 October 1915.

³⁴ See *Rundschreiben*, 15 October 1915, 15 March 1916; *De Arbeid*, 15 December 1915, 1 January, 6 February 1916.

³⁵ *Rundschreiben*, 1 January 1917.

³⁶ *Guerra di classe*, 23 October 1915; M. Antonioli, *Armando Borghi e l'Unione Sindacale Italiana*, Manduria, 1990, p. 33.

reconfigured international bonds between workers or a new International since the outbreak of war. El Ferrol collectively reiterated that call well before Zimmerwald. But Zimmerwald constituted an effort of an antiwar minority of socialists not to break with the Second International, but to prompt its passive International Socialist Bureau to act. The organizers initially intended to admit only representatives of organizations belonging to the Bureau, but did not so stipulate, which permitted Alphonse Merrheim to participate on behalf of the CGT antiwar minority. But the delegates never opted to found a new International, the policy advocated by the Zimmerwald Left and its main spokesperson, Lenin, who also advocated 'revolutionary defeatism.' The majority preferred - explicitly at Zimmerwald in September 1915, more ambiguously at Kienthal in April 1916 - not to break with the existing Socialist International.³¹

Although the non-French syndicalists could commend Zimmerwald as a sign of deepening antiwar sentiment, they questioned its prospects of transcending the exclusivity of earlier social democratic internationalism. They approved the presence of the French CGT minority. But they - even those who later proved most sympathetic to Zimmerwald, the Italians of the USI - also noted that in this it merely replicated the situation of formal prewar Internationalism in which the French, but no other revolutionary unions, were allowed a voice. In October 1915 *Guerra di classe* applauded the coming conference in Brazil as evidence of increasing international solidarity of class, as well as Zimmerwald, which offered workers "a little optimism, hope and comfort." But it regretted that Zimmerwald's composition and procedures tied it to the past. If the international workers' movement

³¹ Albert Bourderon, who represented the Left socialists of France at Zimmerwald, was also active in the CGT. On the Zimmerwald movement, see for example, R. Craig Nation, *War on War: Lenin, the Zimmerwald Left, and the Origins of Communist Internationalism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1989.

bition, 47 delegates appeared at the El Ferrol congress, which spoke for over 170 organizations. Since the congress constituted the war's first international revolutionary antiwar labour gathering, held five months before the Zimmerwald meeting in Switzerland, it may be useful to establish a fuller picture of what transpired in El Ferrol than has been available to date.

In typical grassroots fashion, the proposal for an International Peace Congress came not from the Spanish CNT, operating semi-clandestinely, but from the Syndicalist Athenaeum of El Ferrol. In February 1915, the Athenaeum issued an invitation to an antiwar congress to be held in that city to coincide with May Day. Inspired by indications of opposition to war elsewhere - it mentioned Anatole France and the antiwar manifesto of Sebastian Faure specifically - the invitation urged "all internationalists" to shake off the lethargy into which the war had plunged them. It appealed to them to abandon debates on the relative guilt of the German or French socialists for their response to war in 1914 or whether well-known anarchists like Peter Kropotkin or Charles Malato had betrayed internationalism by advocating war against German militarism. Issues of moral responsibility were best addressed after the war. Rather, the invitation proposed a three point agenda: the most rapid means of ending the war; new approaches to preventing such crimes against humanity thereafter; and the general disarmament of permanent armies. United across borders and in arms against capital and the state, the spilling of workers' blood, if necessary, was justified, "but not for the bourgeois *patria*, not for an Emperor, Tsar or President of the Republic".¹¹ For its part, the Spanish government, though neutral, could welcome neither the idea of a gathering of international revolutionaries on its soil nor that of an antiwar congress that might alienate the major belligerent states. Since the congress had been publicized openly in the Spanish libertarian press, the government

¹¹ For the invitation, see *Tierra y Libertad*, 3 March 1915.

would not be taken off-guard: it first prohibited and then tried to break up the meetings.

