This is the 4th supplement to 'Rebel Worker' where we are attempting to give some information on the history of various anarcho-syndicalist movements. While the story of the movements in Spain and South America is widely acknowledged, little known is the fact that in the inter war years anarcho-syndicalist groups were set up and grew in most Central European & Balkan countries. In particular in Bulgaria a large and vital movement existed and it played a leading role during the revolutionary upheavals there during the 1940's. Also of some significance was the movement in Poland. We have here put together what little there is in on the subject.

Polski Ruch Anarchistyczny
( History of the Polish Anarchist Movement 1919—1929)
proletariat. Owing to the tactics of the Russian commanders, who did not restrict themselves simply to the defence of endangered revolutionary territories, Plauzkov was afforded the opportunity of lending to his imperialistic endeavours the semblance of a "defensive war". All class distinctions were thrust into the background and the policy of the new regime reached its peak — everything was thrown into the struggle against the Bolshevist invasion — and thus Plauzkov was able to regain the prestige which he had lost in the wake of the bloody defeats of the insurgents. The failure of all efforts made by the populist socialists of the newly "resurrected" Poland; in the politics as in the social life of the country, the road was now open to capitalist and statist reactions.

A broad section of the worker masses, which adhered to the PBS, voted in the elections for its 'socialist conception of independence', but in comparison with the parties of the right and centre, the PBS was no more than a dwindling minority in the Sejm. The elections demonstrated that the majority of workers looked to the Christian Democratic Party, an outpost of reaction on the class terrain. Even the Communists, who had fought against nationalism in the PBS whilst still members of the party, now had their attention entirely fixed on events in Russia and held the creation of a 'proletariat state' to be the ultimate aim of socialism. Hence it was understandable that many revolutionaries who had relinquished enthusiasm for the time, should allow themselves to be seduced by the illusions of independence, and in the class alliance was relegated to the background. Its place was filled by the party political ambitions of right and left social democracy.

It was no certain circumstances in which those who had remained loyal to anarchism could resume their work. On the one hand the worker masses were entirely under the sway of nationalist propaganda, whether mounted by Christian Democrats - who preached cooperation between capital and labour, or by the PBS, which, in order to retain its influence, was promising the workers a peasant and workers' government. And on the other hand, those workers who had achieved a revolutionary consciousness equated every criticism directed against the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' with the counter-revolution. Almost no one had even the slightest notion of the meaning of anarchism, or even worse, many had a false conception of it.

The most urgent task was therefore to draw attention to its existence. Independently of any group, Polish editions of Mutual Aid and An Appeal to the Young by P. Kropotkin were issued in 1919 as the first two anarchist publications in Poland since the war. In that same year a group of Polish workers issued a broadsheet entitled Bread and Freedom. The actual fate and further history of this group remain completely unknown; what little information it has been possible to uncover suggests that the group dissolved when the greater part of its members emigrated to Russia.

A group of journalist had in 1920 issued and undertook the illegal publication of a paper in the Russian language. Entitled The Voice of Freedom, only one issue appeared, although two further issues of Bread and Freedom were published legally. Kropotkin's pamphlet on Modern Science and Anarchism, however, was never issued. In order that it might be passed over by the censor, was also published that same year in Leemberg.

The activity of this group became more intensive with the formation in 1920 of the first group of school-pupils. This latter group spread anarchist ideas in the schools by word of mouth. Considering the illegal circumstances in which this work was done, great precautions were taken and the work reported to the more worthwhile and reliable elements. This was naturally insufficient for these youths, who were eager for action. A Letter to Youth explaining the principles of anarchism was duplicated on a hectograph and these "letters" then placed in the pupils' desks before classes began. But since the police, in their unrelenting efforts to curb the workers, then joined in the struggle, the group made, and with the help of the Free Workers and The Libertarian were received regularly. These books and papers were of inestimable value for propaganda work amongst youth in the schools, and the majority of whom had a command of the German language, and were all male, used as an aid to those comrades who undertook their instructonal work in the theoretical groups. Yet none of this could circumscribe the need for literature in the Polish and Yiddish languages. Attempts were made to circumscribe this need. An approach was made to the International Working Men's Association for financial assistance to allow the necessary work to be done. The secretary of the IWA, however, imposed the condition that the choice of titles for publications should be in consultation with the IWF, which would have meant that all the pamphlets would by necessity have been of an anarcho-syndicalist complexion. The group, on the other hand, demanded complete autonomy but gave an undertaking that international literature on syndicalism would be published at regular intervals. Since the translations were conducted...
through written channels, and indirect ones at that, no result was forthcoming.

