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Internationalism without an International? Cross-Channel Anarchist Networks, 1880-1914

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The years between 1880 and 1914 saw the emergence of anarchism as an organised political movement in Western Europe and the United States. From its very inception, anarchism was regarded as essentially internationalist, and yet, retrospectively, the temptation to disregard or downplay the international dimension of the late nineteenth century anarchist movement is understandably great. First, the fact that anarchism was usually the product of very specific national and even local contexts, and that most of the militants themselves tended to focus primarily on the national struggle, has led historians to study these movements within these contexts, often regarding their international dimension as a dead letter⁽¹⁾. There is also the fact that anarchism was sometimes connected with nationalism and xenophobia, usually fighting them of course, but sometimes embracing them. For instance, Anglophobia, anti-German feelings and anti-Semitism were rife among the French *compagnons*⁽²⁾ well into the 1890s, often affecting prominent militants, who were notoriously late to rally the *Dreyfusard* camp or even shifted to outright xenophobia. Lastly, views of international anarchism, like those of the Second International and the International Federation of Trade Unions⁽³⁾ have inevitably been tainted by the collapse of militant unity at the outbreak of the First World War, as European anarchists split into two rival groups according to whether they advocated joining the war or sticking to antimilitarist and antipatriotic propaganda.

However, part of this negative interpretation of anarchist internationalism can be traced to the fact that anarchist internationalism is usually defined as the setting up of international agencies – the Anarchist International, the Black International⁽⁴⁾ – in order to achieve the goals set by anarchist militants⁽⁵⁾.

(1) There is a thriving school of regional studies in France, a prime example of which is René BIANCO's *Le mouvement anarchiste à Marseille et dans les Bouches-du-Rhône (1880 - 1914)*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Provence, 1977, 438 p. See the unpublished dissertations at the *Bibliothèque Jean Maitron* in Paris.

(2) This is the term used by Francophone anarchists to address one another. It was usually translated into English as 'comrade' or 'companion'.

(3) See Susan MILNER, *The Dilemmas of Internationalism. French Syndicalism and the International Labour Movement, 1900-1914*, Oxford, Berg, 1990, 260 p., ch. 8.

(4) This unofficial designation is not to be mistaken with the one used to refer to the Catholic militant movement by Emiel LAMBERTS, ed., *The Black International 1870-1878: The Holy See and militant Catholicism in Europe*, Leuven, Leuven UP, 2002, 515 p.

(5) For such an approach, see George WOODCOCK, *Anarchism*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970 (2nd ed.), ch.9.

Anarchist international endeavours, when considered at all, are too often reduced to the interactions between the most famous activists and thinkers and the institutions they tried to set up. And yet, these institutions were inevitably plagued by internal conflicts over the very question of organisation, and seldom proved efficient, as George Woodcock has explained: "Looking back over the history of the anarchist Internationals, it seems evident that logically pure anarchism goes against its own nature when it attempts to create elaborate international or even national organizations, which need a measure of rigidity and centralization to survive. The loose and flexible affinity group is the natural unit of anarchism"⁽⁶⁾.

It is therefore on these 'loose and flexible' international groups, which constitute the true basis of anarchist organisation, that this paper focuses – that is, on 'informal anarchism', on the many links woven between national groups and militants in order to achieve general or specific propagandist aims. This approach is primarily inspired by the method of Michel Cordillot and others in *La Sociale en Amérique* (2002)⁽⁷⁾, the biographical dictionary of French-speaking socialists in the United States, which transposes the biographical method of Jean Maitron's *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier* to the international level, assessing the political impact of lesser-known militants and their sociabilities. The first theme of this paper is therefore the gap between the repeated failures of institutional internationalism on the one hand, and on the other, the unacknowledged significance of informal endeavours, especially with respect to the transmission of political ideas.

However this is not to say that the anarchists developed an unproblematic and entirely successful internationalism outside formal institutions. All the objections listed above remain, such as the obstacle of nationalism or the pull of localism. In particular, there is a clear gap, as far as internationalism is concerned, between the militant elite and the grassroots level, which limited the pursuit of common international goals, so that only a minority of militants can be regarded as true internationalists in ideology and in practice. This is the second theme which this paper seeks to highlight. These constitute what George Haupt has called "international leading groups" of working-class activists – as opposed to leading cadres – characterised by their flexibility and personal prestige. Analysing these groups and their functioning is necessary, Haupt suggested, as part of a general strategy of "studying institutions and biographies" – an approach which proves especially relevant in the period preced-

(6) *Ibid.*, p. 256. Similarly, Max NOMAD, "The Anarchist Tradition", in M. DRACHKOVITCH, ed., *The Revolutionary Internationals 1864-1943*, Oxford, OUP, 1966, p. 57-92, acknowledges the intellectual legacy of anarchism, but focuses on the organisational deadlocks encountered by the movement, without questioning the impact of libertarian ideals on militant organisations.

(7) Michel CORDILLOT, ed., *La Sociale en Amérique. Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement social francophone aux Etats-Unis (1848-1922)*, Paris, L'Atelier, 2002, 431 p. A similar approach has been applied to European anarchism by Carl LEVY, "Malatesta in London: The Era of Dynamite", in L. SPONZA & A. TOSI, eds., *A Century of Italian Immigration to London 1880s-1980s. Five Essays*. Supplement to *The Italianist*, 1993, nr. 13, p. 25-39.

ing the First World War, when modern working-class parties were still being developed⁽⁸⁾.

Two aspects should therefore be emphasised: first, the permanent tension between the failed efforts to set up a new International and the actual wealth of informal internationalism. Secondly, the diverging attitudes towards internationalism, and the achievements of a handful of highly internationalised militants. These are examined here through a case study, the example of the relations between the French and the British anarchist movements at the turn of the nineteenth century. This pivotal yet underestimated axis in pre-WWI anarchist internationalism makes for an analysis of internationalism in context, as Britain sheltered anarchist exiles from all over Europe throughout the period, thus enabling us to examine everyday interactions between militants. This exile also generated a great wealth of links and collaborations between both movements, especially at the elite level, which played a significant part in the development of pre-war syndicalism. The Franco-British case thus illustrates the functioning of informal networks, and how these led to ideological cross-fertilisations.

The Black Internationals: ideals and realities

The period under review is framed and punctuated by major organisational attempts: it opens with the International Revolutionary Congress held in London in July 1881, and comes to a close at the outbreak of the war, which led to the cancellation of the September 1914 London Congress. The story of anarchist congresses throughout this period is eventful but hardly productive; above all, it exemplifies the dilemmas of libertarian organisation.

In the early 1880s, internationalism was one of the few clear and stable principles of anarchism. The notion as it was developed by the anarchists was mainly a continuation of the internationalist ideals embodied by the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA) or First International at its foundation, and upheld by both Karl Marx and Michael Bakunin. However, the new generation had cleared anarchism of the patriotism still present in Bakunin's writings. This set them aside from contemporary socialists, whose positions remained more ambiguous until the Dreyfus Affair to the French left to make a clear break with nationalism, but also from the notable exceptions of prominent theoreticians like Peter Kropotkin or Elisée Reclus, who still admitted of some forms of national attachment⁽⁹⁾. This new emphasis on

(8) George HAUPT, *Aspects of International Socialism*, Cambridge, CUP, 1986, p. 81-100.

