
THE

PRACTICAL

REVOLUTIONARIES

*A New Interpretation of the
French Anarchosyndicalists*

BARBARA MITCHELL

Contributions to the Study of World History,
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Contents

For

Melissa

Christopher, Michael, and Elizabeth

Contents

| | |
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| Acknowledgments | ix |
| 1. An Introduction to the Movement and Its Critics | 1 |
| 2. The Question of Direct Action: Action in the Economic Realm | 34 |
| 3. The Question of Direct Action: The Syndicalist As Moralist | 71 |
| 4. The Woman Question: The Legacy | 102 |
| 5. The Woman Question: From <u>Foyer</u> to Factory | 124 |
| 6. The Peasant Question: Grounding the Rural Offensive | 154 |
| 7. The Peasant Question: A Paradox | 174 |
| 8. The Question of the State: "The Workers Have No Country" | 203 |
| 9. The Question of the State: . . . Unless It Is the <u>Patrie</u> in Danger! | 233 |
| 10. The Revolution Reconsidered: A Final Assessment | 264 |
| Selected Bibliography | 273 |
| Index | 295 |

Acknowledgments

As is often the case in these matters, it was in the wee hours of morning of the absolutely last day before deadline when I finished working on this manuscript. In my fatigue and exhilaration, my original thought was to skip the acknowledgment section so as to send the bundle on its appointed way. Why bother, I asked, since no one looks at that part of a book anyway. Besides, generally those who receive public acclaim are either foundations which have provided the writer with funds--institutions that don't need any publicity--or graduate students and other toilers, who would have preferred money to public mention. I looked at the disarray around me. There were my notes--those pounds of paper so lovingly carried back and forth across continents, and generally guarded with a paranoiac concern--now strewn about the floor, practically indistinguishable from the reams of computer paper trailing out of the trash basket. The floppy disks, once treated with reverence because they concealed within their innocuous plastic coverings the full flower of my wisdom, were vying for space on the desk with some pizza crusts on a paper plate, from, was it two days ago?--and I at the word processor STILL--while the rest of the household, and most of the city, and perhaps half of the world was enjoying the sleep of the nonwriter. I wondered: would I just make a dash for the car and wait outside the post office until it opened, or would I say just one more thing? In spite of the hour, the opportunity to say a few more words was too difficult to pass up. Besides, I concluded, no self-respecting study could receive the stamp of completion without some form of public declaration. Surveying the pandemonium around me, I asked myself, "Who will I thank?" And myself replied, "Who do you THINK you'll thank for this business? YOU, that's who!"

Indeed, I'm sure that more than one person who has finished a similar project has been tempted to say simply: Many thanks to me, for conceiving of the ideas, for sitting on hard library chairs, for laboring in dusty archives, for

trying to make sense of my notes, for plugging away at the typewriter when everyone else was having fun, and for smiling good-naturedly at those blissfully distanced souls who ask why you don't apply your time and talents (assuming you have any) to writing something that can be made into a television miniseries.

For a historian, research is a solitary occupation. We're not like our colleagues engaged in the "hard" sciences, who are constantly drawn out of themselves by having to measure and plot the actions of laboratory mice, anemones, or microbes. Historians have few such outside imperatives. Our subjects tend to lie patiently still, obediently waiting until WE touch them. Bringing them to life may be plain hard work, but it is a rather solitary labor that involves us at our own pace. We shuffle through card catalogs, peruse bibliographies, hide away in the stacks, and take notes that are generally recognizable only to ourselves. Finally, we sit in front of a yellow pad or a writing machine and try to put into words some of the fancies which, up to that point in time, have only danced around in our own heads.

So doing history tends to have a narcissistic quality about it, making it very reasonable to feel that one has, indeed, "done the whole business oneself." But of course one hasn't, because there is always a vast network of people who provide us with the means to spend so many marvelous hours of self-indulgence. Unfortunately, because of the limitations of time and space, only a very few of my supporters can be mentioned here.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the Board of Trustees of Chaffey College for having given me a sabbatical leave so that I could spend more time with the good men and women of the syndicalist movement whose stories have captivated me for so many years.

There are the countless librarians, archivists, and general book toters at the Library of Congress, the Hoover Institution, Stanford, the Honnold Library of the Claremont Colleges, the library at the University of California, Riverside, the Archives Nationales and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris without whose efforts my work and everyone else's, would not be possible. A special salute is reserved for Priscilla Fernandez, Frank Pinkerton, Ethel Lewis, Phyllis Smith, et al. at the Chaffey College Library for their endeavors. Though small in size, the staff is massive in talent.

There is also a large network of friends and colleagues who are interested in what I do. They know who they are, so they don't need to be listed by name, and they know how much I have relied on their encouragement. Particular mention must be made of Arch Getty, and especially Irwin Wall of the University of California, Riverside, and David Gordon of the University of North Carolina, for having worked with me on the original manuscript. In my own academic milieu, applause goes to François Briot, who helped me with my French, and Sid Silliman who helped me with my logic. Over

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My warmest appreciation also goes to my friends Pierre and Geneviève Cahour and Sylvie Roger--my French Connection. Without their consideration and warmth I would be a lonely sojourner, rootless and confused. Because of them, I am always able to go home to Paris.

As always, the first shall be last. Thanks be to the family: Stan and Irene Fountain, my parents; Donald, Eric, and Matthew, my sons; and Helga and Janet, their wives. A stupendous bravo is reserved for Van, my husband. All have diligently tried not to draw attention to the fact that the stews haven't been salted nor the socks mended while this work has been in progress. They have behaved quite bravely and rather cheerfully during my long mental and physical absences. Of course, over the years, they have all grown accustomed to seeing me with my nose in a book. Only this time, the book was mine.

1. An Introduction to the Movement and Its Critics

The story is told that in the closing moments of Gertrude Stein's life, she roused from unconsciousness, turned to the distraught Alice B. Toklas by her side, and asked: "What is the answer?" Receiving no reply from her unhappy companion, Stein continued: "In that case, what is the question?"(1)

Analyses of French revolutionary syndicalism have usually been formulated on the basis of the wrong questions posed of the movement. Until recently, therefore, historians and political analysts have tended to dismiss syndicalism as a movement whose influence was either negative or nil. "A cause without rebels," grumbles Peter Stearns; a movement "paralyzed outside the realm of theory," unable to generate among the French workers a revolutionary commitment to match its radical rhetoric.(2) The chasm existing between word and deed, between leaders and masses, according to the consensus, was evidenced in syndicalism's failure to put its theory into revolutionary practice on the eve of World War I. Unable to make a revolution, unionism was thrust into collaboration with the bourgeois government, thereby becoming more deeply embedded in the mire of conservatism and reformism. Syndicalism's inherent weakness was finally revealed when the supporters of the Third International withdrew from the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) in 1921. Bereft of its radical members, the CGT then moved further to the right as bureaucrats and white collar workers began to swell its ranks once more.(3)

Currently, treatment of the movement is being aided by the social historians, armed with new methodological tools, who are studying the phenomena of mass violence and strike activity. Increasingly, everything from incidences, intensity, quantity of strikes, and the numbers involved, to personal data on the strikers is being plotted, tabulated, and ranked.(4) Local and regional profiles, as well as occupational analyses, are being compiled.(5) The collection and ordering of this information is invaluable for providing hitherto untapped sources out of which to construct new interpretations.

The purpose of this study of French anarchosyndicalism from its inception to World War I is not to effect a

as food riots and wanton destruction of property typical of jacqueries. It is characterized by spontaneous explosions: short-lived, intensely violent, individualistic, and reflective of a society not yet grouped and disciplined by the machine.(12) The use of modern-premodern categories of protest is a useful one for social scientists attempting to deal with a collectively mute proletarian class. This approach also offers a useful tool to plot the course of industrialization: when protest activity moves beyond the bread-riot stage to that of organized strikes, it follows that the economy is entering the phase of industrial maturity.

Generally, the hypothesis of equating strike activity to industrialism holds true for Germany and England because of the more direct correlation evident in these two countries between economic and political centralization and the growth of nationally organized unionism. Such a methodology is not necessarily so well-suited to France, however, which perhaps accounts for the proliferation of regional studies on worker protest. One such study, a work by Michael Hanagan on organization and strike activity in the Stephanois, highlights the different tempo of industrialization. He notes that in many industries, certain functions continued to be carried on by artisans, but within a factory setting. While his study supports the traditional class-based view that artisans were the leaders of the labor movement, Hanagan also emphasizes the fact that it was the skilled workers who provided the catalyst for the mass protests of the industrial proletariat.(13) These data lead to two conclusions. One is that if the French economy was not neatly stratified, neither was French unionism. Further, until a better understanding is gained of the relationship between the artisans and the industrial proletariat, the tendency to characterize syndicalism as being preindustrial, and to dismiss it as premodern, is no longer valid.

