Chapter 9 - Revolutionary syndicalism and unionism

Marx’s analysis of trade unions in the *Manifesto* and *Wages, Price and Profit*, dating from the second half of the 19th century, is no longer applicable. Workers struggles, with their victories or defeats, no longer have the sole objective of consolidating labor unity, but are also intended to strengthen the trade union as a reactionary organization. The German Left would be compelled to understand this, while other revolutionaries (among others, Bordiga, despite his visionary traits) would want to *reconstruct* the old movement. Others would later be tempted by the idea of forming broad-based, democratic workers organizations, which would be based on rank and file workers organizations. At the end of his life, Pannekoek’s achievement would reside in the fact that he understood, despite his councilist and educationalist illusions, that revolutionaries would never be able to recreate the old movement: like Bordiga, Pannekoek is also profoundly contradictory. It is not the reformist *organizations* which oppose the revolution: it is *reformism* itself which drives the proletarians away from the revolution.

**Revolutionary Syndicalism**

The rupture (in the USA and other countries) between the official socialist movement and a more leftist movement with a Marxist orientation, as was the case in the split between the reformist *Socialist Party of America* and DeLeon’s *Socialist Labor Party*, was characteristic of a period when the proletariat was incapable of unity. The alternative was between obtaining reforms and “preparing” for the revolution: in the first case, there was integration into capital; in the second, a break with the real practice of the workers. This explains why the *syndicalist* perspective was the only one which thrived: it established the unity of immediate struggles and revolution. For the syndicalist perspective there is continuity between: 1) the immediate struggle, with trade union organization (by trade or, like the IWW, by industry); 2) the revolution, with the industrial organizations taking power; 3) socialism, with a social organization on this basis. Such an illusion has the merit of being coherent. The groups (DeLeon) which tried to unite with these syndicalists in order to penetrate the working class failed, because, by definition, this form of action rejected any kind of structure which was not formed “by the workers themselves” at the point of production.

The “syndicalists” were divided into two major currents. The first was a survival from the 19th century workers movement and of the “workers separatism” which rejected both the communist movement and capitalism for the same reason, preferring instead to deal with the labor question in its own way, in terms of its exclusively worker-based organization. It was connected to the Proudhonist tradition, which was not so much an ideological tendency as it was a theorization of workers aspirations; its contemporary analogue is the politics of self-management. This current, which was predominant in the early days of the CGT, entered into crisis after 1906 (when the general strike for the eight-hour day failed) due to the expanding industrialization which liquidated its base in
trade- and skill-based organizations. French revolutionary syndicalism never underwent a factional struggle between moderates and radicals: the revolutionary tendency, by virtue of its own development, was transformed in a reformist direction. In 1914, there was no surprise: "For several years, Griffuelhes, Pouget and Merrheim had discouraged antipatriotic action."\(^6\)

The second current was much more modern and was inseparable from large industry. The IWW was the organization of the unskilled, Taylorized labor and the unemployed. This organization did not decay like the CGT, but was destroyed as an active movement. The trade unions of the CIO would come to occupy the positions which the IWW could not, because, as a hybrid movement, the IWW simultaneously wanted revolutionary action and an organization of all wage workers on an economic basis. The shop stewards,\(^7\) on the other hand, were the organizations of workers delegates, often skilled, whose trade unions had not defended their privileges during the war. They often used original means in organizing to obtain the satisfaction of their demands, but their struggle was not revolutionary. Rather than preventing an autonomous organization of the workers against capital, they filled a vacuum abandoned by the trade unions.\(^8\) Germany combined the first and second currents of revolutionary syndicalism in an original synthesis, which would be adapted to events under pressure from the workers, and this development would be accentuated as the positions of the SPD and the ADGB drove the workers towards more leftist organizations.