(9) For a study of Bakunin's thinking on nationalism in connection with internationalism, see Michael FORMAN, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State UP, 1998, p. 22-41.; Jean Caroline CAHM, "Kropotkin and the anarchist movement", in E. CAHM and V. FISERA, eds., *Socialism and Nationalism*, Nottingham, Spokesman, vol. 1., 1978, p. 50-68, explains Kropotkin's conceptions. In the same volume, Roger D. THOMAS's "French revolutionary Socialists and the Revolutionary Tradition, 1789-1871", p. 10-21, analyses socialist conceptions of nationalism in France, as does John SCHWARZMANTEL's "Nationalism and the French working-class Movement, 1905-1914", *Ibid.*,

anticolonialism, antimilitarism and later, on the general strike gave it a more contemporary inflection and a more specific tone.

The first principle restated by the anarchists throughout their writings was that only through international cooperation would the revolution be achieved – in other words, that class prevails over the nation, the latter being usually described as a decoy implemented by the powers that be in order to vent the workers' anger: "We workers are internationalists, we acknowledge no distinction of nationality or color. The workers of all countries suffer as we do here, and our comrades have everywhere to fight the same battle for freedom and justice. The capitalists are internationally unanimous in persecuting the defenders of freedom and in fleecing the workers [...]. The workers as a rule are filled with an unreasoning dislike to the workers of other countries, whom their masters have succeeded in representing to them as their natural enemies, and herein lies one of the main sources of the strength of the capitalist system"⁽¹⁰⁾. The old idea that the international scale capitalism should be fought through the international cooperation of the proletariat was also restated. Anarchists also pointed out the threat posed by international blacklegging, and therefore the very practical use of workers' solidarity – hardly a new theme, as the fear of blacklegs had been one of the chief motives of British trade unions in joining the First International in 1864⁽¹¹⁾.

The real anarchist development was the connection between internationalism and the critic of patriotism, which was starting to gain momentum throughout socialist and liberal circles from the 1880s onwards, and especially in France, where the *revanchard* obsession after the defeat against Prussia in 1870 and the subsequent annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, was giving way to a backlash. The critic of patriotism was connected to anticolonialism and antimilitarism, which became anarchist stock themes from the early 1880s onwards, thus giving this form of internationalism real prominence in the movement, and leading to joint international actions, such as the setting up of a short-lived international anarchist antimilitarist association in 1904.

A final theme deserves attention, as it is closely linked to the very evolution of anarchism itself: the general strike. When the assembled socialists adopted it at the 1889 Paris congress of the Second International, the anarchists resented its Marxist, social-democratic and reformist origins. However, they took part in May Day demonstrations from the very first year. After 1895, the general strike became a pillar of revolutionary syndicalism, and as such, the very aim and symbol of proletarian internationalism. But this was still a long way away in 1881, as the first formal and general Anarchist Congress since the breakdown of the Jura Federation was organised in London.

p. 65-80. See also "Socialism and the nationalist Movement in France at the time of the Dreyfus Affair" by Eric CAHM, *Ibid.*, p. 48-64, as well as Carl LEVY, "Anarchism, internationalism and nationalism in Europe, 1860-1939", in *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 50, September 2004, issue 3, p. 330-342. I wish to thank Wayne Thorpe for mentioning this reference to me.

(10) *An Anarchist Manifesto*, London, 1895.

(11) G.D.H. COLE & Raymond POSTGATE, *The Common People, 1746-1946*, London, Methuen & Co, 1961 (1938), p. 374-76.

It is a sign of the importance anarchists attached to international action that a revolutionary congress bringing together the militants of many different countries was called in July 1881, almost as soon as the anarchist movement started to spread internationally.

It met in London from July 14, 1881. It brought together an impressive number of foreign delegates, and the most eminent anarchist militants and thinkers of the period attended it: Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, Saverio Merlino, Louise Michel, Peter Tchaikovsky, Emile Gautier, Marie Le Compté. The congress seemed to achieve some of its initial goals: it defined a line of propagandist action for all to follow, and adopted propaganda by the deed as the path to social revolution, while respecting "the complete autonomy of the local groups"⁽¹²⁾. After lengthy debates, the conference also agreed to set up a correspondence bureau in order to facilitate the pursuit of international action. Internationalist principles were vigorously restated, as the preamble of the 1864 IWMA Inaugural Address was taken up again in the Congress's resolutions.

It is clear however that the Congress adumbrated all the organisational difficulties which plagued the international anarchist movement for the next three decades. Even the modalities of its organisation had led to a controversy, between those who thought that it should be open to all, irrespective of their formal political affiliations, and those who argued that belonging to an established militant group was a prerequisite, since it testified to the militants' true dedication. The debate was conducted in the pages of the Paris-based *Révolution Sociale*, the main French anarchist paper at the time, between March 1881 and after the Congress, in August. In May, Gustave Brocher, the Congress secretary and a French anarchist exiled in London, writing under the assume name Rehcorb, announced in the paper that admission to the congress would be unrestricted: "the only conditions to meet is to notify in advance to the commission the names of those who want to attend the Congress"⁽¹³⁾. The paper published the announcement, but also specified that "today there is a socialist party which we have to fight and maybe even more than the bourgeois party, and this is why a group whose work has been assessed for three months or more will present greater guarantees than any random individuality"⁽¹⁴⁾.

Within two weeks, Malatesta himself brought his support to the libertarian, anti-organisational party: "the July congress is not a reunion of the representatives of some already-existing organisation; admission will not be restricted to any rule; all delegates will be admitted, who can prove their quality and give sufficient guarantee of their revolutionary morality"⁽¹⁵⁾. The following week, Brocher brought up a new series of objections against the editors of *La Révolution Sociale*, emphasising that refusing individual admission would in no way guarantee the admission of pure revolutionaries only. He also pointed out that such an admission procedure would rule out the representation

(12) Max NETTLAU, *Anarchisten und Sozialrevolutionäre: die historische Entwicklung des Anarchismus in den Jahren 1880-1886*, S.I., Bibliothek Thélème, 1996 (1931), p. 202.

(13) *La Révolution Sociale*, 8 May 1881. My translation.

(14) *Ibid.*

(15) *Ibid.*, 23 May 1881.

of secret societies, a serious problem since, due to repression revolutionary movements were still predominantly underground in Spain, Italy or Germany. Lastly, in true libertarian fashion, he questioned the very notion that anyone should be entitled to edict rules on who should be admitted⁽¹⁶⁾.

The principle of delegates sent by groups eventually prevailed. But the debate over admission soon gave way to another dilemma, which revolved around the same issue: what should anarchist organisation be?

The congress proclaimed "the absolute autonomy of all groups", but even though groups proved extremely elusive in practice, the decision was already a compromise for those who had expressed a preference for the absolute autonomy of the individual⁽¹⁷⁾. There were also significant strategic differences: while all the attendants agreed on their revolutionary goal, there was an opposition between those wishing to create an open organisation of propaganda similar to the First International, and the heirs of the Bakuninist tradition, who believed in insurrectionary methods. More important disagreements arose as to what had been defined as the main purpose of the congress: the setting up of a new revolutionary organisation, possibly an Anarchist International. The attendees were asked to express the views of the groups they represented as to the relevance of setting up a centralised international bureau – and their answers revealed widely diverging but overwhelmingly negative views⁽¹⁸⁾.