It was at this time that the existing propaganda groups were further reorganised. Some of the older comrades moved across to the youth group. But since this new group found itself occupied with additional work, another group had to be formed for the purpose of underwriting propaganda work. Thus in 1923 the 'variegated' group was formed, drawing its members from those in the workers' group, who were active in the People's University and from among the students. Propaganda between the two groups was never more than distant, since the 'older' group adopted an attitude of slight suspicion towards the 'variegated' group and showed reluctance to instruct it in organisational matters.

When the secret Social Democratic confederations were rearticulated at the national anarchist conference, the 'variegated' group declared itself in favour, but fundamental differences arose within the 'older' group when it came to elect a representative. The 'variegated' group, composed of anarchists-communists and anarchosyndicalists, achieved complete agreement in this matter and consequently sent a delegate in its own name. Close contacts with anarchist organisations abroad opened up new channels at home, notably communication with comrades in East Africa and personal contact with comrades in Lublin, Warsaw and elsewhere. The discovery of already existing groups afforded new opportunities for the movement to expand. Not only did this make it possible to distribute and sell literature on a larger scale, but also ensure the necessity of organising the movement on a country-wide basis.

Communication with the new contacts was handed over to the older group, while the 'variegated' group busied itself with propaganda work. It was thus that the book was published later in Polish, Anarchist and Bolshevik Communist, written by a comrade to explain the basic attitude of the anarchists to the Bolshevik state. A pamphlet in Polish entitled The Truth about Makino, also copyrighted, was published at the time of Makino's trial. The same method was used to print a Rudolf Rocker pamphlet on Direct Action, which, in the event, could not be brought over from England. And in the same year Kropotkin's The Great French Revolution was issued by the Kaliska Press.

Debates were held with other groups. The 'variegated' group played a leading role in a group of joiners founded in 1922 by members of the building trade union. Here comrades from other groups gave talks and took a lively part in the discussions. This group was further amalgamated into another. The original group then became increasingly more active as its ranks were swelled by mentally mature comrades who were capable of undertaking propaganda work despite a ban by the authorities. It was only by working in this manner that the organisation could be successfully built up in secret in the initial stages, and it was this, in fact, which opened the way to slow but sure progress under the regime of police informers and white terror.

In the autumn of 1923 several of the comrades from the 'older' group left the country and settled in Paris. In this way the group lost the best of its members and effectively ceased to exist. The 'variegated' group, which had intended to devote itself exclusively to propaganda work, had to be reorganised and became the effective coordinating group. It took over the correspondence with those at home and abroad and found itself burdened with the entirety of the educational work in the theoretical groups. This resulted in attention being focused entirely on the existing membership and the leaders were particularly hard pressed to extend their field of activity to France where an active group existed.

Early in 1924 they organised a group there and published 2000 copies of a pamphlet entitled The Aim of the Anarchists. Despite immense difficulties a number of these were successfully smuggled into the country and proved very popular; a quantity was sold legally through the left-wing bookshops.

The legal Communist Party paper Kultura Robotnicza was sharply critical of this pamphlet and repeated the familiar accusation that anarchism was a 'party-bourgeois ideology'. Yet the very fact that a Communist party gave attention to an anarchist pamphlet is proof that anarchist ideas had penetrated to the masses. With the assistance of the IWMA, three pamphlets in the Polish language were published in Paris with a short preface of Dr. K. Diel, of Poland, in 1922: The Kronshtadt Uprising: The Russian Tragedy, and "The Communist Party and the Russian Revolution, 2000 copies being printed. Initially, however, there was a reluctance to sell these pamphlets in the country, for it was felt that it was still early to engage in anti-Communist propaganda, as this would serve only to injure the Communist Party without reaping any advantage to the anarchist movement. Only later, when our comrades had reached a stage at which they could move freely in and out of Communist circles, did these pamphlets prove invaluable, since their incisive and logical criticisms contributed greatly to clarifying in a pertinent manner doubts which had arisen in the ranks of the Communists themselves. The Kronshtadt Uprising, in particular, had its historic epoch of 1920 opened to the workers, who knew of it, if at all, only through the interpellations of the Communists, and showed the role which anarchists had played in the Russian Revolution.