The drift towards the more radical groups (USPD, KPD, syndicalists) would create a new conception of organization: unionism. At the beginning of 1919, the metal workers union, which, with 1,240,000 members and comprising 1/5 of all organized workers, was the leading German trade union, elected new leaders sympathetic to the USPD. During the war, its minority had already voted for a proposal, which was defeated by 77 votes to 44, to withhold its dues from the ADGB, whose patriotism it denounced.\(^9\) The Mannheim Accord of 1906 (cf. Chapter 2) had expired. But the ADGB responded by getting rid of its opponents: it would reintegrate the RO opposition and exclude the communists. In Halle, for example, where almost all the trade unions were led by communists, the local trade union committee fused with the council organization at the beginning of 1921; the ADGB immediately provoked a trade union split.\(^10\) In 1919, however, the KPD’s lack of a precise position on the trade union question at its founding congress led to an absence of relations between communists and trade union organs during the first half of the year, although the situation varied from region to region. “In Hamburg and Bremen, the communists attacked Legien’s trade union offices, seized their funds and distributed them to unemployed workers; the workers did not so much as lift a finger in defense of ‘their’ organization. The conference of the northern German sections of the KPD (August 1919) ruled that the members of the KPD must leave the ADGB.”\(^11\) It was only at the end of 1919, and thus after a series of defeats, that the purged KPD would adopt the orientation of conquering the trade unions, in which the USPD “had already conquered the leadership position in the legal trade union opposition”.\(^12\) Not much was accomplished in this regard, and the (right wing) KPD was not in touch with the spontaneous tendencies of the workers.
As often happened, once the revolution was over, the workers joined the most radical organizations which were, or appeared to be, correct, or created new ones, which slowly became counterrevolutionary if they survived into a prolonged period of “calm”. The rupture took place between a pre-existing tendency from before the revolution and the other, more recently produced tendency, which could not survive after the revolutionary defeat. The same process would take place in the communist party.

The FVDG broke the radical front by opposing the renovation of the General Union of Miners, destroyed in May 1919, and turned to the creation of an organization on the principles of revolutionary syndicalism in the Rhineland-Westphalia region, where it was strongest: the Freie Arbeiter Union (Rhineland-Westphalia) (Free Workers Union) was founded at the Düsseldorf Congress on September 15-16, 1919. The very name, FAU, was a compromise between anarchism (Freie: free) and unionism (Union). Indeed, besides the members of the post-November 1918 reconstituted FVDG, local unionist organizations sympathetic to the KPD also attended the congress (the Essen AAU, the General Union of Miners). The opposition of the two tendencies was clearly defined: the syndicalists appeared as “dogmatists” who wanted their 1906 program to be adopted. At that point, the differences revolved around organization by trade, an article of faith for classical revolutionary syndicalists, or by factory. A compromise was reached: in theory, organization by trades was adopted, but in practice the organization was based on what actually existed (organization of miners by shafts, and the others by factories). All political parties were condemned except the KPD. The FAU (R-W) would remain a coalition of organizations until the creation of the FAUD and the AAU.13

The FAUD was founded at the XIIth Congress of the FVDG in December 1919. This new name reflected the adherence of the various locals of the FAU, born since May, to the FVDG: the FAU of Rhineland-Westphalia, discussed above, was by far the most important. The organization had spread throughout Germany (FAUD, D: Deutschlands) and must have had approximately 200,000 members at the time. The left unionist opposition was weaker at that time and the FAUD returned to classical anarchosyndicalism, under the influence of Kropotkin, filtered through R. Rocker, the ideologist of the movement. It called itself the FAUD(S) to distinguish itself (S: Syndicalist). It broke with all political parties, declared itself against the dictatorship of the proletariat, for not being a dictatorship of “the whole class” “from the bottom up”, and was in favor of non-violence as a matter of principle. Its leadership was to disapprove of many of the revolutionary actions in which its rank and file would participate in 1920-1921. “Revolutionary syndicalism” (=FAUD(S)) was there to decree the general strike of all workers (proletarians), so it said: this strike would paralyze the economy and the bourgeoisie, and the trade unions would take affairs into their own hands and would organize the society of “the free and equal producers”.