A 'correspondence bureau' was eventually agreed on; it consisted of three rotating members (Malatesta among them), was based in London and attached to the Rose Street democratic club, a refugee socialist club founded in the late seventies. National branches were organised in the following months. Practice, however, demonstrated the limits of this consensus, and maybe the lack of a true commitment to international action, since this Bureau, deprived of any financial power and any sort of authority, except a moral one, achieved very little over the following years. Indeed, by the mid-1880s, the International was withering away, and even the French political spies in London, where the Bureau was supposedly based, were very confused as to what it really was about⁽¹⁹⁾. Ironically enough, the myth of the Black International thus initiated was to have a lasting imaginary power well into the 1890s, especially on the Continent. If anything, however, the London Congress had in effect sealed the primacy of individual action in anarchist militancy⁽²⁰⁾.

In other words, the London congress showed that the problem of organisation lay at the very core of anarchist ideology itself: how libertarian should one be with respect to political organisation? The rejection of traditional political hierarchies and the tyranny of party discipline was one of the basic tenets of anarchism – but clearly, it left a broad margin for interpretation.

(16) *Ibid.*, 29 May 1881.

(17) M. NETTLAU, *Anarchisten*, *op. cit.*

(18) Amsterdam, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (IISG), Amsterdam, Gustave Brocher Archive, "1881 London Congress", n.d.

(19) Archives of the *Préfecture de Police* (PPo), Paris, BA 435.

(20) Gaetano MANFREDONIA, *L'individualisme anarchiste en France*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, 1984, p. 40.

No other strictly anarchist congress was held until 1907. After London, formal interactions at the international level were focused on the Congresses of the Second International. But at the 1893 Zurich congress, the social democrats started discussing the exclusion of the anarchists, and the latter became effective at the 1896 London Congress.

Following their exclusion, the revolutionaries of the world worked again towards establishing their own forum. In 1899, the French militants Emile Pouget and Ferdinand Pelloutier and the Dutch Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis launched the idea of an International Revolutionary Workers' Congress open to all revolutionary groups, trade unions, libraries, or study groups. It was planned to coincide with the International Trade Union Congress and the fifth Congress of the French trade union confederation, the CGT, both due to take place in Paris in September 1900⁽²¹⁾. The preliminary programme included discussions on the general strike, the relations between anarchy and communism, anarchist views on Zionism and anti-Semitism, and, inevitably, the question of organisation – i.e. “the relations between the groups of one or more countries by means of a national or an international committee of propaganda, each group conserving its full autonomy”⁽²²⁾. But the Congress was banned by the French police, showing that the impediments to an organised international anarchist movement could be external as well as internal.

A second international anarchist congress was finally held in 1907, in Amsterdam, only to witness new dissensions. An international paper, *Le Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire*, was launched in October 1906 to help with the organisation of the gathering. Once more, it stated the necessity to create an International, asserting in its first issue that “if, for a long time now, a great many libertarians have been contemplating the creation of an international organisation, there is no denying that this tendency is appearing – at least in some countries – with greater strength than ever”⁽²³⁾.

The *Bulletin* acknowledged the lack of international cooperation and mutual knowledge between the various national anarchist movements (“We are still closed in the narrow and factitious borders on nationalities; with our brothers abroad, we only keep purely theoretical relations, hardly do we know that they exist”), but restated the inherent internationalist intent of anarchism, and the creation of the anarchist international was defined as the main objective of the conference. Above all, there was the conviction that “faith without good deeds is but a dead faith: internationalism without an active International is a dead internationalism!” The charge was levelled above all at individualist anarchists, who denied the legitimacy of any form of organisation: “Whatever intransigent individualists may say, anarchism and communism are obviously two sides of a whole. No real communism can be conceived without being anarchist, and no sound mind can picture to itself an anarchist society without it being immersed in almost complete communism (...). Anarchists organise

(21) *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 1-7 April 1899. My translation.

(22) *Freedom*, December 1899.

(23) *Bulletin de l'Internationale Libertaire*, October 1906. My translation.

themselves because there is no eluding groups and also because anarchy is order, organisation”⁽²⁴⁾.

It was not long before arguments were again raised against these organisational efforts. They came from the Belgian anarchists in charge of the paper *Terra Livre*, who argued in favour of a less rigid mode of organisation, pointing out that the International already existed, but was “real, not formal (...) The question of organisation is too often a question of words: in fact, there are no opponents of organisation, but only of certain ways of organising. Some comrades prefer to regroup around action, with no formalism, around the soul rather than forms”⁽²⁵⁾.

These voices were quickly dismissed as ‘pessimistic’ by the majority at the Congress, and once more, the setting up of a new International was announced very officially on August 27. A new international paper, the *Bulletin de l’Internationale Anarchiste* took over⁽²⁶⁾. The Congress’s proceedings are strangely reminiscent of those of the 1881 congress. In his report, the London-based Jewish anarchist Alexander Schapiro stated that the decision to set up an anarchist international and to keep up the *Bulletin* as an international paper “had not been received with equal fervour”, due to “the fear that organisation might be the way whereby centralisation and authoritarianism could sneak into the anarchist movement”. Once more, this objection had been by-passed by reducing these agencies to insignificant functions and powers: the International would function ‘from below’, it had “no official doctrine, no legislative body, no executive power”, and the International was in fact no more than “a correspondence bureau, used by those who want to”⁽²⁷⁾. Malatesta, Rudolf Rocker and Schapiro were its secretaries, and London its base.

In these conditions, it is hardly surprising that within a year, the Bureau/International was starting to wither out. For about one year, the *Bulletin* kept on appearing almost every month. It had correspondents in many countries, most of them the elite of the anarchist communist and anarcho-syndicalist movement. However, when appeals appeared for the planned 1909 Congress, in the October 1908 issue, reactions were far from enthusiastic. In March, six months away from the planned congress, there had been little correspondence regarding it, and Malatesta, Rocker, Schapiro and the English John Turner published a new appeal in five languages to stimulate interest. By October, the appeal turned into a plea for financial aid and written contributions, and the project was subsequently dropped.

The Amsterdam Congress had in fact proved more fruitful for the future of revolutionary syndicalism: the famous debate between Pierre Monatte and Malatesta, between the young and the old guard, had clarified the aims of syndicalism, and reinforced it with strong antimilitarist resolutions⁽²⁸⁾. An international syndicalist paper, *Le Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste*,

(24) *Ibid.*, November 1906.

(25) *Ibid.*, February 1907.

(26) *Bulletin de l’Internationale Anarchiste*, 31 January 1908.

(27) *Ibid.*

(28) Wayne THORPE, *The Workers Themselves*, Dordrecht, Boston, Kluwer Academic and IISG, 1989, p. 31-32; M. ANTONIOLI & A. MIEVILLE, eds., *Anarchisme et syndicalisme. Le*

was founded in the aftermath of the Congress and appeared without interruption until the War.