In 1924 an edition of Kropotkin's The State: its Role in History was published legally in Warsaw and almost completely sold out. A special issue of an anti-militarist paper entitled Montery was published in Kraków. Although the greater part of this paper was made up of blank spaces to which the censor had contributed the word 'suppressed', its anti-militarist nature was nonetheless clearly apparent. Intended as a test of the extent to which legal methods could be employed for anarchist propaganda, it demonstrated immediately how futile it would have been to entertain any illusions in this respect. In Warsaw, where the censor was of a less liberal outlook, this publication was banned in its entirety. While the police did succeed in seizing a number of copies, the majority had been distributed in them before they attained the police and the network of informers and provocateurs, which had achieved a deep penetration of the Communist ranks, also inflicted considerable harm on our young movement. In 1924 the People's University arranged an excursion which was alleged by an agent provocateur to be a communist conference. Many of the comrades were thrown into prison merely because they had taken part in the excursion. But since it could not be proved against them that they were anarchists, they were regarded as Communists. Liberated on bail after a short period in prison, they were forced to flee abroad. This put an end to the work at the People's University, which was now disbanded. The arrest of those comrades had no subsequent effect on the organisation. While in prison they spread propaganda amongst the Communists and they won over a number of comrades who became vigorously active once they had been released, particularly in Communist circles and amongst workers in the large factories, where previously it had been difficult to gain a foothold. The primary effect of this propaganda was to force the Communists to react, since major splits took place in several of the party branches, which we shall have more to say about later on.

Trials which mobilised public opinion were the anarchist trials of Makino and A. Lewin. Makino's trial vindicated him of the charge that he had roused the initiatives of the Jews in the Ukraine, and compelled both the bourgeois and the workers' press to acknowledge him as a man of ideals. Despite the fact that the president of the tribunal attempted to prevent Makino from stating his views, he succeeded nevertheless in presenting a brief outline of the philosophy of anarchism. His acquittal was used by political opponents, notably the Communists, to argue that the anarchists were in the pay of the police, an accusation which they never tired of repeating when they saw that the anarchists were mounting an intensive campaign of activity. The sentence of four years' penal servitude passed against comrade Lewin for alleged possession of a rubber stamp belonging to the Jewish community was not without its effect, but it proved only too clearly that the epigones of Marx will stop at no demagogy, however brazen, when it comes to neutralising a political opponent. The entire press carried lengthy reports of the 'first anarchist trial in free Poland' at the time, and
did not neglect to point out that ‘anarchism was more dangerous than communism’.

Both the trial of Makino and that of comrade Lewin were taken up by the independent socialist paper Nasza Wolność, edited by the former social-democrat Wincentawa. Lewin’s paper did not survive long but it was carried on between anarchists and Communists on the subject of Makino. With regard to the affair of comrade Lewin, the paper’s editors adopted a sympathetic stance, pointing to the insufficiency of the charges. There is no doubt that these two trials helped the pioneers of the anarchist movement to break down the wall of silence. Indeed, anarchism was steadily becoming better known in Poland. Early in 1925 the press in the USA had under the title of Najmita (The Wage Slave), Intended for workers abroad, Najmita was also smuggled into Poland, but while it galvanised propaganda work, the paper was incapable of making up for the lack of interest throughout the country, and demand for it could not be satisfied as a rule owing to the difficulties of transportation. But the paper was unable to take into account the requirements of work within groups, since the latter needs pamphlets first and foremost if it is to be conducted effectively. Thus the national organisation trade efforts to connect the group in Paris that the work of groups abroad ought to be more subordinate to the control of the central organisation. In the course of events during the three days of the May Revolution, what was needed was a flexible, closely controlled, and sufficiently large organisation. But at this time the work of the anarchists was undertaken by those who were interested in the movement but also organised in a very different way. In spite of their distance from everyday struggles, the anarchists did perceive the true character of the ‘May Revolution’ immediately, in that they deplored it as being no more than a political patch, in contrast to the KPP - to say nothing of the KPN - which succumbed to the spell of Pilsudski’s oratory, took part in the demonstrations in honour, and even directed its people into the fight against the reaction - and to the aid of the revolution.

