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# Analyzing revolutionary syndicalism: the importance of community

## Introduction

In the last twenty years revolutionary syndicalism has received much attention again. However, not all new investigations are entirely satisfactory. Some remain quite descriptive, while others offer theories explaining the appearance and disappearance of revolutionary syndicalism, but leave the subject of analysis -the syndicalist- remarkably absent. That may be caused by a lack of data concerning the beliefs of the syndicalist rank and file, a problem to which Hartmut Rübner and Howard Kimeldorf have referred to. According to Kimeldorf this may also explain “why inference, rather than hard evidence, governs so many studies”.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, some of the newer studies basically display an attitude towards revolutionary syndicalism familiar from older studies. This paper focusses on three other problematic aspects of the more recent studies. Firstly I will discuss the relevance of ideology, in these studies a more or less neglected aspect of revolutionary syndicalism. Secondly I will debate their emphasis on action and on the consequence of this: revolutionary syndicalism as just a trade-union movement like others. Thirdly I will draw attention to the quality of the statistical reasoning behind the most important analyses. A certain accent is laid on the Dutch revolutionary-syndicalist movement, with which I am most familiar.

In so far as the older studies tried to go beyond the old genre in labour history of *faits et gestes*, they manifested a remarkable obsession to explain revolutionary syndicalism. They apparently relied on a paradigm that a group of workers, inevitably rising against capitalism, will develop a movement which naturally will become socialist, if not social-democratic. Thus, the emergence of some kind of social-democrat-

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<sup>1</sup>Hartmut Rübner, *Freiheit und Brot. Die Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Anarchosyndikalismus* (Köln 1994), 258; Howard Kimeldorf, “In search of syndicalism”, *Labor Studies Journal* 27/2 (2002), 39-50, 44.

ic movements was considered the normal course of events in the labour movement. Usually it was seen as a higher, if not the highest, stage a labour movement could reach. Abnormal according to this paradigm was every sort of labour movement which was not social-democratic: company unions, Christian unions, revolutionary syndicalism, no labour movement at all. Of these movements particularly revolutionary syndicalism needed an explanation. Being members of the socialist movement, taken in a broad sense, after all the revolutionary syndicalists should have been social democrats. Often one reads a vague echo of Lenin's verdicts on anarchism: "Anarchism is bourgeois individualism in another form." "Anarchism is a product of despair. It is the mentality of the intellectual who is off track or of the lumpenproletarian, but not of the proletarian."<sup>2</sup> A worker, left on his own, in his consciousness will never exceed the boundaries of the workplace. He will never get beyond 'economic consciousness' unless he is taught by socialists from bourgeois origins. Anarchist workers, therefore, are the embodiment of 'false consciousness'. A revolutionary-syndicalist workers' movement is the opposite of the effective social-democratic movement that is adapted to the capitalist circumstances of the time. This seems the essence of Eric Hobsbawm's contention that revolutionary syndicalism is a "quasi-revolutionary union strategy and practice".<sup>3</sup>

The validity of this often implicit social-democratic or communist paradigm is questionable, though. The degree of union membership differed per country, but in many countries only a minority of the workers was organized in a trade union. This is even more the case when we look at political parties. From this perspective, every organization of workers seems abnormal and in need of being explained. This paper, therefore, starts from the point of view that revolutionary syndicalism should be considered as normal or abnormal as every other type of labour movement. It might be that social-democracy with its prominent role for non-worker socialists is a much stranger phenomenon than revolutionary syndicalism.<sup>4</sup>

In explaining revolutionary syndicalism F.F. Ridley in his study of French syndicalism,<sup>5</sup> referred to the "latin temperament" of the French workers. Nowadays hardly anybody invokes elements of a national char-

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<sup>2</sup> W.I. Lenin, "Anarchismus und Sozialismus" in: Id., *Werke*, Band V (Berlin 1976) 334-7, 334-5: "Anarchismus ist umgestülpter bürgerlicher *Individualismus*." "Der Anarchismus ist ein Produkt der *Verzweiflung*. Die Mentalität des aus dem Geleise geworfenen Intellektuellen oder des Lumpenproletariers, aber nicht des Proletariers." See of course also, Id., *Was Tun?*, Ibid. 357-551, esp. 385-6

<sup>3</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, "I enhver arbejder er der en syndikalist, der forsoeger at kæmpe sig ud", in: Birte Broch c.s. (eds), *Årbog for arbejderbevægelsens historie* (Kopenhagen 1979) 207-215, 207. See also id., *The age of empire, 1875-1914*. (London 1991<sup>3</sup>) 134: "Between 1905 and 1914 the typical revolutionary in the west was likely to be some kind of revolutionary syndicalist who, *paradoxically*, rejected Marxism as the ideology of parties which used it as an excuse for not trying to make revolution" [My emphasis] As we will see, Marxism was not always rejected by revolutionary syndicalists and when it was, it was often for other reasons.

<sup>4</sup> In this paper the words 'revolutionary syndicalism' and 'syndicalism' are used interchangeably for reasons of brevity and to avoid repetition.

<sup>5</sup> F.F. Ridley, *Revolutionary syndicalism in France* (Cambridge 1970) 17-18. Stress on the 'latin' character of syndicalism also in: Winfried Röhrich, *Revolutionärer Syndikalismus. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (Darmstadt 1977), 46.

acter anymore. Newer theories which try to explain revolutionary syndicalism are often inspired by some sort of modernization theory.<sup>6</sup> According to this theory, revolutionary syndicalism fundamentally is a shortsighted or irrational form of social protest, which stumbles behind the forward march of history. Usually historians and sociologists look at the difficulties certain categories of workers faced when confronted with a changing mode of production.<sup>7</sup> From the seventies onwards, these historians have concentrated on a limited group of occupations: construction workers, shoemakers and some other categories. Other historians, e.g. Melvyn Dubofsky or Erhard Lucas, have highlighted the consequences of migration. They see in the revolutionary syndicalists 'uprooted workers' who, separated from their traditional environment, have become undisciplined and easy to radicalise.<sup>8</sup> In the light of newer research on anarchism, syndicalism and migration, this thesis seems untenable. Bonds with the place of origin usually remained strong, migrants tended to settle in places where they could find compatriots and if they were already syndicalists or anarchists they just extended their old networks.<sup>9</sup> A completely different group of researchers look at political circumstances. Their explanations range from the failure of socialist parties<sup>10</sup> and socialist trade unions<sup>11</sup> to political repression.

As yet the most developed theory has been formulated by Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe. Not only do they deal with the causes of revolutionary syndicalism, but they have analysed the causes of its dis-

<sup>6</sup> An interesting critique of modernization theory in research of labour movements is: Martin Henkel, *Zunftmisbräuche. "Arbeiterbewegung" im Merkantilismus* (Frankfurt/New York 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, "The rise and fall of revolutionary syndicalism", in: Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds), *Revolutionary syndicalism. An international perspective* (Aldershot 1990) [henceforth: Van der Linden and Thorpe, "Rise"] See e.g. V.V. Dam'e, "Istoricheskie sudby anarkho-syndikalizma v Evrope", *Novaya i noveshaya istoriya* (2005) 21-37, 21. Dam'e, however, also points to the absence of social policies as a factor in the emergence of anarcho-syndicalist consciousness.

<sup>8</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, *We shall be all. A history of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago 1969); Erhard Lucas, *Zwei Formen von Radikalismus in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Frankfurt/M. 1976). For a recent appraisal of Dubofsky's book: 'Symposium on Melvyn Dubofsky's We Shall Be All', *Labor History* 40 (1999) 345-70.

<sup>9</sup> The classic account of the bonds between migrants and their place of origin is of course Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen : the modernization of rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford 1976). See also the fascinating article by Davide Turcato, "Italian anarchism as a transnational movement, 1885-1915", *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007), 407-444. A very penetrating analysis of uprootedness as a result of migration can be found in: Jacy Alves de Seixas, *Mémoire et oubli, Anarchisme et syndicalisme révolutionnaire au Brésil: mythe et histoire* (Paris 1992), 7-13. To her migration did not lead to radicalisation, but rather to a painful process full of nostalgia of redefining oneself as a syndicalist in a new world. See also Eric Arthur Gordon, *Anarchism in Brazil: theory and practice, 1890-1920* (Ph.D. Tulane University 1978), 19, who argues that most Brazilian immigrants became syndicalist militants after having worked in Brazil for at least ten years and because of their experiences there.

<sup>10</sup> This explanation comes from Hubert Lagardelle and has been taken up by several authors: for France by Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France (1880-1914)* (Paris 1951); for Spain by George Richard Esenwein, *Anarchist ideology and the working-class movement in Spain, 1868-1898* (Berkeley etc. 1989); for Australia by Verity Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism. The Industrial Workers of the World in Australia* (Cambridge etc. 1995) and id., 'Antipodean peculiarities: comparing the Australian IWW with the American', *Labor History* 40/3 (1999) 371-93.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Holton, *British syndicalism, 1900-1915* (London 1975); Dirk H. Müller, *Gewerkschaftliche Versammlungsdemokratie und Arbeiterdelegierte vor 1918. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Lokalismus, des Syndikalismus und der entstehende Rätebewegung* (Berlin 1985)

appearance as well.<sup>12</sup> Basically they explain revolutionary syndicalism from the second industrial revolution, which transformed labour processes and labour relations, made general strikes possible and workers radical. They observe an upsurge in workers' militancy during the decades leading to the First World War, that improved the climate for revolutionary syndicalism. They state that only in times of a revolutionary mood syndicalism could become dominant, otherwise it remained a minority in the trade-union movement. Interestingly enough they also state that syndicalism first developed in France, especially in busy Paris, both not known for their leading role in the Second Industrial Revolution. In this respect Vadim Dam'e, however, has maintained that the revolutionary-syndicalists favoured industrial progress much more than the anarcho-syndicalists.<sup>13</sup>

These are very general processes and revolutionary syndicalism not in every place where the Second Industrial Revolution manifested itself. To explain this Van der Linden and Thorpe point to so-called 'radiation effects': Paris became dominantly syndicalist because the workers in the small enterprises there were syndicalist and dominated the Parisian workforce. In contrast the workers in Northern France joined more reformist unions because reformists (although mostly Guesdist!) dominated the scene there. Resembling a tautology this thesis of 'radiation effects' does not add to our understanding why syndicalism dominated Paris. Other causes making for regional and local difference are sought in the behaviour of employers. All in all this analysis of the rise of revolutionary syndicalism centres on work and work-relations. However, we will see that in explaining the fall of the movement factors outside the workplace are called upon.

Before I go on, I should clarify the relation between revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism in order to give a more adequate, if somewhat elusive definition of revolutionary syndicalism.

## Syndicalism and Anarchism

Revolutionary syndicalism presented itself to a world audience for the first time in August 1907 in Amsterdam at an international anarchist congress. The year before, at its congress, the French Confédération du Travail (CGT) had formulated the famous Charte d' Amiens, a fundamental declaration of revolutionary-syndicalist principles. In Amsterdam, Amédée Dunois, who over a period of fifteen months had changed from an ardent opponent to a militant supporter,<sup>14</sup> defended revolutionary syndicalism as a higher stage of anarchism. He argued that syndicalism and anti militarism elevated anarchism from the level of pure theory to that of practice. Through revolutionary syndicalism anarchism

<sup>12</sup> Van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary syndicalism*. ; Marcel van der Linden, "Vorläufiges zur vergleichenden Sozialgeschichte des Syndikalismus" in: Heribert Baumann c.s. (Hrsg.), *Anarchismus in Kunst und Politik. Zum 85. Geburtstag von Arthur Lehning* (Oldenburg 1985) 45-64; Marcel van der Linden, "Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism", *Labour History Review* 63 (1998), 182-197.

<sup>13</sup> V. Dam'e, *Anarkho-Syndikalizm v XX veke* (Moscow 2001), 15.