The last Congress of the period met with an even less fruitful fate. Originally scheduled to take place in London in September 1914, it was cancelled after the war broke out. As before, an international paper had been set up to prepare it and create links between the militants of different countries, in Europe and across the Atlantic. Many foreign representatives were expected and the congress had already been announced as a success. However, unsurprisingly, the ever same contentious themes formed the bulk of the programme – its aim was “to study all forms of organisation, to find a common basis for anarchist organisation, and to coordinate all forms of local action with a view to forming an international agreement between the anarchists”⁽²⁹⁾.

The history of international anarchist congresses thus confirms what could be surmised *a priori*: in a movement based on libertarian and anti-organisational principles, and especially at a time when the motto of spontaneous individual initiative had a wide appeal among the anarchists, attempts at setting up a formal International could only backfire into indifference, or even conflicts. To some extent, loose groups, informal networks and fluctuating associations provided the key to this organisational deadlock.

Internationalism in context: the French Anarchists in Britain

The exile of the French anarchists to Britain is a good touchstone for the difficulties and sometimes admirable achievements of anarchist internationalism at grassroots level. There were a handful of French anarchists in Britain from the late 1870s onwards, most of them staying over after the Communards' plenary amnesty in 1880. A steady trickle of exiles brought more of them throughout the 1880s. The real wave of anarchist exile took place between 1892 and 1895, during the period of the anarchist bombings in France and the subsequent repression, with the *Lois Scélérates*, the Wicked Laws, passed in 1894. It is very hard to estimate how many anarchists fled to Britain during this period. About 450 individuals described as exiled French anarchists can be found in the spies' reports sent to France⁽³⁰⁾, and contemporary external commentators provided similar estimates.

The rather small exiled anarchist communities in Britain (that is, mainly London, Norwich, Birmingham, Glasgow) and the London milieu can be regarded as a representative sample – in exceptional circumstances – of the failures and achievements of anarchist internationalism in practice. The exiled groups were indeed a microcosm of the actual French anarchist circles in ideological and social terms. These circles were characterised by a division between anarchist communists and individualists, both of which groups were substantially represented in London. There was also a dichotomy between grassroots mili-

congrès anarchiste international d'Amsterdam (1907), Rennes, Editions du Monde Libertaire, 1997, p. 107-120.

(29) *Bulletin du Congrès Anarchiste International*, nr. 2, July 1914.

(30) PPO, BA 1508, BA 1508.

tants – who may or may not have been lastingly committed to anarchism – and, on the other hand, what could be called an anarchist elite, consisting of theorists, journalists and activists. Most importantly, the London anarchist milieu was a microcosm of the anarchist international movement itself, or at least, of its European wing. The Germans had been in London since 1879, around Johann Most, who had gradually evolved towards anarchism. There were also Italians, and Eastern Europeans, plus the occasional exile from Scandinavia or some American visitor.

This British episode was characterised by a dual attitude with respect to internationalism, evidencing a clear gap between the intense networking of the international elite, and on the other hand, a limited, yet resolute and ritualised internationalism at grassroots level. National segregation prevailed for most militants at the grassroots level. In this respect, anarchists hardly differed from the other groups of French political exiles who had fled to Britain in the nineteenth century⁽³¹⁾. They very much kept to themselves in the exiled ghetto of Soho which, tellingly, was nicknamed “La petite France”, or Petty France. There, the French companions lived together, in the same streets (mainly Charlotte Street and Fitzroy Square), often in the same houses. They often worked together, providing services to their community. They also had French shops to provide them with food or news, such as Victor Richard’s grocery or Armand Lapie’s bookshop, which also served as meeting points. Alternatively, they could also organise themselves into gangs of robbers, operating in Britain, or more commonly, between France and Britain, sometimes with Belgium on the map too. But even these networks were predominantly French. If individuals of other nationalities were involved, they were usually Belgian or Italian. The latter had become close to the French during the 1880s and the 1890s, as France had sheltered a great many Italian anarchists⁽³²⁾, who sometimes mixed in with the indigenous militant groups. The explanation for the links with the Belgians is similar, as there had been a lot of going back and forth between both countries (especially in Lyon) for years⁽³³⁾.

Several factors explained such isolation. Most of the exiled anarchists saw their situation as temporary, which it was, by comparison with the previous generation of exiles, that of the Communards, most of whom had been forced to stay in England from 1871 until 1880. These exiles had often known each other before leaving, and were thus able to recreate groups and circles which had existed before their departure. There was quite a strong contingent from the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis, which even included a whole family.

(31) See Fabrice BENSIMON, « Les réfugiés du Printemps des Peuples à Londres », in *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique*, vol. 12, autumn 2003, nr. 3, p. 35-48; S. FREITAG & R. MUHS, eds., *Flotsam of Revolution. European Exiles in Mid-Victorian England*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2001, 256 p. P. K. MARTINEZ, *Communard Refugees in Great-Britain*, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Sussex University, 1981, 630 p.

(32) PPO, BA 1510, « Italiens anarchistes réfugiés à Londres » ; René BIANCO, *Le mouvement anarchiste*, op. cit..

(33) PPO BA 1510, « Anarchistes en Belgique » ; Marcel MASSARD, *Histoire du Mouvement Anarchiste à Lyon (1880-1894)*, unpublished Masters’ Thesis, Université de Lyon, 1954, 220 p. On Franco-Belgian anarchist connections, see Jan MOULAERT, *Le Mouvement anarchiste en Belgique*, Ottignies, Quorum, 1996, 415 p.

Many of the Parisian exiles had become acquainted at the *Cercle Anarchiste International*, and several of them had been linked to the newspaper *Le Père Peinard*. In other words, self-sufficient family, friendship and militant networks had been transposed and recreated in exile.

And of course, there was the language factor. The language barrier between the French anarchists and their British counterparts was both the symptom and the cause of such isolation. Only the elite of the French circles spoke English, and not all of them did. The average level of English is poorly known, but some idea of it can be derived from police spies' reports. These were written in such bad English that even the names of the streets they referred to were constantly distorted: *street* often became *stret*, *windmill* became *vindemille* etc.

A few distinguished comrades, usually the most internationalised of all, seem to have had a good command of English. Louise Michel came first in this respect. The speeches she gave during international conferences were usually translated (often by the bilingual spy Auguste Coulon), and her works and writings were also translated into English by the libertarian poetess Louise Bevington. However, her private correspondence also reveals some impressive letters in English⁽³⁴⁾ and she clearly took some lessons. Charles Malato is another famous example. He wrote a memoir of his English sojourn, *Les joyeusetés de l'exil* (The Joys of Exile), which concludes with a tongue-in-cheek French-to-English glossary, strongly tinged by his anarchist views. However, in the same book, Malato mentions two famous anarchist personalities, Zo d'Axa and Armand Matha, who, according to him, never made any effort to speak English, and were contented with wooing women all over the city with only a handful of words: fish, street, cheese⁽³⁵⁾.