CONFUSION REGARDING THE IDEOLOGICAL INHERITANCE

If analyses of revolutionary syndicalism are complicated by persistent stereotypes of the socioeconomic order, interpretations of the movement are also hampered by the prevalence of similarly erroneous presumptions regarding the ideological content and heritage of unionism. Again, Marx's attitudes toward the French radicals have tended to influence the questioning process. Was the movement utopian? A shelter for the libertarians cast out of the First International? The anarchist word-made-flesh? If one looks at the syndicalist movement through the Marxian perspective, then French unionism was hopelessly utopian. Based on the twin strains of Bakuninism and Proudhonianism, syndicalist ideology could only produce a feeble organization, neither grounded in reality, nor able to survive the industrial process. Proudhon's tenets, resting on antipolitical action and mutualism, held no practical

reality for workers after the advent of universal male suffrage. Bakunin's idea of creative violence might appeal to ignorant peasants. But a proletariat capable of working collectively toward its own emancipation within the context of a party structure, must dismiss as sheer romantic nonsense Bakunin's call for terror by the deed.

The antipolitical and antitechnological tendencies of syndicalism were anachronistic in an industrializing, centralizing, modern society: "Pathological" and "reactionary," according to Lichtheim.(14) Marxist socialism was based on scientific analyses of the past and present; it was future-oriented. French syndicalism, on the other hand, looked neither to the realities of the present nor to the possibilities of the future. Based only on nostalgic longing for a golden age by artisans and peasants, the movement was destined to disappear.

Thus the "otherness" of syndicalism was early established, and "difference" has often had a pejorative connotation, particularly with respect to the concepts of syndicalists and socialists regarding the proper route to revolution. Syndicalism preached revolution, the critics charge, but its "economic" rather than "political" approach was negative: antidemocratic, antipolitical, antirational, and antimodern. Marxist socialism's revolutionary goal, however, was pursued by positive action and practical reform. With its notions of direct action, particularly that of sabotage and general strike, syndicalism was nihilistic. Socialists sought change by orderly collective activity. One was productive, seeking a society based on economic justice. The other, according to some, was counterproductive, and degenerated into fascism.(15)

The difference between socialists and syndicalists, historians have often noted, was early established, and was based on the differences between Marx's ideas and those of Bakunin and Proudhon. For libertarian George Woodcock, those differences that led to the 1872 schism in the IWA were based on inherent personality conflicts between Marx and Bakunin:

Marx was authoritarian, Bakunin a libertarian; Marx was a centralist, Bakunin a federalist; Marx advocated political action for the workers and planned to conquer the state; Bakunin opposed political action and sought to destroy the state; Marx stood for what we now call nationalization of the means of production; Bakunin stood for workers' control.(16)

Differences over basic principles rather than of personality, according to Lichtheim, caused the tensions between French socialists and syndicalists. The reason for the schism between these two wings of the French left, he maintains, was the disagreement over the questions of ouvriérisme, that is, workers' control of the class struggle without the aid of intellectuals, and opposition to

parliamentary action--two distinct tenets of Proudhonian philosophy.(17)

What of the contribution of Proudhon's thought to revolutionary syndicalism? This has been a topic of exploration by some analysts.(18) Generally, the consensus is that Proudhon was the ideological grandfather of French unionism. Certainly to syndicalists themselves, the movement was directly related to Proudhon in its critique of existing society, its vision of a new order, and its advocacy of the methods to be used to bring about unionist goals. Syndicalism's position regarding the state and the political structure and its support of direct action as a means to revolution was directly linked to Proudhon's ideas on anarchism and federalism. The leading light of the bourses du travail, Fernand Pelloutier, declared that syndicalism was the realization of "the federative principles formulated by Proudhon and Bakunin."(19) Syndicalist Hubert Lagardelle conceded that direct action echoed Proudhon's assertion that "each class must develop its own organs of emancipation."(20) Syndicalists had a clearer concept of Proudhonian philosophy than did others, it seems. Yet much of the reigning controversy regarding syndicalist thought stems from a confusion over Proudhon's philosophy and the inability of modern historians to place Proudhon on the traditional spectrum of political left and right. Woodcock, for instance, entitled his chapter on Proudhon "The Man of Paradox." Lichtheim simply dismissed Proudhonian philosophy as being muddled and simplistic.(21)

The following discussion of syndicalism's attitudes toward the state, toward direct action, and toward women and peasants does take note of the Proudhonian inheritance of syndicalism. But what emerges in this study is that while Proudhon's ideas influenced the early trade unionists, his philosophy came to have little bearing on syndicalist actions as unionism matured. Actually, Proudhon's theories had more in common with the guiding philosophy of the right--of employer-sponsored labor organizations and Catholic syndicalism--than of the left. In fact, the underlying presumption of this presentation is that French syndicalism was not the direct translation of any single intellectual system. As with Marxism, its ideological inheritance was based on a synthesis of the concepts generated by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Just as the theorists of revolution were in accord concerning the vision of a new society, although disagreeing violently over the means by which to prepare for it, so too were syndicalists in agreement with Marxists over the goals of socialism. Unionists disagreed with socialists only over the manner in which the revolution should be directed in France. They affirmed the notion of the class struggle and the belief that the proletariat was the only class that could bring about permanent revolution.

The confusion regarding where to place Proudhon on the political spectrum holds true for the syndicalists. By

positing a new vision of society, the syndicalists were revolutionary. But since the object of their wrath was the paraphernalia of the modern world--liberalism, capitalism, democracy, and state centralization--revolutionary syndicalists have been deemed reactionaries in disguise. The problem with most analyses has been the tendency to posit "reform," in this case defined as working for better material conditions for labor, as the antithesis to "revolution." Stearns, for instance, assumes that because syndicalists participated in bread-and-butter demands, the movement failed to live up to its revolutionary posture. In that sense, anarchosyndicalism was nothing more than a French version of American Gompersism. Robert Goetz-Girey, however, rightly declares that "the idea of reform would always be one of the poles of the syndical movement." (22) Félicien Challaye points out the naiveté of drawing too sharply a distinction between reformist and revolutionary elements within syndicalism. Reformism, he notes, was always an animating spirit of revolutionary syndicalism because syndicalists were never partisans of an all-or-nothing approach. (23)

This study will go beyond the observations of both Goetz-Girey and Challaye in demonstrating that economic reforms were never perceived by syndicalists as part of a polarity, but were always regarded as a way station to revolution. This being the case, then political analysts must look beyond the traditional definitions of reform and revolution when assessing the radical content of French unionism. They will also have to shed the classical notions that political action is narrowly encompassed in parliamentary and electoral activity.

GUIDED BY PRACTICAL NECESSITY

Once the qualitative differences between socialism and syndicalism are revealed to be less vast than were formerly held, then some of the questions traditionally posed of the movement elicit different answers. Was syndicalism antimodern in its philosophy and approach, trying vainly to resurrect a long-past golden age? If one uses as a criterion for measuring modern tendencies the acceptance of industrialism as a practical means to bring about greater well-being for all, then syndicalists were as modern in their outlook as the Marxian socialists. Fernand Pelloutier said the machine in no way debased that which in England "they call the standard of life." (24) Even Stearns admits that syndicalists did not dwell on what he believed were "the anti-industrial implications of their doctrine." (25) Syndicalists, Pelloutier charged, wanted to carry out the revolution by means of progressively eliminating "capitalist forms of association, production, and consumption, and replacing them with corresponding communist forms." (26)

Was syndicalism the ideological product of anarchist dissidents from the International? For anarchosyndicalists the movement was not part of an ongoing heresy. Syndicalist

Emile Pouget stated that the movement was "no more than the logical following" of the First International.(27) Was syndicalism an aberration of socialism? Certainly syndicalists never perceived themselves as different. Holding strongly to the notion of class conflict, those who spoke for the unions regarded their mission as a necessary crusade to rescue socialism from the malaise into which it had fallen as the result of having spent too much time doing battle in the electoral arena.

Lastly, one must inquire if this crusading impulse was not utopian in character. Once the traditional stereotypes have been shed concerning the movement, new questions can be posed of syndicalism. The conclusion drawn, which is the central thesis of this study, is that there is very little of a utopian nature about syndicalism, that it was a very pragmatic movement in theory and practice. Syndicalist philosophy was in constant evolution, a synthesis of past theories practically applied to the needs of the times. It was not the ideological manifestation of French national character, but rather the natural response to the French milieu. There was no single ideological mentor, little written protocol, and no intellectual priesthood to serve as guardian of the sacred flame. It was no more compounded exclusively from the theories of Marx, Bakunin, or Proudhon, than it was the metaphysical inspiration of Blanqui or Sorel.

In fact, it is not the intent of this study to examine syndicalism from the vantage point of the thought of the syndicalist intellectuals such as Edouard Berth, Hubert Lagardelle, or Georges Sorel. The theories of the "Sorelian Syndicalists" have been ably explored by Jules Levey in a 1967 Ph.D. dissertation. Sorel's philosophy has been brilliantly examined by Professor John Stanley in a recently published book.(28) Rather, perhaps reflective of the ouvriérisme of the syndicalists themselves, this study seeks to explore the revolutionary syndicalist movement in light of the ideas expressed by those men and women associated with unionism who contributed articles to the working-class press and arguments at the trade-union congresses. What emerges from this approach is the conclusion that the ideas of the lesser known working-class representatives had as much weight in determining the policies of the bourses and the CGT as did the theories of the well-known leaders, such as Fernand Pelloutier, Georges Yvetot, Alphonse Merrheim, Victor Griffuelhes, Emile Pouget, Georges Dumoulin, and Léon Jouhaux. While the latter are more often quoted in the succeeding text, and are certainly regarded as the major spokesmen of the syndicalist movement, the respective philosophies of these men who frequently argued among themselves, were often sharply divergent on important issues. The only point of consensus among them was that the social revolution must occur in order to bring into being a just society, and that unionism was the means to achieve that end. Beyond that commitment, syndicalist leaders shared little common philosophy. Indeed, philosophy had little to do with French anarchosyndicalism: theory was

always the adjunct to practice. The movement always worked within those limits prescribed by the social, economic, and political imperatives.