The FAUD(S) was led by a central committee of old syndicalists, at whose head were R. Rocker and F. Kater, who defended a pacifist and anti-revolutionary syndicalism. They had been the first to proclaim the slogan of a united front, inviting the Spartacists and independent socialists, already in 1918, to join a “social-political” front. They would even continue to follow this policy in 1921, issuing invitations to the USPD as well as to the
KPD/VKPD. In parallel with the Levi tendency, the German syndicalists adopted the same “anti-putschist” positions during the course of the March-April 1920, and March 1921 events. Like the Levists, the central committee of the FAUD(S) would characterize the attacks which the left communists (of the KPD and KAPD) carried out against the trains carrying arms to Poland during the summer of 1920 as “romanticism”.14 As a delegate from the Ruhr declared, requesting that the term “syndicalist” be abandoned: “the syndicalists are not revolutionary enough in the eyes of the Ruhr miners.”15

In the next period, the FAUD split into three principle tendencies. The leadership, now in the minority, upheld anarchosyndicalism in its original purity. It tried to set up a trade union international to rival the Communist International: the “IWA”. The IWW, the shop stewards and the CNT, however, tried to join the Communist International, through its affiliate the Red Trade Union International, founded in July of 1921. But the CI’s policies repelled them, since it wanted the traditional trade unions to join the RTUI, as well as to promote reformist struggles using more aggressive slogans and methods. If the IWA, founded at the end of 1922, would only have an ephemeral impact, by taking advantage of the RTUI’s opportunism, it at least managed to detour numerous revolutionary workers into a dead end. The primary activity of this new IWA would consist of denouncing the “communists” who were trying to shift the workers struggle away from its true terrain: the workers struggle. The behavior of the Communist International, at both the national and international levels, helped to push the revolutionaries—since at least some of these workers organizations showed a tendency towards radical actions and positions—into the arms of the reformists. It reinforced tendencies towards confusion and conciliation, which were strong in some trade unions (CNT), instead of extirpating or eliminating them.16

Equally insignificant, the second tendency was grouped around the Düsseldorf journal Die Schöpfung (The Creation), characterized above all by its activism and its “anti-dogmatism”. Some of its adherents judged that they “had to vote despite their principles”. Others, in September 1921, elaborated a program of action which involved issuing an ultimatum to the government and the trade unions, whose rejection would lead to the general strike. Its members also created “communes” and anarchist schools, etc.

The most important tendency, whose further development is most noteworthy, was the so-called “FAU of Gelsenkirchen” (FAU(G)), whose nucleus was formed by former members of the USPD and the General Union of Miners. It only superficially adopted the syndicalist ideology, and became the economic organization of the VKPD, while retaining a certain degree of autonomy (concerning the VKPD, cf. Chapter 13). It left the FAUD in November 1920, and had 110,000 members at that time, primarily in the FAU of the Rhineland-Westphalia region and the General Union of Miners of Central Germany and Upper Silesia. After its founding in December 1920, the VKPD acknowledged it as a revolutionary factor. The FAU(G) admitted, for its part, that many of its members were members of the VKPD. In September of 1921, the FAU(G) fused with two other trade union organizations which had existed since 1918 to form the General Union of Manual and Intellectual Workers of Germany (Council Organization),
It would be the only German trade union to join the RTUI. However, after years of opposition, the VKPD and the CI would force it to dissolve into various reactionary trade unions in 1925.