Moreover, despite all their internationalist proclamations, the companions retained a primarily French focus and they showed little interest in their host society, although their internationalisation was greater than that of other exiled communities⁽³⁶⁾. While five papers were set up by the exiles during their stay in Britain – an impressive figure in proportional terms – these were very oriented towards the French political situation. Even comrades with strong international sympathies occasionally lapsed into national stereotyping and self-segregation: Emile Pouget thus deplored the coldness of Britain, and took up many of the inevitable anti-English stereotypes in the London series of his *Père Peinard*, criticising the food, the weather or the coldness of the people⁽³⁷⁾. It is also exemplified by the functioning of the International Anarchist Club in London, the Autonomie Club (on Windmill Street and then Charlotte Street), which was organised in national sections, each of them meeting on a specific week day. There was no hostility between the sections however: many of them, for instance, took French lessons⁽³⁸⁾, and all the comrades regularly gathered for special events.

(34) Amsterdam, IISG, Louise Michel Collection, letter to Saxe, 31 July 1901.

(35) Charles MALATO, *Les Joyeusetés de l'Exil*, Paris, Stock, 1897, p. 49-50.

(36) For an international comparison, see Andrew CARLSON, *Anarchism in Germany*, Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1972, vol. 1, 448 p.

(37) *Père Peinard*, London Series, September and October 1894.

(38) *Freedom*, September 1891.

Some forms of international collaboration were established at grassroots level. Militant links between exile organisations and native ones were made very early on. Gustave Brocher was prominent in organising the 1881 London Congress and joined the indigenous organisation the Socialist League as early as 1885. He was an active member, who liaised with the French movement (he sent regular correspondence to the Paris-based *Révolution Sociale*), gave talks on working-class history during branch meetings and also sang French revolutionary songs at special gatherings. Another versatile and bilingual French member – for all his hidden motives – was Auguste Coulon, who was later exposed as a police spy. Before he started working for the English Police, he had joined the Dublin branch of the League in 1885, and later became a regular contributor to *Commonweal* and a branch speaker. More remarkable is the contribution of Auguste Bordes, a very radical militant who tried to build bridges with the organisation and the international circles in London, despite his very tentative English⁽³⁹⁾. His efforts exemplify the attempt at building international working-class collaborations.

Above all, the comrades asserted their internationalism through symbolical gatherings. This illustrates the – rather unusual – relevance of the commentary made by a police spy about the London exiled milieus: “The regrouping according to nationalities will appear surprising to those who see in anarchy the internationalist idea above all [...]. Proclaiming universal solidarity does not mean meeting up everywhere. While for the language, the manners, and the way of thinking, they get together according to their origins, they gather for joint discussions, great talks or shows”⁽⁴⁰⁾. While it failed to account for elite practices, this depiction did portray the grassroots’ stance rather accurately.

Such international events usually took place on the dates which were significant for the international anarchist movement; there were therefore celebrations and commemorations every single year on March 18 (anniversary of the beginning of the Paris Commune), May 1st (this date had been appointed in 1889 for the organisation of national strikes) or November 11 (the day marked the execution of four anarchists in Chicago in 1887). These occasions brought together speakers from all the nationalities represented in London. Louise Michel usually spoke for France. England was represented by David Nicoll, John Turner, Charles Mowbray or even William Morris, until his death in 1896. Yanovsky or William Wess voiced the concerns of the East End militants. The Spaniards were represented by Tarrida Del Marmol. Kropotkin, who was probably the most consistent speaker, bound together the concerns of the East End militants (as a Russian *émigré* and activist for the Russian cause, he had close ties with them), the British groups (he had a central position in the British anarchist movement, as the editor of its main paper, *Freedom*), and also the French (he had formed ties with many prominent militants there in the early 1880s, such as Louise Michel, Paul Reclus, Augustin Hamon). There were also special events, such as charitable balls or ‘socials’ with a propagandist view, or protest meetings against specific outrages.

(39) Amsterdam, IISG, Socialist League Archive, Correspondence, nr. 882a.

(40) PPO, BA 1508, 25 January 1894. My translation.

See for instance the international militant calendar of the year 1891, as reproduced in *Freedom*: the January 1891 issue reported on the Chicago anniversary in Edinburgh, where the Scottish militant Cyril Bell had spoken, along with other British anarchists. The meeting had been concluded with the French exile Philippe Lebeau singing of the French revolutionary song *La Carmagnole*. In March, the international groups organised meetings to commemorate the Commune of 1871. One of the London meetings was at the South Place Institute, bringing together several British comrades (John Turner, Tom Pearson, James Blackwell...), the French Louise Michel, the Italian Malatesta, the German Johann Trunk, the Russian Saul Yanovsky, and of course Kropotkin⁽⁴¹⁾. In April, the London International Anarchist Congress was announced; it was to include "members of London and provincial English groups, Germans, Italians, and Frenchmen", in order to discuss "the action of English anarchists on the First of May"⁽⁴²⁾. Accounts of the provincial commemorations of the Commune also evidenced international cooperation: in Edinburgh, the meeting had been chaired by the French Communards Léo Melliet and Lebeau⁽⁴³⁾. In London, international militant sociability could also spread beyond anarchist circles, mainly thanks to the presence of renowned foreign militants: the Marxist-inspired Social Democratic Federation's (SDF) celebration of March 18th had seen talks by George Bernard Shaw, Henry Hyndman, and Louise Michel. The May Day anarchist platform in Hyde Park featured speeches by the Britons Thomas Cantwell, Charles Mowbray, Sam Mainwaring and David Nicoll, along with those of Louise Michel, Kropotkin, Yanovsky and Wess⁽⁴⁴⁾. These international rituals endured well after the heyday of the exile years: even in 1912, 20 years later, the 'Chicago murders' were remembered by an international assembly, whose speakers included Malatesta, Tarrida Del Marmol, Rudolf Rocker, the French Madame Sorgue, along with several British protesters. This suggests that commemorations, whose emotional and political function in the national context are well-known, as a rallying cry always likely to be reinterpreted according to contemporary circumstances and necessities⁽⁴⁵⁾, also had a strong unifying function in international situations.

This strongly ritualised international militancy shows that, at this stage of its development, the anarchist movement did possess symbols which were meaningful for all the nationalities, even if they made for a rudimentary militant sociability. Moreover, the fact that France had been the theatre of the Paris

(41) *Freedom*, March 1891.

(42) *Ibid.* April 1891.

(43) *Ibid.*

(44) *Ibid.*, June 1891.

(45) G. HAUPT, "The Commune as symbol and example", in *Aspects...op. cit.*, p. 23-47; Michel WINOCK, *Le socialisme en France et en Europe, XIX-XXe siècles*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 179-243 ; A. CORBIN, N. GEROME & D. TARTAKOWSKY, eds., *Les usages politiques des fêtes aux XIXe-XXe siècles*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1994, 440 p. ; Jacques ROUGERIE, « La Commune et la Gauche », in J.-J. BECKER & G. CANDAR, eds., *Histoire des gauches en France*, vol. 1, Paris, La Découverte, 2004, p. 95-112.

Commune gave French militants a certain centrality in these celebrations⁽⁴⁶⁾, as did their very strong commitment to May 1st. Secondly, despite contacts at the grassroots level, it is very clear that these international initiatives would not have been possible without the presence and charisma of the most famous militants. It was them who brought together the militants of the various countries. International militancy was therefore very much an elite phenomenon, which trickled down and was taken up by less famous individuals.