Although the congress was both partly improvised and truncated, and the intervention of the authorities denied the delegates the luxury of full and unfettered discussion, it nevertheless met and gave rise to a series of resolutions. Despite the absence of a protocol, the course and results of the congress can be reconstructed from accounts left in the workers' press.¹² Eight nations were directly or indirectly represented. The list of various organizations subscribing without personal representation reached well over 130. That figure included 70 trade unions; 16 workers' federations; 14 *Casas del Pueblo* and *Centros Obreros*; six syndicalist *Ateneos* and groups; 25 anarchist groups; two socialist and one republican group, as well as a variety of cooperatives, Esperantist groups and journals. Another 43 organizations - the number is certainly higher - were recorded as represented by the 47 delegates who attended. A number of newspapers and journalists were directly represented, notably Tomas Herreros of the *Tierra y Libertad* group (Barcelona), Manuel Andreu, editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* (Barcelona), José Lopez Bouza speaking for *La Voz del Cantero* (Madrid), Pedro Sierra for *Action Libertaria* (Gijón), Antonio Porto for *Cultura Libertaria* (Barcelona), and

¹² The course of the congress can be largely reconstructed from diverse accounts left in the workers' press of the period, such as those by the Congress Commission, participants, and other observers and commentators. The discussion in the paragraphs that follow constitutes above all a distillation from newspapers in Spain: *Solidaridad Obrera*, *Tierra y Libertad*, *Action Libertaria*, *El Porvenir del Obrem*; Portugal: *O Despertar*, *Germinal*; Argentina: *La Protesta*; and Brazil: *Na Barricada*. But see also Edgar Rodrigues, *Os Anarquistas e os Sindicatos, Portugal, 1911-1922*, Lisbon, Sementeira, 1981, p. 54; M.J. de Sousa, *O Sindicalismo em Portugal*, Lisbon, 1931, p. 106-110; Angeles Barrio Alonso, *Anarquismo y anarcosindicalismo en Asturias (1890-1936)*, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1988, p. 151-155; Antonio Bar, *La CNT en los años rojos*, Madrid, Akal, 1981, p. 430; Diego Abad de Santillán, *Contribución a la historia del movimiento obrero español*, Puebla, Cajica, 1965, vol. II, p. 121-123.

served to make internationalism disappear from the International, continue to prevail? Or were the French prepared to rethink these pre-war formulas of exclusion and to effect "positive relations of solidarity with the syndicalist movement of the other countries"?"³⁰

While pondering their own trajectory, the syndicalists soon also had to assess the international antiwar movement of the Socialist Left which first met in Switzerland in Zimmerwald in September 1915, then in Kienthal in April 1916, and finally in Stockholm in September 1917. By contrast with the El Ferrol congress, Zimmerwald had been carefully prepared; the organizers had not publicized it, but communicated by post and emissary; it met on more congenial Swiss soil; and it did not try to meet openly, but convened secretly, initially renting meeting space as an ornithological society. The itinerary of syndicalist internationalism that passed through El Ferrol and Rio de Janeiro did not include Zimmerwald, for only the French minority syndicalists were invited to participate. Certainly there were a number of features of the Zimmerwald movement that the syndicalists could commend, since they themselves had exemplified or embodied them in the year since the war had broken out: it was antiwar; it was consciously internationalist; it repudiated policies of civil truce and eventually opposed socialist support for government war credits. The syndicalists could also applaud the fact that Zimmerwald had managed, as the El Ferrol congress had not, to bring together direct workers' representatives from belligerent as well as neutral countries.

But while the syndicalists could see Zimmerwald as a welcome if belated sign of the revival of internationalism among some socialists, could they see in it a departure in labour internationalism that might accommodate their voice? Syndicalists had deemed the old Socialist International dead from August 1914 and their organizations had individually been calling for

³⁰ *Guerra di classe*, 4 September 1915.

1915, when the El Ferrol congress was being forcibly dispersed, Alphonse Merrheim's Metalworkers Federation took up the antiwar cause within the CGT, declaring that "this war is not our war." The German syndicalist journal welcomed evidence that in France "there are still syndicalists!"²⁷

Italy's USI, its antiwar resolve presumably strengthened by the departure of the interventionist minority, followed events within the international revolutionary camp with keen interest. From its early declaration against the war the USI had argued that a new revolutionary International would emerge from the conflict.²⁸ Its new journal, *Guerra di classe*, noted that the El Ferrol congress, which the USI had supported, had been closed down. But it applauded the energetic opposition of the young syndicalists of France to the policies of the CGT majority and to Jouhaux's collaboration in the *union sacrée*. It also noted the USI's contacts with the syndicalist organizations of Spain, Portugal, Germany and with the French antiwar minority. In mid-May 1915 the USI's General Council charged the Executive with seeking to ensure the presence of USI representation in future international workers' congresses.²⁹ A week later Italy entered the war on the side of the Entente, a war that neither the USI nor the Italian Socialist Party could endorse. Operating now under a stricter censorship, the USI continued to promote workers' internationalism. Hoping to spur initiatives from within France and from syndicalists elsewhere, the USI in August 1915 composed an open letter to the CGT on the vexed question of the International. Who should be represented in future? Would national minorities, like the syndicalists in every country but France, continue to be excluded? Would majoritarian dogmatism, the sleight-of-hand that had magically