Certainly the development of the working-class movement was influenced by the economic order. From 1871 to 1914 France continued to be a major force, enjoying second place as a world colonial power and a third-place position in Europe in industrial terms. Yet, during the period coinciding with the growth of syndicalism, France's place of importance in Europe and the world diminished, partly due to global factors, but mostly as a result of inherent economic defects in France.

There was the rural nature of the country, compounded by the persistence of small landholdings and subsistence agriculture. In 1896, after twenty-two years of agricultural depression, 44.9 percent of the French population was still employed in agriculture.(29) Many of the surplus producers, particularly those engaged in viniculture and mulberry cultivation, had lost their crops to disease. Others, such as grain farmers, had suffered major setbacks as a result of competition from the United States and other countries. In the face of these disasters, subsistence farming looked even more attractive to large numbers of rural landowners.(30) This penchant for subsistence agriculture, combined with the price depression, meant that tenant farmers, smallholders, and large landowners lacked the needed surplus to modernize or add acreage. The agricultural depression also meant that farmers had little available cash to buy the goods produced by the industrial sector. Potential consumption was further reduced as a result of the slow growth in population in the years before World War I. Population stagnation was the result of a host of factors: poor diet, minimal health care, wretched living conditions, and a very high infant mortality rate, a problem compounded by the widespread practice of employing wet nurses, who passed along diseases and malnutrition to their charges.(31)

Of course the greatest contribution to the sluggish economy in France lay with the business sector. Used to serving local or regional needs, the majority of businesses were family owned, managed, and financed. The typical French businessman thought in terms of thrift and low overhead, keeping production costs minimal so he could reinvest his profits. Self-financing was cheaper and safer. From 1896 to 1913, 1.6 billion francs of the 2.5 billion invested annually in French businesses was supplied by the owner.(32) Banking facilities tended to be localized also, so vast amounts of money were not available for investment. Without sufficient capital there were neither incentives nor resources for expansion. Artisanal labor and luxury goods production continued to dominate the business sector at the expense of industrialization. While France remained second to none in its production of luxury goods, such a system offered few incentives for expansion. Artisanal work units were static, with scant interest in or capital for modernization. This is why in 1904 the traditional

industries of textile, clothing, and leather still employed the bulk of French workers. And of that number, 68 percent of those employed were women earning minimal wages.(33)

Economic recovery began after 1896. This upturn was due largely to three factors: increased investment of domestic capital, the rise of farm income with the advent of protectionist legislation, and the spread of electrification and railroads. These factors provided the dynamics for a series of local and regional industrial revolutions. In turn, these catalysts stimulated urbanization and population concentration, the growth of newer industries, such as metallurgy, and the increase in the number of workers employed in the industrial sector. By 1911, 45 percent of industrial workers worked in factories employing over fifty workers.(34)

Industrialization brought changes in the condition of the working class. Per capita income rose; living standards improved; and life expectancy increased. Changes were manifested in employer-employee relationships. Larger industrial units had required greater investment, so employers were sometimes more reluctant to lay off their workers. Other industrialists practiced a form of paternalism, providing workers with company medical care and factory housing. This seemingly better treatment brought to the individual worker a greater sense of job security.

But the industrial revolution did not follow the same pattern in France as it did in other western countries. Although per capita incomes increased, wide divergences in wages continued to exist among various occupational groups, in different regions, and between the sexes. A few years were added to life expectancy, but mortality rates fluctuated wildly by department and even by Parisian arrondissement. Large investments might make the industrialist a little more protective of his workers, but it also gave him more incentive to call upon the government to use force in putting down workers' demonstrations. The increase in the large factory unit neither destroyed the artisanal class, nor did much to elevate the technological expertise of the unskilled factory worker. Some large-scale newer industries, such as the manufacture of automobiles, for instance, employed artisanal labor.(35) The rest of those working in the larger factories continued to be little more than machine tenders.

What the industrial revolution brought to France was a change in scope, if not in scale. From 1871 to 1914 factory production increased, but regional variations were heightened; class differences were amplified; and the economy stayed localized and decentralized. The pace of change quickened, but the micro-unit of production remained the norm in both the industrial and the agrarian sectors. Thus, French society consisted of an economic mosaic in which industrialization occurred rapidly in some places, sluggishly in others, and not at all in other locales. The social order, like the economic order, was also in a state of transition. Peasants were becoming proletarians, artisans were moving into industry, unskilled workers were

becoming skilled. If France was a socioeconomic mosaic the labor movement, reflecting that milieu, had to embody within itself all the different patterns and paces of industrial evolution. Given that reality, syndicalism had to be inclusionary rather than exclusionary. As will be demonstrated, the movement sought to provide a large theoretical and organizational umbrella under which could huddle Frenchmen of every stripe: Positivists, socialists, cooperationists, liberals, anarchists, Marxists, mutualists, unionists, conservatives, Catholics, atheists, nudists, and vegetarians. (36)

Pragmatism, then, was syndicalism's guiding force. The confederal structure of the CGT, for instance, was perfectly suited to the needs of the diverse society. The bourses were grouped geographically, the unions by occupation. These units made up the horizontal structure that took account of philosophical differences and provided an outlet for the varied demands of the assorted trades adhering to the Confederation. These groups were represented in the CGT, the vertical structure of which allowed the different organizations to maintain their distinction and total autonomy, while still being affiliated to a central body in the interest of building working-class unity, solidarity, and strength. The CGT was a practical structure in which to carry out the class struggle. That reality, rather than any felt need to remain consistent with anarchist philosophy, served as the impetus for maintaining a confederal organization.

Syndicalism's stand on party politics also had little to do with philosophy. The CGT's emphasis on direct action, as opposed to parliamentary inaction, may have squared ideologically with Proudhon. But philosophy was less an imperative than was the practical need to survive. To do that syndicalism had to overcome the atomism of the socioeconomic order. It also had to thwart the politicians of the Third Republic and stave off the political socialists who wished to turn the unions into recruiting adjuncts of the party. Common sense influenced the antipartisan stand of anarchosyndicalism. The Third Republic inspired loyalty only insofar as it was the unlovely benefactor of the Revolution of 1789. Outside of that inheritance, the Republic had little else to endear it to its people. The guiding political force was a mass of shifting and falling coalitions. The French people smarted under the numerous political scandals and crises: the attempted takeover by General McMahon, the exposé of wholesale government corruption over the construction of the Panama Canal, the malfeasance and numerous cover-ups over the Dreyfus affair. (37) The political structure of the Third Republic was scarcely adequate to carry on the workers' revolution. Lacking a trustworthy electoral medium, the leaders of the working class could only fall back upon themselves.

Revolutionary syndicalism, therefore, was a movement based on practical action, designed to appeal to a diverse work force united only in its realization of individual suffering and a desire for immediate material reform. As

such, syndicalism emphasized less a future apocalypse than it demanded that the present world be made more habitable. To achieve these goals, it directed itself toward organizing the workers and prodding them along the path toward a just order, all the while burrowing from within the capitalist regime by gaining reforms. The French syndicalist movement, this study concludes, was consciously designed to be an instrument of practical revolution.

A RHYTHM OF REPRESSION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Because syndicalism was so clearly the product of the French milieu, a brief historical overview tracing the contributing factors in the development of the union movement is helpful.(38) The modern working-class movement began with the passage of the 1884 legislation (the Waldeck-Rousseau Law) giving workers the right to associate in defense of their professional interests. Neither working-class action nor labor organizations began in 1884, however. The compagnonnages of journeymen dated from the fifteenth century. These organizations, formed within the guild structure, were generally devoted to providing mutual aid for their members. But they also directed strikes and boycotts in defense of their economic interests.(39)

When when all citizens were given the right to combine freely in 1790, workers quickly took advantage of the law by organizing into trade unions. When a multitude of strikes ensued, employers demanded protection against this "new tyranny." The government obliged with the passage of the Le Chapelier law in 1791, forbidding all combinations for the purpose of changing existing labor conditions. As a result, workers turned either to organizing legal "friendly societies" or to illegal underground activity: the formation of sociétés de résistance by which workers could protect themselves against the rapaciousness of the employers. Over the succeeding decades, the more prosperous craftsmen, such as the typographers, often defied government regulations and organized.(40)

Proscriptions against workers' organizations continued until the Second Empire, when the right to strike and form associations was granted by Napoleon III. As a result of this new freedom, organizational activity escalated, as did offensive strike action for higher wages and shorter hours. Chambres Syndicales Ouvrières, later known as syndicats, were formed in the older industries and in those occupations, such as metallurgy, that had never been organized. In addition, French workers participated in the creation of the International Workingmen's Association in London in 1864. The bulk of delegates from the French section, which came to be the largest national section in the First International, were Proudhonists who supported workers' activity in the economic realm through the formation of unions, cooperatives, and mutual banks, rather than through party activity. As anarchists, they placed great emphasis on spontaneous action, voluntarism,

federalism, and ouvriérisme, thereby putting them in direct opposition to the Marxist program of collectivism, electoral activity, and the centralization of both the International and the state.

