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The Beginnings of German Syndicalism

(Translator's note:- Expelled from Britain at the beginning of 1918, Rudolf Rocker resided at first in the Netherlands at the home of veteran libertarian socialist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis; he returned to Germany in November at the personal invite of Fritz Kater, Secretary of the syndicalist Free Association of German Trade Unions (Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften – FVdG). The following passage give's Rocker's account of the process whereby the FVdG, hitherto an alliance of anarchist and disillusioned Social Democratic workers, became the FAUD, with a firm commitment to anarcho-syndicalism. JG)

Soon after my arrival in Berlin I had various discussions with the business committee of the syndicalists, aimed at reaching agreement with its members on a clear position for the movement. I had received the first issue of *Der Syndikalist* while still in Amsterdam; on their own, those guidelines published in the paper were still quite unclear, something which was easy to understand in view of the sudden political turnaround after the war and the indescribable complexity of the whole situation. In particular, the demand that comrades across the land support the left wing of the socialist movement, the Independents and Spartakists, and the papers' espousal of "proletarian dictatorship", were not to my liking.¹ I had already conferred with Domela-Nieuwenhuis on the matter, who fully shared my point of view.

Although I did not deny that qualified co-operation with other tendencies on particular points was useful and appeared wholly appropriate to the situation in Germany, it was clear to me, however, that for the movement to preserve its independence on questions of principle and tactics, it needed to undergo an internal process of clarification. Right from the beginning, Germany's socialist workers' movement had been markedly authoritarian and the strongly centralised character of its organisation promoted within its ranks that iron discipline known only in Germany and which was the main factor paralyzing any further intellectual development of the movement. Its theoretical bases were tailored to the dogmatic reasoning of Marxism, admittedly loosened later, here and there, with the appearance of the so-called revisionists", but nonetheless acknowledged by the great majority of party members at all party congresses up to the outbreak of the First World War. The later splits during and after the war

did nothing to change this situation. There were no theoretical differences between right-wing socialists (Rechtsozialisten), Independents and Communists. They all acknowledged the teachings of Marxism, were strict centralists, authoritarian to the core, and where libertarian ideas were concerned hadn't the faintest clue. Their differences were of a purely tactical nature and revolved mainly around whether one should revert back to pre-war methods following the collapse of the monarchical regime, or whether one by a continuation of the revolution should create a new set of circumstances in Germany. Thus I explained my views to the comrades and explained to them that it was now above all important to develop a broader base for libertarian socialism in Germany and to create a movement which rejected all tutelage from political parties. I especially recommended that they maintain the closest contact with the syndicalist and libertarian movement abroad, something which was urgently needed in view of the revolutionary situation in Europe brought about by the war.

Our discussions were very comradely and fruitful and at their end I was entrusted by the business committee with the working out of a declaration of principles to be presented for debate to the 12th Congress, announced for 27th December.² Copies of this declaration were sent in advance to all local branches to enable delegates to formulate their suggestions to submit in writing to the Congress.

The Free Association of German Trade Unions had been founded by the former state-qualified architect, Gustav Kessler, and other comrades in 1897 and before the outbreak of the war counted some 8,000 members.³ This Alliance originally bore purely Social Democratic ideas, but it differed from the large centralised trade unions in the federalist character of its organisation. This "federalism", however, was in no way the product of a social and political realisation, as with Piscane in Italy, Proudhon in France, and Pi y Margall, and later adopted by the anarchist movements of those countries; it arose much more out of the attempt to circumvent the regulations of the then Prussian Law of Association, which admittedly permitted the discussion of political matters in the assemblies of purely local unions, but denied the same right to members of the centralised trade unions. The so-called Lokalisten, for whom it was above all a matter of educating their members in the spirit of Social [over]

Inside: Anarcho-Syndicalist history, William Wess

Beginnings of German Syndicalism

Democracy, did not wish to forfeit this right and wishing better to pursue their propaganda work, organised in accordance with the law.⁴

However the leaders of the centralised unions, who over the course of time had succeeded in winning an ever greater influence within the Social democratic Party, succeeded at one party congress in ensuring that a decision was taken, in accordance with which the localists were to join the centralised unions within a year or be expelled from the party.⁵ So one witnessed the grotesque spectacle of a socialist party threatening members with expulsion for being over-enthusiastic Social Democrats who had moreover wished to implant the spirit of Social Democracy in their own trade unions. But in Germany much was possible which in other countries would hardly be believed possible.