It was the May events which finally gave rise to the conviction that the organisation of the movement throughout the country was a matter of necessity. In June the coordinating group reached a meeting with the comrades inside the country, by which it was decided firstly to establish provisionally a national organisation to be known as the Anarchist Federation of Poland, and secondly to convene a national conference for the month of August.

Even before the conference, the coordinating group issued a call, the first document to appear in the name of the KPP, which was timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Bakunin’s death. Seven thousand copies were printed and sold in factories and trade union branches. At the same time the paper Wolny Proroksiur (The Free Proletarian) was published for the first time in Krosno. It was directed towards a mass audience in a much more pronounced way than Glos Anarchisty, but technical problems stopped publication after four issues.

In August the first conference was held and passed resolutions in three areas: on questions of principle, tactics and organisation. The resolutions on principles and tactics were published, while those on organisation were communicated to the groups through pamphlets. The section on tactics discussed the problem of the capitalist order, the positive bases of anarchism, its position on the revolution and so on.

The section on tactics then formulated a position on the ‘May Revolution’ and gave an evaluation of the situation in the country and a critique of the political parties, the parliamentary system and the reformist trade unions.

The section on organisation set the view of the conference that the anarchist movement in Poland would have to adopt methods of group organisation in order to further its development. On the basis of this assumption the conference thought it legitimate to lay stress on the publication of a series of pamphlets, since it regarded as premature any attempt to publish a paper. New and larger than the last, the resolution on the question related to the publication of pamphlets, the conference stated its opposition to the practice of circulating these amongst the masses at periodic intervals for the purpose of calling attention to the movement. There was then a brief summary of the methods of propaganda which were suited for use in the trade union movement; it was resolved to continue publication of Glos Anarchisty as the bulletin of the KPP, but also to make use of other legal papers. The coordinating group was recognised as the secretariat of the organisation, a condition which reflected the national movement and a representative in international contacts.

In accord with the guidelines approved by the conference, the secretariat began to function and devoted most of its attention to publishing work. The task of issuing pamphlets which had been delegated to it was not to be satisfactorily carried out by the secretariat until later, and then only to a degree. 1925 saw the publication of a pamphlet entitled The Origins and Nature of the International Working Men’s Association. The ‘GA’, now published by the secretariat, was appearing regularly, each month. In addition to articles which were sent to Glos Anarchisty, the other bulletin, the bulletin of the KPP, i.e., as its semi-official organ, also published articles justifying the tactical line of the organisation, as adopted by the groups in view of current problems. The section of news about the international anarchist movement also contained a large amount of information.

The violent quarrels which broke out within the KPP on account of the so-called ‘May error’ provided an opportunity for the comrades to organise a joint KPP propaganda campaign, and indeed did the ferment which developed around the ‘Protestestyle’ opposition. In June 1926 a hectographed document commenting on these internal conflicts was issued by one of the groups. In September of the same year another group published a manifesto in the Polish and Yiddish languages to be distributed in connection with International Youth Day, which made a very favourable impression. There was a steady increase in the number of theoretical groups, predominantly composed of former members of the KPP.

The propaganda work carried out by these groups amongst the workers represented a major threat to the KPP. With the presentment that anarchism would come to be an even greater threat, the Warsaw KPP published a set of theses on anarchism.

The existence of a number of active groups in Warsaw led to the necessity of establishing internal links. It was intended that this should bring about an end to the detrimental system under which various groups operated separately. In September 1926 the Warsaw KPP formed a council of delegates. The first trade union group was created to bring together comrades in the different branches of industry for purposes of propaganda. An event of particular importance was the formation of the Free Youth. The issues of a magazine called Wolne Miastod (Free Youth) were published, and for the first May a paper, The Wage Slave, as well as a manifesto which, however, fell into the hands of the police.

The encounter with the mass propaganda of the Communist Party was not without results for the form of propaganda by the KPP. The focus shifted from the group to the masses. In particular, a propaganda campaign of this type evolved at the time of the Sacco-Vanzetti affair.