²⁷ *Mitteilungsblatt der Geschäftskommission der Freien Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften*, 15 May 1915.

²⁸ Rome, *Archivio Centrale dello Stato*, Armando Borghi Files, b. 755, f. 2, USI declaration (third) against the war, 24 September 1914.

²⁹ *Guerra di classe*, 1, 15, 22 May 1915.

from Portugal, Antonio Alves Pereira for *A Aurora* (Porto).¹³ The publications of the young syndicalists of Portugal (*O Despertar*) and of France (*Le Cri des jeunes syndicalistes*), both then published in Lisbon, were also represented.¹⁴

The organizers believed that a site in northwestern Spain would facilitate the attendance of foreign delegates through the port of La Coruna, but had underestimated the difficulties of travel, even of communication, in wartime. The invitation to the El Ferrol conference itself had not reached the syndicalist organizations of northern Europe. The congress proved less international than they had hoped. Iberian organizations predominated among those that subscribed without personal representation, but others from Great Britain, France, Brazil, Argentina and Italy were also represented, including Italy's large USI. Of the 36 delegates who participated in the initial session of 29 April, before all delegates had arrived, seven were from Portugal, Eleuterio Quintanilla represented both the Young Syndicalists of Portugal and the Federation of Young Syndicalists of France, and Antonio F. Vieytes the *Confederação Operaria Brasileira*. *Solidaridad Obrera* reported that a second Brazilian delegate died in uncertain circumstances in Vigo. Among later arrivals was a delegate from Cuba. Reports claimed that delegates from England and France had been prevented from leaving their countries, and that Spanish authorities had not allowed a delegate from Italy to disembark at Barcelona.¹⁵

The antiwar congress of El Ferrol met in the wake of the unprecedented clashes of massive armies and only a week after poison gas had been introduced as a military weapon

¹³ On representation, see *Tierra y Libertad*, 12 May 1914; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 May 1914; *Action Libertaria*, 14 May 1914.

¹⁴ *O Despertar*, May 1915. *Le Cri des jeunes syndicalistes*, which could not appear in France, was published with *O Despertar*.

¹⁵ See *Tierra y Libertad*, 12 May 1914; *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 May 1914; *Action Libertaria*, 14 May 1914; *Na Barricada*, 30 September 1915.

at Ypres. The authorities, who had been interfering with the post, now prohibited the congress. They would soon turn to force. Constancio Romeo, noting the massive presence of the police, the Civil Guard, and the cavalry, described El Ferrol as swarming with "ugly brutes" ("animaluchos").¹⁶ To circumvent the order of suspension, the three dozen delegates who had already assembled on the evening of 29 April commenced deliberations immediately, a day ahead of schedule, and met into the early morning hours. A couple of hours later government forces raided the hotels, forcing their way into rooms and rousting the foreign delegates, to the consternation and alarm of family members who had sometimes accompanied them. The Portuguese delegates were bundled onto the train and escorted to the border. Later, when the remaining delegates continued to meet, the authorities acted again, seizing the Brazilian delegate, Antonio Vieytes, who was taken to Vigo and put on a ship bound for South America, and arresting the chief congress organizer, José Lopez Bouza, and the fiery Eusebio Carbo, who were held without bail. The remaining delegates protested these measures without effect. As the Catalan delegates, the largest group represented at El Ferrol, worked their way back across Spain, they arranged a series of protest meetings in Valladolid, Madrid, Zaragoza, each prohibited in its turn by the authorities.