The large majority of localists obeyed the dictate of the party and entered the centralised unions.⁶ The minority, however, preferred to leave the party, for which so many had risked their freedom and the well-being of their families during the difficult time of the Anti-Socialist Law. From this minority emerged later Germany's syndicalist movement. Only after the supporters of this minority had left the party did the awareness arise among most that the centralisation of the workers' movement had contributed considerably to the paralysing of its effectiveness, sacrificing its lively spirit to the dead hand of a mechanised organisational model which, as was later clearly shown, completely failed when tested with the outbreak of the revolution.

Under the strong influence of French syndicalism, the Free Alliance of German Trade Unions moved ever increasingly into syndicalist waters. The acceptance by a mass rally in Berlin in August 1904 of a resolution following on from a speech by the former Social Democrat and later Anarchist Dr. Raphael Friedeberg, which later found wider circulation in the form of a special brochure, showed this especially clearly.⁷ This movement was forcibly stopped in its tracks with the outbreak of the First World War, but came once more to the fore with a greatly increased membership following the collapse of the Kaiserreich.

119 delegates from all parts of the country were present at the twelfth congress of the FVdG, which met in Berlin from 27th-30th December 1919. Among them were people of all ages: young intelligent workers and middle-aged men, long active in the movement, and also old veterans who had experienced the struggles from the time of the Anti-Socialist Law. The two most important points on the agenda were given over to the debate over the new declaration of principles and, in connection with this, discussion of the new organisational blueprint as presented by the business committee. At the latter's behest, I explained in the course of a long speech the principles I had drawn up, which shortly afterwards by

decision of the congress appeared in print as a special pamphlet.⁸ [...] Following a thorough debate my blueprint was unanimously adopted by the delegates with a few technical alterations. [...]

Melnikow, Magdalena & Duerr, Hans Peter, *Aus den Memoiren eines deutschen Anarchisten (From the Memoirs of a German Anarchist)*, Frankfurt-am-Main (Suhrkamp) 1974. pp.287-90.

("From the memoirs of a German anarchist" is an abridged version of Rocker's complete three-part autobiography, translated into Spanish and published by Abad de Santillan in Argentina; the above extracts from *Revolucion y Regresion* (1952). The original German-language typescript can now be found at the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam.)

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1 Independents, i.e. Independent Social Democratic Party (Unabhaengige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands – USPD). Anti-war, part revolutionary, part revisionist pacifist, split from mainstream Social Democratic Party after 1917.

2 12th Congress of the Free Association of German Trade Unions (FVdG).

3 Gustav Kessler (1832-1904), former Progressive Liberal, later radical Social Democrat, expelled from Berlin in aftermath of successful bricklayers' strike of 1885. Thereafter associated with the localist wing of Social Democratic trade unionism. Editor of the FVdG paper *Die Eingkeit* (Unity) until his death.

4 This law, one of several such across late nineteenth century Germany which pre-dated its unification, dated from 11th March 1850 and the repression which followed the revolution of 1848. Walking the legal line between 'local' and 'associative' was always a fine one; during the period of the Anti-Socialist Law 1878-90, the nascent localist building workers' organisation in Berlin had been caught in its dragnet on several occasions.

5 Social Democratic Party congress, Mannheim, 1906.

6 In 1907 by its own figures the FVdG counted 17,633 members; in 1910, 6,454. However, delegates to the eighth congress of the Free Alliance in January 1908 had rejected a proposal for merger with the centralised Free Trade Unions by 91 to 48 votes. Minutes for the same congress report an immediate loss of membership of some 6,000. Rocker's statement should be taken as accurate if it describes this process over time.

7 Dr. Raphael Friedeberg (1863-1940), Social Democratic city councillor in Berlin, later anarchist and participant at the 1907 International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam. *Parlamentarismus und Generalstreik: Vortrag von Dr. R. Friedeberg*, Berlin 1904.

8 Rudolf Rocker, *Prinzipienerklärung des Syndikalismus*, Berlin 1920.

The Influence of Spain

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION – IN THEIR WORDS

‘History is written by those who survive, philosophy by the well-to-do; those who go under have the experience.’ W.R. Lethaby.