As in every other country, so in Poland, the case of Sacco and Vanzetti unleashed a storm of public protest. The daily press declared itself in support of the two anarchists. The Socialist as well as the Communist parties tried to conceal the fact that Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists, or alternatively made the movement out to be sympathisers of the Communists. Thus the task of the anarchists became one of presenting Sacco and Vanzetti in a true light and making the best use of opportunities to express their ideas. The anarchists began a series of statements and leaflets, often two in one day. Banners were displayed everywhere and slogans presenting our demands for the two fighters painted on the walls. At every workers’ meeting our comrades presented ideas of Sacco and Vanzetti. A pamphlet on the case was published in July 1927 and 2000 enthusiastically received copies were distributed within a short space of time. The weekly magazine Polska Wolność was used to defend the Sacco and Vanzetti signatures from individuals and organisations for transmission to the Governor of Massachusetts. The attempt to arrange a mass protest demonstration by all the left tendencies came to
nothing as a result of narrow-minded party sectarianism, but a strong police guard was placed on the American embassy in Warsaw.

The Sacco-Vanzetti campaign marked the first time that the AFP intervened on a mass basis. It would, of course, have been more effective if it had a subsequent mass influx of workers into our organisation, but the propaganda work was made clearer and advanced rapidly on a large scale. Unfortunately, however, the infrastructure of the organisation was too weak to allow it to master the situation that presented itself. In addition, the application of mass tactics led to less importance being attached to work in the groups, and this too had a deleterious effect on the general condition of the organisation.

One of the events that brought the supporters to an end was the secretariat proposed that a national conference should be held. This proved impracticable for technical reasons and was reduced to the calling of the so-called Preparatory Conference in October 1927.

The conference revoked the resolutions of the first conference of 1926 and also rejected the 'Platform' of the 'Russian Anarchist Abroad'. The conference drew up its own statement in which it defined the AFP as an organisation which based itself unambiguously on a class analysis, and it rejected all the decisions contained in the 'Platform' which led to the misconception of a 'transitional stage' in the period of transition and to attempts to establish an 'anarchist power' during this period. The conference stated its opposition to the various centralist tendencies contained in the 'Platform'. In the declaration, the AFP acknowledged as its aim the overthrow of capitalism and the state by means of the class struggle and the social revolution, and the creation of workers' and peasants' councils as the basis of the future social order. The major task of the AFP within the framework of this was the intensification of class struggle, the enlargement of the area of conflict by direct economic actions on the part of revolutionary trade union organisations, the struggle against the political parties, the purification of the more formal of these organisations, the proclamation of the economy, its recognition as belonging to all existing active groups, and the abolition of the so-called basis on which newly formed groups could be included into the organisation. In this way the theoretical and organisational consolidation of the movement was attained and any future intrusion of undesired elements whose relation to anarchism was unclear, now became impossible.

The conference found no solution, however, to the problem of its task with regard to the principles of propaganda tactics. The provisional secretariat was to adhere in future to the mass line as it had been put into practice during the Sacco-Vanzetti campaign. 4000 copies of a manifesto printed to mark the 10th anniversary of the Russian Revolution were published in November, and the Clsoe Anarchist, following a lengthy break, appeared in January 1928 with a reply to the anti-anarchist theses of the Warsaw KPP apparatus. In March there appeared a double issue of Clsoe Anarchist which was given over to the subject of anti-parliamentary struggle in connection with the elections to the Sejm, in print, the anti-parliamentary campaign took the form of the comprehensive manifestos and several leaflets, 22,000 copies of which appeared in the Polish and Jewish languages. A lack of money prevented the publication of an anti-parliamentary pamphlet compiled by the secretariat, but a meeting was arranged in connection with the document. The effect of this campaign was to make anarchist activities significantly more popular. The bourgeoisie's press drew attention to the threat of anarchist propaganda in Poland.

In May 1928 a leaflet was issued on 'The Third Anniversary of Fascism'. In July about 5000 copies of the anti-militarist manifesto entitled Sacco-Vanzetti, in the Polish and Jewish languages, were distributed by the secretariat.

Work in the provinces did not advance at an equal pace. New contacts were successfully made in Galicia and Congress Poland owing to the selling of Wolska and the popularity of the anarchistic slogans - and as a result of the anti-parliamentary and May campaigns. Two centres were smashed by police reprisals, but the other hand new groups were formed in several of the smaller towns of Congress Poland. The lack of money stood in the way of forming closer contacts with the provinces by means of speaking tours, and this also had a deleterious effect on the independence of work in those localities. The inadequacy of communication made the transfer of pamphlets published abroad quite impossible.