At home the syndicalists' position was always tenuous, as the French government acted to stamp out any hints of radicalism existing within the movement. Government repression of the workers reached a crescendo as a result of the belief that the Commune was directly inspired by members of the First International. Tens of thousands, the bulk of whom were neither unionists nor Internationalists, were executed, transported, or imprisoned.

The massacre of the Communards changed completely the nature of the working-class movement and socialism. On the one hand, as David Stafford notes, the subsequent failure of the violence of 1871 to bring on the social revolution served to discredit for many the Blanquist notion of a coup de main. On the other, government repression of the Commune destroyed confidence in the Proudhonist notion, dear to the hearts of many French workers, that emancipation would occur through peaceful evolution. Most important, the Commune threw the nascent syndicalist movement into a temporary eclipse. With most of the French militants either dead or in exile, unionism was forced into a period of moderation. In the post-1871 twilight, working-class restraint became the keynote, and workers' cooperatives and mutuals the panacea.(41)

The feebleness of the working-class movement was evident in the proceedings of the first national workers' congress held in Paris in 1876. The right of assembly was still illegal, so this group of delegates met as private citizens. The distinctly working-class character of the movement was enunciated. So too was the distrust of politicians ("theoretical men") and party action. The delegates condemned socialist theories as being "bourgeois utopian." But they also rejected strikes for creating "civil wars among workers." The bourgeois press lauded the delegates for their moderation.(42)

The next two decades were pivotal in the formation of revolutionary syndicalism. Worker unrest was spurred during the depression years. This was also a time of vacillating attitudes toward the workers, of severe government repression of all forms of protest between 1875 and 1878, and of overtures by the "opportunist" governmental leaders between 1879 and 1884 aimed at welding an alliance with the working class in order to bolster the Republic. This attempt at détente saw the passage of legislation designed to woo the workers. The government granted amnesty to the Communards and passed the 1884 law allowing workers to organize. Of course, Radical Party Opportunism was not radicalism. As L. Goyard noted in 1911, the Waldeck-Rousseau Law was designed more "to recognize those organizations politically [rather than] professionally," and was not intended to give the workers full freedom of association and action.(43) What the government could give, it could also take away. Faced with strikes,

unemployment, and threats from Boulangists, radicals, and anarchists, the government plunged into another round of repression between 1883 and 1886 that included the use of troops against striking workers.

GUESDISTS, BROUSSISTS, AND ALLEMANISTS

Economic fluctuations and government vacillation were not the only impediments to the growth of unionism. More problematical was the ideological sectarianism persisting among those seeking unity. The collectivist-federalist debate that helped kill the IWA was only one aspect in the bitter struggle being waged among Blanquists, Bakuninists, positivists, mutualists, cooperationists, and radicals within the workers' organizations.

The paralysis caused by clashing philosophies begged for the emergence of a powerful leader. Marxist disciple Jules Guesde surfaced at the Third Workers' Congress, held in Marseille in 1879, as the one to lead the unionists from their sectarian wilderness.(44) The red posters adorning the walls of the Folies-Bergères, where the delegates were meeting, offered slogans for everyone: "the Earth to the Peasant, the Tool to the Worker, Work for all--Science; Peace; Union; Justice."(45) But the resolutions adopted by the delegates, proclaiming equality between the sexes and supporting collectivization of the soil, were clearly Guesdist in their inspiration. Having gained the working-class tribunal, Guesde sought to organize socialism in France and wed labor to it. His task would not be an easy one.

By the Fourth Workers' Congress, held in Le Havre in 1880, a new leaven was introduced. The Communards had been amnestied, and some of the militants were in attendance. The delegates ranged from anarchists and collectivists on the left to the more timorous on the right who feared radicalism. The left united to push through a program that was an admixture of the theories of Marx and Bakunin. The moderate syndicalists, those who remained committed to mutualism and cooperation, left the congress and formed their own organization, which ultimately died in indifference after only two congresses.(46)

If apathy was the fatal ingredient among the moderates, passion was the tragic flaw of the radicals. In 1881 delegates met at Reims. Arguments broke out over everything: from adopting a program, to placing blame for the poor showing of socialist candidates in the 1881 elections. In the melee, Paul Brousse and his lieutenants grabbed the spotlight from Jules Guesde.(47) The congress threw out the Guesdist proposal, adopted the previous year, sanctioning tight party control over elections, and adopted Brousse's newspaper as the official organ of the organization.

At the next congress, held in Saint-Etienne in 1882, Guesde was only a voice crying in the wind. In the interim between the two congresses, he had campaigned steadily for a

tightly organized and disciplined Socialist Party. The setting was ripe for schism, which came swiftly. When all of Guesde's resolutions were rejected, he and his followers left the hall. Sighing good riddance to Guesdist authoritarianism, the Broussists then voted to exclude this group from the party. They further agreed to form themselves into a new political party favoring a federalist structure and "possibilist" action. Brousse had declared himself in favor of seeking immediate reforms by splitting socialist demands, he stated, "into what is possible." (48) With their antagonists purged, the possibilists were able to hold an orderly convention in 1883. Delegates did little more than change the name of their group to the *Fédération des Travailleurs Socialistes* (FTS) in an attempt to attract all factions. The Guesdist minority, rejecting possibilist reformism, organized itself into the *Parti Ouvrier* (PO, later the POF). Meeting in Roubaix the following year (1884), they declared themselves a party committed to Marxist orthodoxy, and pledged to carry the class war into the political domain by winning elections. (49)

Despite the initial victory, the power of the Broussist FTS was clearly on the wane. During the next few years the party leaders devoted the bulk of their energies to winning local elections. As part of their political offensive, they also supported the creation of a central bourse du travail in Paris, with annexes in all the departments. Despite some modest success in the 1887 elections to the Paris Municipal Council, internal factionalism was growing. Challenging the Broussists were the more radical representatives of the working class, led by printer and former Communard Jean Allemane, who castigated the possibilists for their alleged obsession with politics. Political infighting halted briefly during the Boulanger crisis of 1888, as all factions within the FTS agreed to support the Republic against the dictator. But schism was a foregone conclusion.

In the months before the 1890 convention, the disciples of Allemane had carried on a vigorous offensive in the newspapers against possibilist opportunism, charging the Broussists with having sold out to the bourgeoisie in the interest of political expediency. The propaganda campaign against Brousse served to attract the more radical elements to the Allemanist side, but it was not strong enough to put Allemane at the head of the party. At the next national congress of the FTS, the Allemanist "rebels" were expelled. Without its revolutionary element, the Broussist-dominated FTS moved further to the right. Four years later the party held its last real congress in Tours.

The year 1890 also saw the convening of the Guesdist PO, their first congress in six years. The meeting was short and uneventful, with the delegates doing little more than agreeing to demonstrate on May Day. During those years the major activity of the Guesdists had been carried on within the *Fédération Nationale Syndicaliste* (FNS, then FS). In 1886 a national congress of unions had been convened at Lyon for the express purpose of establishing a federation of trade unions. This "union of unions" was seen as being

necessary to build working-class unity and to provide a socialist counterorganization to the Radical-dominated Union des Chambres Syndicales. The FNS was the creation of representatives from all philosophical schools, but it very quickly became "a hotbed of Guesdisme." (50)

By now radicalism was also firmly ensconced in the newly organized Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire (POSR), an Allemanist political creation. In 1891 the POSR met in Paris. Delegates to this first convention agreed to undertake aggressive action to win the agrarian proletariat to socialism and the eight-hour day for workers. The delegates also warmly applauded the use of the general strike, which they suggested might be the tactic to precipitate the socialist revolution, and committed the new party to unionism rather than to electioneering. Members were urged to join a union and to create one where none existed.

Allemanists were united in their belief that political action was only a means of propaganda designed to achieve "a rigorously revolutionary" end. (51) The two Guesdist organizations--the FNS (now the FS) and the PO, on the other hand--remained clearly committed to political action, albeit with a slight deviation. In 1888 the FS had met at Bordeaux-Le Bouscat. The most surprising aspect of the congress was the adoption of the principle of the general strike, rather than the conquest of political power, as the means by which to make the revolution. The notion of the general strike had been a bone of contention within the IWA and was supported by French anarchists. This deviation from Marxist orthodoxy must have been with the approval of Guesde, who was not in attendance. Engels would later complain to Paul Lafargue during a walk through Hyde Park that Guesde's support of the principle of the general strike was "an absurdity" and a hangover from his anarchist days. (52) It was a case of temporary absurdity, however, because at the next congress of the FNS, held in Calais in 1890, the Guesdist majority accorded only qualified support to the principle: maintaining that a general strike of miners alone would be effective. The question of the general strike was clearly becoming another schism-producing issue to the leftist-oriented unionists.

At their Lyon congress in 1891, the delegates to the PO concerned themselves mainly with national political issues in preparation for the forthcoming elections. But dissension was brewing in the wings. When the FS met that same year, the Guesdist majority found itself confronted by a growing number of union representatives who were converted to the principle of the general strike, which the Guesdists now completely rejected as an illusory form of action that would deflect energy from the revolution. But the groundswell of support for the tactic could not be denied. When the fifth congress of the FS convened in Marseille in 1892, the supporters of the general strike were ready. Over Guesdist objections, and after a sterling defense by then socialist journalist Aristide Briand, the principle of a universal general strike as a viable instrument of combat

was adopted by the FS.(53) Having lost the vote, the Guesdists lost interest in the labor federation and turned their full attention to their political party.