When I had to study the Spanish civil war at school in 1981 my teacher sketched up on the blackboard what he saw as being the spectrum of political and social forces involved: From Right to Left there was the falange (a fascist sect inspired and supported by Hitler and Mussolini but of little overall influence), the right-wing nationalists, land owners, army and Catholic church. The middle class was represented by ‘sensible’ liberals and republicans and on the left there was the socialist UGT union and the Moscow-backed Communist Party. On the lunatic fringe was the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (National Federation of Labour) ‘The headcase anarchists – a bunch of hot blooded latins, terrorists and priest killers unique to Spain. They wanted to smash capitalism and the state, abolish the army and police, the prisons and money, institute free love and stop the bullfights. How can you fight a war successfully with nutters like that?’ – the civil war was a battle between fascism and democracy. Lots of heroic communists and socialists had to go and help out because the Spanish workers and peasants didn’t have the right political consciousness and leadership to get by on their own. The anarchists were trouble causers aiding the cause of fascism. Bullshit? – ‘that’s what the books say.’ With the exception of Gerard Brenan’s ‘The Spanish Labyrinth’ (the writer has actually spent most of his life in Spain), all of the standard academic texts are written by marxist intellectuals in comfy university jobs with axes to grind. Hardly the people to write balanced, unbiased history. I pointed out that the military was defeated in many parts of Spain by anarchist workers and peasants, followed by the most far reaching social revolution of the 20th century. But that’s not what the books say is it ?

Not long after my ‘history’ lesson a Spanish anarchist came to speak in Leeds. He was an exile living in London. I was able to persuade a couple of school friends to come along with me. In the afternoon Helenio spoke at the university to an audience which included many Iranian students [interested?] in how the anarchist communes and collectives had taken over Aragon and most of rural Catalonia in 1936. In the evening, at a packed meeting organised by Leeds Anarchist Group at the Trades Club, he outlined the history of Spanish anarchism and his memories of the revolution and anti-fascist resistance after 1939. He was a child living in Barcelona in 1936. His father was a self-employed anarchist milkman, who refused to work under a boss. When the revolution came the dairy industry was collectivised by the CNT. The employers had the choice of leaving or becoming workers with no more power than

anybody else. Milk was distributed by a federation of free individuals. In spite of a bloody war and the near complete isolation of Spain from the rest of the world, the federation was able to buy sophisticated tankers from Nestle in Switzerland for transporting milk. Barcelona had never had a more efficient milk distribution system, before or after. This was just one of many instances of how it was possible for society to be run without the dictates of bosses and politicians.

Miguel Garcia was another anarchist militant who witnessed and actively participated in the revolution and civil war. After the fascist victory he continued to fight in the resistance. He was caught and sentenced to death – commuted to 30 years life as a result of international pressure. He left prison in 1969, and at the invitation of Stuart Christie, whom he had met in prison, came to England. ‘Miguel Garcia’s Story’ was printed in 1982 shortly after his death as a tribute and is well worth reading.

We owe a great deal to George Orwell for publicising an honest and inspiring account of his experiences as a volunteer and the political situation in free Spain in ‘Homage To Catalonia’. He went to fight fascism in the columns of the POUM who were a small marxist party under the wings of the CNT, critical of Moscow with contacts with the Independent Labour Party in Britain. Politically insignificant (it had a membership under 5 figures – though bigger in 1936 than the Communist Party!) we were told it was a force comparable to the 2 million strong CNT! The book is a graphic account of how the militias were able to fight and win without officers and generals. It also contains Orwell’s bitterness at the way the Communist Party grew in influence due to Russian guns and money, how they began to arm the cops in Barcelona while people at the front were fighting with ancient rifles or their bare hands, and how they began to exterminate opposition to their rule, starting with the POUM. Eventually Orwell had to flee Spain to save his own skin, not from the fascists but from the communists! The anarchists decided not to fight the communists for the sake of anti-fascist unity. This proved to be the biggest mistake the anarchists ever made!

I eventually persuaded my history teacher to read ‘Homage to Catalonia’ and he has since admitted that he had to radically alter his notes on Spain!

From *Northampton Libertarian* 1987

[This is a fascinating account of the ‘Fight for history’ in action; and the importance, not just of the historical fact of the Spanish Revolution, but of the personal testimony of exiled revolutionaries on new generations of anarchists (here in 1980s Britain). We have published a couple of pamphlets by Miguel Garcia, but who was Helenio?]