<sup>14</sup> Maitron, *Histoire*, 300-301.

would become a concrete programme for social change: “We see in it [syndicalism] the most perfect theoretical expression of the different proletarian tendencies.”<sup>15</sup>

Young Pierre Monatte supported Dunois. According to Monatte, revolutionary syndicalism implied political neutrality for trade unions. Every craft in every town should be organized in just one union. The means to emancipate the working class could be limited to two words: *action directe*. Of all socialist movements the most faithful heir to the First International was revolutionary syndicalism because of its adherence to *direct action*. Had not this International stipulated that the emancipation of the working class should be the work of the workers themselves? Moreover, Christiaan Cornelissen, a Dutch syndicalist living in Paris, later would argue, had its libertarian wing, the Fédération Jurassienne, not coined the term *action directe* as the opposite of *action parlementaire*?<sup>16</sup> Through revolutionary syndicalism, Monatte thought, at last the labour movement had stopped being a movement of talk, limiting itself to books and debates, to theory and negative criticism. It had become a positive power that would change the world. “Quite unlike socialism and anarchism, which have preceded it, revolutionary syndicalism speaks less through its theories than through its actions and you should find it in what it does more than in the books.”<sup>17</sup> From the context of this statement it is clear that this idea of a new type of labour movement does not imply that revolutionary syndicalism should be analysed as if it were only about action and not about ideas and indeed ideals. The remarks of Monatte show traces of a passion for action which was typical of a new generation of anarchists, influenced by Nietzsche and Bergson. At the congress Christiaan Cornelissen added to the words of Monatte, that revolutionary syndicalism and direct action should be revolutionary in intent: “they must never stop trying to transform the present society into a communist and libertarian one.”<sup>18</sup> Cornelissen communicated ideas he had advocated since 1888 when he had joined the socialist movement. During the nineties these ideas had positioned him between the pure anarchists and the Marxist social-democrats (Cornelissen considered himself a Marxist too). At the Amsterdam congress he had placed himself between a narrow economic trade-unionism and pure, or more individualistic, anarchism.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Il nous suffit de voir en lui l’expression théorique la plus parfaite des tendances du mouvement prolétarien.” *Congrès anarchiste tenu à Amsterdam. Août 1907. Compte-rendu analytique des séances et résumé des rapports sur l’état du mouvement dans le monde entier* (Paris 1908) [*Congrès Amsterdam*] 36-7.

<sup>16</sup> Christiaan Cornelissen, “Internationale brieven”, Tweede reeks XXV, *Het Volksdagblad* 4/1/1908.

<sup>17</sup> *Congrès Amsterdam*, 62 and 67-68: “Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire, à la différence du socialisme et l’anarchisme qui l’ont précédé dans la carrière, s’est affirmé moins par des théories que par des actes, et c’est dans l’action plus que dans les livres qu’on doit l’aller chercher.”

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*, 77: “c’est qu’ils ne cessent pas de viser à la transformation de la société actuelle en une société communiste et libertaire.”

<sup>19</sup> Cornelissen’s ideas can be found in: Christian Cornelissen, *En marche vers la société nouvelle. Principes. Tendances. Tactique de la lutte de classes* (Paris 1900); *id.*, “*Directe actie!*” “*Zelf doen!*” (Amersfoort 1904). The development of Cornelissen’s revolutionary syndicalism has been traced in: Bert Altena and Homme Wedman (eds), *Tussen anarchisme en sociaal/demo-*

Cornelissen's position becomes clear from Errico Malatesta's remarks. The Italian anarchist thought that revolutionary syndicalism could endanger pure anarchism: the trade unions had to be politically neutral, otherwise Christian and social democratic militants would propagate their own ones. This would divide the working class. Besides, the labour movement was only one of the means to establish a much wider goal, anarchist society, and that goal included people other than workers. "The anarchist revolution we want is much bigger than the interests of only one class: it offers complete liberation of a humanity which is now enslaved and that in a way which is at once economic, political and moral. Therefore, we have to be cautious regarding every means which is unilateral and simplistic." Simplicity Malatesta found in the revolutionary-syndicalist idea of the general strike as sufficient to bring about a new society. According to him that goal could only be reached by means of an armed insurrection.<sup>20</sup>

The French historian Jean Maitron has seen in this discussion the separation of the anarchist and the revolutionary-syndicalist movements, but he dates this separation too early even for France.<sup>21</sup> It is true that from 1912 onwards the French CGT started to develop a less broad interpretation of revolutionary syndicalism, narrowing the concept to pure trade-unionism. Even then, however, the CGT successfully boycotted in a classical anti-parliamentarian way a proposed law on pensions.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, at the same time a similar process was arrested in the Dutch syndicalist movement, the Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat (NAS). How broadly the syndicalist movement in the world still defined itself is apparent from the agenda and proposals for the international syndicalist congress held in London from September 27 to October 2, 1913. This agenda included as Point 3 'Anti-Militarism', as Point 8 and 9 respectively: 'International language' and 'Religions and morals of the proletariat'. For this last point the *Polska Groupa Syndykalisci Rewolucyjne* from Krakow had sent in a document, which in the best tradition of social-darwinism tried to connect revolutionary syndicalism with "the natural evolution of humanity".<sup>23</sup>

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*cratie. "Het Revolutionaire Kommunisme" van Christiaan Cornelissen (1864-1943)* (Bergen 1985). See also: Bert Altena and Homme Wedman, "Sociaal-democratie, ouderwetse vakbonden en nieuw anarchisme: de Internationale Brieven van Christiaan Cornelissen", *Kritiek, Jaarboek voor socialistische discussie en analyse 2009* (Amsterdam 2009).

<sup>20</sup> *Congrès Amsterdam*, 80-85: "La révolution anarchiste que nous voulons dépasse de beaucoup les intérêts d'une classe: elle se propose la libération complète de l'humanité actuellement asservie, au triple point de vue économique, politique et moral. Gardons-nous donc de tout moyen unilatéral et simpliste."

<sup>21</sup> Maitron, *Histoire*, 305.

<sup>22</sup> Irène Bourquin, "*Vie Ouvrière*" und Sozialpolitik: Die Einführung der "Retraites ouvrières" in Frankreich um 1910. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Sozialversicherung (Bern e.a. 1977); Karin Schniedewind, "Life-long work or well-deserved leisure in old age? Conceptions of old age within the French and German labour movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries", *International Review of Social History* 42 (1997) 397-419; Bert Altena, "The State - revolutionary syndicalism - mediators from below" in: Nico Randerad (ed), *Mediators between state and society* (Hilversum 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Westergard-Thorpe, "The provisional agenda of the international syndicalist congress, London 1913", *International Review of Social History* XXVI (1981) 92-104. See also: Id., "Towards a Syndicalist International: the 1913 London Congress", *International Review of Social History* XXIII (1978) 33-78, and: Wayne Thorpe, "*The workers themselves*". *Revolutionary*

Each of the various national revolutionary-syndicalist movements shows a peculiar mix of different traditions and influences, but at least until the 1920s revolutionary syndicalism can best be understood as part of the broad anarchist movement.<sup>24</sup> Of course, there are scholars who disagree. Peter Schöttler does not consider the apolitical stance of the French *Bourses du Travail* as caused by anarchist influences.<sup>25</sup> Gerald Friedman argues that low contribution fees and small strike funds are only evidence of the ideas of the syndicalist leaders.<sup>26</sup> Marcel van der Linden, maybe inspired by Ridley, prefers a focus on action to one on ideology: “what counts is what the movement does in practice, and not how it justifies what it does”.<sup>27</sup> Such an a priori assumption ignores the ideological and idealistic aspects of revolutionary syndicalism, which can inspire instead of justify. It seems suited to only a quantitative analysis of labour movements answering questions such as how many strikes occurred, how long they lasted, and how many strikers participated. For such kinds of analyses, the thoughts that guide activities are always a nuisance.

By ignoring ideological convictions it becomes possible to see in revolutionary syndicalism a Pavlovian reaction, primitive or not, to big economic developments in society and/or small problems at the shop-floor. Revolutionary syndicalism as a distinct variant of anarchism and a source of inspiration for the syndicalist worker gets lost in this approach. Uprooted because of migration or short-lived labour contracts, the syndicalist worker seems driven by economic modernization.<sup>28</sup> Here the politically inspired negative interpretation of revolutionary syndicalism, which I mentioned in the introduction, returns in a more sophisticated form. The syndicalist worker appears as part of a herd, which primarily is driven by primitive emotions, not rationality. It is significant that in these analyses all kinds of things are ascribed to syndicalist workers, without actually inquiring what was going on in their mind. The individual syndicalists one may meet in newspapers and archives, seldom appear in these studies. Nevertheless, it is not too difficult to imagine that individual syndicalist workers would have had to defend and develop their convictions at home, on the street, in cafés and on the shop-floor. We also should allow for the local and collective build-up of

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*Syndicalism and international labour, 1913-1923* (Dordrecht etc. 1989) 66-87. Christian Cornelissen also would continue to write about morals and ethics from a revolutionary-syndicalist point of view: Christian Cornélissen, *Les générations nouvelles. Essai d'une éthique moderne* (Paris 1935).

<sup>24</sup> Michael Schmidt and Lucien Van der Walt disagree on this point. To them the syndicalist movement is equivalent with what they call “broad anarchist movement”, that is an anarchist movement without any individualist anarchists. See: Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame. The revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism (Counter-Power Volume I)* Oakland CA forthcoming).

<sup>25</sup> Peter Schöttler, “Politique sociale ou lutte de classes: notes sur le syndicalisme “apolitique” des Bourses du Travail”, *Le Mouvement Social* 116 (1981) 3-21, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Gerald Friedman, “Strike success and union ideology: the United States and France, 1880-1914”, *The Journal of Economic History* XLVIII (1988) 1-26, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Van der Linden, “Second thoughts”, 183; Ridley, *Revolutionary syndicalism*, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ridley, *Revolutionary syndicalism*, 16: “Property, independence, craftsmanship were their ideals. They remained strongly individualistic in outlook and in that sense *petit-bourgeois*. They were not merely concerned with the problem of wage exploitation, as was the industrial proletariat, but with problems of economic freedom and social equality.”

experiences in the class-struggle, a struggle usually broader than just the world of work.

Connected to this is another problem with quite a few analyses of syndicalism: revolutionary syndicalists appear as people who only work and react to the world of work. They do not seem to have had broader societal or personal concerns at all. For example, in those studies religion remains a private matter, just as social-democracy had always preached.<sup>29</sup> Richard Evans, in a rarely quoted booklet, has shown, however, the wide range of topics workers used to talk about when they met each other in the pub.<sup>30</sup> When revolutionary syndicalists do take the floor in analyses, they demonstrate that they were capable of defending their conviction against either Social-Democracy or individualistic anarchism. In their clubs such questions were regularly debated. In 1907, the minutes of the *Bourse du Travail* of Le Havre reported that “the disputes between Monatte and Malatesta [in Amsterdam] were hotly debated.”<sup>31</sup>

The famous historian of anarchism Max Nettlau has written “that labour, which has become free from artificial obstacles (state, politics) and which does not pay any tribute anymore to a parasite (capital), will show the natural tendency to organize itself freely and efficiently and in a mutual and solidary way as far as work forces it to. This is the goal of revolutionary syndicalism and at the same time it is anarchism, because it is natural, the situation which intelligent people automatically choose after all obstacles have fallen away.”<sup>32</sup> These words are a bit categorical, but I agree with Nettlau that revolutionary syndicalism is a much more natural and logical movement than often has been thought. As Maitron has argued, revolutionary syndicalism, moreover, was intimately connected with the life of the syndicalists as a whole.<sup>33</sup> The cultural activit-

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<sup>29</sup> Such narrow-minded workers appear also in the otherwise impressive article by Klaus Weinhauer, “Labour market, work mentality and syndicalism: dock labour in the United States and Hamburg, 1900-1950s”, *International Review of Social History* 42 (1997) 219-253.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Evans (ed.), *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich. Stimmungsberichte der Hamburger Politischen Polizei, 1892-1914* (Hamburg 1989)

<sup>31</sup> “les débats Monatte-Malatesta faisaient rage”: *Histoire méconnue et oubliée du syndicalisme Havrais, 1907-1939, Le Libéraire* numéro hors série (automne 1996) 13. For similar discussions within the German FAUD (Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands) see: Dieter Nelles, *Zur Soziologie und Geschichte des Anarcho-Syndikalismus im rheinisch-bergischen Raum unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Wuppertals von 1918-1945* (Diplomarbeit Wuppertal 1989) 124-134.