The phenomenon of the _unionen_ reflected a situation in which the proletarians were neither capable of nor wanted to attack capital, but refused to carry out purely economistic actions in the usual corporativist manner: this explains their anti-trade union reaction and their efforts to unify themselves in the _unionen_. Of course, since the assault was not undertaken with a firm resolve, reformism, no matter how strong it may have been, was condemned to failure. These new organizations would be eclipsed or would fall into dependence on another form of syndicalism, with apolitical aspirations but much more concerned with fighting against the Marxists than in driving the workers actions forward, and which would sabotage local and regional attempts at unification with unions inspired by left communists, who were judged to be “authoritarian” and violent. This narrow-minded spirit was a revelation of a competitive attitude typical of politics. Unionism would develop as a reaction against classical “revolutionary” syndicalism as much as against the ADGB.

**The Origins of Unionism**

(It should be emphasized that the _Unionen_ discussed in this book were not (and in fact fought against) what are called “unions” in the English language (_Gewerkschaften_ in German)) (Author’s note to the American edition).

Unionism, as a concept of proletarian revolutionary organization, was conceived by elements which had arrived during the war, at the time of the revolution in Germany, from the USA. The IWW, an organization of radical economic struggle, born in the USA at the beginning of the 20th century, had historical roots which extended back to Owen’s theory of _One Big Union_ (ca. 1830). The workers in the IWW were organized by factory and by industry. The IWW had various tendencies, one of which—a minority—asserted the need to form an alliance with a revolutionary political party; this tendency was inspired by DeLeon and was actually excluded from the IWW. The DeLeonist SLP and the workers groups under its influence worked in parallel with but separately from the IWW. DeLeon thought a party distinct from the unions was necessary in order to destroy the State: once this purely negative act had been consummated, the party would be eclipsed by the unions’ administration of society. The majority of the IWW’s membership rejected this dual party/unions structure, and wanted to make the IWW the sole revolutionary organization. Dannenberg, having arrived from America, led a small unionist tendency in Braunschweig, and was undoubtedly influenced by DeLeon. The greatest difference between the IWW and anarchosyndicalism was the IWW’s dedication to the principle of the factory organization.

The IWW was considered to be a sympathetic but confused movement, or as one of those rare cases of a workers organization which was “not manipulated” from outside by a “party”. It played a role in the formation of the German Left. When the KAPist worker P. Mattick immigrated to the USA in 1926, he joined the IWW. The IWW’s real nature must be acknowledged, as well as its _failure_ in 1914, _just like_ that of the parties and
trade unions against which it carried out such an effective struggle. Its failure was not due only to its repression, which it had neither wanted to prepare for nor was capable of confronting. From its founding in 1905, it tried to remain on the margin of political groups, but it had an overwhelming tendency to ignore the question of power as well as that of the destruction of the State. It was more apolitical than antipolitical.  

The IWW’s 1916 congress called for the organization of a general strike in case of war. Just like the resolutions of the Second International (cf. Chapter 4), this proposal would not be respected. A minority fraction demanded the implementation of the decisions of the 1916 congress when the US entered the war in April 1917. The IWW’s General Executive Board, after long deliberation, refused to do so. Even after April 1917, when the IWW was under attack by the State and armed gangs (assassinations, arrests, destruction of its offices), the GEB took no action. B. Haywood, the IWW leader, stated that everything would return to the way it was before the war and that the organization would rebuild itself. For the next two years, the IWW restricted its defensive activity to the legal system . . . which the State itself did not respect.  

The war revealed its limitations, just as it had exposed those of the trade unions and socialist parties. Unionism held that the workers should be organized by factories and then by economic regions (and not by industries). This difference is crucial (within the context of the period under consideration, and obviously not as an abstract, ahistorical opposition): the point of view of industrial unionism, in its debates, and its power position, was framed in relation to the cartels and industrial trusts—it was a form of organization designed to return to the roots of true trade unionism. Organization by economic regions, however, united all the workers in the same region, transcending not only the trade or profession (like all unionism) but also the industry and even the factory; this kind of unionism which goes beyond the interests of trade, of factory, and of industry is, in fact, a geographical-strategic grouping with a view to revolutionary action and had a tendency to supersede the proletarian condition itself. Furthermore, the one time when a union, with the assistance of the AAUD, led a reformist struggle (in 1927), it was an industrial union: the Union of North Sea Fishermen.