The impact of transnational networks: the example of Syndicalism

It is therefore by focusing on these elite achievements that the true extent of international collaboration can be taken in. While the shared activities of the militants at grassroots level were rather formulaic and the actual attainments of the so-called Anarchist Internationals usually mediocre, a handful of international activists, through their networks and connections, did a lot for the progress of anarchism, both at national and international level.

The Franco-British genesis of syndicalism provides the most striking example of such fruitful internationalism between the two countries, from the bottom up. Other examples could be given: libertarian pedagogy, which was a major concern for the movement in the early twentieth century, owed a lot to Franco-British networks, with the Spanish mediation of Francisco Ferrer or Lorenzo Portet. The Franco-British axis also generated a great deal of protest against governmental repression in Spain, or mutual efforts towards the creation of autonomous libertarian communities.

Syndicalism gained ground from the mid-1890s onwards, especially in France. Britain saw a remarkable blossoming of syndicalist militancy on the eve of the First World War, with the Great Labour Unrest. Syndicalism was partly derived from anarchism, with which it shared a great defiance of political institutions as a means of improving the workers' plight, advocating instead direct action, mainly through boycott, sabotage, and the general strike⁽⁴⁷⁾. French syndicalism, retrospectively, has been associated with the theoretical developments of the philosophers George Sorel and Hubert Lagardelle, but sources dating back to the very early days of French anarcho-syndicalism evidence the

(46) Michel Cordillot has evidenced a similar process in the case of the French socialists exiled in the United States. Michel CORDILLOT, « Les socialistes franco-américains, 1848-1917 : particularismes nationaux, pluri-ethnisme, internationalisme », in M. CORDILLOT & S. WOLIKOW, eds., *Prolétaires de tous les pays, unissez-vous? Les difficiles chemins de l'internationalisme, 1848-1956*, Dijon, EUD, 1993, p. 20-26 (25).

(47) See Wayne THORPE & Marcel VAN DER LINDEN, "The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism", in W. THORPE & M. VAN DER LINDEN, eds., *Revolutionary Syndicalism. An International Perspective*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1990, p. 1-24. In the wake of Thorpe and van der Linden, at this preliminary stage, the term is defined in its most general sense, encompassing all revolutionary direct-actionist industrial movements. This is not to disclaim the validity of M. van der Linden's subsequent call for a more specific approach ("Second thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism", in Marcel VAN DER LINDEN, *Transnational Labour History*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2003, p. 71). An effort is made to refine this general definition subsequently, by distinguishing clearly between French and British interpretations of syndicalist ideas, but a very general understanding of the term is relevant as starting point.

unheeded importance of foreign influences in the elaboration of this theory. Along with Australian and American developments, the example of the British trade unions greatly influenced the first propagandists of anarcho-syndicalism in France, and later, the idea travelled back to Britain, to serve different purposes, in a different political and industrial context. Most importantly, syndicalism gained ground in two countries whose union structures were highly contrasted.

Informal international collaborations were crucial for the elaboration of anarcho-syndicalism at every stage. Some of its components had already been developed by the anti-authoritarians in the First International – like the general principle that the workers should unite across borders, be autonomous from the State and that their emancipation should be achieved “by the workers themselves”. The need for revolutionary unions had been repeatedly stressed by the anti-authoritarian St-Imier International⁽⁴⁸⁾. But by the time of the 1881 London congress and in the next decade, anarchists usually opposed action via the trade unions, which were regarded as reformist agencies, essentially anti-revolutionary since they led workers to focus on piecemeal, palliative measures to improve their lot. In France, British unions were regarded as the very embodiment of such social conservatism, and attracted much hostility because of this.

Yet, at the same time, some anarchists on both sides of the Channel were already involved with trade unions, all the more as 1884 saw the legalization of *syndicats* in France. Emile Pouget had helped found the employees’ union in 1879. In the French suburb of Saint-Denis, some anarchists set up the *Syndicat des Hommes de Peine*, a revolutionary union of unskilled and unemployed workers⁽⁴⁹⁾. Joseph Tortelier, a prominent Parisian anarchist, was very active in the carpenters’ union and an early propagandist of the general strike⁽⁵⁰⁾.

This evolution was strengthened from the late 1880s onwards. The first factor leading in this direction was the disastrous consequences of the outburst of anarchist terrorism which had been sweeping France and resulted in the increased marginalization of the anarchists. Another very significant motive was the example of the British social movement. Indeed, the late 1880s witnessed an unheard-of flare-up of union militancy in Britain, with the 1886-9 mass strikes and the great wave of unionization that followed. For the first time, unskilled workers were joining unions, which had hitherto been the preserve of the skilled elite. They were also adopting a much more aggressive stance, and the widely publicized 1889 Dockers’ Strike illustrated for many the revo-

(48) See Emile POUGET, *Le Parti du Travail*, Paris, Editions CNT, 1997 (1905), p. 214-16 ; W. THORPE, *The Workers*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

(49) Jean MAITRON, *Histoire du Mouvement Anarchiste en France*, vol. 1, Paris, Maspero, 1975, p. 265-269; Antony LORRY, *Recherches sur les anarchistes et les syndicats en banlieue nord de Paris (1880-1912)*, unpublished Master’s Dissertation, Université Paris XIII, 1995, p. 20-25.

(50) Jean MAITRON *et alii*, *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier Français, 1880-1914 (DBMOF)*; Jean MAITRON, *Ravachol et les anarchistes*. Paris, Gallimard, 1992 (2nd ed.), p. 121-135.

lutionary potential of trade unions. Kropotkin was among those⁽⁵¹⁾. He started spreading these views in Britain, through conferences and through his monthly paper, *Freedom*. Since Kropotkin was closely linked with Jean Grave, the editor of one of the most important French anarchist papers, *Le Révolté*, both developed their propaganda jointly from 1890 onwards. Articles were exchanged and reprinted, and so were arguments in favour of anarcho-syndicalism⁽⁵²⁾.

In France, the notion that anarchists should enter trade unions and permeate them with revolutionary ideas was also gaining ground in a local militant group, *Le Cercle International Anarchiste*, attended by French and Italian militants. The *Cercle* was also the main forum for debates on anarcho-syndicalism. Founded in early 1889, it was dying out by 1892, but within months, most of its main anarcho-syndicalist militants had fled to London, to avoid the anti-anarchist repression in France. This included front-line militants like Pouget, Paul Reclus, Viard, or Michel Zévaco but also less famous ones, who nevertheless seem to have played an important role at the time, such as Charveron, Tennevin, Bidault, or Garderat⁽⁵³⁾.

The London years provided the opportunity to reinforce this new strategic prospect. The French anarcho-syndicalists became acquainted with their British counterparts, such as Charles Mowbray or John Turner of the Socialist League, who had been lecturing unskilled workers and the East End proletarians on anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism for several years. Some of them frequented Kropotkin, who was a dedicated exponent of syndicalism, or Malatesta, who had taken stance in favour of more structured organisation since the mid-1880s⁽⁵⁴⁾. The Autonomie Club sheltered international meetings on anarcho-syndicalism on several occasions⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Both the French and the British militants were evolving towards the same ideology but for different reasons: for all of them, permeating unions was a way of finally getting in touch with the workers. For the British activists, it was a response to the limitations of New Unionism which were starting to appear, a way of counteracting the growth of union hierarchy and bureaucracy and the employers' backlash that had followed the revolutionary outbreak of 1889⁽⁵⁶⁾. For the French, anarcho-syndicalism seemed a more realistic prospect, as the

(51) John BURNS & Peter KROPOTKIN, *La Grande Grève des Docks*, Bruxelles, Temps Nouveaux, 1897, p. 31.