<sup>32</sup> “die Tatsache, die nun einmal besteht, so unangenehm sie für manches Ohr ist, daß die von künstlichen Hindernissen (Staat, Politik) befreite, keinem Parasiten (Kapital) mehr Tribut zollende Arbeit die natürliche Tendenz besitzen wird, sich frei und zweckmäßig, nach Gegenseitigkeit und mit Solidarität so weit zu organisieren, als dies der Sache der Arbeitszweck selbst, erfordert: dies ist eben zugleich Syndikalismus in seinem Endziel und es ist Anarchie, weil es eben natürliches Leben ist, der nach Wegfall der Hindernisse sich für vernünftige Menschen von selbst ergebende Zustand”: Max Nettlau, “Fernand Pelloutiers Platz in der Entwicklung des Syndikalismus”, *Die Internationale. Zeitschrift für die revolutionäre Arbeiterbewegung, Gesellschaftskritik und sozialistische Neuaufbau* 1 (1927) 5 Lieferungen, 5 S. 21.

<sup>33</sup> “C'est que le syndicalisme révolutionnaire n'est pas pour les militants qu'il rassemble, une doctrine étrangère que l'on adopte ou que l'on rejette. Il émane d'eux-mêmes. Ils l'ont créé par leur action quotidienne”. Maitron, *Histoire*, 298. When Maitron continues with the remark that revolutionary syndicalism was more a kind of practice than a theory, that does not mean that theory was unimportant. See also Wilfried Röhrich: “Indem der revolutionäre Syndikalismus das “authentisch”-proletarische Bewußtsein vorrangig in der ökonomischen Aktion zu entwickeln erstrebte, suchte er die konkreten Bedürfnisse der Arbeiterschaft mit allgemeingesellschaftlichen Zielvorstellungen zu verbinden.” Wilfried Röhrich, *Revolutionärer Syn-*

ies of the revolutionary syndicalists would be incomprehensible, if we were not prepared to see in the movement an experiment to connect the lives and actions of individual persons with a total revolution of society. That revolution had more in common with Malatesta's economic, political and moral goals than he feared in 1907.

If for us revolutionary syndicalism is a variety of anarchism, the actions of the syndicalists acquire a significance which goes beyond the Pavlovian reaction. The movement gains a tension which is the result of its being a labour movement and an anarchist movement at one and the same time. We need to see beyond the narrow economic dimensions to which syndicalists are usually confined. Then only next to numbers and depersonalized tendencies will there appear people in our studies.

So what about a definition of revolutionary syndicalism? As with Marxism, it is not easy to give a shorthand one, nor is it very useful. As academics we like to articulate precise and clear-cut definitions, because generally they help our analysis. Sometimes, however, they harm it. That for example, applies when the object of study itself, in this case revolutionary syndicalism, was not very precise. Revolutionary syndicalism was not sustained and formulated by anarchist intellectuals like Emile Pouget or Christiaan Cornelissen (Sorel was hardly seen in syndicalist circles)<sup>34</sup>, but also by workers.<sup>35</sup> The latter more often than not had little formal education nor the time to educate themselves in an academic way in matters concerning the labour movement, but still they discussed anarchism and trade-unionism in their local unions and often had to cast their votes in referenda.

I start my 'definition' with words of Jacques Julliard, who has written that revolutionary syndicalism did not aspire to "the dissolution of the individual in the group, but on the contrary to extract the individual out of the anonymous group."<sup>36</sup> That is the core of syndicalism. Furthermore, the political conviction that to realize Socialism the economic struggle is of much more importance than the political one, is very characteristic of all kinds of revolutionary syndicalism. In the primacy of the economic power struggle we encounter notions from Marx. Verity Burgmann has shown how much the Australian syndicalists were influenced by Marxism.<sup>37</sup> In the Netherlands the early champions of revolutionary syndicalism F. Domela Nieuwenhuis (who later switched to the anarchism of Kropotkin and Malatesta if not to a more individualistic anarchism) and Christiaan Cornelissen had learned from Marx that political circumstances are dictated by the economic power relations.<sup>38</sup> The trade union was the best weapon in the class struggle and on the

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*dikalismus. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* (Darmstadt 1977) 3.

<sup>34</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism. A history of libertarian ideas and movements* (Harmondsworth 1971<sup>3</sup>) 303.

<sup>35</sup> See also V. Dam'e, *Anarkho*, 13

<sup>36</sup> "à la dissolution de l'individu dans le groupe, mais au contraire à l'extraction de l'individu du groupe anonyme": Jacques Julliard, *Fernand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d'action directe* (Parijs 19852) 13.

<sup>37</sup> Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism*, 42-9.

<sup>38</sup> Bert Altena, "Kritik wegen der Praxis. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis und der Marxismus" in: Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *Die Rezeption der Marxschen Theorie in den Niederlanden* (Trier 1992), 47-84, esp. 67; Altena/Wedman, *Cornelissen*, e.g. XLVII.

day of the revolution it would start to organize production. "The workplace will be the government", Léon Jouhaux, secretary of the French CGT, thought.<sup>39</sup> Friedhelm Boll has perceptively argued that this conception leads to "unionisation rather than state control of production".<sup>40</sup> How the rest of society should be organized after the revolution seldom was a matter of concern. Some ideas about the future society could be found in utopian books such as William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, but even important anarchists did not know what exactly to do after the 'conquest of bread'.<sup>41</sup> It is difficult to reconcile detailed blueprints of a future society with anarchist liberty and spontaneity. This left the revolutionary-syndicalist ideals even more in a state of limited elaboration.

Because trade unions were to organize the economy after the revolution, trade-union activities, like strikes, should educate the workers for their future role, not only as workers but as human beings in a broad sense. Revolutionary syndicalism consequently maintained a very tight relation between goals and means. Many syndicalist movements valued quality above quantity. To them their organizations were ranked below the movement of the workers themselves. The weakness of many a syndicalist organization did not challenge this conviction. "We want to have workers, who can stand on their own feet and act in the organization with conviction", was the opinion of the executive of the Dutch NAS. Only then could the movement fight in earnest for the liberation of labour.<sup>42</sup> In order to subordinate the organization to the workers at large, revolutionary syndicalists refused to have big strike funds. "We always point to the power of organization [itself] and we do this as a lesson from our experience. Never a struggle has been won because of strike funds, but because of the conviction [of the members], of the power of the organization", lectured Gerrit van Erkel, secretary of NAS.<sup>43</sup> The self-awareness and responsibility of the members moreover militated against centralization of power. Regarding these matters their tolerance was limited. Consequently, the rights of the smallest organization frustrated domination of the national federations by the large ones. NAS was a federation of trade unions (local and national ones) and every member-organization had a maximum of three votes.<sup>44</sup> Christiaan Cornelissen defended this with the argument that some unions

<sup>39</sup> B. Georges et al, *Léon Jouhaux: Cinquante ans de syndicalisme* (Paris 1962) 44.

<sup>40</sup> "Verstaatlichung der Produktion [...], sondern die Vergewerkschaftung": Friedhelm Boll, *Arbeitskämpfe und Gewerkschaften in Deutschland, England und Frankreich. Ihre Entwicklung vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn 1992) 469.

<sup>41</sup> In 1909 F. Domela Nieuwenhuis asked Kropotkin: "What should we, anarchists, do when like during the Paris Commune of 1871 the old order has disappeared and the new state of affairs has not yet been established." Kropotkin thought this was a very important question, which had been addressed by the anarchists far too poorly. Altena, "Kritik", 83.

<sup>42</sup> *Correspondentieblad NAS*, 1/12/04. Later this opinion about the value of quantitative strength led to corrections in official statistics in case these exaggerated the size of the NAS. The executive of NAS wanted a struggle with honest weapons: minutes of the executive 2/7/08 in: IISH, NAS-archive 4.

<sup>43</sup> Minute of a meeting of delegates 20/1/01 in: IISH, NAS-archive 21.

<sup>44</sup> *NAS congresverslag 1903*, 32. The French CGT had a completely different organizational structure but it was guided by the same principles. In practice small organizations within both federations dominated the few large ones. Georges, *Jouhaux*, 20-1.

would remain small, because of their trade, which nevertheless could be very important for society.<sup>45</sup> This reasoning demonstrates anarchist inspiration. In the French CGT anarchism also led to a certain contempt for daily organizational routines and for small strikes, which, moreover, tended to exhaust the organization.<sup>46</sup> Maybe the lack of radicalism in the demands of the French syndicalists, which has surprised Peter Stearns, could be explained by this contempt.<sup>47</sup>

Revolutionary syndicalism was a complicated movement. Besides being part of the broad anarchist movement revolutionary syndicalism also was a libertarian form of older worker socialism. Contrary to that of non working-class socialists, this socialism did not, in the first place, critically address the liberal bourgeoisie and its convictions, but instead focussed on the role of workers in the coming socialist society. Their role in production was very important, but their place in society generally was contemplated as well.<sup>48</sup> From the 1880s onwards this worker-socialism became increasingly enriched by the ideas of anarchist or *anarchisant* militants like Joseph Tortellier in France or Cornelissen in the Netherlands. This observation is of importance to my argument because revolutionary syndicalism was the ideology of a movement which very much wanted to be a workers movement. That is a movement, that wanted to have no truck with bourgeois, however socialist, unless they recognized that a socialist workers movement ought to be led by the workers themselves. Revolutionary syndicalism did not turn its attention to the world of the bourgeoisie (to which in many countries parliamentary politics belonged as well), but to that of the workers. Often their pride as craftsmen developed into anti-intellectualism and a certain contempt for ideological and white-collar work in general. This in turn could be sharpened by Bakunin's anti-Marxism.<sup>49</sup> Jean Maitron has argued that intellectuals behaved uncertainly when confronted with these self-aware syndicalist workers unless they considered themselves superior. Maitron thought that these mutual prejudices considerably damaged the relations between the various militants in the movement.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Christiaan Cornelissen "Internationale brieven" XXXV/2, *Het Volksdagblad* 27/9/1904.

<sup>46</sup> Maitron, *Histoire*, 281-282.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Stearns, *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French labor: a cause without rebels* (New Brunswick N.J. 1971)

<sup>48</sup> On the difference between the socialism of workers and that of bourgeois socialists: Bert Altena, "Bürger in der Sozialdemokratie. Ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) in den Niederlanden 1894-1914", *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 20 (1994), 533-48. Robert Michels, who also has differentiated between the socialism of 'ex-bourgeois' and the 'proletarians', looked at the matter from a psychological point of view and thought that the socialism of bourgeois social democrats was an expression of a more intense idealism, whereas the socialism of the workers was rather pragmatic. The psychological make-up of the bourgeois socialists in the socialist movement is a very interesting topic (Michels himself is an intriguing case), but I think that the difference between the socialism of bourgeois socialists and that of the workers is not a matter of intensity but of the frame of reference of these socialisms. Robert Michels, *Political Parties. A sociological study of the oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy* (New York/London 1962) 238-239.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton 1967) 91. A similar opinion: John M. Hart, *Anarchism and the Mexican working class, 1860-1931* (Austin 1978) 9-10.

<sup>50</sup> Jean Maitron, "La personnalité du militant ouvrier français dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle", *Le Mouvement Social* 33-4 (1960-1) 67-87, 84.

Revolutionary syndicalists became very suspicious when the world of politics and the world of the bourgeois came together in the person of the parliamentary social-democrat. Then their anti-intellectualism intensified. Thus, when confronted with the Social Democratic Workers Party (with its many “gentlemen lawyers”)<sup>51</sup> Dutch NAS was proud to be a strong organization of workers without much education. Social-democrats were “completely untrustworthy”.<sup>52</sup> The distrust of the CGT concerning social-democratic political parties dated from the 1880s, if not from even earlier days.<sup>53</sup> “The Socialist Party has no business whatsoever with sessions of the workers”, Jouhaux wrote in 1909.<sup>54</sup> The same distrust can be found among the Australian syndicalists.<sup>55</sup> Political socialists, moreover, embodied the danger of dividing the workers, who, when left alone, apparently automatically formed a united entity. That was another reason political movements should be excluded from the workers’ movement. On occasions when revolutionary syndicalists had been active within a political socialist movement, for example in Australia, anti-social-democratic feelings could become even stronger. Only a unified labour movement, based on the solidarity of the workers, could be the genuine representative of the proletariat. Therefore: “we only discuss economic problems, no political ones”.<sup>56</sup>

Revolutionary syndicalists very much wanted to have their organizations continue to be run by workers and with a bureaucratic apparatus as small as possible. In doing so they contradicted the organizational laws which their friend,<sup>57</sup> Robert Michels, was about to discover.