William Wess / Syndicalist Workers Federation

William (Woolf) Wess Obituary: Death of Anarchist Veteran : Echo of Bryant & May Strike

Death has taken from us, in his eighty-fourth year, our comrade William Wess, on may 23rd of this year. His body was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium.

We have lost a true comrade; the world a real noble man. his life was an epitome of the mind and activity of a genuine anarchist in present-day society.

He was born in Lithuania in 1861. As a lad he worked in Dvinsk, and in 1881 followed the great emigration of the Jews after the terrible pogroms which occurred in Russia at that period. He came to London, and after learning the English, German and Russian languages, became one of the founders of the International Working Men's Educational Club in Berners Street, Commercial Road, E. and later its secretary (the title of the club deserved to be "Germinal", so much has been its outcome). Here was started the "Workers' Friend" (a journal in the Yiddish language) which lasted for many years. In 1895 William Wess became editor for some months.

During Wess' secretaryship the Berners Street club became famous as a centre of enlightenment and propaganda. Among well-known people who lectured or addressed meetings there were William Morris, Annie Besant, John Burns, Peter Kropotkin, Stepniak, John [Johann] Most, Elisée Reclus and Errico Malatesta. Active British comrades of the time, such as Charles Mowbray, Frank Kitz, David Nicol [Nicoll], Ted Legget [Leggatt], John Turner and George Cores also addressed meetings from its platform. It was the headquarters of the famous strike of the match-box girls of Bryant and May, in which Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows figured prominently. But the club, true to its practical Anarchist character, did not merely gather the poor girls and women together to listen to speeches, and to parade them in strike processions, but fed them, to the best of its ability, with bread and butter, cake, tea, etc., to maintain their stamina. There were no strike funds to draw upon and street collections had to be made to sustain the poor workers who were in revolt against making match-boxes in their own homes for twopence-farthing a gross.

Wess was Secretary of the club when it organised a mass-meeting in the Great Assembly Hall, Mile End, E., on November 1st 1890, to protest against the foul persecution of the Jews in Russia.

The exploitation of the immigrant Jewish workers was very severe, especially in the East End of London, and Comrade Wess, in co-operation with others, was most active in trying to bring about an amelioration of their conditions.

William Wess played an important part in the Jewish trade-union movement in Britain. He helped to establish

almost all of the Jewish unions in the 1880's and 1890's.

He was proud of the part he took in the great East London Tailors' strike in 1889. The strike lasted from August 27th until October 2nd, and its aim was to reduce the working-day to 10 ½ hours. Wess was the secretary of the strike committee and worked hard day and night for it. Funds had to be raised to provide the necessities of life for the strikers and their families. Wess obtained a donation of £75 from Lord Rothschild and Samuel Montague (afterwards Lord Swaythling) gave the sum of £30 10s. 0d.! The strike was won – at least for a time. It is pleasant to add that the dockers contributed £100 to the strike funds, while other English trade-unions, including the Tailors, also gave smaller sums of money.

In 1890 Wess founded and became Secretary of the East London Workers' Unions. In the 1890s he was secretary of the International Tailors, Machinists and Pressers' Trade Union, and later of the United Ladies' Tailors and Mantle Makers' Association.

And yet his activity in the Jewish Workers' movement is by no means the whole story. He was a member of the (original) Socialist League in the '80's – when the present writer first met him – and when "Freedom" was published by Mrs Wilson, Peter Kropotkin and the other comrades he joined with them in their English propaganda of Anarchism, and was associated with the Freedom Group until 1914 (Both "Freedom" and the Freedom Group" have long passed out of existence, and are not to be confused with any present paper using the same name. – [DA] eds) He learned type-setting and at one period, when the offices of the journal were in St. Augustine's Road, Camden Town, N.W., set up the type there.

As a man his nature and conduct were of the kindest and most tolerant character. He sought to win others by persuasion to sympathy with the principles and ideals of our movement.

As can be seen by his work in the Jewish trade unions he was in favour of direct action methods, although the phrase was not in general use in those days.

As a man in his private life he was a good husband and father. He won the respect and esteem of numerous people, and many, both in this country and the U.S.A. will deeply regret the fact that he is no longer with us.

Of course, he was not a believer in any theological superstition, Almost to the last he was, in spite of his age, actively associated with the movement. This year, 1946, he was present and made an encouraging speech at a social meeting at the Workers Circle House in Alie Street, Aldgate, E. which was held to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the publication of the "Freie Arbeiter Stimme" (Free Workers Voice) of New York, the well-known Jewish Anarchist journal.