In 1919, the unions were temporary associations which worked on the formation of councils: it was the councils and not the unions which were called upon to manage production. For all the currents of the period, socialism was a problem of management: the different conceptions of socialism concerned the form of workers management of production (by the party, by the council, the trade unions, the union, etc.). The unions appeared spontaneously during the war and the revolution. When the workers abandoned the trade unions they did so factory by factory and not by the basic units of trade union organization (the trades).

The idea of unitary organization (neither party, nor trade union, but something beyond both) appeared for the first time in an anonymous article in the Bremen Arbeiterpolitik, and was presented as a concept which had originated among rank and file workers. The “soul of the proletarian” cannot be divided into a “political soul” and an “economic soul”. In Mass Strike, Party and Trade Unions, Luxemburg had expressed the idea that the separation of the party and the trade union was by no means absolute. In a sense, what
was taking place was a return to the primitive organization of the proletarians, except, this time, as the fruit of a more advanced movement. The trade union-party distinction was proof that the previous era was not revolutionary: the same was true of the distinction between maximum and minimum programs. The mere fact, however, that a proletarian organization would define itself, in the first place, in relation to the *workplace* shows that the proletarian offensive was deadlocked.

At the KPD’s founding congress, the left defended the concept of unitary organization. During the ensuing period of struggles, the party’s majority implemented the slogan “abandon the trade unions” and also helped to create the elements of the future AAU. The unionist current was seeking its own identity at the moment (May 1919) when the syndicalists broke with the revolutionary front. At that time, revolutionary groups were once again forming in the Ruhr, in Central Germany, and above all in various cities in the North (Bremen and Hamburg) in a series of organizations which were neither classical trade unions nor revolutionary syndicalist trade unions. In Hamburg, a direct line of descent connected the IWW to the unions. Wolffheim had spent several years with the IWW in California. With Laufenberg, he urged the workers to join the AAU when it was created in August of 1919, and they considered it to be the German section of the IWW.20

It was in Hamburg that unionism was theorized in particular detail. The Hamburg *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Zeitung* published numerous articles from May to August 1919 from various sources (“theoreticians”, “rank and file militants”, “trade unionists”, “communists”, etc.) under the rubric of “a contribution to the debate concerning the trade union question”. It was here that the idea arose that the party should end by dissolving itself into the AAU, after having contributed to the latter’s generalization. Moreover, all the tendencies and future splits were to be found in embryo within the debate concerning the rate at which this dissolution should proceed.

Organizations of the AAU type (by factory and by region) expressed a primordial fact: the workers who formed them carried out a revolutionary struggle by attacking the roots of the economic relations and not their effects. To declare oneself in favor of the dictatorship of the proletariat was also the sole criterion for membership in the AAU. Viewed negatively, only those workers who rejected any idea of reformist or partial struggle could organize in the AAU. When the revolutionary wave receded and was submerged in the sea of reformist action, the trade union-type organization, with its professional divisions, reigned unchallenged. The AAU ceased to be an instrument of struggle, since the struggle which it served no longer existed, and it would be relegated to the status of a subsidiary sect of the KAPD.

The relation between organization based on skills/trades and the reformist struggle would be negatively confirmed in 1923. The spectacular inflation of that year caused a day’s wage to lose one-third of its value after 24 hours.21 The wage struggle once again having become impossible, the trade union organizations were dismantled and replaced by factory organizations: but this time the latter did not undertake any revolutionary action worthy of the name.
The Formation of the “AAUD”
In August 1919, factory organizations, acting upon the basis of the positions of the KPD, met in Essen to found the AAU of Essen. For the last time, the Levist central committee gave its assent to such an act. In itself, this meeting was of little importance, but the AAU was the focal point for the foundation of the AAUD. It participated in the foundation of the FAU(R-W) but quickly broke with the latter, since unionism was in the last stage of acquiring its own identity. The founding congress of the AAUD (General Union of German Workers) met on February 14, 1920. The principle spokespersons for unionism had become isolated: Wolffheim and Laufenberg had devoted themselves exclusively to propaganda for their national-bolshevik theses. Frölich and Becker had remained in the KPD and joined the fight against “leftism” (cf. Chapters X, XIII and XV, for the Bremen left).