### Researching the causes of revolutionary syndicalism

First something needs to be said about numbers and origin. Usually the years 1900-1920 are considered the heyday of revolutionary syndicalism. There are exceptions such as Germany, where during the twenties the FAUD enjoyed considerable support and of course Spain, where in 1919 the CNT had 700.000 members and in 1932 more than a million.<sup>58</sup> It is important to bear in mind that even when its following was large, revolutionary syndicalism never organized the majority of the workers. Jacques Julliard has established that in 1906 2.91% of the working population of France was member of a CGT-affiliated organization. At that

<sup>51</sup> Gerrit van Erkel at a meeting of NAS-delegates 21/10/00 in: IISH, NAS-archive 21.

<sup>52</sup> *Correspondentieblad NAS*, 1/9/03.

<sup>53</sup> Georges, *Jouhaux*, 14-6. A deep distrust can already be found in the writings of Proudhon.

<sup>54</sup> Georges, *Jouhaux*, 35, note 1.

<sup>55</sup> Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism*, 54-5; Burgmann, ‘Antipodean peculiarities’, 373.

<sup>56</sup> Georges, *Jouhaux*, 35, note 1. It is much more fear of the divisive effect of parliamentary socialism, and for that matter of religion as well, that syndicalists avoided politics and religion than “a desire to escape from time- and energy-consuming squabbles between socialist groupings” as Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe have maintained: Van der Linden and Thorpe, “Rise”, 13. In this respect the syndicalist movement resembles the rule on ships, where political and religious discussions are avoided as well.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Michels, “Eine syndikalistisch gerichtete Unterströmung im deutschen Sozialismus (1903-1907)” in: s.n., *Festschrift für Carl Grünberg zum 70. Geburtstag* (Leipzig 1932) 343-365.

<sup>58</sup> George Esenwein, *Anarchist ideology*, 205; Temma Kaplan, *Red city, blue period. Social movements in Picasso’s Barcelona* (Berkeley 1992) 167.

point, CGT had only 18% of all unionized workers on its books while in 1911 this percentage had risen to 23%.<sup>59</sup> Even the huge membership of the Spanish CNT amounts to only 20% of the total working population.<sup>60</sup> Other syndicalist organizations were significantly smaller. The FAUD had a maximum of 150.000 members,<sup>61</sup> the American Wobblies in 1917 were of about the same size,<sup>62</sup> in Australia membership reached a maximum of 2000 which is about the same proportion of the working population as the IWW had in America<sup>63</sup> and in the Netherlands NAS had a maximum membership before 1914 of 12446 (1900) and of 51570 in 1920.<sup>64</sup>

It was only after the 1906 congress at Amiens that the CGT spread the term *syndicalisme révolutionnaire*. Thus the term 'revolutionary syndicalism' emerged at a rather late date in history. In the Netherlands, 'syndicalisme' seems to have been used for the first time in 1907.<sup>65</sup> The French origins of the name have led many to believe that revolutionary syndicalism was a French invention, which subsequently was exported to other nations. Avrich argues that in Russia revolutionary syndicalism was imported from France,<sup>66</sup> but often the movement seems to have had autochthonous roots. Societal phenomena differ from human beings in that they can exist a long time before having received a name. Movements which can be called revolutionary syndicalist can be found in several European countries before 1900. During the 1870s in Italy and Spain followers of Bakunin already showed traits characteristic of revolutionary syndicalism.<sup>67</sup> During the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the northern half of Europe we find other examples of revolutionary syndicalism. The first region to think of is of course the Jura, the homebase of Bakunin and of the Fédération Jurassienne during the 1870s.<sup>68</sup> In 1887 the Dutch Social Democratic Federation concluded that trade unions should be the basis of the socialist movement. This reorganization was inspired by Domela Nieuwenhuis' interpretation of the Communist Manifesto and Capital several years earlier.<sup>69</sup> In Germany we

<sup>59</sup> J. Julliard, *Autonomie ouvrière: études sur le syndicalisme d'action directe* (Paris 1988) 208.

<sup>60</sup> Size of working population is taken from: B.R. Mitchell, *International historical statistics. Europe 1750-1988* (New York 1993<sup>3</sup>) 153.

<sup>61</sup> Nelles, *Wuppertal*, 5. In 1932 membership had come down to approximately 7000: Ulrich Klan and Dieter Nelles, "Es lebt noch eine Flamme", *Rheinische Anarcho-Syndikalisten/-innen in der Weimarer Republik und im Faschismus* (Grafenau-Döffingen 1986) 46.

<sup>62</sup> Melvyn Dubofsky, "The rise and fall of revolutionary syndicalism in the United States", in: Van der Linden and Thorpe, *Revolutionary syndicalism*, 203-221, 215.

<sup>63</sup> Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism*, 126.

<sup>64</sup> J.M. Peet c.s. (red.), *Honderd jaar sociaal. 1891-1991. Teksten uit honderd jaar sociale beweging en sociaal denken in Nederland*. (Den Haag 1998) 784-785. In 1920 all Dutch trade unions together had organized only 25% of the working population!

<sup>65</sup> Christiaan Cornelissen, "Internationale brief" Tweede reeks XVII, *Het Volksdagblad* 16/6/07. The term became popular only between 1909 and 1912.

<sup>66</sup> Paul Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 76-78.

<sup>67</sup> Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian anarchism, 1864-1892* (Princeton 1993) 48-49, 53, 57-81; Esenwein, *Anarchist ideology*, 208-209. Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia, 1868-1903* (Princeton 1977) 207.

<sup>68</sup> Rolf Bigler, *Der libertäre Sozialismus in der Westschweiz. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte und Deutung des Anarchismus* (Köln 1963)

<sup>69</sup> Jacques Giele, "Socialisme en vakbeweging. De opkomst van socialistiese vakorganisaties in Nederland (1878-1890), deel 1", *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van socialisme en arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* 1978 (Nijmegen 1978), 27-83 52,61-62, 67-71; Bert Altena, "Zu den Wirkungsbedingungen des niederländischen Sozialismus", in: Horst Lademacher und Walter

find revolutionary syndicalism in the oppositional trade unions of the *Lokalisten*. Dirk Müller has shown that even the German trade unions of the 1870s had many revolutionary syndicalist characteristics.<sup>70</sup> During the 1880s French labour organizations adopted anti-political resolutions, but also more parliamentary Marxist ones.<sup>71</sup> Even in 1896 in Bohemia anarchists decided that trade unions were the only possible organization in the struggle of the working class.<sup>72</sup> The Wobblies claimed to be a purely American movement and declined to be called syndicalist. Nevertheless Dubofsky puts them in the revolutionary syndicalist camp and rightly so!<sup>73</sup> He states that revolutionary syndicalism had adherents amongst the American workers before the Wobblies in 1905 composed their declaration of principles.<sup>74</sup> Strangely Belgium, a country with a long tradition of socialist and libertarian labour movements, remained free of revolutionary syndicalism. Even after the founding of a Belgian CGT in 1905 it remained a movement of no significance at all.<sup>75</sup> To sum up: it is clear, that before 1906 many countries had experienced endemic revolutionary-syndicalist (embryonic or not) movements. This does not mean that there were no transnational 'radiation effects'. Private networks, migration and the syndicalist press transferred experiences and ideas between the various movements. There is evidence of this, *pace* the IWW and Dubofsky, in certain places in the United States<sup>76</sup> and even more so in several Latin American countries for example Chile<sup>77</sup> and Peru.<sup>78</sup> Constance Bantman has argued that British syndicalism basically was imported by French anarchist *émigrés*, whereas the French syndicalists borrowed ideas from their British com-

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Mühlhausen (Hrsg.), *Freiheitsstreben – Demokratie – Emancipation. Aufsätze zur politischen Kultur in Deutschland und den Niederlanden* (Münster 1993) 245-283, 268-271; Id., "Kritik", 67. Both publications by Marx have also inspired Christiaan Cornelissen: *Altena/Wedman, Cornelissen*, XIII-XX.

<sup>70</sup> Müller, *Lokalismus*; Id., "Der Syndikalismus in der deutschen Gewerkschaftsbewegung vor 1914", in: Erich Matthias und Klaus Schönhoven (Hrsg.), *Solidarität und Menschenwürde. Etappen der deutschen Gewerkschaftsgeschichte von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Bonn 1984), 57-69. See also: Rudolf Boch, *Handwerker-Sozialisten gegen Fabrikgesellschaft. Lokale Fachvereine, Massengewerkschaft und industrielle Rationalisierung in Solingen 1870-1914* (Göttingen 1985)

<sup>71</sup> Maitron, *Histoire*, 264-269.

<sup>72</sup> Václav Tomek, "Tschechischer Anarchismus um die Jahrhundertwende", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 12 (1992) 97-131, 112.

<sup>73</sup> Dubofsky, *We shall be all*, 76-84, 170.

<sup>74</sup> Id., 82. See also: Nicolaas Steelink, *Reis in droomland* (Sittard 1998) 148-51. (The original English version of these Wobbly memoirs can be found in the Labadie-collection at the University of Michigan)

<sup>75</sup> Jan Moulaert, *Rood en Zwart. De anarchistische beweging in België, 1880-1914* (Leuven [1994]), 210, 301-340. See also: Pieter Ballon, 'Le mouvement syndicaliste révolutionnaire à Liège pendant l'entre-deux-guerres', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis/Revue Belge d'Histoire Contemporaine* XXVIII (1998) 339-62.

<sup>76</sup> Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, black November: culture and community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany 1989) 51.

<sup>77</sup> Peter DeShazo, *Urban workers and labor unions in Chile 1902-1927* (Madison 1983) 90.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Blanchard, *The origins of the Peruvian labor movement, 1883-1919* (Pittsburgh 1982) 47, 54.

rades.<sup>79</sup> It is only during the early twentieth century that these syndicalist movements looked to France for new ideas and practices.

Given the fact that in many countries revolutionary syndicalism was established during the last quarter of the nineteenth century it comes as no surprise that a syndicalist opposition, composed of delegates of several countries, made itself felt early within the ranks of the Second International. This opposition against Marxist and parliamentary dominance was voiced in 1889 in Paris at its first congress. With each new congress it took a more decisive course towards revolutionary syndicalism between parliamentary social-democracy on the one hand and individualistic anarchism on the other.<sup>80</sup> In 1896 it was thrown out at the London congress and after that it required considerable effort to get some international revolutionary syndicalist organization started. Because of individualistic-anarchist opposition, the Amsterdam congress of 1907 failed to launch such a new organization. The London congress of 1913 would have established a syndicalist international, had not the First World War and subsequent disagreements between anarchists and between revolutionary syndicalists occurred. In 1923 at last a syndicalist international was founded.<sup>81</sup>

This historical overview shows that revolutionary syndicalism contains an authentic labour movement and one with a tradition. Revolutionary syndicalism in fact was either a continuation of very old labour movements or, as I also will argue, a phenomenon in circumstances in which the world of the workers was isolated from the rest of society. Parliamentary politics belonged to the world of the bourgeois, which before 1914 generally was foreign to workers. Here one could expect the natural developments Max Nettlau spoke of earlier. I come back to this in the next section. The anarchists, who during the 1880s and 1890s saw that their strategy of insurrection and terror did not help their cause, brought to these workers only a sharper theoretical articulation of their beliefs by introducing them to the concepts of direct action, the value of action by workers themselves, the importance of direct democracy, the general strike. They also gave them a broader cultural perspective.<sup>82</sup> They only taught the workers to state more clearly what they already

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<sup>79</sup> Constance Bantman, "Internationalism without an international? Cross-Channel anarchist networks, 1880-1914", in: Magaly Rodríguez García, *Labour Internationalism. Different times, different faces* (=Revue belge de philologie et de l'histoire / Belgisch tijdschrift voor filologie en geschiedenis 84/4 (2006)), 961-981, 962, 974. Constance Bantman, *Anarchismes et anarchistes en France et en Grande-Bretagne, 1880-1914: Échanges, représentations, transferts* (Ph.D. Paris XIII 2007), 474-485. Holton, *British syndicalism*, 30-31, 50. Eric Hobsbawm, "The 'new unionism' in perspective" in: id. *Workers: worlds of labor* (New York 1984) 152-176, 154; Richard Price, 'Contextualising British syndicalism c. 1907-c.1920', *Labour History Review* 63/3 (1998) 261-77, 264.