Meanwhile, other groups of socialists were also in the process of organizing. Blanquists rallied around Communard Edouard Vaillant. Their platform, a reflection of Vaillant's discipleship of both Proudhon and Blanqui, was based on the doctrine of double autonomy: independent economic action by the unions and independent action by the parties. In 1898 this group adopted the name Parti Socialiste Révolutionnaire (PSR). There were also the Independents, formed first as a cadre of socialist deputies in 1886. This faction, among whom Alexandre Millerand and Jean Jaurès were the leading lights, became the most important socialist group in parliament. But the Independents were hampered because there was no unity of philosophy among its members.(54) Of greater significance to the left in 1892 was the organization of the Fédération des Bourses du Travail (FBT).

THE FBT AND THE CGT CHALLENGE

Since 1886, when the first bourses were opened under the aegis of the FTS, numerous bourses had sprouted forth in the provinces. These bourses reflected both new and old forms of organization. As with the compagnonnages, the bourses served as employment bureaus and fraternal organizations, providing itinerant workers with clean beds, baths, and suppers. They were also cultural centers in that they compiled libraries and offered vocational classes for the local unions. The bourses also demonstrated the effects of positivist philosophy in that the members committed themselves to the task of compiling statistics on such things as the variances in the cost of living, wage rates, and job availability. Acting in this capacity, the bourses generally received municipal support in the way of cash subventions or rooms in the mairies from which to operate. In addition, the bourses quickly became the chief center for organizing trade unions. These unions were usually affiliated by profession. Under the sheltering umbrella of the local bourses, however, the unions tended to take on a more regional characteristic, organizing into federations, with the federations subsequently forming into the FBT.(55)

Despite the mutualist activity and government support of the bourses, the FBT clearly demonstrated a radical cast. The thirteen bourse delegates who met at Saint-Etienne in 1892 included Blanquists, Allemanists and non-Guesdist members of the FS who supported the principle of the general strike. The object of the meeting was to group workers in a national organization of bourse federations to serve as a rival to the PO-controlled FS. But another result of this meeting was the convening in 1894 of a national confederal congress of unions, groups, federations, and bourses in Nantes open to all.(56)

The show of unity was also intended to provide the means by which to launch an offensive against party control of labor. In an attempt to stave off a possible purge of Guesdist influence, the PO convened its congress in the same city, meeting ahead of the general convention. The Guesdists expected to impress the laborites with the efficacy of political action. In 1893, mostly because of the Panama scandals and the decomposition of Boulangism, over fifty socialists had been elected to parliament. The congress opened with a cordial salute to the socialist deputies, adopted an agrarian program, and changed the party's name to the Parti Ouvrier Français (POF) in order to enunciate the political and economic aspects of socialist action. The delegates then soundly rejected the principle of the general strike as being utopian and unrealizable and one that would bring reaction and reprisals, ruin unionism, and divide city and country workers.

The delegates to the larger confederal congress met the following day amid great tumult and confusion. After two days of intense debate on the issue of the general strike, cloture was finally voted. The next day the resolution favoring the general strike won by 65 to 37. The minority then convoked a separate meeting of the FS and declared itself an autonomous organ. Its actions were only a show of bravado since the Guesdist labor group had suffered irreparable division, with one faction dependent on the POF and the other clearly under the influence of the FBT. Thereafter the FS limped along as an appendage to the POF until its final convention in 1898.

By contrast, in the spring of 1895 the FBT held a successful congress at Nîmes. Fernand Pelloutier, a former Radical-turned-Guesdist, had been converted to anarchism because of his preference for federalist principles of organization and because anarchism emphasized the individual in opposition to the centralized state.(57) A brilliant organizer and theoretician, Pelloutier was elected secretary of the Federal Committee of the FBT. The major source of conflict within the congress was over the question of where to house the directing body of the organization: in Paris or the provinces. The issue seemed to be one reflecting the longstanding fears of provincials against Parisian domination since arguments were all based on the issue of federalism versus central control. But more pointedly at issue was the fact that the bulk of Guesdist influence lay in the provinces while, in Paris, the bourse was run by anarchists and Allemanists. Central direction would neutralize Guesdist direction in those bourses under their control. Pelloutier voted with the majority in favor of establishing a permanent office in Paris, thereby setting aside, at least temporarily, his commitment to the federalist principles of anarchism in favor of political expediency.

Although the FBT was a strong organization, particularly under Pelloutier's leadership, another organization ultimately came to encompass the FBT. With all factions still jockeying for control, another national

congress was convened in Limoges in 1895. Included in the delegations were bourse leaders, those of the FS who supported the general strike, and militants from the POSR, now in eclipse, including Allemane himself. The time had come, delegates agreed, to organize a stronger national committee in order to coordinate labor activities. The new organization took the name of Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT).(58) Its task was to serve as a kind of clearing house of labor activity between syndicats and bourses on the local, regional, and national levels. The CGT would be housed in Paris, but would hold congresses in various parts of the country. Delegates to the administrative council and to the congresses were to be elected by the individual organizations. The duties of the national council were to carry on propaganda and coordinate strikes. More important, every bourse, local union, and trade federation adhering to the Confederation, regardless of the number of members in its organization, would have one vote. Despite the scope of its charge, for several years the CGT remained a shadow organization. The real link between the various corporate groups continued to be the bourses and the FBT.

During the years coinciding with Pelloutier's leadership, the FBT was able to stave off both CGT and Guesdist domination. At the Tours congress in 1896, Pelloutier successfully held out once more against the proposal to rotate the Federation's headquarters annually. In 1897 another Guesdist-inspired foray was defeated. The general strike was upheld, and a resolution was passed disclaiming political action and declaring that the issue would never again be raised. Victorious finally against the party socialists, the FBT was less successful in the battle against being subsumed into the CGT.

From the outset, the FBT intended to dominate the CGT, just as the POF had controlled the FS. Pelloutier's refusal to attend the first three congresses of the Confederation was an indication of how unimportant he regarded that organization to be.(59) The Federation even snatched a page from the Guesdists' book by convening its own congresses in the same city, with delegates meeting immediately before the opening of the CGT conventions in order to marshal their forces. At the first few congresses, the more financially solvent FBT was able to dictate successfully to the underfinanced CGT on questions involving the role of the bourses in the Confederation.(60) Thus, for a few years at least, the FBT remained officially independent, united to the CGT by little more than a mutual commitment to carry out the work of social revolution, particularly through the use of the general strike, and by its desire to dominate the infant organization.

TOWARD SOCIALIST PARTY UNITY

By 1898 not even the POF seemed to be a threat to the FBT. Guesdists had spent much time in 1892 discussing the

problems of centralization versus local autonomy. One resolution gave the wayward unionists a stern rebuke. Those rejecting the commitment to political struggle were wrong; political activity was indispensable. The POF further urged its members to join the unions and declared that it was the workers' duty to adhere to the POF. At Montluçon in 1898, the party leaders again called for unity within the left. The Dreyfus affair had once more split the groups. Allemanists, Broussists, and independent socialists vigorously supported Dreyfus. Guesde and Vaillant were claiming that the Dreyfus affair was not part of the workers' struggle and should be ignored. In response to the controversy, delegates at Montluçon also called for the formation of a central committee in which all the socialist factions would be equally represented.

The following year (1899) President Faure died. Paul Déroulède attempted to stage another Eighteenth Brumaire. Fearful of a monarchist plot, the socialist factions within the party joined together in a Comité d'Entente. A congress of unity was held in Paris in April 1899. Delegates pledged to maintain cordial relations with all groups. In June Waldeck-Rousseau was charged with forming a cabinet of "Republican Defense." Seated together in the new cabinet were socialist Alexandre Millerand and General Gaston de Galliffet, the latter associated with the repression of 1871. Millerand's decision to enter the government sundered the flimsy Comité d'Entente.

When the political socialists again gathered at Epernay in 1899, Millerandism was the order of the day.⁽⁶¹⁾ After a debate lasting two days and two nights, the meeting ended with little more accomplished than a pledge to convoke another congress to discuss the question of unity. Shortly thereafter, a General Congress of Socialist Organizations of France was convened in Paris. The delegates called for "Entente and international actions of workers, political and economic organizations, [and] for the conquest of the means of production and exchange."⁽⁶²⁾ Fusion would be achieved by membership in a single organization, offering equal representation to parties, unions, and cooperatives. Both political and economic action would be deemed effective methods of achieving revolution.

Although the question of the direction of the socialist party was settled, the issue of ministerial participation aroused violence and deep emotions among the delegates. After all sides filled the room with angry charges, the vote was taken. The resolution that was passed, however, was a model of avoidance. It stated that the nature of the class struggle allowed no entry of socialists into a bourgeois government, although circumstances might arise to cause the party to redefine its position.