In August 1928 the Warsaw organisations held a conference which passed a resolution setting out its position on the preparation of a national conference, on methods of internal work in the groups, and on the need to pay greater attention to the theoretically oriented groups as well as to the expansion of publishing activity. In addition, an organisational structure was proposed and subsequently adopted by all the active groups within the country.

On the strength of the decisions reached at the Warsaw conference, the secretariat took steps to obtain pamphlets from abroad and to re-start the publication of the Clsoe, the latter successfully. Relevant texts were published differently. In general, however, propaganda work was falling off significantly towards the end of 1928 and this led in consequence to self-criticism within the organisation and to an alteration of the guidelines for political work.

It should also be mentioned that comrades Kruszewicz & Co. were tried in Tarnow and sentenced to five years' penal servitude for his membership of the AFP. Early in 1929, comrade S. Witling was arrested in Krakow for possession of AFP pamphlets and sentenced to four years in prison.

At the present moment, anarchism in Poland is undergoing a deep crisis. The persecution not only of revolutionary groups, but in fact of every honestly socialist assembly, is the order of the day. Although the overwhelming majority of workers has by now seen through the Plunderki regime they have not drawn the lessons and are even returning to the PIS, since it is making leftist gestures in this situation.

Even the KPP is experiencing a profound crisis as a result of internal dissensions and 'purges', as well as of an immense onslaught of police terror.

The anarchist movement in Poland has a heavy road to travel. The line of work followed hitherto must be analysed, errors avoided, and closer cooperation established. The lack of propaganda literature has been the most serious deficiency until now, and this will have to be remedied. Objective conditions augur well for the revolutionary tasks of anarchism in Poland.

Hence it cannot be a matter of indifference to any revolutionary or any anarchist organisation whether the ten years of anarchist propaganda in Poland are to disappear without trace, or whether the banner of the anarchist idea once again is raised in the Poland of the bourgeoisie and the large landowners in the Poland of Plunderki.

S.5

This article was first published in Die Internationale of April 1930—-the weekly organ of FAK—the German section of IWA at the time of the height of its influence. The first English translation by Peter Slesock appeared in "Freedom" 41/19.

Żyje Solidarność
The Z.Z.Z. 1931-1939

On Dec. 13th, the working class over the whole world demonstrated what they thought of 'patriot' Jaruzelski's Poland, where the free and independent trade union movement Solidarity has now been prohibited for over two years. Contrary to what is usually believed, this is not the first time in Polish history that a free and independent union movement has grown up, and later been crushed by totalitarian powers.

The Pilsudski regime attempted to crush the former free and independent union ZZZ, and this union was finally crushed by German and Soviet occupation. The story of the ZZZ is hitherto unknown in the Norwegian trade union movement, so we will let ALARM, the former newspaper of the Norwegian Syndicalist Federation, tell the story.

ALARM was well known for its international coverage from the early 1920's. The various sections of the IWMA formed a network of contacts, while the anarchist organisations and the fellowship of esperantists also played an important role. Esperanto was often used as a common language during many of these years, and this proved very useful during the civil war in Spain.

ALARM, March 19th 1927 published an appeal from the Polish Anarchist Federation, translated from esperanto. There were then already more than 7,000 political prisoners in the Polish prisons; anarchists, communists, Ukrainian nationalists, White Russians and conscientious objectors, in fact, a wide spectrum of Polish opposition. The further from central Poland the prisons were located, the more often ill-treatment of prisoners occurred, rather like today.

The appeal emphasised that thousands of anarchists and socialists were doomed in prisons and camps in the Soviet Union, and that the same thing was happening in countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

Joseph Pilsudski's government, established after the army revolt in May 1926, was a regime of white terror, a government of 'democratic' fascists. There were 7,000 political prisoners, an increasing level which had reached 219,471 by April 1927, and there was an increasing use of police against workers' meetings. Real unemployment was about twice the official figure of 219,471, while scanty public assistance often led to rioting in the towns.

On Dec. 21st 1926, the police had shot at strikers at a mine in Dzwirz, Galicia - 9 killed; 8 wounded.