<sup>80</sup> A study of the developments in the anarchist and revolutionary camps in and around the Second International remains to be written. A first attempt can be found in: Altena/Wedman, *Cornelissen* and in Markus Bürgi, *Die Anfänge der Zweiten Internationale. Positionen und Auseinandersetzungen 1889-1893* (Frankfurt/M 1996) 547-602.

<sup>81</sup> Thorpe, *Workers themselves*. Of that International Vadim Dam'e has written an exhaustive two-volume history: *Zabytyi internatsional. Mezhdunarodnoe anarkho-sindikalistskoe dvizhenie mezhdvumya mirovymi voynami* (Moscow 2007 and 2007)

<sup>82</sup> Hanneke Willemsse has beautifully shown how during the 1930s syndicalism was only a further and very natural development of ideas the leftist workers of Spanish Albalate de Cinca already had: Hanneke Willemsse, *Gedeeld verleden. Herinneringen van anarcho-syndicalisten aan Albalate de Cinca, 1928-1938* (Amsterdam 1996).

thought, to do better what they already practised and they brought them the perspective of a class society beyond the local sphere in so far as the workers, e.g. through migration, had not acquired this perspective themselves. As far as they were intellectuals from bourgeois origin, they also proposed more sophisticated assessments of the world of the bourgeois.

The search for historical roots and the syndicalists' own ideal of the 'unionised' economy have caused some authors to examine guild traditions. Doing so revolutionary syndicalism can be accommodated within the stage theory of socialism proposed by Geoff Eley, who saw in the movement a continuation of old associational ideals.<sup>83</sup> Dirk Müller has established a strong line between the traditional guild organisation and practices of the construction workers of Berlin and the localist convictions and practices they showed from the 1890s onwards.<sup>84</sup> Barbara Mitchell thinks that French syndicalism had its roots in the *compagnonnages* of the eighteenth century.<sup>85</sup> It is possible that in some countries there have been connections between guild-organisations and early syndicalist labour movements, especially where guilds gradually became trade unions. However, similarities are not always causal links as everybody knows and we have to be aware that a certain type of behaviour in certain circumstances can be the most logical without containing any reminiscences of earlier practices.<sup>86</sup> If the syndicalists continued old guild traditions, why then did they abandon the social self-help arrangements of the guilds, or their rules concerning apprenticeship and entry into the trade? In a country like the Netherlands guilds had disappeared long before the first trade unions were founded. Here it seems difficult to establish a connection with the guilded age. On the other hand Dutch syndicalism was as genuine Dutch as French syndicalism was French.<sup>87</sup> Rolf Bigler's conclusion that the strength of the

<sup>83</sup> Geoff Eley, "Reviewing the socialist tradition", in: Christiane Lemke and Gary Marks (eds), *The crisis of socialism in Europe* (Durham/London 1992) 21-61, 43-45.

<sup>84</sup> Müller, *Lokalismus*, 331; Id., "Syndikalismus", 58-59, 63. Nelles, *Wuppertal*, 57. See also: Marina Cattaruzza, *Gewerkschaftliche Organisationsprozesse der Werftarbeiter im Kaiserreich: eine komparative Skizze* in: Gerhard A. Ritter and Elisabeth Müller-Luckner (Hrsg.), *Der Aufstieg der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Sozialdemokratie und Freie Gewerkschaften im Parteiensystem und Sozialmilieu des Kaiserreichs* (München 1990) 415-438, 421-422

<sup>85</sup> Barbara Mitchell, *The practical revolutionaries. A new interpretation of the French anarchosyndicalists* (New York etc. 1987) 12; id., "French syndicalism: an experiment in practical anarchism", in: Van der Linden and Thorpe, *Rise*, 25-45, 26.

<sup>86</sup> Rudolf Dekker, "Labour conflicts and working-class culture in early modern Holland", *International Review of Social History* XXXV (1990) 377-420, shows how the medieval 'uutgang', where the journeymen left town in a body, disappeared as a practice and later was replaced by the 'uutscheyding' or strike. When in the nineteenth century Berlin construction workers left town (Müller, "Syndikalismus", 63), this could have been a repetition of old guild practices, but it might also have been a very rational and effective method. During the 1920s syndicalist construction workers in the Netherlands would use a variant: when on strike, they would establish their own production associations: Frans Becker en Johan Frieswijk, *Bedrijven in eigen beheer. Kolonies en produktieve associaties in Nederland tussen 1901 en 1958* (Nijmegen 1976) 195-212; Bert Altena, *'Een broeinest der anarchie'. Arbeiders, arbeidersbeweging en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling. Vlissingen 1875-1929 (1940)* (Amsterdam 1989) 430-435.

<sup>87</sup> Jan Lucassen sees a continuity between guilds and trade unions in the Netherlands: Jan Lucassen, *Jan, Jan Salie en diens kinderen. Vergelijkend onderzoek naar continuïteit en discontinuïteit in de ontwikkeling van arbeidsverhoudingen* (Amsterdam 1991). For opposite opinions: Dekker, 'Labour conflicts' and Bert Altena, "Continuïteit of een nieuw begin? Gilde en vakbeweging in Dordrecht, 1798-1872" in: M. Bruggeman c.s. (red.), *Mensen van de nieuwe tijd. Een*

guilds in Geneve was a formidable obstacle for libertarian socialism in that city militates also against an all too strong connection between guilds and revolutionary syndicalism.<sup>88</sup>

Taking up the possible link of syndicalism with guilds the German historian Rudolf Boch has given another, surprising and rather functionalist, view of social-democracy. According to him it was precisely the older generations of workers in Solingen which subscribed to the idea of a “free association of producers”. However, workers who had migrated to Solingen from the countryside or who had suffered deskilling became members of the new social-democratic trade unions. These unions disciplined their members to fit into capitalism and taught them to expect help from the state.<sup>89</sup> Here the members did not create the union, but the union created the members. Another line of reasoning seems to suggest itself in connection with Boch’s remarks. It is conceivable that the socio-economic order brought about by the guilds and guaranteed by towns and the state, later was translated into the need for state regulation of the economy. In that case guild traditions would have led to social-democracy. It is difficult to reach definite conclusions as to these matters. It seems, therefore, best to assume that revolutionary syndicalism, like every social movement, was informed by existing repertoires of beliefs and actions, but that it simultaneously was the expression of a future-oriented consciousness which was re-created every day. Revolutionary syndicalism was not just an old tradition of days past, but it also was an answer for the needs of the day, inspired by a vision of a free society tomorrow.

Though the revolutionary-syndicalist movement was not more abnormal than the ‘ordinary’ socialist one, it should not be analyzed as if it were just another trade union movement. Its links with anarchism preclude that option. Many modern analyses of revolutionary syndicalism err in disregarding the anarchist dimension of syndicalism. Instead they concentrate on the shop-floor and address mainly two themes: characteristics of certain specified occupations and modernization of the production process. In this respect Van der Linden and Thorpe point to two groups of workers that were strongly represented in the syndicalist movements: 1. casual, seasonal or project labourers; 2. miners, railway and factory workers who were confronted with the deskilling effects of the second industrial revolution. At the root of some modern references to this characteristic of revolutionary syndicalists is the hobo as the arch-syndicalist. Verity Burgmann has warned against an all too easy use of this line of reasoning, for the Australian hobo enjoyed greater respect than his American counterpart.<sup>90</sup>

A great variety of trades can be found with the revolutionary syndicalist movement:

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*liber amicorum voor A.Th. van Deursen* (Amsterdam 1996), 462-483.

<sup>88</sup> Bigler, *Sozialismus*, 255-256. For another explanation see below.

<sup>89</sup> Boch, *Handwerker-Sozialisten*, 289-92.

<sup>90</sup> Burgmann, ‘Antipodean peculiarities’, 377-8.

## Occupational bases of revolutionary syndicalism, 1870-1940

Country	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
France	*		*		*	*				*							
Spain	*		*	*	*	*				*					*		*
Italy	*					*									*		
Portugal	*		*					*	*	*					*		
Sweden	*					*	*							*	*		
Norway	*						*							*			
England	*						*	*				*					*
Netherlands	*			*	*	*		*	*		*	*			*		*
Germany	*				*	*	*			*		*					*
Bohemia					*		*										
Switzerland													*				
United States					*		*							*	*		*
Argentina	*	*	*					*		*		*					
Chile	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*	*
Mexico	*				*		*									*	
Peru					*												
Australia							*										

1. Construction workers; 2. Bakers; 3. Shoemakers; 4. Tailors; 5. Textile workers; 6. Metal workers; 7. Miners; 8. Railwaymen; 9. Cabinet-makers; 10. Typographers; 11. Cigar-makers; 12. Seamen; 13. Watchmakers; 14. Lumberjacks; 15. Land labourers; 16. Electricians; 17. Dock workers

Sources: Van der Linden/Thorpe, 'Rise'; Maitron, *Histoire*; Kathryn E. Amdur, *Syndicalist legacy: trade unions and politics in two French cities in the era of World War I* (Urbana 1986); Kaplan, *Barcelona*; Kaplan, *Andalusia*; Edvard Bull, "Die Entwicklung der Arbeiterbewegung in den drei skandinavischen Ländern, 1914-1920", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Socialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung X* (1922), 329-361; Holton, *British syndicalism*; Volkert Bultsma and Evert van der Tuin, *Het Nederlandsch Syndicalistisch Vakverbond, 1923-1940* (Amsterdam 1980); Tomek, "Anarchismus"; Václav Tomek, "Anarchismus als eigenständige politische Partei oder als breite Gefühls- und Ideenströmung? Dokumente zu einer Diskussion über die Zukunft des tschechischen Anarchismus im Jahre 1914", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 13 (1994) 63-91; Bigler, *Sozialismus*; Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*; Dubofsky, *We shall be all*; Samuel L. Baily, *Labor, nationalism and politics in Argentina* (New Brunswick 1967), 31-32; Willy Buschak, "Schwalben der Arbeit – ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Bäckereiarbeiter und des Anarchismus in Argentinien", *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit* 10 (1989) 83-109; Walter Bittner, *Gewerkschaften in Argentinien. Vom Anarchismus zum Peronismus* (Berlin 1982); DeShazo, *Urban Workers*; Hart, *Mexican Anarchism*; Blanchard, *Peru*; Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism*.

This table is an incomplete approximation and it even lacks any indications as to size or staying power of the movements. As such it is more or less a reflection of the literature and the syndicalists' habitual bad bookkeeping, but it serves my purpose, for it shows that among revolutionary syndicalists many artisanal trades were represented. This is not a new finding and for every trade explanations have been proposed. For instance it is said of Argentinian bakers that they changed jobs frequently, just as Van der Linden and Thorpe argued for the construction-workers.<sup>91</sup> Much has been said of the shoemakers, who according to Maitron worked in a trade which provided opportunities to think, the more so since in their shops it was customary to read books or newspapers aloud.<sup>92</sup> Bigler has borrowed Maitron's line of reasoning for his Swiss watchmakers.<sup>93</sup> This explanation seems to be the complete op-

<sup>91</sup> Buschak, "Schwalben".

<sup>92</sup> Maitron, *Histoire*, 118, 446. See also the classic: Eric Hobsbawm and Joan W. Scott, "Political Shoemakers" in: Hobsbawm, *Workers*, 103-131.

<sup>93</sup> Bigler, *Sozialismus*, 236-237.

posite of the migratory worker on short-term labour-contracts. Though Maitron argues that syndicalists recruited their following from artisanal trades such as the shoemakers, this, for example, does not explain the presence of textile workers amongst the French revolutionary syndicalists.