It was now imperative to take a position that would attract labor to the political fold, having sidestepped the question of Millerandism. After listening to Briand and others defend the principle of the general strike, the delegates agreed almost unanimously that all means of action--economic activity, electoral and revolutionary

action, boycotts, and the general strike--must be employed in the struggle by the socialist party. Peace reigned momentarily within the party's ranks. However, the government's actions in the ensuing strikes at Châlon-sur-Saône split the ranks of the political socialists. In 1900 the Guesdist POF met in their eighth congress at Ivry-sur-Seine. Their principal bid for labor's support was in the form of an acerbic condemnation both of police brutality and of the alleged betrayal of the French workers by the deputies. They closed by forcefully rejecting ministerial collaboration. When the Congrès Général des Organisations Socialistes Françaises convened in Paris later that year, the meeting began with squabbles over the question of mandates, and closed with fistfights on the floor. It would be five years before a final socialist unity would prevail.

SYNDICALIST ACCORD AT AMIENS

At the very moment socialists were trying to stop the shattering of their political force, the syndicalists were moving toward greater accord. The FBT congress in 1900 firmly rejected adherence to the socialist party and again agreed to remain aloof from any political involvement and organizationally separate from the CGT.(63)

In 1901 Pelloutier died. At the FBT congress in Nice that year, delegates concurred that keeping the organizations separate was not in the interest of building working-class unity. When the FBT met in Algeria the following year, the delegates sanctioned all but total fusion with the CGT. The CGT met four days later at Montpellier and adopted the principle of unity. Unions entering the CGT must adhere to both their industrial federation and a bourse or local union, and they would have to support the officially sanctioned newspaper, La Voix du Peuple. The CGT would be comprised of two autonomous sections: that of the industrial and professional federations and isolated unions and that of the federation of bourses. Each section would be directed by a committee and would collect its own dues. Congresses would be convened every two years. Between congresses a Confederal Committee, composed of the committees of both sections, would be in charge of daily affairs. The single-unit voting provisions were upheld; the question of proportional representation was overwhelmingly rejected 392 to 76. To the libertarians of the CGT, the French political structure was based on indirect democracy. The one unit-one vote system they adopted seemed to offer the greatest protection to individual workers even within the smallest unions.

With détente in the blueprint stage, the CGT was presented with another problem that had arisen as a result of the unification effort: the confrontation with the reformists within the Confederation. Reformism had always been regarded as the bête noire of radical unionism, but the term had come to encompass a variety of definitions. In the

early years of syndicalism, "reformists" consisted of the more conservative artisanal elements who believed that capitalism should be preserved in a humanized form through the electoral process and through the pacific forms of direct action such as mutualism and cooperation. These reformists supported Republican and later Socialist Party candidates, and they tended to regard the Republic as a patriarchal force that could be called upon to broker the conflicting demands of labor and the bosses. This group of reformists, epitomized in the person of Auguste Keufer, remained a marginal, although articulate element, within syndicalism.

To the left of this group was another, equally branded as reformists by the more radical labor activists. These were the members of some of the larger federations--particularly metallurgy, printing, and tobacco--who were committed to practical activism, including strikes, to achieve labor reforms. But they tended to eschew what they considered to be the more violent forms of direct action, such as sabotage, and they dismissed as chimerical the use of the general strike. This group's slogan was caution; they found comfort in numbers, hence their penchant for organization and for distributing some of their eggs in the socialists' basket. To achieve that end, they worked within the CGT for détente with the party socialists and engaged in battles to overturn the single-unit voting system in the Confederation. Only through proportional representation could the giant federations exercise power commensurate with their organizational wealth and numbers. Only with the exercise of that power would radical strength, usually centered in the smallest unions and bourses, be diffused.

Also tagged as reformists, as we have witnessed, were those syndicalists who believed that workers should participate in the political sphere to the same degree as they were involved in activity in the economic realm. The most dangerous element among the "party socialists" were the Guesdists, who went beyond merely soliciting working-class support for leftist candidates. Guesdists wanted to turn the unions into recruiting organs subservient to the Socialist Party. For syndicalists this was the most pernicious brand of reformism because it would have placed the workers' destinies in the hands of politicians.

At the Bourges congress of the CGT in 1904, those reformists representing the larger federations waged another frontal assault to achieve proportional representation, and were defeated 825 to 369. The trouncing was not surprising since the reformists were trying to gain victory while operating within a system that was designed to insure their defeat! But by the next congress of the CGT, held in Amiens in 1906, conditions had changed. The more powerful unions were marshaling their forces; disruption was threatening at the very time the party socialists were reveling in their victory of unity. In April 1905 they had met in Paris. All factions had agreed to fuse into a single party, the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO). The

political socialists were now crooking a beckoning finger at the unions to join them.

The discussion at Amiens opened with the Guesdist delegate Renard of the textile federation making another bid for the Confederal Committee to endorse unity with the socialists. The object, he declared, was to work for the triumph of "reformist principles of the workers," which, translated, meant adherence to the SFIO. His suggestion was soundly rejected by 736 to 34. Then Auguste Keufer of the printers' union demanded that the CGT not become "the instrument of anarchist and antiparliamentary agitation" and that the Confederation immediately establish relations with the political parties. (64)

In answering the reformists' challenge, the majority reaffirmed the CGT's nonpartisan and "legalistic" position, adopted at their founding congress in 1895. They were constituted as a body to group themselves outside of all political schools, their resolution declared, in order to rally the conscious workers in the struggle to bring about the disappearance of the wage system and capitalist exploitation. Involvement in political sectarianism, the argument continued, would only deflect the workers from their objective, which was social transformation. The resolution against Guesdism and reformism was overwhelmingly accepted 834 to 8. It came to be called the "Charter of Amiens," equal in magnitude to the Magna Carta, syndicalists said, because it was designed to pave the way for achieving working-class unity.

The Charter of Amiens was a practical document serving a multitude of purposes. It spoke to the ideological preferences of the anarchists and libertarians by further stating that all workers had the liberty of conscience to pursue whatever political objective they desired, as long as this activity was carried on outside the context of the Confederation's congresses. The document further recognized a fact of life apparent to all: if the French workers were going to unite successfully, fusion would have to take place under a broad enough umbrella to accommodate without too much discomfort members from every school. All would be welcomed, as long as they did not bring their political prejudices into the congress hall.

The resolution also took the wind out of the reformists' sails. It became the *raison d'être* for not having to debate the thorny issue of affiliation with the political socialists, whose unification had been achieved only at the cost of much bloodshed and recrimination. The Charter further allowed the anarchist elements to take the offensive since the commitment to work outside the parameters of partisan sects seemed implicitly, at least, to sanction direct and personal workers' action in the economic realm. The anarchosyndicalist element, not content to rest on its laurels, further proposed that antimilitarist-antipatriotic propaganda be carried on. A weak majority agreed. But another motion, calling for the establishment of a commission to undertake propaganda supporting the eight-hour day and the principle of the general strike, was

unanimously approved. In another show of radical strength, a motion was carried to suspend temporarily relations between the CGT and the Second International, since the latter organization had refused to consider a motion at the 1905 Amsterdam congress calling for support of the general strike, the eight-hour day, and antimilitarism. At the CGT's congress two years later, the reformist bid for proportional representation was finally laid to rest by a vote of 716 to 379. Now the syndicalists could get on with the task of organization.

In the CGT the leftist labor movement had a proper organization to carry on the class war. Its guiding philosophy was based on mass trade unionism, independent of church or patrons, working by direct action within the bourses and syndicats to overthrow bourgeois capitalism and put in its place a new society based on industrial, rather than parliamentary organization. The Confederation's operating principles were supple enough to attract individuals of every leftist shading, and its organizational structure was capable of mediating the demands of any labor organization: large trade federations or unskilled workers; peasants or artisanal groups. Delegates to the Amiens congress believed they had swept away the last barriers to building a powerful labor confederation into which the working class could gather. But as René Garmy so aptly phrases it, the CGT became "not a fortress in which one masses, but a hallway through which one passes." (65) Yet as industrialization progressed, that hallway served as a necessary shelter into which the militants could either escape or regroup, and down which the recently initiated could travel on their way to gaining revolutionary consciousness. Even if anarcho-syndicalism never became the battering ram of revolution its founding fathers intended it to be, the movement nevertheless left an indelible mark on the history of France and its working class.

NOTES

1. Stein's final words are transcribed "officially" in Norman and Betty Donaldson, How Did They Die? (New York, 1980), p. 349.

2. Peter Stearns, Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor: A Cause Without Rebels (New Brunswick, 1971), p. 102. Stearns concedes that the only positive aspect of syndicalism was its negative effect. "Insofar as it frightened workers away from the unions it not only held French union membership down," he states, "but reduced its chances of controlling spontaneous protests" (p. 94.) The negative aspects of syndicalism are emphasized by friends and foes alike. J. W. Scott claims that syndicalism was "the failure of the socialist idea to prove its fitness for power," and declares that the movement constituted a confession that socialism was unable "to do what it set out to do--namely, run a state." Syndicalism and Philosophic

Realism (London, 1919), p. 1. Jean Montreuil calls syndicalism "a deaf aspiration toward an order where the worker no longer will be isolated and mistaken." Histoire du mouvement ouvrier en France (Paris, 1947), p. 531.

3. E. Drexel Godfrey, Jr., Fate of the Non-Communist Left (New York, 1955), p. 24. Writing in 1920 against Jouhaux and Merrheim, Lenin outlined the specific charges that would remain the themes of indictment against anarchosyndicalism. He charged that Jouhaux and other leaders of the Confederal Committee had betrayed the working class by joining the government of national defense, by criticizing unjustly the Russian Revolution, and by collaborating with the bourgeois state. Reported in Georges Lefranc, Le syndicalisme en France (Paris, 1957), pp. 57-60. Stearns maintains that the increased membership occurring after 1906 resulted in more moderates entering syndicalism. Bernard Moss refutes this charge, noting that the new recruits, having come in on the crest of heightened strike activity, tended to be more radical. The Origins of the French Labor Movement (Berkeley, 1976), p. 152.