(52) P. KROPOTKIN, « Ce que c'est qu'une grève », in *La Révolte*, 21 September 1889.

(53) PPO, BA 1506, "Cercle International Anarchiste". See individual biographies in the *DBMOF*.

(54) C. LEVY, *Malatesta*, *op. cit.*, p. 30; G. MANFREDONIA, *L'individualisme*, *op. cit.*, p. 90-103; Pietro DIPAOLO, *Italian Anarchists in London, 1870-1914*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Goldsmith University, 2004, p. 68-72; 166-68.

(55) Such a meeting, featuring Louise Michel, Kropotkin, Mowbray, Malatesta and the Franco-Italian publicist Malato is described in *Freedom*, December 1892. The resolution passed stated that "if we mean to be victorious we must permeate the trade unions and other associations of workers with our ideas. Only by this means can we make the Social Revolution effective when it comes".

(56) For studies on the limitations of New Unionism and how they paved the way for syndicalist ideas, see Eric HOBBSBAWM, "New Unionism Reconsidered", in H.G. HUSUNG & W. MOMMSEN, eds., *The Development of Trade-Unionism in Great-Britain and Germany, 1880-1914*, London, Allen and Unwin, 1985, p. 13-31. See also Sidney POLLARD, "The New

French union structure was young, and not subjected to parliamentary hegemony. The decentralised structure of French trade unionism also matched the federalist ideal common to both anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism⁽⁵⁷⁾. Moreover, French unions had the advantage of still being allowed while repressive laws made anarchist action as such impossible⁽⁵⁸⁾.

This intense exchange of ideas through exile came to fruition in Pouget's propaganda. It started famously in the paper that he had resumed in exile, the London series of the *Père Peinard*. In the second issue of the influential paper, in October 1894, Pouget clearly took sides for anarchist action via the trade unions: "One place which has a lot to offer for the comrades who are having it hard is the *chambre syndicale* of their craft [...]. When one declares that all political groupings are traps for fools, that the only reality is economic, there is no better base than the corporative group. We have been damn wrong in restricting ourselves to affinity groups. Affinity groups have no roots in the popular masses..."⁽⁵⁹⁾. The British influence on Pouget was clear; what the British trade unions had shown him was above all the bargaining power that unions got through their financial strength and through the way they dealt directly with employers, without any State interference: "In London since last year, shops have started to close on Thursday afternoons. In order to obtain this, employees have dealt with their bosses, not with the State. This is why they succeeded"⁽⁶⁰⁾.

Far from being coincidental, the reference to the British trade unions' accomplishments remained central to Pouget's anarcho-syndicalist propaganda in the following years, and was taken up by the other leading exponent of anarcho-syndicalism in France, Ferdinand Pelloutier. On his return to France, Pouget resumed his journalistic activities; in both the *Père Peinard* and his new weekly, *La Sociale*, he used the British example as a way of explaining what anarcho-syndicalism should be, and why⁽⁶¹⁾. He also borrowed militant strategies from the British traditions, such as go-canny (*Sabotage*), which became one of the pillars of syndicalism⁽⁶²⁾. As for Pelloutier, although he was not as influenced by British trade unionism, he still reprinted in his monthly

Unionism in Britain: its economic background", *Ibid*, p. 31-52. Matthew THOMAS, *Anarchist ideas and Counter-Cultures in Britain, 1880-1914*, London, Ashgate, 2005, p. 151-156.

(57) W. THORPE, *The Workers*, op. cit., p. 24.

(58) See Emile POUGET, *Père Peinard*, London Series, October 1894.

(59) *Ibid*.

(60) *Ibid*.

(61) See for instance *Père Peinard*, 26 July 1897: "As I've already said, folks: let's look at what the English are doing [...]. They're proving to us experimentally that it only takes some pluck to hold out against your boss. Whereas in France, the socialists are wasting their energies trying to climb up the greasy pole, the English, who are a lot more practical, do not care an inch about the State: they just march against the capitalists. And they're all the better for it! When will the French lads be strong enough to follow their example?" My translation.

(62) See his 1905 pamphlet *Sabotage*: "Neither must it be believed that sabotage is a product with a Parisian trademark. It is, indeed, if anything, a theory of English importation and it has been practised across the Channel for a long time, under the name of Go-Cannie – a Scotch expression which literally means 'Go Slow'". Emile POUGET, *Sabotage*, Arturo M. Giovannitti tr., Chicago, Kerr, c. 1915.

L'Ouvrier des Deux Mondes the book of the liberal economist Paul de Rousiers on British trade unionism.

The British reference was obliterated once anarcho-syndicalism gained momentum and became dominant in the French union confederation, the CGT. By then, the British anarcho-syndicalists were already very influenced by the theories of their French counterparts, and the international anarchist groups in London supported their work⁽⁶³⁾. Their propaganda intensified in the early 1900s, in a more propitious environment, as economic and working conditions worsened in Britain, as the tameness of parliamentary socialism appeared, and as the lack of democracy and the still very elitist nature of the new unions became more blatant⁽⁶⁴⁾. The London-based weekly *The Voice of Labour* was a fierce critic of parliamentary socialism and trade unions; it constantly sought to draw parallels between France and Britain, and to encourage British workers to take up syndicalism. The French correspondent Aristide Pratelle actively defended this stance: "[Our new year's wish] surely is to see workers across the Channel rapidly convinced that none but themselves, and nothing but their own strength, will be able to gain them liberty and justice. We wish that, together with the workers here, they could recognise that there exist no heaven-born men to bring them happiness and felicity, if sent by their votes to Parliament. Both in France and England, experience has proved that good results must never be hoped for from such men, however socialistic they proclaim themselves"⁽⁶⁵⁾. After 1907, the links between the various international syndicalist movements were reinforced by the publication of a monthly international sheet, *Le Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste*, composed in France by the anarchist-turned-syndicalist Christian Cornelissen.

The British anarcho-syndicalists were soon joined in their French-inspired propaganda by some trade unionists, notably Tom Mann. Mann, it seems, had first become acquainted with the French anarchists during the 1896 Congress of the Second International, in London, where he had been one of the few 'parliamentary' socialists, along with James Keir Hardie, to protest against the expulsion of the anarchists from the Congress and the Second International. He had attended several anarchist meetings on this occasion. The following year, he had invited some anarchists to lecture at his London club, the Enterprise. Malatesta was among them. Mann's links with the anarchists and the French anarcho-syndicalists became tighter after 1910, when he returned to Europe after several years in Australia. His Australian stay had considerably refined his views on trade-unionism, leading him to completely turn his back on parliamentary action, especially after witnessing the failure of government arbitration⁽⁶⁶⁾, and to lay the emphasis on industrial action (that is, the idea that unions within the same branch of industry should be amalgamated).