Historians of revolutionary syndicalism have paid special attention to construction workers. In the table this group of workers is prominent. According to Nettlau these construction workers were “mostly strong men coming from the province, who liked a fight and so often came to the fore in wild *chasses au renard* (fights with scabs), because usually a bigger occasion did not present itself.”<sup>94</sup> Nettlau provides an explanation for the syndicalism of the construction workers of Paris which nicely fits in with the theories of Kerr and Siegel<sup>95</sup> and which is still propounded today.<sup>96</sup> More usual is to infer the preference of these workers for syndicalism from characteristics of their work. Christiaan Cornelissen e.g. thought that the work of bricklayers and carpenters retained more of the creative urge in these construction workers than was the case with workers in production processes of the second industrial revolution.<sup>97</sup> I already mentioned Dirk Müller’s exposition of guild traditions among Berlin construction workers and Van der Linden and Thorpe’s stress on the short term of their labour contracts (Müller points to that characteristic as well).<sup>98</sup> Construction-workers, who according to them at times also were confronted by deskilling because of joinery works, but whose working conditions in general were characterised by short-term labour contracts. Because of this, they did not have the opportunity to get rooted, so it seems, and strikes were not very dangerous to them but a first choice to defend their interests.<sup>99</sup> That these ‘project workers’ were very much inclined towards revolutionary syndicalism, Van der Linden and Thorpe infer from the fact that these workers frequently pop up in syndicalist circles.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from artisanal trades representatives of big enterprises such as textile workers, miners and metalworkers like those on shipyards also feature in the above table. It therefore seems difficult to maintain that revolutionary syndicalism was a product of the (pre-industrial) artisanal

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<sup>94</sup> “vielfach stärke Männer aus der Provinz, die sich gern geschlagen hätten und die sich, da es hierzu keine grössere Gelegenheit gab, in den wilden *chasses au renard* (Kämpfen gegen Gelbe) so oft hervortraten”: Max Nettlau, *Geschichte der Anarchie. V. Anarchisten und Syndikalisten. Teil I. Der Französische Syndikalismus bis 1909 – Der Anarchismus in Deutschland und Russland bis 1914 – Die kleineren Bewegungen in Europa und Asien* (Vaduz 1984) [Nettlau, GdA V] 85.

<sup>95</sup> They compared “the bull of the woods”, the lumberjack, to “the mousy bank clerk”. According to them heavy work or unpleasant work which demanded little formal education produced “an independent spirit”, tough workers who easily went on strike: Clark Kerr and Abraham Siegel, “The interindustry propensity to strike – an international comparison” in: Arthur Kornhauser c.s. (eds), *Industrial conflict* (New York 1954) 189-212, 195-196.

<sup>96</sup> Van der Linden, “Second thoughts”, 187.

<sup>97</sup> Christiaan Cornelissen, “Internationale brieven” Tweede serie XXXIII, *Het Volksdagblad* 4/5/1908.

<sup>98</sup> Müller, *Lokalismus*, 34, 101. Also: Th. Van Tijn, “Verkenningen inzake ideologie in de arbeidersbeweging”, in: C.A. Admiraal c.s., *Historicus in het spanningsveld van theorie en praktijk. Opstellen aangeboden aan dr H. Klompmaker* (Leiderdorp 1985) 5-21.

<sup>99</sup> Van der Linden and Thorpe, “Rise”, 7-9.

<sup>100</sup> Van der Linden, “Second thoughts”, 184.

shop. Whoever likes to stress artisanal backgrounds of revolutionary syndicalism has to show that these big enterprises were characterized by artisanal work conditions. That seems possible with the miners (Hobsbawm: “miners are a peculiarly archaic body of workers”)<sup>101</sup> and it is certainly possible in the case of shipyards.<sup>102</sup> Workers at shipyards had quite a bit in common with construction workers. They enjoyed much autonomy in their work, were often highly skilled and worked in subcontracting types of work organization. This means that they had to be able to estimate the amount of work a certain task would take. They often produced unique objects, which gave them an opportunity to identify themselves with what they were making. Like their colleagues in construction, workers at shipyards had a lot of pride in their work.

However, the textile workers continue to pose problems. Those of St Etienne worked in medium-sized or small enterprises.<sup>103</sup> Their syndicalist colleagues on the left bank of the Rhine were to be found amongst the most skilled and most privileged category of the branch: the *Namenbandwebern*.<sup>104</sup> The same cannot be said of the syndicalist textile workers in the Dutch region of Twente, so it seems, or of those in Barcelona. Production there had abandoned the artisanal stage for quite some time. This should warn us to look exclusively for factors on the shop-floor, when explaining the popularity of syndicalism.

Leaving the textile workers aside, it does not seem important that the syndicalist workers were ‘project workers’, but rather that they enjoyed a lot of autonomy on the job. That kept them independent and proud of what they could make, of showing their skills. Dockyard labourers also needed such self-reliance: they too had to estimate the amount of work a task would require, they too had to name a price for which they were prepared to take on the job. They furthermore had to administer what they had carried in total and how much each of them had carried. Generally this type of worker is not very well suited for a type of trade unions that makes them obey either their own leaders or, through arrangements of the unions, the bosses at work or, through ties of the union leadership with them, parliamentarian socialists. Moreover, for them trade unions often were not the only means to defend interests. These workers could rely on their craft. They mostly did not have a weak position in the labour market, which made it easier for them to move on to another job. In this sense mobility often was not a cause of syndicalism but proof of independence, of a private defence of interests. Moreover, the independence of the workers may explain why in some countries or some branches of industry, where revolutionary syndicalism had a certain appeal, the majority of the workforce was not unionised. That would explain the relative strength of the CGT in France at a time when most of the workers did not carry a union card. Seen in this light, the cause of syndicalism in France was, contrary to Ridley’s argument, not

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<sup>101</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive rebels. Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Manchester 1978<sup>5</sup>), 5.

<sup>102</sup> Altena, ‘*Broeiwest*’, 469-497.

<sup>103</sup> Amdur, *Legacy*, 15-32.

<sup>104</sup> Nelles, *Wuppertal*, 245.

the general weakness of French trade unionism, but the origin of both can be found in the independence of the French worker.<sup>105</sup>

These 'explanations from the shop-floor' pose three other problems. The first is, that apart from Spain and some Latin American countries, revolutionary syndicalism was a minority in most countries and in most branches of industry. We should also bear in mind that in many countries only a minority of the total workforce was unionised. This means that the causes of syndicalism which authors (including myself) find on the shop-floor do not 'work' with the majority of the workers. That imperils this whole line of argument. If the causes were so important, we should have seen dominant syndicalist movements and a level of unionisation well above 50%. In other words: on the shop-floor we may find necessary causes, but these causes are insufficient to explain syndicalism. Some trades (such as construction workers) may show up strongly among syndicalists, but that says little about the shop-floor (otherwise many among the construction workers should have become syndicalists). That e.g. construction workers figure prominently among syndicalists, should be explained in another way. One such explanation can be found in the small size of many revolutionary syndicalist movements, for that undermines the statistical relevance of differences in size between various syndicalist unions. In other words: it might be the case that statistical evidence about the size of syndicalist unions has not much validity.<sup>106</sup>

The second problem has been posed by Friedhelm Boll. On the basis of an analysis of the construction workers of London, Hamburg and Paris he concluded: "Notwithstanding the striking similarity of trade structures and work conditions, especially the skilled construction workers in the three countries have developed quite different, if not opposite, political orientations and concepts of trade unionism."<sup>107</sup> Howard Kimeldorf investigated similar differences between dockworkers on the west- and east-coasts of the United States. While those on the east coast were radically leftist, their colleagues in New York were radically rightist. Kimeldorf explains this contrast by looking at labour markets, that are of course related to the world outside work and work-relations, and the recruitment of workers.<sup>108</sup> Apparently the nature of the shop-floor cannot fully explain a specific type of labour movement.

The third problem is different: when we focus on the shop-floor and on work relations alone, we almost automatically make revolutionary

<sup>105</sup> Ridley, *Revolutionary syndicalism*, 17.

<sup>106</sup> The administrative negligence of revolutionary syndicalists poses many additional problems for historians. Even central organs of the movement often did not exactly know how big their organization actually was. At times local secretaries and treasurers even refused to tell general secretaries of the trade unions or the statistical office of the state the strength of their local organizations. Their anarchism informed these functionaries that the state had nothing to do with the labour movement. On the other hand many syndicalist organizations did not feel an obligation to correct too high estimates of their strength.

<sup>107</sup> "Trotz hoher Vergleichbarkeit von Industriestruktur und Arbeitsbedingungen haben vor allem die qualifizierten Bauhandwerker in der Vergleichsländern außerordentlich verschiedene, ja geradezu gegensätzliche Gewerkschaftskonzeptionen und politische Orientierungen angenommen." Boll, *Arbeitskämpfe*, 495.

<sup>108</sup> Howard Kimeldorf, *Reds or rackets? The making of radical and conservative unions on the waterfront* (Berkeley etc. 1988) 40-1.

syndicalism a movement of men. Some authors have started to analyse revolutionary syndicalism as a male (whether or not 'virile') movement.<sup>109</sup> Verity Burgmann has shown that a gendered analysis of revolutionary syndicalism can be very stimulating and fruitful.<sup>110</sup> However, a gendered approach also can bring back to us the syndicalist as an unsophisticated and emotive worker,<sup>111</sup> the movement can be depicted all too easily as virile anti-feminist,<sup>112</sup> or everything syndicalist can be reduced to 'radical manhood'.<sup>113</sup> The strength of Burgmann's analysis is, that she shows how in the same organization rude anti-feminism can go along with feminism, be it at times feminism in a working-class jacket. Indeed straightforward anti-feminism can be found in syndicalist movements in other countries. The French CGT practised it, maybe inspired by Proudhon.<sup>114</sup> Already in 1866 the French delegation to the First International had written: "Without a family woman is of no use in the world." One had to wait until 1935 before the CGT would adopt a more favourable stance towards women and that after women's participation in the Paris Commune of 1871 and in the factories during the First World War.<sup>115</sup> The French, or the Swedish and German<sup>116</sup> syndicalists for that matter, are not representative of all revolutionary syndicalists, as Verity Burgmann has shown. Moreover, revolutionary syndicalism was not exclusively a movement of struggle in the factories, neither did it express itself solely through trade unions. Temma Kaplan sees among the adherents of revolutionary syndicalism in Barcelona also "neighborhood women". The general strike, which in Barcelona had been employed several times, had taught what these women could contribute to the struggle. This does not mean that the Spanish revolutionaries were feminists, but their understanding for women was considerably greater than that of the French CGT.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Francis Shor, 'Masculine power and virile syndicalism: a gendered analysis of the IWW in Australia', *Labour History* 63 (1992) 83-99. Id., "'Virile" syndicalism in comparative perspective: a gender analysis of the IWW in the United States and Australia', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 56 (1999) 65-77.

<sup>110</sup> Burgmann, *Revolutionary industrial unionism*, 92-111.

<sup>111</sup> Shor, 'comparative' 72: "the IWW often took the lead in appealing to the *primordial instincts* of working men against the assault of the new individualizing techniques of power embedded in scientific management and other changes in industrial capitalism" [my emphasis].

<sup>112</sup> Zie Van der Linden, "Second Thoughts", 187.

<sup>113</sup> Todd McCallum, "Not a Sex Question"? The One Big Union and the politics of radical manhood', *Labour/Le Travail* 42 (1998) 15-54.

<sup>114</sup> For doubts about the importance of Proudhon for the French labour movement: Maria Fitzpatrick, "Proudhon and the French labour movement: the problem of Proudhon's prominence", *European History Quarterly* 15 (1985) 407-430.

<sup>115</sup> "Sans famille, la femme n'a sur la terre aucune raison d'être": Maitron, "Personnalité", 84. See also: Jean-Louis Robert, "La CGT et la famille ouvrière, 1914-1918. Première approche", *Le Mouvement Social* 116 (1981) 46-66. Robert cites Pericat, who in 1916 at the congress of the *syndicat des terrassiers* had said: "Les femmes, mises au monde pour procréer, sont obligées pour gagner leur vie de tourner des obus pour tuer des hommes. Si l'élément féminin n'était pas si égoïste, il y a longtemps que la guerre serait terminée, mais les femmes ne pensent qu'à gagner de l'argent pour se payer des bijoux et des toilettes."

