

Call for contributions

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The Red International of Labour Unions and the syndicalist opposition to Bolshevism

1921: Centenary of the Founding of the Red International of Labour Unions

The anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist movements gave their unconditional support to the Russian Revolution in its early stages, but gradually, as news reached Western Europe, doubts arose about the emancipatory character of the revolution and the real nature of the regime set up by the Bolsheviks.

In March 1919, the Soviet government, in vital need of international support, created the Communist International – or Comintern – whose function was initially to contribute to the success of the world revolution, but which soon confined itself to encouraging the formation of communist parties to support the international policy of communist Russia. Indeed, the Bolsheviks realised that an International of *parties* was not enough because the mass of the international proletariat was beyond their control: most of it was under the domination of reformist organisations, while a strong very active minority, was in revolutionary syndicalist organisations. They therefore created in 1921 a trade union annex to the Comintern: the Red International of Labour Unions – or RILU –, whose foundation had very important consequences for the subsequent fate of the revolutionary syndicalist movement, causing an irreparable split which was to be the origin of the formation of anarcho-syndicalism.

The revolutionary syndicalists tried on several occasions to reach a compromise with the Bolsheviks, notably on the question of trade union independence. But they quickly came to a double conclusion: *a)* No compromise with the Bolsheviks was possible; *b)* The revolutionary syndicalist movement could not remain isolated at the international level, so they resolved to found, in Berlin at the end of 1922, a revolutionary syndicalist International: The International Workers' Association.

The year 2021 marks the centenary of the founding congress of the RILU, which was the main instrument for the penetration of communism into the trade union organisations of the world, often dominated by revolutionary syndicalism. Through aggressive methods, often leading to splits, the RILU succeeded in undermining the influence of the revolutionary syndicalist current and taking control of the trade union movement. One of the few examples of the failure of this strategy was the CNT in Spain.

Le Monde libertaire, the organ of the French-speaking anarchist federation, published a series of articles on this event in its online version in 2020¹. The **Cercle d'études libertaires Gaston-Leval** (cel-gl@orange.fr) appeals to comrades throughout the world who would be interested in writing a document recounting the history of the implantation of the RILU in their country, the way in which this implantation was carried out and the consequences that this may have had on the trade union and/or revolutionary movement.

Such a work seems to us absolutely necessary: indeed, if the methods of penetration of the mass organisations ordered by the Communist International and implemented by the Red International of Labour Unions were so effective, this is perhaps also due to the very shortcomings of the revolutionary trade union movement and the anarchist movement, which were unable to face them. This is what the Latin American comrades call the "loss of the social vector", i.e. the loss of the mass implantation. Taking stock of this failure without concession is probably the best way to envisage a realistic strategy for the future.

All the Best, René Berthier,
Cercle d'études libertaires Gaston
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Practical arrangements

Insofar as the articles, translated by us, will be published online in *Le Monde Libertaire*, there is theoretically no space limit. However, it seems to us that it is not reasonably desirable that they exceed a certain length limit. A maximum of 3,500 words or 25,000 characters (with spaces) seems reasonable.

Documents should be sent to the following address with the mention: "RILU":

cel-gl@orange.fr

DEADLINE: Articles will be published until December 2022, the date of the foundation of the International Workers' Association in Berlin.

1 Twenty articles, the first of which can be found at the following link: [https://www.monde-libertaire.fr/?article=Histoire:_LInternationale_syndicale_rouge_\(1ere_partie\)](https://www.monde-libertaire.fr/?article=Histoire:_LInternationale_syndicale_rouge_(1ere_partie))