The two leading tendencies at the congress were composed of those who called for the immediate abolition of the party organization (Roche, from Hamburg, and Rühle, from Dresden) and those who thought that it was necessary to maintain the party for a certain time (Schröder and the leadership of the future KAPD). The Hamburg national bolsheviks comprised a very small minority of the congress delegates. The first theoreticians of unionism were thrown overboard at the very moment that unionism began its existence.

During this period, Becker thought that the unions should “be intermediate organs between the party and the class”, a position which the other tendencies felt was too rigid. The split which developed among the “centralists” helped to hand over the leadership to the “federalists”, who were particularly strong in Hamburg and Dresden, and who would dominate the organization’s leading positions in 1920. For example, supreme authority was vested solely in the hands of the national congress: “The AAUD’s organization would never completely achieve the same stable character as the FAU. The AAUD was, more than any other union, the expression of the revolutionary movement of the Betriebsräte, and from the moment the revolutionary movement began to stagnate, this would appear as an enormous weakness.” But this was only true from an extremely “organizational” point of view: as if the proletarian revolutionary movement should provide itself with (mass) organizations capable of resisting an extremely long counterrevolution. Again: organizations like the AAUD were so exceptionally subversive because they were so completely attuned to the revolutionary movement; they overcame the opposition between the movement and a petrified organization. The fact that they disappeared at the end of the revolutionary period would, instead, be a good sign, if one did not know that they would never admit the full extent of their failure and all of its implications.

Dannenberg’s tendency advocated “industrial unionism”: the unions should federate by industry and not by region, and should link up with a political party (in this case, the USPD). This tendency disappeared along with its leader in 1921, after having been excluded in 1920, “attacked by all other tendencies for its pro-USPD sympathies and its ‘economistic reformism’.”
The debate at the congress was very confused, and the delegates had just enough time to agree about what the AAUD was not, before the police arrested them. But the organization's foundation responded to a real movement. The formation of the unions coincided with a de facto break with and a rejection of trade union organization. To conceive of the AAUD in purely organizational terms, as one more link in “the life of groups”, is to have not understood it in its essence. In August 1919, the Union of Port and Shipyard Workers of Hamburg was formed, with a communist leadership. Such splits had a political basis: “It attacked the trade union Zentrale for its support of Ebert and the Kaiser’s generals, it supported arming the proletarians, recognition of the Russian soviet republic, militant solidarity with Russia, and opposition to Ebert-Scheidemann’s support of the Poles and the White Army. Had the revolutionary situation remained more generally aggressive, the events which took place in Bremen and Hamburg would have been repeated.”

The second conference of the AAUD, which took place on March 10-12, 1920, just before the Kapp Putsch, adopted some very simple statutes. The Roche-Rühle tendency emerged victorious: federalism, no party. In November 1920, the third conference convened while the KAPD was in its ascendant phase, after it had excluded Rühle and his supporters. Joint action between the KAPD and the AAUD was especially extensive during the month of August due to the sabotage of arms shipments to Poland. The KAPD tendency (Schröder) gained support. This tendency recognized the temporary necessity of the party as a separate institution, even after the revolution, at the advent of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The conference also adopted a very succinct program and a set of “General Guidelines”. These two texts were in absolute conformity with the KAPD program, from which entire passages were borrowed.

Rühle’s current separated from the AAUD (cf. Chapter 14). The destiny of the AAUD after its third conference was indistinguishable from that of the KAPD. What is essential is that, from the organizational point of view, the AAUD was not merely an appendix of the KAPD which the latter had created.