Before the Portuguese had been deported, however, the delegates had a long session and those who remained, joined by newcomers, managed again to meet. The motions they endorsed, the chief results of the El Ferrol congress, can be synthesized in a three-fold fashion as having intended international, peninsular and Spanish application. First, the assembly - being above all a peace congress - sought to establish some means of acting against the ongoing war. The delegates thus endorsed a proposal from Constancio Romeo of Galicia to

¹⁶ *La Protesta*, 2 June 1915.

towards which the Rio congress resolved to work came in May 1929, when organizations from seven countries met in Buenos Aires to found the *Asociacion Continental Americana de Trabajadores*, which had 13 national affiliates by 1931.²⁵ A version of the objective of the El Ferrol congress to unite Spanish and Portuguese workers in a peninsular organization emerged in July 1927 in Valencia, with the founding of the *Federation Anarquista Ibérica*, which admitted only members of the Spanish or Portuguese syndicalist organizations, both of which by early 1927 operated in illegality. As for the new workers' International envisioned in El Ferrol and Rio, it would emerge as the International Working Men's Association in December 1922.

The Syndicalists and Zimmerwald

But to return to 1915, the collective hope for international consultation and action in the syndicalist world found satisfaction in neither the El Ferrol congress, disrupted and truncated, nor the Rio congress. The European syndicalists continued to ponder their international prospects. They could take some consolation from the emergence of an antiwar minority in the CGT in the early months of the year. "Bravo," wrote Armando Borghi of the Italian USI to Pierre Monatte, who had resigned from the Confédéral Committee of the CGT to protest its war policy, "and bravo also to all the comrades who have understood that syndicalism was not born for statist politics, no more in time of war than in time of peace".²⁶ On May Day

²⁵ *Congreso constituyente de la Asociacion Continental Americana de Trabajadores*, Buenos Aires, ACAT, 1930; *IV. Weltkongress der Internationalen Arbeiter-Assoziation, Madrid vom 16. bis 21. Juni 1931*, Berlin, IAA, n.d., p. 10.

²⁶ Borghi to Monatte, 9 January 1915, in Colette Chambelland and Jean Maitron, eds., *Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et communisme. Les archives de Pierre Monatte 1914-1924*, Paris, Maspero, 1968, p. 75. Monatte resigned in December 1914.

largest by war's end. But the resolutions with international application of these congresses had scant practical effect during the war itself. The Amsterdam-based International Syndicalist Information Bureau, although it operated from a neutral country, had already learned the difficulties of endeavouring to maintain international contacts in time of war.²³ Spain, neutral as well, opposed the holding of a workers' antiwar congress on its territory. Those charged with advancing the international programs of the El Ferrol and Rio congresses faced formidable challenges, all the more so if their country itself entered the war and curtailed peace activities and press freedom. The El Ferrol congress had established an antiwar propaganda committee to sit in Lisbon, but Germany declared war on Portugal in March 1916. The Rio congress established an International Relations Committee to sit in the Brazilian capital, but in October 1917, with a fourth ship lost to U-boats, Brazil declared war on Germany. The Brazilian government declared a state of siege and closed down a number of labour organizations. The mainstay of the *Confederação Operaria Brasileira*, however, the *Federação Operand do Rio de Janeiro*, now described by the chief of police as an enemy of the fatherland, the rule of law, and the family, as a refuge of "anarchists" and "international slime," had already been closed down three months earlier.²⁴

But if the international goals of the El Ferrol and Rio congresses progressed little in wartime, they would - to glance ahead - find greater organizational expression in the years that followed. The larger Latin American labour association

²³ The Bureau, which began operating early in 1914, did not survive the war. The Dutch NAS issued an invitation to an international syndicalist congress at war's end, but in its own name, not that of the Bureau. An international syndicalist conference held in Berlin in December 1920 established a second International Syndicalist Information Bureau, which also sat in Amsterdam. The two Bureaus may be seen in organizational terms as minor stepping stones between the syndicalist congress of London in 1913 and that of Berlin in December 1922, which founded the Syndicalist International.

²⁴ Quoted in J. Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

establish a Permanent Committee, charged with periodically producing propaganda in the languages of the belligerent nations, for distribution as far as possible in the active and reserve forces of the two sides. As Romeo put it later in a letter to the Argentinian paper *La Protesta*, the propaganda was intended to provoke indiscipline and rebellion and to awaken in the soldier "his conscience as a man".¹⁷ The five person committee, whose composition would be determined by the Portuguese, would sit in Lisbon.