<sup>116</sup> Klan/Nelles, *Flamme*, 289-315.

<sup>117</sup> Kaplan, *Barcelona*, 24, 61; Willemse, *Gedeeld verleden*, 206-217.

## An alternative research strategy

If labour movements cannot be adequately explained by the shop-floor, we have to look somewhere else. Eric Hobsbawm once wrote: "There is nothing which says that if you have a particular social position, that God or destiny has decided that you're going to end up on the revolutionary left or on the ultraright. It depends upon the situations, and it depends on what you do to mobilize people and organize them."<sup>118</sup> This stress on contingency and agency seems fatal for structural explanations or the formulation of laws that determine history.

Nevertheless, 'situations' and 'what you do' bring us in a position to have a better look at structures. For instance: because of their weak finances and bad organization revolutionary syndicalist organizations had fewer opportunities to win adherents and mobilize people than rich trade unions or political parties, both of which were well organized. In the Netherlands, for example this was an important cause for the fading away of revolutionary syndicalism: during the 1920s the syndicalists could not compete at all with Christian or social-democratic trade unions when it came to unemployment insurance funds. On the other hand, 'situations' are not arbitrary either. Which 'situations' promoted syndicalism and which obstructed its rise?

Often revolutionary syndicalism is analyzed on a national level. Since circumstances can change with nation, this choice seems to make sense, but I doubt whether we can gain a sufficient explanation when researching on the national level. There are several reasons for this opinion. If revolutionary syndicalism is a minority amongst working-class movements, at times even a tiny minority, the national scope can easily become too broad. Therefore, revolutionary syndicalism primarily should be researched at the local level. Local circumstances, which of course in some way are embedded in national circumstances, contain the factors which cause the independence and pride that are fostered at the shop-floor to affect the labour movement. Every labour movement, after all, is a societal movement. Ideologies such as revolutionary syndicalism can guide a labour movement only if they provide an (adequate) interpretation of society as a whole and propose a sensible strategy of change. Both requirements can be met by syndicalism. Moreover, the 'localist' element in revolutionary syndicalism (that element might be less prominent within Australian syndicalism) proves that the militants themselves took the local arena seriously. On the other hand, research at the local level seems the only possible way to establish why the textile workers in the north of France rallied behind marxist guesdism and their colleagues in St Etienne behind syndicalism. Why were the construction workers of Berlin localistic and inclined towards revolutionary syndicalism, but those of Hamburg not? The last reason for investigating syndicalism locally has to do with the process of national unification that can be observed everywhere between ca. 1800 and 1940. The pace and the thoroughness of this process differed per country. In this process the importance of the local community

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<sup>118</sup> Eric Hobsbawm in: *Socialist Review* 66 (1982), 123.

gradually gave way to national government and centralised regulation by the state. The extent to which at the end of the nineteenth century local communities in important matters like social policy were autonomous, could differ from country to country. That in itself might contain part of the explanation why in some countries revolutionary syndicalism was relatively strong. As long as local communities had much autonomy, the 'situations' per locality could be very different. Revolutionary syndicalism has the best chance in communities where the independence the workers need on the shopfloor is not repressed outside the workplace or is even stimulated. This assessment is congruent with Max Nettlau's explanation of anarchism, which I quoted on the first pages of this essay. I want to elucidate it with the findings from my analysis of revolutionary syndicalism in the Dutch town of Flushing.<sup>119</sup>

Flushing and Middelburg are two towns in the southwest corner of the Netherlands. In 1899 both had about 20.000 inhabitants. Flushing has a harbour and still is a small industrial town, Middelburg, 6 kilometers away, is the centre of provincial government and the markettown for the region. The economy of Flushing was dominated by one big shipyard, the 'Koninklijke Maatschappij 'de Schelde'' (established in 1875), other jobs were to be found in the harbour, on the ferry to England and in construction. Middelburg had small enterprises in construction and metalwork and a middle-sized timber company. As a result of the town's economy the social structure of Flushing consisted of a broad working-class base, a rather small layer of middle classes (shopkeepers, teachers and clerical workers) and a very small elite. The social structure of Middelburg was much less lopsided and at the same time more differentiated. The town had a rather broad layer of shopkeepers. The educated middle classes were much stronger because of Middelburg's function as the administrative and judicial centre of the province and its rich collection of educational institutions. The elite of Middelburg (gentry, magistrates and some entrepreneurs) consequently was much larger and more strongly represented in the town than its equivalent in Flushing.

The economic basis affected more than only the social structure of the towns. Since Flushing had no function as a marketplace in the region, the local shopkeepers had to earn their living from selling to the working class. Consequently they were rather poor. Because of the preponderance in the community of the working class, education beyond the basic level was underdeveloped. Children from higher classes easily could go to schools in nearby Middelburg. These children usually came from the small local elite: a couple of directors of the big companies, the odd notary, some general practitioners, some clergymen and the mayor.

This social build-up of the town is important for two reasons. Firstly, Flushing was too poor to come to the aid of the workers in times of crisis and unemployment. Therefore the workers had to rely on themselves. Secondly, because the middle classes were very weakly developed, it was difficult to establish a connection between the elite and

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<sup>119</sup> Altena, 'Broeïnest'.

the workers. It was not according to the moral code of the day for the elite to socialize with workers. A connection between the two layers was only possible if intermediate groups could establish it, but the middle classes in Flushing dependent as they were on the workers hardly had any contact with the elite. Thus, in Flushing it was very difficult to establish organizations and activities which would cover all strata in the community. Both elite and workers lived in separate spheres. A workers movement which wanted to remain a movement of only workers did not find any obstacles in town.

It was a different story in Middelburg. Here, the shopkeepers were much richer and better educated, because the town not only had a broad, well situated middle class, but also because Middelburg was the marketplace of the region. Many of these shopkeepers depended on wealthy consumers, not on the workers of the town. Because of its schools, law courts and provincial administration, Middelburgs intelligentsia was rather strong. In times of economic crisis the elite and middle classes of Middelburg managed to give substantial aid to the workers. Moreover, all kinds of initiatives helped to integrate the workers into local society. For example, from 1890 onwards Middelburg elites quite successfully practised the 'Toynbee-work' (Toynbee werk), an initiative to provide lectures and education to the workers. This way members of the elite, like the rich timber trader and later social democrat F.M. Wibaut, could come into contact with workers. Through the schoolteacher Christiaan Cornelissen, Wibaut even managed to establish contact with the socialist workers in town. Attempts to establish some kind of Toynbee work in Flushing on the other hand failed miserably. The local workers showed too much pride to be taught and entertained by the bourgeois and Flushing simply lacked sufficient people who were able to sustain this type of work.

Because the social structure of Middelburg was much more complex than that of Flushing and because other strata behaved differently, Middelburg did not suit a social ideology such as revolutionary syndicalism, which contains a rather simple analysis of society. Workers in Middelburg considered themselves at the bottom of the social structure. They were confronted with other strata which could and did offer assistance, when necessary. Efforts at social integration of the working class promised to be much more successful in Middelburg than in Flushing. This changed the attitude of the higher classes of Middelburg too. The people who started the Toynbee work either remained engaged leftist liberals or in 1895 together with workers formed a branch of the new Dutch social-democratic party. In 1896 Wibaut went to London to observe the international socialist congress. The Middelburg branch of the social-democratic party was socially heterogeneous, especially after 1897 when Wibaut and his wife became members. Other important members of the branch were teachers, artisanal entrepreneurs and lawyers.

In Flushing the workers not only had to rely on themselves, they also had the opportunity to build a world of their own. In fact, they dominated life in the city. Already in the 1880s we find proletarian theatrical clubs, friendly societies and attempts to set up a workers' co-operative

store. Socialism appeared in Flushing much earlier (1879) than it did in Middelburg and it was entirely a working class affair. It developed in a libertarian direction. For the next forty years the labour movement of Flushing would be dominated by revolutionary syndicalism. It proved extremely difficult to establish a branch of the social-democratic party in this working-class town. Only in 1906 a tiny and weak branch was set up. The revolutionary syndicalists, however, developed a rich culture: choirs, a free thought union with its own library, musical societies and a very good theatrical club, which performed an ambitious repertoire: the famous Dutch socialist playwright Herman Heijermans, but also the German author Gerhard Hauptmann. Ulrich Klan and Dieter Nelles have argued that it was much easier to keep the syndicalist principle intact with the help of cultural activities than on the shopfloor only.<sup>120</sup> This argument emphasizes both the importance of syndicalist culture and of looking at it. Flushing presented no problem to the syndicalists in further developing their cultural activities. Bourgeois cultural life, with its own concerts, plays and libraries hardly existed in the town. For this the local bourgeoisie simply did not have enough cultural baggage and it was too small to maintain a cultural infrastructure of any significance. Besides, for entertainment it could go to Middelburg. The absence of bourgeois culture stimulated syndicalist culture in Flushing even more, for the owner of the local theatre depended on the workers for his living. It was easy to hire this theatre for socialist plays or for a speech by a libertarian activist. As a result, deference and humility were no characteristic of the average Flushing worker.

In these matters the 'situation' for the workers of Middelburg was much more difficult. They knew they stood at the bottom rung of the social ladder, they behaved accordingly and showed deference. On Mondays at the shipyard in Flushing the workers of Flushing would joke about their colleagues from Middelburg: "Did you see him with his sleeve?" They meant that the workers of Middelburg from their poor pay only had bought a sleeve, which on Sundays they would put on so that they could hang out of the window with one sleeve on and seem respectable. The bourgeoisie of Middelburg could support a decent bourgeois cultural life. Professionals from outside the province came to town to perform, its own intelligentsia was strong enough to deliver educated lectures the whole year round. Workers' culture seemed poor when compared to the glitter of bourgeois evenings. The owners of theatres in town did not need a working-class audience and therefore it was difficult for the workers in town to hire these places. After 1895 even their own branch of the social-democratic party was dominated by socialists from bourgeois origins. It is a measure of the poor level of working class cultural activities in Middelburg that at times the syndicalist theatre club from Flushing was invited to perform in Middelburg.

The workers of Middelburg not only found it much more difficult to develop an independent culture of their own, independence was also

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<sup>120</sup> Klan/Nelles, *Flamme*, 44. See for syndicalist culture also: Alan B. Spitzer, "Anarchy and culture: Fernand Pelloutier and the dilemma of revolutionary syndicalism", *International Review of Social History* VIII (1963) 379-389. Rübner, *Freiheit*, 159-169

repressed on the shop-floor. Many of the small employers of Middelburg depended on the wealthier classes for work. Since the local economy stagnated, it was even more important to keep these clients. That caused employers to behave in a fairly servile manner and they in turn imposed servility on the workers, especially when these had to work in the houses of clients. The presence of a relatively large elite and relatively wealthy middle classes changed relations within the working-class family as well. It was an accepted practice in Middelburg that a working-class woman went out to work in the house of a wealthy family.

It was different in Flushing. Here there were hardly private clients to be served, but this was compensated for by the big companies. Since these were steadily growing they constantly needed housing for their workers. Employers consequently valued skill, but servile behaviour of their workers towards the clients was not very important to them. The labour market for women was significantly smaller as well. If the family wage was a matter of honour for the workman of Flushing, the small labour market for women did not undermine this conviction. Flushing offered an ideal breeding-place for 'radical manhood', so it seems, but this manhood contained other aspects as well, for example responsibility for the family. It may seem a paradox that women played an important role in Flushing's syndicalism, much more so than in the labour movement of Middelburg. The role assumed by women is another aspect of syndicalist culture. Journalists often noticed a strong presence of women in meetings as well. This might have been reinforced by the way trade unions collected their dues. If they sent a collector around town, the dues came out of the household budget and that automatically involved the women. If they collected the dues in the pub, they came from the pocketmoney the men kept for themselves and the trade union remained a man's affair. Moreover, the women of Flushing involved themselves in strikes (such as the big strike at 'de Schelde' of 1928, which lasted for six months)<sup>121</sup> much in the same manner as did their counterparts in Barcelona.