William Wess / Syndicalist Workers Federation

William Wess' life was that of a man wholly devoted to the service of humanity; and especially to the betterment of the conditions of the workers, and to their emancipation from the slavery and misery of modern times.

George Cores

Direct Action (monthly organ of the Anarchist Federation of Britain), v.1, no.10 (August 1946)

STORY OF THE SYNDICALIST WORKERS FEDERATION – BORN IN STRUGGLE

When, in 1939, Fascism triumphed in Spain, the Libertarian movement was downcast, many gave up hope and departed. The social climate, too, was gloomy, for Spain had been, not only the last, but the only hope of defeating World Fascism. And in spite of those who murmured, "Now for peace, I always said they should not have resisted Fascism," the world knew that in the same year war would again sere the earth and tens of millions would die in the rubble of civilisation. That, all knew, was the beginning; none could know the end.

There were Syndicalists before and during the 1914-1918 war. They were not many, but their work in the social struggle was so earnest, so great and so apt to the workers' needs that the class enemy numbered them as hundreds of thousands. They were the proverbial "little leaven that leaveneth the whole lump." But, they were men of action, men of the deed, few of them had the time to write. Syndicalism was the opposite of the parties, which seem to consist entirely of writers and policy merchants. So, when men say, "Show me the Books of Syndicalism," there is little to show. Its lasting work is the living flesh of the workshop committee idea, with its shop stewardship, which has grown till nearly every worker, be his collar dirty blue or dirty white, knows its efficacy.

If you ask, "What became of all that work of the Syndicalists?" we would say, "When you see the grass-roots organisation of the workers in action, bending employers, union bosses and the State to its will, think of the St. Paul's tablet so Christopher Wren, 'If you seek his monument, look around you'." The only thing of value remaining out of this century's struggles and work of the Left is the shop steward and workshop committee movement. The parliamentarians and "Parties of the Working Class" have nothing to show but Wilson and Ramsay Mac.

By 1936 there was no identifiable Syndicalist movement in Britain, though the idea was still operated and individual Syndicalists practised their skills in factories, mines and on railroads. Anarchism, too, fared badly; indeed every grouping that could be called by the vague term Left had suffered at the hands of the Communist Party and the wealth of Russian money that was dedicated to smash all Left movements to make way

for the sole proprietors, the party of Lenin. The big British Socialist Party was swallowed, then digested, the Socialist Labour Party destroyed, the numerous lively local Socialist groups hammered one by one. Only the ILP remained, later to fall a prey to Parliamentarism and Communist intrigue.

Summer, 1936, all that remained of Anarchism was the old Freedom Group of London and the Jewish "Worker's Friend" Group. Freedom Group was a very old organisation and all its members were elderly, too, having spent most of their lives in the cause of Anarchism; some had known William Morris and been in Trafalgar Square on Bloody Sunday. These good people worked with handset type and a treadle machine to publish their paper, *Freedom*, monthly.1

When Spanish Fascism made civil war and was answered by Social Revolution, the group ended the paper *Freedom* to concentrate on the CNT-initiated English paper, *Spain and the World* (later *Revolt*) and wound up the group to merge with all others who gathered to aid the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalists in their life-and-death struggle. They never republished their paper, *Freedom*, one by one they passed away and the world was poorer for their going.

The comrades, mostly fairly young, who remained after the end of the Spanish struggle, reassembled; at first only three persons, who made anti-war posters and pasted them in prominent parts of London, then enough to form a group and link with groups in Scotland; the Anarchist Federation of Britain was formed.

Serious discussion produced unanimity on the kind of organisation we wanted. Everyone was sickened by the coffee-bar Anarchists, who specialised in "the Ego", individualism, hating the working class, being "anti-organisation" and forming organisations to propagate that idea, or had a new theory of society every few months. Such persons had created a bad image of Anarchism.

We all wanted a sincere, responsible organisation. We wanted Anarchism to influence society, to be revolutionary, bring about change, not to be just a permanent grouse. We all insisted on Syndicalism and Internationalism, we were all anti-war.