Previously won rights were disappearing under the new regime; the working class was split into a myriad of political parties, and most of the workers were unorganised. People's thoughts were centered on their daily bread. The Socialist Party, PPS formed an alliance with Pilsudski, without his caring much about them. The Communist Party KPP was being persecuted, and although they had 6 seats in the Polish Parliament, Sejm, they couldn't do much, also they were affected by internal conflicts.

"All leaders have the desire for public honour satisfied, form new Socialist parties, but these parties are ineffectual," wrote ALARM 4th April 1927.

There were in Poland in 1927, three types of trade unions; the class struggle organisations, which were nearly all controlled by the PPS, the National unions, and the Christian Democratic unions. None of these carried much weight, as there was a mass flight by workers from the unions. But something was happening, as stated by ALARM:

"The unions in upper Silesia demanded a 25% wage increase for the miners and steel workers, but the arbitration commission granted the former 6% and the latter 6%. The negotiations at Lemberg resulted in 13.5%. In Nov. 1926 the textile workers demanded 40% and got 10%. Many more similar instances could be quoted. The union leaders made strikes impossible everywhere. The workers lost confidence in the hitherto existing forms of the labour movement. The unpleasant reality had shown the Polish working class that it could only reckon on its own strength, and it has therefore an almost mystical belief in the realisation of the Dictatorship of the proletariat. The short distance to "Socialist" Russia has however made it possible for the intelligent to understand that THAT dictatorship over the proletariat is not the hoped for ideal."

The article, translated from Esperanto, bore the signature, INO.

After the hard repression in Poland of the 1920's, no major union organisation was established until after 1930, by then a number of large independent unions appeared. However, syndicalist workers, established in 1926 the ACA, the General Workers Confederation, inspired by the French CGT. ACA published the newspaper "THF SYNDICALIST" and adopted a position of party-political independence. Its most prominent leaders were Surzich, who had spent many years in France, where he had got to know the CGT and the works of Sorel, Gavlik, a union man, who had become a syndicalist through practical work, professor Zakszewski, the theorist, who had reached syndicalism by study (Sorel's works were then much read in Poland) and Zakrzewski, the author who had in many of his books given a sympathetic description of syndicalism.

During the muzzle, which followed the wide-spread party quarrelling and the split in the labour movement, the ACA launched the slogan: "Unity on an economic and union basis, against the political parties!"

A number of independent unions joined with the ACA in 1921 and formed the ZZZ. The first ZZZ chairman was Maraczewski, who had been prime minister on the re-establishment of the Polish state in 1918. He had also taken part in the Pilsudski coup in 1926 and become minister of labour. He had also together with Pilsudski, taken part in the "revolutionary fraction" in the PPS. And he said in 1931, that he had had more than enough of political parties. Maraczewski, who led the syndicalist wing in the ZZZ, was once sentenced to three months imprisonment for "syndicalist propaganda".

ZZZ was by no means a purely syndicalist union, but a chaotic mixture of Catholics, Pilsudski supporters, radical romantics who wanted a fight for the sake of a fight, and Syndicalists from the
ACA, who had great influence and gradually became the deciding factor. ZZZ had in 1937, 150,000 dues paying members (unemployed members not counted). The PPS controlled union organisation had 400,000 members, including the unemployed non dues payers. The two organisations were thus of about the same size. The chief federations affiliated to the ZZZ were the Engineering workers, the miners, the building workers, the forestry, woodworking and textile workers, the workers at the state tobacco factories and distilleries, the match workers and the communications staffs. The tramway and postal workers and the hospital staffs were forbidden by law to join the ZZZ, but the 35,000 tramway workers and the 18,000 postal workers decided in 1933 to affiliate in spite of this. The government intervened and moved the most active members to the most remote locations in Poland. ZZZ also had newspapers, "Workers Front" came out twice a month with 40-80,000 copies. The Silesian miners published

Some members of the Anarchist Federation of Poland during 1930s and 1940s.

EVA SZAPIRO - ARRESTED IN RUSSIA AND DIED THERE.
their own paper with sales of 50-60,000, ZZZ's daily newspaper stopped after being regularly censored, and after a stoppage of three months it went broke, Albert De Jong tells of this in ALARM mar. 4th 1939.