(63) The London-based paper *La Grève Générale* (1902), set up by some London-based French militants is an example of exiled syndicalist propaganda.

(64) Joseph WHITE, "Syndicalism in a mature industrial setting: the case of Britain", in W. THORPE and M. VAN DER LINDEN, *Revolutionary Syndicalism*, *op. cit.*, p. 101-118.

(65) *The Voice of Labour*, 18 January 1907.

(66) After Mann's return from Australia, Cornelissen reported that "in the colonies supposedly ruled by labour governments, he found pitiful situations for the workers' emancipa-

On his return, Mann went to visit CGT members in France. He had already started to contribute articles to one of the main French syndicalist journals, *La Vie Ouvrière*, where he expounded his views on the Australian labour movement, making a case for amalgamation. After his visit to the CGT, he set about propagating his views in Britain, via conferences and also through the journals he had set up, *The Transport Worker*, *The Syndicalist* and *The Industrial Syndicalist*. In the summer of 1911, with Guy Bowman, he founded the Industrial Syndicalist Education League (ISEL), an educational league meant to spread industrial syndicalism in Britain. The French example was foremost in this propagandist work⁽⁶⁷⁾; his main imports were the notions of industrial solidarity and direct action, and the antimilitarist propaganda of the CGT was also publicised in Britain. The diffusion of French syndicalism in Britain was also aided by the active propaganda of a rather colourful French woman, Madame Sorgue, who preached the gospel of direct action and workers' solidarity all over the country. She was especially active during the Hull dockers' strike in 1911⁽⁶⁸⁾. The outburst of industrial unrest after 1911 gave great publicity to Mann and ISEL's work, even if the unrest was not a direct product of it.

It is not the least of ironies that by the time Mann had started to emulate it, the CGT was entering a major crisis, caused by a combination of financial scandals, internal feuding between the revolutionaries and the reformists, lack of international integration, and the blatant discrepancies between its revolutionary mottos and its very tame everyday practice⁽⁶⁹⁾. The climax of the crisis coincided with the peak of the Labour Unrest in Britain. The latter had featured more and more prominently in French syndicalist publications, whose editors were keen to keep their readers informed of international developments. But it now became the central issue of the main syndicalist publications, *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, *La Vie Ouvrière* and *La Voix du Peuple*: the syndicalist agitation within the Great Labour Unrest, from being an interesting case to keep an eye on, became *the* example to follow, and the French *cégétistes* resolved to pay particular attention to their achievements in terms of union-building, militancy and cross-industrial solidarity⁽⁷⁰⁾.

tion, and he returned thoroughly averse to parliamentarianism...only economic organisation, with or without social legislation, can achieve things". *Bulletin International du Mouvement Syndicaliste*, 5 June 1910. My translation.

(67) "Our comrade wanted to study himself French syndicalism because he wants to completely reorganise the English trade union movement according to the French model and that of the American IWW", *Ibid.* See the papers *The Syndicalist* and *The Industrial Syndicalist* or Mann's own commentaries on French syndicalism.

(68) *Ibid.* 25 September 1910. Yann BELIARD, "Outlandish 'isms' in the City: How Madame Sorgue contaminated Hull with the virus of Direct Action", in *Recherches Anglaises et Nord-Américaines*, 2003, nr. 36, p. 113-126.

(69) Nicholas PAPAYANIS, *Alphonse Merrheim. The Emergence of Reformism in Revolutionary Syndicalism*, Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985, 184 p., ch. 6; Bruce VANDERVORT, *Victor Griffuelhes and French Syndicalism, 1895-1922*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State UP, 1997, 278 p., ch. 9.

(70) Jean-Louis AUDUC, *Le Mouvement syndical anglais à travers la presse syndicaliste française (1911-1914)*, Unpublished Master's Dissertation, La Sorbonne, 1971, ch. 4.

Conclusion

The genesis of syndicalism testifies to the perennality of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist cross-Channel networks, and illustrates the fact that militant theories and models did not need a formal institutional framework to travel across borders. Of course, this does not remove the question of whether the syndicalist notions thus evolved had a true impact at the grassroots level⁽⁷¹⁾ and in everyday militant practice⁽⁷²⁾. If anything, the London years of the French anarchists illustrate the difficulties for the rank-and-file of putting internationalist mottos to practice, even in the propitious exilic context. Moreover, in Britain, the influence of syndicalism remained marginal until its reworking into guild socialism in the aftermath of the war⁽⁷³⁾, while in France, the CGT was numerically weak throughout the period. However, if one considers only the ideological level, these theories were influential among union leaders and theorists, and their transnational genesis remains unduly overlooked. As with pure anarchism however, the problem now lay in creating international organisations between these movements which would make them truly effective; once more, the fruitful circulation of militant models can be contrasted with the painstaking yet problematic efforts to coordinate the various national syndicalist movements on the eve of WW1⁽⁷⁴⁾, through the International Syndicalist Information Bureau founded in 1913. The dilemma would not be solved until after the war. Before then, in 1914, the CGT was to join the *Union Sacrée* and rally the war effort almost unanimously, alone among the European syndicalist organisations⁽⁷⁵⁾.

It is highly paradoxical that while local and national studies of the anarchist movement constantly emphasise the importance of networks, circles and informal groups, and despite the recent boom in transnational labour history, historians of anarchist internationalism have failed to do them justice. This dimension is only approached in passing, or through biographical studies, which can only provide a sketchy picture of what was a primarily elitist yet very dense international militant sociability. Transnational approaches are all the more relevant in the case of movements like anarchism and syndicalism, which have been developed through the diffusion of foreign models and owe a lot to

(71) To revert to Marcel van der Linden's distinction between the ideology, the shop-floor level and the organisational level. VAN DER LINDEN, "Second thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism", *op. cit.*, p. 72-74.

(72) The canonical – but questionable – objection against the notion that revolutionary syndicalism truly prevailed in the CGT was formulated in Peter STEARNS, *Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor: a Cause without Rebels*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1971, p. 1-6.

(73) G.D.H. COLEF, *Self-Government in Industry*, London, Bell & Sons, 1917, 283 p.

(74) S. MILNER, *The Dilemmas*, *op. cit.*, p. 195-206; W. THORPE, *The Workers*, *op. cit.*, p. 53-86.

(75) For the CGT position during the WW1, see Ralph Darlington's contribution to this issue: "Revolutionary Syndicalist Opposition to the First World War: A Comparative Reassessment", and Wayne Thorpe's: "El Ferrol, Rio de Janeiro, Zimmerwald, and Beyond: Syndicalist Internationalism: 1914-1918".

international migrations and exile as agents in this process⁽⁷⁶⁾. It is yet another incentive to reconsider labour history in the light of cross-border interactions, international exchanges and political transfers⁽⁷⁷⁾. It is also an indication of the better understanding of militant strategies which may be achieved by relying on the concept of network, as a way of elaborating on historical biography.

(76) M. VAN DER LINDEN, "Second thoughts on Revolutionary Syndicalism", *op. cit.*, p. 74-75.

(77) Michael WERNER & Benedicte ZIMMERMAN, eds., *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée*, Paris, Seuil, 2004, 236 p. (Le Genre Humain, nr. 42) is an excellent synthesis of the historiographical uses of this notion.