As the war developed, others joined us and we billposted, printed and published and held public meetings, indoors and, mainly, open air. Members of industry, mostly in Lanarkshire, on Clydeside and in London, took the anti-war struggle into their workplaces and unions, opposing the State, the union bosses, the employers and their Communist stooges. We stood with others, PPU and ILP, in a mutual witness against war. *Direct Action* was one of the very first papers to be anti-A Bomb, while the CP supported it and many others were silent.

William Wess / Syndicalist Workers Federation

Early in 1944, the AFB resolved that when the war ended we would appeal to all Anarchist Federations abroad to meet and form a viable, militant Anarchist International. Late in 1945, the French Anarchist Federation sent out such a call to meet in Paris and form the International. In February 1946 the meeting was held, a delegate of the AFB attending.

The times were right; Europe was in the melting-pot, between war and peace. Anything could happen, men's minds were open and eager, the peoples of Europe were anti-Fascist, eager to end Franco and Salazar in the last, Iberian fortress of Fascism. People were ready for a new society, but the politicians had no answer.

With hope and eagerness, the AFB delegate reached Paris, to be astounded at the well-organised opposition to the mooted International; opposition within the Anarchist ranks. The Internationalists were defeated. The majority were against the International in any case, but added the excuse, "The time is not yet ripe." Curiously, it hadn't been 50 years earlier.

Later, the Anarchist Federation of Britain changed its title to the Syndicalist Workers' Federation and joined the Syndicalist International, the International Working Men's Association, of which it now is the British Section.

The term Syndicalism is more acceptable to the British worker than is the theological-sounding mouthful, Anarcho-Syndicalism, and the Syndicalist ethos is to workers, and even historians, a good ethos in Britain.

Some complain that the SWF has not changed its principles. That, in a world where Socialist politicians change their principles far more often than their raincoats, ought to be welcome. But the principles of capitalism have not changed: we live in a society which is still founded on rich and poor, war and class war still go on, men's lives are still governed by property relations. What has happened to all those fabulous developments which made Syndicalism and Revolution "irrelevant" – the H-Bomb, Affluent Society, Automation?

The old problems are still with us. Capitalism has no answer. The case for Syndicalism remains unanswered. It is no answer to go looking for a new butterfly to chase.

Tom Brown, *Direct Action* February 1968, vol 9 no 2

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Review Special

We plan to have a 'Review special' of the Bulletin next issue. We hope to have reviews of *Durruti*, *Beer and Revolution*, *Bash the Rich*, *The Battle for Spain* and others. We're looking mainly for reviews of recent books on anarchism (especially ones you don't need a degree to understand).

We have a 'how to do a review' piece if you've not done one before (or you just want some tips). Don't just repeat what happens in the book – in a review you can:

- * say if the book does what it tries to do.
- * fill in interesting background to the book.
- * say the book is good and should be more widely known.

* say its awful and should be challenged.

* discuss the ideas in the book.

* write a piece on what the book made you think

Please get in touch if you want to do a short review of something following our usual bottom-up, class struggle approach (aim for 500 words).

New pamphlet out now

My Revolutionary Life: Juan Garcia Oliver interviewed by Freddy Gomez. Translated by Paul Sharkey. Juan Garcia Oliver, the activist who became the world's only anarchist 'Minister for Justice' tells of his life in the CNT (National Confederation of Labour) and FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation), and gives his account of the Spanish Revolution and Spanish Civil War. 37 pages. ISBN 9781873605721 Anarchist Library series #19. £3 (£2 to subscribers) / \$3.

Next pamphlet (Spring)

Rebellious Spirit: Maria Occhipinti and the Ragusa Anti-Draft Revolt of 1945

Maria Occhipinti, Pippo Gurrieri, Franco Leggio, edited by Anna Key, Translated by Paul Sharkey
Ragusa, Sicily, 1945. Mussolini's fascist regime had fallen apart, with many of his backers turning 'democratic' and hoping to prevent a revolution with the help of the allied armies and Communist Party. After five years of war, their attempts to create a new Italian army were met with evasion and resistance. Maria Occhipinti began the Ragusa anti-draft revolt of January, 1945 by laying down in front of an army truck carrying arrested draftees, who then escaped. A four-day insurrection followed, with the rich dispossessed, until the Italian army was able to retake the city. Maria Occhipinti served nearly two years' prison for her part in the revolt.

ISBN 9781873605592 Anarchist Sources series #9

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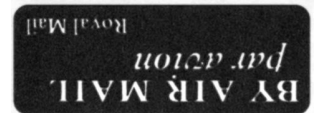
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