Particularly strong in Hamburg, Berlin (30,000 members in December 1920) and central Germany, the AAUD had 150,000 members in the winter of 1920-1921 during this same period the KAPD never had more than 40,000 members. In December 1922, the AAUD would have no more than 120,000 members in its so-called “Berlin” tendency and a few hundred in the “Essen” tendency (cf. Appendix I). It was during 1919-1920, however, that the union was most active, even in terms of its propaganda: the union had at least ten weekly newspapers and its numerous pamphlets sometimes had print runs of 120,000. After 1923 it was left with almost no members. While the FAU(G) was stronger in the mines, the AAUD was especially strong in the metal industry. “The trunk of the class”, as Radek had described it at the congress of the Communist International, had thus abandoned its traditional organizations. This phenomenon of workers regroupment also took place, prior to 1914, in the British trade union movement, where the Triple Alliance consolidated the miners, the railroad workers and the transport workers in order to stage turbulent but non-revolutionary actions. The IWW, on the other hand, recruited mostly in the newer industries with a heavy
representation of unorganized immigrants. These facts, by the way, refute the legend according to which the German Left was mostly composed of “déclassé” elements. The members of the AAUD were not *lumpen*, as Rosenberg would have us understand in his *History of the Weimar Republic*. All layers of the working class were to be found in the AAUD, as well as in the FAUD, the KAPD and the KPD.

First, the members of the KAPD and the AAUD came from all layers of the proletariat. Furthermore, after half a century of social democratic domestication, and in opposition to the despotism of the factory, the rejection of the discipline of the various parties was something completely positive, especially in Germany. It has been said that the “leftists” lacked any experience of organization. But this is utterly untrue: they knew the organizations of their time all too well and knew that these organizations considered them to be a simple “mass” which was always led to defeat and massacre. An important fraction of radical proletarians acted in a revolutionary way and knew what they had to do. It is all to their credit that they did not want to hear of any discipline which did not originate among their own ranks. What would be absurd would be to raise anti-discipline, anti-organization and anti-authority to the status of categorical principles, as if the rebels of the various insurrectionary movements had not had their own leaders, organizations and discipline. The principle that “the whole world must give the orders” is only valid where there is nothing that has to be done.

As long as the AAUD was a living organization, its polemic against the anarchosyndicalism which was attempting to return to organization by trade had a real basis. It was the expression of the movement of radical proletarians which, by organizing to achieve goals held in common by the whole proletariat, also entered into conflict with the forms which were keeping them isolated in stagnant compartments. As a distinct ideology, revolutionary syndicalism played a reactionary role during this phase. But when, during the period of reaction, some survivors of unionism devoted themselves to making a fetish of the forms of organization of the radical current of the German Left (councils, factory organizations, AAU, etc.), this propaganda underwent a change of function. Encouraging the workers to create these organizations was in this case a substitute for revolutionary action. And this was all the more dangerous insofar as these forms, which had previously expressed a subversive content, could become the vehicle for tendencies which were simply reformist, as a result of the further development of capital and of the forms of its domination.

3. Pannekoek and the Workers Councils.
9. La question syndicale…., p. 7.
10. Ibid., pp. 48-49.
11. Ibid., p. 8.
12. Ibid., p. 9.
13. The text adopted by the congress appears in Bock, Document VI.
14. La question syndicale…., p. 16.
16. La question syndicale…., pp. 17-19.
17. Its extensive statutes are reproduced in Bock, p. 367.
18. Our position is anti-political, but not a-political: cf. Le Mouvement Communiste, No. 5, October 1973, “De la politique”.
20. Bock, Document V.
22. La question syndicale…., p. 19.
23. Ibid., p. 20.
24. Ibid., p. 8.
25. La gauche allemande….
26. Ibid.
27. La question syndicale…., pp. 19-20. Bock estimates a maximum of 100,000 in March 1921.
28. La question syndicale…., p.20.