4. See Michelle Perrot, Les ouvriers en grève, France 1871-90, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974); Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, Strikes in France 1930-1968 (Cambridge, Mass., 1974); Charles, Louise, and Richard Tilly, The Rebellious Century (Cambridge, Mass., 1975).

5. Michael P. Hanagan, The Logic of Solidarity: Artisans and Industrial Workers in Three French Towns 1871-1914 (Urbana, Ill., 1980); Joan W. Scott, The Glassworkers of Carmaux (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974); Rolande Trempe, Les mineurs de Carmaux, 1848-1914 (Paris, 1971). Local and regional studies have always been of interest to the French, and are too numerous even for a sampling here.

6. David Stafford, historian of the possibilists, notes that work on his subject has also suffered from "the dead weight of Marxist historiography." Stafford points out that histories of the socialist movement have stressed the Marxian inheritance, so analysts have generally tended to pay little attention to the nonorthodox groups, such as the possibilists. From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse Within the First International and the French Socialist Movement, 1870-90 (Toronto, 1971), p. 5.

7. See for quotes two works of George Lichtheim: Marxism (New York, 1965), p. 222; and A Short History of Socialism (New York, 1971), p. 289.

8. For an exposition of the artisanal basis of syndicalism see the work of Moss, The Origins of the French Labor Movement.

9. For a history of anarchism see the following: Jean Maitron, Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France 1880-1914 (Paris, 1955); James Joll, The Anarchists (New York, 1964); George Woodcock, Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements (Cleveland, 1962). Woodcock defines the relationship between anarchism and syndicalism in a chapter entitled: "Syndicalism, the Industrial Expression of Anarchism," in Leonard I. Krimerman and Lewis Perry, eds., Patterns of Anarchy (Garden City, 1966), pp. 38-42.
10. Stearns, Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor, p. 36.
11. Ibid., p. 102.
12. See particularly the work of the Tillys, The Rebellious Century, and of Shorter and Tilly, Strikes in France.
13. Hanagan, The Logic of Solidarity, pp. 11-12.
14. Lichtheim, A Short History, p. 289.
15. Frederick F. Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France (Cambridge, England, 1970), p. 230. See also Paul Mazgaj, The Action Française and Revolutionary Syndicalism (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979).
16. Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 171.
17. Lichtheim, Marxism, p. 226.
18. Annie Kriegel, "Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire et Proudhon," Le pain et les roses (Paris, 1968); Lucien Febvre, Une question d'influence: Proudhon et le syndicalisme contemporain (Paris, 1919); E[douard] Berth, "Le centenaire de Proudhon," Le Mouvement Socialiste (1 Jan. 1909): 49-55. All generally agree that syndicalism was a direct-line translation of Proudhon's ideas.
19. Fernand Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail (Paris, 1971), p. 262. A biographical overview of some syndicalists mentioned in each chapter is listed alphabetically following the notes.
20. Hubert Lagardelle, et al., Syndicalisme et socialisme (Paris, 1908), p. 47.
21. Woodcock, Anarchism, pp. 106-144; Lichtheim, A Short History, p. 289.
22. Robert Goetz-Girey, La pensée syndicale française: Militants et théoriciens (Paris, 1948), p. 29.
23. Félicien Challaye, Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et

syndicalisme réformiste (Paris, 1909), p. 38.

24. Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail, p. 258.

25. Stearns, Revolutionary Syndicalism and French Labor, p. 105.

26. Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail, p. 249.

27. Pouget quoted in Challaye, Syndicalisme révolutionnaire, p. 12.

28. Jules Levey, "The Sorelian Syndicalists: Edouard Berth, Georges Valois, and Hubert Lagardelle" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1967); John Stanley, The Sociology of Virtue: The Political and Social Theories of Georges Sorel (Berkeley, 1981).

29. For concise discussions of the French economy, see the following: Clive Trebilcock, The Industrialization of the Continental Powers 1780-1914 (London, 1981), pp. 135-204; Tom Kemp, Economic Forces in French History (London, 1971), pp. 217-298; Roger Price, An Economic History of Modern France 1730-1914 (New York, 1981). France's position as a world power is treated by Kemp, p. 222. Statistics are listed on p. 168 in Price.

30. See Georges Dupeux, French Society 1789-1970, Peter Wait, trans. (London, 1976), who states that the 1884 census showed that 50 percent of French agricultural land consisted of parcels of twenty hectares or less, supporting 97 percent of the rural population. (P. 109). See also Kemp, Economic Forces in French History, p. 233; and Price, An Economic History of Modern France, p. 226.

31. Ibid., pp. 202-208.

32. Ibid., pp. 149, 234. David Landes describes this practice quite graphically as "small firms drowning in their own liquidity." "French Business and the Businessman: A Social and Cultural Analysis," in E. M. Earl, ed., Modern France (Princeton, 1951), p. 339.

33. Price, An Economic History of Modern France, p. 236.

34. Ibid.

35. Kemp, Economic Forces in French History, p. 276.

36. In attempting to explain which groups supported birth-control campaigns, Francis Ronsin notes the inchoate quality of leftist thought, and concludes that the different

doctrines within socialism were not inherently contradictory. This was why, Ronsin explains, it was possible "to be at the same time syndicalist, socialist, cooperator, and Christian." La grève des ventres: Propagande néo-malthusienne et baisse de la natalité en France 19(me)-20(me) siècles (Paris, 1980), p. 165.

37. For a background on the political climate of the period see D. W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939 (London, 1940); and Roger M. Soltau, French Parties and Politics 1871-1921 (New York, 1965).

38. The literature on the formation of socialism and syndicalism is vast. A few of the works specifically dealing with syndicalism include some of the following: André May, Les origines du syndicalisme révolutionnaire (Paris, 1913); Val R. Lorwin, The French Labor Movement (Cambridge, Mass., 1954); Georges Weill, Histoire du mouvement social en France (Paris, 1924); Edouard Dolléans, Histoire du mouvement ouvrier, 3 vols. (Paris, 1967); Léon Blum, Les congrès ouvriers et socialistes français, 2 vols. (Paris, 1901); Confédération Générale du Travail, La confédération générale du travail et le mouvement syndical (Paris, 1925) [hereafter cited as La CGT et le mouvement syndical]; Marjorie Ruth Clark, A History of the French Labor Movement (1910-1928) (Berkeley, 1930). Already noted are the works by Ridley, Moss, and Stearns.

39. On the compagnonnages consult the following: E. Martin Saint-Léon, Le compagnonnage (Paris, 1901); Emile Coornaert, Les compagnonnages en France du moyen age à nos jours (Paris, 1966).

40. For the early years, see Rudolph Rocker, Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice (London, 1938), pp. 66-67; and André Marchal, Le mouvement syndical en France (Paris, 1945), p. 10; Léon de Seilhac, Les congrès ouvriers en France de 1876 à 1897 (Paris, 1899), pp. 1-14.

41. Stafford, From Anarchism to Reformism, p. 20; Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France, p. 63.

42. Quotes appear in Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, pp. 7 and 14.

43. L. Goyard, La crise du petit commerce et le syndicalisme (Paris, 1911), p. 15.

44. On Guesde see Claude Willard, Le mouvement socialiste en France 1893-1905: Les guesdistes (Paris, 1965).

45. Quote appears in Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 1, p. 36 (their emphasis).

46. On the early workers' congresses see *ibid.*, pp.

32-71 of vol. 1; pp. 210-238 in Weil, Histoire du mouvement social; de Seilhac, Les congrès ouvriers en France.

47. See Stafford's work From Anarchism to Reformism; and Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, pp. 128-131.

48. Brousse quoted by Stafford, From Anarchism to Reformism, pp. 175-176.

49. See pp. 218-248 in Weil, Histoire du mouvement social.

50. For quote see René Garmy, Histoire du mouvement syndical en France (Paris, 1933), vol. 1, p. 147.

51. Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 2, pp. 128-130; see p. 129 for quote. See Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France, pp. 63-67. For an overview of the congresses from 1886-1914, see Robert Brécy, Le mouvement syndical en France 1871-1921: Essai bibliographique (Paris, 1963), pp. 17-83.

52. See bottom of p. 20 in *ibid.* for the Sunday conversation in May, 1890, between Engels and Lafargue.

53. For the development of the tactic of the general strike by Briand and Pelloutier see Jacques Julliard, Fernand Pelloutier et les origines du syndicalisme d'action directe (Paris, 1971).

54. For a brief overview of the political situation see Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France, p. 48.

55. Fernand Pelloutier, Histoire des bourses du travail. In the F(7) series at the AN there is a circular from the Minister of the Interior dated 8 Dec. 1894 to prefects regarding the bourses du travail, in which he assured the prefects were primarily employment agencies. He expected the bourses to create no problems because they had neither legal nor actual autonomy. Discussion of politics, religion, or even economics in general were forbidden by the terms of their charters. He advised the prefects that they were authorized to close the bourses if these organizations strayed from their original purpose.

56. Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 2, pp. 132-157. La CGT et le mouvement syndical, pp. 26-37.