Second, of international significance but of immediate peninsular application, the delegates resolved to work in stages towards the establishment of a new Workers International. The Portuguese proposal, from Ernesto Costa Cardoza of Porto, called for the formation of a joint Spanish-Portuguese Committee as a first step towards an Iberian Federation, itself to be the first cell of a new trade union International committed to working "against all wars, capitalist exploitation and the tyranny of the state".¹⁸ A number of sites - Lisbon, Coruna, Barcelona, Gijon, Zaragoza - were discussed before the assembly decided to convert the organizing committee of the present congress into the new Spanish-Portuguese Committee, which would remain for the time being in El Ferrol.

Third, the assembly - the Portuguese delegates had already been deported by then - seized the opportunity of a national gathering of like-minded labour activists to turn their attention to specifically Spanish matters. The Spanish delegates represented a blend of established, well-known militants and rising activists in the direct actionist union movement. Direct delegates represented nearly every region of Spain. The Catalanian delegation, at least eight strong, included Manuel Andreu of *Solidaridad Obrera*, Angel Pestana, and polemicist and ora-

¹⁷ *La Protesta*, 2 June 1915.

¹⁸ *Solidaridad Obrera*, 13 May 1915.

tor Eusebio Carbo, as well as Francisco Miranda and Antonio Loredó, mainstays of the clandestine committee that had sustained the work of the *Confederation Regional del Trabajo* of Catalonia and the CNT during the bans against them. Although it had not figured on the agenda of an international congress, the Spaniards readily approved the proposal of Angel Pestana formally and publicly to reanimate the CNT, which they saw not only as a domestic undertaking but as a step toward realizing the larger peninsular and international objectives of the congress. They similarly resolved to convert *Solidaridad Obrera* into a daily.

South American Echoes: Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro

The congress of El Ferrol found its greatest immediate resonance not within war-torn Europe, but within the South American workers' movement. The *Fédération Ouvrière Régionale Argentine* (*V Congreso*) had participated in the 1913 London International Congress, from whose work it had hoped a "purely worker and anti-statist" International would emerge.¹⁹ News from Spain now prompted the *Federacion* to stage a mass meeting in Buenos Aires on 30 May in which over a dozen speakers protested the suppression of the El Ferrol Congress, deplored the ongoing war, and fiercely decried nationalism. "The work of the demarcators of borders, of the hoisters of flags, of everything that so eloquently fashions the name of *patria*" declared Leonardo Schenini in a blunt use of the vernacular, "is no more than *mierda!*"²⁰

Internationalist sentiment was also powerful within the Brazilian workers' movement. The activities of the Popular Commission for Agitation against the War in Rio de Janeiro,

¹⁹ *La Protesta*, 8 November 1913.

²⁰ *La Protesta*, 1 June 1915.

and of the International Commission against the War in São Paulo, contributed to giving May Day rallies a strong antiwar character.²¹ The suppression of the El Ferrol congress prompted the *Confederação Operária Brasileira* - represented like the Argentinian *Federacion* in the 1913 London Congress - to host an International Peace Congress of its own in Rio de Janeiro on 14-16 October 1915, in which Brazilian, Argentinian, Portuguese and Spanish organizations were represented. About 40 delegates, representing labour, educational and propaganda organizations, participated. Two female delegates represented the Women's Center of Young Idealists (São Paulo) and the Women's Social Studies Center (Pelotas). The presence of Antonio Vieytes (one of the chief congress organizers) and of Manuel Campos, both of whom had been expelled from El Ferrol, provided personal continuity with the preceding Peace Conference. The Rio congress resolved, in brief, to establish a International Relations Committee to sit in Rio and to work towards the establishment of a Confederation of South American workers as a means of hastening the formation of a new and much wider workers' International.²²

The congresses of El Ferrol and Rio de Janeiro offered international forums, however imperfect or limited, to workers' organizations, above all those of the Iberian peninsula, Argentina and Brazil, to register their resistance to the dominant labour discourse of national defense. The greatest success of the El Ferrol congress, however, was the decision to reinvigorate the CNT, a task that soon preoccupied the Spanish syndicalists, who built their consistently antiwar trade union into Spain's

²¹ John W.F. Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900-1935*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1973, p. 34.

²² On the Rio Congress, see *Na Barricada*, 21 October 1915, and the report beginning in *La Protesta*, 24 October 1915. See also, Edgar Rodrigues, *Nacionalism & cultura social 1913-1922*, Rio de Janeiro, Laemmert, 1972, p. 105-113, which basically reproduces the *compte rendu* that originally appeared in *Na Barricada*.