The 1930's were not easier for the Polish workers than for any others. In 1937, there were 9 million unemployed, ZZZ members were charged with high treason when they struck work or incited strikes, ALARM reported in 1937 of an attack upon Jews in Brez-Litowsk, where many Jews were killed, "a pure diversion away from Poland's inner problems".

What really speeded up the repression, indeed the liquidation of the organised working class in Poland, was the division of the country between Fascist Germany and Communist Russia, an agreement which compromised many. Agreed or not, each occupying power murdered and imprisoned union members in its part of the country. The Polish government which showed clear fascist sympathies met definite resistance in the population. The 'national' labour leaders and the government united in forbidding the celebration of May Day 1939. Those who took part in the celebration lost their jobs. In spite of the threat of imprisonment, ZZZ threatened a general strike if the May Day celebrations were not re-instated and the employers, government and 'national' labour leaders gave in.

ZZZ members took part also in the struggle against German fascism, but on another basis; Via the IWMW secretariat in Paris, the NSF received the following report from Poland:

We put out at the same time the program, that we should not lay down our arms until Poland was rebuilt within the framework of a free Europe, on the basis of free socialism. We had before the outbreak of war, therefore demanded an extension of the rights of the labour movement, land reform without compensation, taxing of private capital, and privileges for cooperatives. Unlike the other union organisations (including the social democratic one) we opposed all proposals of class collaboration.

After the invasion, repression began seriously, with the elimination of especially the Jewish labour leaders by the Gestapo and the GPU.

Jan Czapinski, editor of the socialist national newspaper BROTENIK was badly hurt, fell into the hands of the Russians and was deported eastwards. Jan Mastek, formerly an Austrian seaman, later chairman of the Polish Railworkers union, Anton Baginski, secretary in the same union and a lawyer, who had defended many socialists and communists in political cases, both went the same way and have never been seen since. In the same way Dr. Henrik Ertich, old leader of the Jewish workers, and Viktor Alter, member of the executive committee of the 2nd International, and Himmeleif, leader of the Jewish trade unions in Rosenthal and Chairman of the tailors union were taken by the Russians and sent eastwards to the death camps in Siberia.

With this information, the ZZZ disappears from our history. A story of class struggle in a sorely tried country. But history repeats itself, and most of the activity of SOLIDARITY is based on the same ideas that ZZZ had in its time.

from 'ARBEIDER SOLIDARITET' (Workers Solidarity) - organ of NSF Norwegian Section of IWA

POSTSCRIPT:

1939-45

The Polish Syndicalist Movement was known until 1941 as Freedom and People, a clandestine organisation created in 1938 by a core of activists from the ZMP, an organisation formed from the Patriotic Workers' Party (remember that 'patriotism' is something different in Poland) and the Institute for Culture and Learning in Galicia.

Its main aim was to fight the Germans and regain independence for Poland, but its programme outlined far-reaching social reforms and was based on worker self-government. The membership was composed predominantly of young workers, students and apprentices who formed themselves into 'hundreds of youth'. There were also groups of school students known as 'peoples' - in 1942 and 1944 its membership was increased by alliances with renegade groups from other political organisations. The movement took an active part in the Second World War, although it was opposed to the government in exile, and had its own armed resistance, which went by the initials ZET. ZET carried out at least 7% successful actions, undertaking sabotage acts in the 'Third Reich' territories (i.e. those parts of Poland considered integral parts of Germany), and playing a major part in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. It also formed a working alliance with the underground 'Country's Army' and 'People's Army'.

The movement, which ceased to exist in 1945, had several papers, Aksja, Sara, Cynu, Sara, Chlopska and Mysl Moudych. Prominent activists included Leon Siganesti, E. Bakowietz, Stanislaw Kapuscinski, Stefan Kapuscinski, Stefan Szewkowski, J. Szury, W. Zakrzewski and J. Zlotowski.

There were, we know, other syndicalist organisations. Stefan Kapszinski was a member of the Central Committee of the General Federation of Work (syndicalist trade union federation) between 1929 and 1930. Between 1929 and 1939 he was on the Central Committee for Trade Unions (like the TUC) and a member of the Slovenian regional parliament, before reverting to syndicalism with the outbreak of World War II, when he became a member of the Central Committee of Polish Syndicalists and a general commandant (?) for action groups. He was arrested by the Nazis and shot on May 29, 1943 in Warsaw.

Zapatista

(from 'Freedom' V38/6)