Flushing and Middelburg resemble Hamborn and Remscheid, which the German historian Erhard Lucas so admirably analyzed<sup>122</sup> or Saint-Junien and Limoges.<sup>123</sup> Lucas' explanation of the radicalism of the workers from Hamborn, essentially in terms of their being uprooted, does not seem to apply to Flushing. A dominance of revolutionary syndicalism of almost 40 years sustained by autochthonous workers seems hardly congruent with being uprooted. Of much more importance, it seems to me, was that attitudes needed on the job, could be developed further in town. I already mentioned that both shipbuilding and construction work often produce unique products. Everybody could see the ships grow above the town for 9 months. Every ship was unique. The working-class houses that were being built could resemble each other; at the same time every project had its own peculiarities and problems,

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<sup>121</sup> S.n., *Om niet te vergeten. De staking bij De Schelde in 1928* (s.l. [1982])

<sup>122</sup> Lucas, *Arbeiterradikalismus*.

<sup>123</sup> Christian Dupuy, *Saint-Junien, un bastion anarchiste en Haute Vienne 1893-1923* (Limoges 2003)

which had to be solved on the spot by the workers themselves. Workers on the shipyards even had to invent new parts and they often developed new production techniques, which they would keep secret. Construction workers and their colleagues on the yards had much 'job control' and the town in no way interfered with a further build-up of their pride. The worker in Flushing did not have to display deference towards other strata. His frame of reference were the opinions of the other workers on the job and in the street. His cultural activities were the best the town could offer. This is not the kind of worker who easily joins labour organizations in which he is dominated, particularly not if this domination comes from people of bourgeois backgrounds.

In sum: to explain revolutionary syndicalism we have to look at the peculiarities of the job and ask whether an independent mind was needed or could develop, but decisive is whether this independence had to or could further evolve in the community at large. Often, as in Hamborn, Saint-Junien or St Etienne, the circumstances in town will resemble those of Flushing, but workers can also be thrown upon their own resources when elites do not take notice of them or even repress them. That is illustrated in Barcelona.<sup>124</sup> The extent to which workers are left to their own devices, however, not only is determined by 'what you do', but, as we saw, also by the 'situation'. The example of the construction workers of Middelburg shows that a broad layer of private clients can be important. When workers can build a world of their own, the choice for syndicalism is a logical, though not a necessary one. This could explain, why syndicalist movements tend to appear in mono-industrial, company towns, as Larry Peterson has argued.<sup>125</sup> Flushing, moreover, shows that a rich workers' culture and revolutionary syndicalism are interconnected. The importance of a workers culture is not just peculiar to Flushing. Neville Kirk has shown how important in England "'traditional' working-class culture" was to "'the rise of labour'" in general.<sup>126</sup> Rolf Bigler mentions the rich organizational life of the watchmakers of the Jura<sup>127</sup> and bearing in mind the example of Flushing the many working-class organizations and clubs of Hamborn would not surprise the readers of Erhard Lucas' book anymore.<sup>128</sup>

Local investigations bring us nearer to an explanation of revolutionary syndicalism and this explanation in a way resurrects Kerr and Siegel's argument about the isolated mass<sup>129</sup> not as a mass which is geographically segregated, but one which is socially badly integrated into society at large. From this perspective social-democracy and Christian labour movements, as Rudolf Boch has argued, appear as mechanisms of integration. No matter how much social-democracy professed

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<sup>124</sup> Kaplan, *Barcelona*; Esenwein, *Anarchist ideology*.

<sup>125</sup> Larry Peterson, "The One Big Union in international perspective: revolutionary industrial unionism, 1900-1925", in James E. Cronin and Carmen Sirianni (eds), *Work, community and power: the experience of labor in Europe and America, 1900-1925* (Philadelphia 1983) 49-87, 70-71.

<sup>126</sup> Neville Kirk, "'Traditional' working-class culture and 'the rise of Labour': some preliminary questions and observations", *Social History* 16 (1991) 203-217.

<sup>127</sup> Bigler, *Sozialismus*.

<sup>128</sup> Lucas, *Arbeiterradikalismus*, 94-98.

<sup>129</sup> Kerr and Siegel, "Interindustry propensity".

differently, it improved the contact between people from bourgeois backgrounds and workers in important ways. Politically, because of its parliamentarianism, it integrated the workers into the political structures and processes of the country. Because they recruited members from different strata of society, in the nineteenth century social democratic and Christian labour movements are much more remarkable phenomena than revolutionary syndicalism is. They often experienced big tensions within their own ranks, which have to be analyzed further.<sup>130</sup>

Local history of revolutionary-syndicalist movements will not lead to easy models, which posit a direct connection between the shopfloor and the labour movement. The number of factors is simply too large. Comparability as a consequence becomes more difficult and that is another obstacle to the formulation of easy explanatory models. That does not deny the importance of comparative research, of course, for it still gives us many heuristic hints and promising hypotheses.

### The disappearance of revolutionary syndicalism

The disappearance of social movements is an understudied subject.<sup>131</sup> Many analyses do not consider the disappearance of revolutionary syndicalism a problem. It should not have existed anyway. Until now, only Marcel van der Linden has tried to provide a structural explanation.<sup>132</sup> It centres around the state, which is remarkable, because in his analyses the state does not appear as a cause of syndicalism. From my argument it becomes clear that the absence of the state (or its repressive role) is important in explaining revolutionary syndicalism. Van der Linden focuses on political social reform, which has given the workers more social security and reduced their inclination towards syndicalism. According to them the welfare state posed three equally fatal options for the syndicalists: either to give up their principles, to be marginalized or to discontinue business.

The feeling of social security certainly has been an important factor, but there have been other broad societal processes at work as well. Two are particularly important. First, the disappearance of the autonomy of local communities. The second is the disappearance of the independent free world of labour. Both processes are affected by the fact that the state assumed more responsibilities, but the first one has also been affected by other centralizing processes, like the introduction of nationwide labour contracts.<sup>133</sup> Consequently local arrangement of affairs became much less important: local communities had to arrange their affairs according to centrally decided social policies. For example, local trade unions were confronted with nationally decided labour contracts. Thus, the local autonomy, which was important to the syndicalists, in-

<sup>130</sup> But see the exemplary analysis of Steve A. Smith, 'Workers, the Intelligentsia and Marxist Parties: St Petersburg, 1895-1917 and Shanghai, 1921-1927', *International Review of Social History* 41 (1996) 1-57

<sup>131</sup> The opinion of Doug McAdam c.s., "Social Movements" in: Neil J. Smelser (ed.), *Handbook of sociology* (Newbury Park etc. 1988), 695-738, 728-729 still is valid.

<sup>132</sup> Van der Linden, "Vorläufiges", 58-60.

<sup>133</sup> See for this also Van der Linden and Thorpe, "Rise", 11-12.

creasingly became a phenomenon of the past. On the other hand regarding national arrangements between trade unions, employers and the state, local unions became unimportant. To make deals on a nationwide scale you need national, centralized and possibly top-down organizations: the very opposite of the syndicalist ideal! Because syndicalists either were not recognized as a partner in the deals or did not recognize these deals themselves, they were marginalized as Van der Linden predicted. After 1914 in many countries trade unions were incorporated in new social-policy structures. That meant that they had to develop expertise as to these matters. Educated cadres and well organized unions were needed. The syndicalists could not very well provide these experts and structures, nor did they want to, but this undermined their position compared to other trade unions.

The rising welfare state not only abolished the autonomy of the communities, it also made political decision making important to the workers. In countries such as France and the Netherlands this enhanced the attractiveness of social democratic parties. It made syndicalists like Léon Jouhaux reconsider their anti-parliamentarian convictions.<sup>134</sup> This way syndicalism lost out to social-democracy and it lost the realizability of its own goal: a self guiding, anarchist society without a state. Various social arrangements by the state brought the state into the life of every individual. In towns where workers would be thrown back on their own resources, social policy now provided help. It took more and more creativity to make the syndicalist alternative realistic and realizable. The syndicalism of the workers could not deliver this and somehow syndicalist theoreticians failed also. In fact the same thing happened to syndicalism that according to Gareth Stedman Jones happened to Chartism during the 1840s: the ideology of syndicalism lost its power to make sense of the world and find possible links with a better one.<sup>135</sup> It appeared impossible for syndicalism to adapt to the new circumstances without losing its character and consciousness.

In cultural activities too the syndicalists were confronted with competitors: sports (which many syndicalists disliked because sports diverted from the essential struggle of the workers)<sup>136</sup> or 'capitalist' forms of entertainment such as movies and dancing. The radio challenged the syndicalist music and theatre with 'real' professional culture and made them look poor and amateurish. Possibly the most important factor was that syndicalist culture was intimately intertwined with the movement as a whole. It was always imbued with syndicalist norms and it pointed to the big syndicalist goal. As soon as syndicalism as a societal force lost the realizability of its vision, its culture became hollow because its message became hollow. Another problem was that new cultural products of anarchist or syndicalist inspiration (Dada for example) were difficult for workers to understand.

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<sup>134</sup> Altena, "Mediators".

<sup>135</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, "Rethinking Chartism", in: Id., *Languages of Class. Studies in English working class history, 1832-1982* (Cambridge etc. 1983) 90-179.

<sup>136</sup> Klan/Nelles, *Flamme*, 46

These big societal processes undermined syndicalism in such a way that in many countries it almost subsided under the intense debates (during the early 1920s) about affiliation to the Profintern. That these debates could be so harmful, proves that syndicalism had already lost much of its attraction. In so far as the syndicalists did not abandon their principles or disbanded, they had to accept marginalization.<sup>137</sup> Marginal movements, however, can still be useful movements.

## Conclusion

Revolutionary syndicalism is a workers movement with deep roots. It flowered during the transformation process between pre-industrial and industrial societies. Syndicalists were not moved by nostalgia, but by the problems of this transformation. Their ideas were future-oriented and their movement was an attempt to educate the workers to become independent bearers of a new, ideal and libertarian society, indeed of a new stage in human civilisation. The workers should become persons who could liberate themselves and in doing that liberate their class, in every respect. That is why syndicalist movements had a big interest in the build-up of an independent workers culture, which was leavened by its ideals. Through cultural activities it could communicate those ideals to the adherents and to the world at large. As a kind of worker socialism, revolutionary syndicalism had conceptual limits, however. It had a limited grasp of society outside the world of the worker. To some syndicalists that world should be dealt with by other libertarian organisations than the trade unions. Workers differed from socialist intellectuals in that they could not spend the whole day in developing, discussing and adapting complex theories about society. For this they lacked the time and the education.

Revolutionary syndicalism should be primarily researched on the level of the locality, but the disappearance of the movement was caused by processes which were national. Local investigations will show the richness of the movement and the insufficiency of an approach which sees it only as a trade union. Because syndicalism was not a purely economic movement, but was intimately tied to other libertarian activities, or even incorporated them, it is logical not to analyse it as if it were only a response to the processes of the shop-floor. Syndicalism presents an interpretation of society as a whole and can only have made sense to the workers when this interpretation proved to be useful to them. Even workers were interested in more than just the job and the shop-floor.

Local history of syndicalism has to look for the structuring of the local society and the opportunity it provides to the workers to build their

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<sup>137</sup> I leave undiscussed the problem of optical illusion in the marginalization thesis: the organization of the formerly unorganised workers may have a completely different significance (for example during the twenties and thirties unemployment funds of the unions could be subsidized by the state and therefore it could become very attractive to be a union member) and at the same time it can give the impression of a marginalization of revolutionary syndicalism. As I have argued, compared to the working population as a whole, and often even to the unionised part of it, revolutionary syndicalism always has been more marginal than many analysts seem to think.

own world. Many possible factors can provide that opportunity, and it appears difficult to further elaborate a model of explanation or still further a historical matrix of labour movements. So this is another mess anarchism has got us in.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> It is my impression that anarchism defies many social-scientific research models. Compare Maitron, *Histoire*, 111: "Qu'est-ce donc qu'une gourpe anarchiste? C'est une organisme très particulière et qui ne ressemble en rien aux sections ou groupes des autres partis. Il n'y a ni bureau ni cotisation fixe et aucun compagnon n'est obligé d'annoncer d'où il vient, ce qu'il fait et où il va. La salle du groupe est un lieu de passage où chacun discourt à sa guise, lieu d'éducation et non d'action." Where does this informality leave our formal research techniques and organizational criteria concerning social movements?