57. On Pelloutier's anarchism see his Histoire des bourses du travail, pp. 87-90, 98.

58. For the beginnings of the CGT to 1899 see the following: Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 2, pp. 159-172; May, Les origines du syndicalisme révolutionnaire, pp. 94-108, Lefranc, Le syndicalisme en France, pp. 64-70.

59. Brécy, Le mouvement syndical en France, p. 37.

60. The CGT's liaison with the FBT was a happy one for the Confederation since, in 1895, the CGT had 85 centimes in its treasury and 47.65 francs in debts. See La CGT et le mouvement syndical, p. 40.

61. Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 2, pp. 173-185, for the party machinations from 1899 to 1900.

62. See p. 178 in *ibid.* for quote.

63. For activity within the FBT and the CGT from 1900 to Amiens see the following: Brécy, Le mouvement syndical en France, pp. 51-64; Blum, Les congrès ouvriers, vol. 2, pp. 187-191; Ridley, Revolutionary Syndicalism in France, pp. 67-76; Lefranc, Le syndicalisme en France, pp. 71-84, 125-146; May, Les origines du syndicalisme révolutionnaire, pp. 109-114, 120-135; La CGT et le mouvement syndical, pp. 73-85.

64. On the Amiens congress see *ibid.*, pp. 95-99; Brécy, Le mouvement syndical en France, pp. 63-68. The quotes of Renard and Keufer appear in *ibid.*, p. 64.

65. Garmy, Histoire du mouvement syndical, vol. 1, p. 159.

PERSONS CITED

The biographical material used here comes from a single source: Jean Maitron, Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier français, vols. 10-15 (Paris, 1964). Unfortunately, Maitron does not list information on every person cited. The reason for including this material is to give the reader a brief background on some of the working-class spokesmen and spokeswomen. Biographical information is confined to those who were specifically syndicalists.

Allemane, Jean (1843-1920), was born in the Haute-Garonne. The son of a wine seller, he left for Paris to learn the trade of typographer. He was imprisoned for his strike activity, and ultimately deported for his participation in the Commune. After being amnestied, he joined a cooperative and then the PO. In 1890 he formed his own party, and served in parliament for five years, although he regarded electoral activity as nothing more than a vehicle for propaganda. He was a supporter of the general strike and antimilitarism. He was a member of the CGT, and after 1905, of the SFIO. After 1910 he retired from party affairs. He supported the party's stand in World War I, but was a sympathizer of the newly formed Communist Party in 1920.

Dumoulin, Georges (1877-1963), was born at Pas-de-Calais and died in Lille. His father worked as a peddler, his mother

as a tile cutter. Georges left school when he was eight to work as a crop picker with his father. At the age of eleven he was working in a sugar beet factory, and later in a coal mine. He attended school with the help of the bourse. He became involved in unionism as a result of the coal miners' strike at Courrières. He became a Guesdist, but broke with the POF after returning from his army duty. He was fired, jailed, and later exiled from Belgium, where he had fled to escape persecution for his union activity. In 1906 he was Secretary of the Young Syndicalist Miners. He subsequently moved to Paris, where he again supported himself by doing odd jobs. After 1910 he was given a permanent position as CGT treasurer. In 1911 he was sentenced to thirteen months in prison for his antimilitarist activities. He was mobilized into the army on 4 Aug. 1914. Dumoulin's war activities are discussed in a later chapter of this work. After the war he joined the SFIO, but did not participate in the disputes of that organization. In 1931 he returned to the CGT. After World War II he was sentenced to death for his support of Vichy during the war. He went into hiding, working as a farmhand in a small village in the Eure until 1951, when his sentence was remanded and his miners' pension reinstated. He returned to the Nord and converted to Catholicism.

Griffuelhes, [Jean] Victor (1874-1922), was born in the Lot-et-Garonne. He was from a poor family, and left school at fourteen to apprentice as a shoemaker. After his military's service he moved to Paris and for a time became active in socialist politics, finally abandoning politics for unionism. Within the CGT he supported the move away from craft unionism to industrial unionism. He was a remarkable organizer, directing the campaign for the eight-hour day and against the reformists within the CGT. He also personally directed several strikes, many of which would have foundered without his direction. He served numerous prison terms. His irascible nature earned him more foes than friends. His enemies were finally able to undermine Griffuelhes' reputation by claiming he had misappropriated CGT funds. Griffuelhes resigned as CGT secretary and limited his activities to journalism thereafter. He supported the war effort, perhaps because of his long-standing hatred of the Germans. He was also an admirer of the Russian revolution.

Jouhaux, Léon (1879-1954), was born and died in Paris. A member of a working-class family with a history of radicalism, Jouhaux apprenticed in numerous trades, finally becoming a match worker. He continued his education by reading in the library. At sixteen he was involved in his first strike. After his army service, he returned to match making and militancy. He was imprisoned and fired for his radicalism. Until hired by the CGT, Jouhaux stayed alive by working at odd jobs. He was elected secretary of the Confederation as a compromise candidate, revolutionary enough for the left, but not enough to frighten away the

reformists. His actions at the start of and during the First World War are discussed in the text. Jouhaux was imprisoned by Vichy during World War II. He remained General Secretary of the CGT until 1947. In 1951 he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Keufer, Auguste (1851-1924), was born in the Haut-Rhin. He was orphaned and raised by the Brothers of the Christian Doctrine. He became a compositor, moved to Paris, and married. Keufer's attraction to positivism gave his ideas on unionism a highly moral quality. He was the first treasurer of the CGT, and carried on numerous battles advocating the reformist position against the anarchists. He supported the government of national defense in 1914. Keufer was the guiding light of the Fédération du Livre, serving as its general secretary from 1884 to 1920.

Lagardelle, Hubert (1875-1958), was born of a middle-class Toulousean family. He was a socialist journalist and an advocate of syndicalism. He supported the government during World War I and Vichy during World War II, and was subsequently sentenced to prison for collaboration.

Merrheim, Alphonse (1871-1925), came from a working-class family. He left school at the age of ten to work as a soapmaker. This was the first of numerous apprenticeships. He joined the POF, leaving the party because of the violence of the May Day 1890 demonstrations. He created a coppersmithing union in 1891, and was instrumental in getting his union fused into the Federation of Metallurgists. At Paris he was shocked by the demagoguery and immorality of many of the militants, although he had spent six days in jail for adultery in 1897. At Amiens he opposed joining the politicians, but rejected antimilitarism. He participated in numerous strikes, directing many of them between 1905 and 1910. He was honest and a hard worker. He built solid friendships, such as with Griffuelhes, with whom he frequently disagreed, and with Monatte, with whom he launched La Vie Ouvrière. He approved of Jouhaux's actions during the July Crisis, but was one of the first to criticize the policy of Union sacrée. He remained as interim secretary of the CGT during the German offensive while the rest of the Confederal Committee went to Bordeaux with the government. By the end of 1914 he was working with Trotsky and Martov; by 1915 he was leading peace demonstrations. His actions earned him great opprobrium. He was tagged as a German agent, and never went anywhere without being accompanied by two large dogs. He attended the Zimmerwald conference, and was able to get his more moderate proposal passed over Lenin's. By the end of that year he had returned to the center, not wishing to see the syndicalists split. After a violent critique of Jouhaux in 1918, he voted and remained with the majority.

Pelloutier, Fernand (1867-1901), was the son of a postal worker, raised in Saint-Nazaire. He was rejected for a

baccalaureate degree because he was more involved in fantasies than in schoolwork. He supported Aristide Briande's election as a Radical, then joined the POF, leaving the party when the Guesdists rejected the notion of the general strike. By 1892, when he settled permanently in Paris, he had become an anarchist, although he spoke out against anarchist terrorism. By this time he was ill from lupus and in financial difficulty. Jean Jaurès obtained a position for Pelloutier in the Labor Office, an appointment that brought bitter charges of government cooptation against Pelloutier in the 1900 FBT congress.

Pouget, Emile (1860- ?), was born in the department of the Aveyron of a middle-class family. He migrated to Paris, participating eventually in the creation of the Textile Workers' Union. By then he was an anarchist and committed to antimilitarism. He served three years in prison for his participation as a leader in an 1883 meeting of unemployed workers. During the years of anarchist terrorism, Pouget served as bourse secretary in Algeria. He published Père Peinard, collaborated with Sébastien Faure on several libertarian journals, and in 1900 became editor of La Voix du Peuple. Pouget's appearance was described as "ironic to the point of looking almost acerbic, philosophical." He spent another two months in prison in 1908 for his strike activity. In 1909 he married and retired to the provinces. He supported the government during World War I.

Yvetot, Georges (1868-1942), was the son of a policeman. Born in Paris, he was orphaned at an early age. He became a typographer. He was an anarchist and antimilitarist, and opposed the political socialists' involvement in unionism. From 1902 to 1918 Yvetot was second in command in the CGT. He was extremely authoritarian, earning the nickname "Bulldog." He and the equally stubborn Griffuelhes clashed frequently. Yvetot was arrested numerous times for his radical activities, serving a combined total of several years in prison. He resigned from the CGT in opposition to the politics of the Union sacrée. During most of the war he worked as a typographer and directed the National Association of War Orphans. In 1918 he leaned toward the CGT minority. Between the wars he worked as a proofreader, and was involved with unionism on a local level. He was a pacifist during World War II.