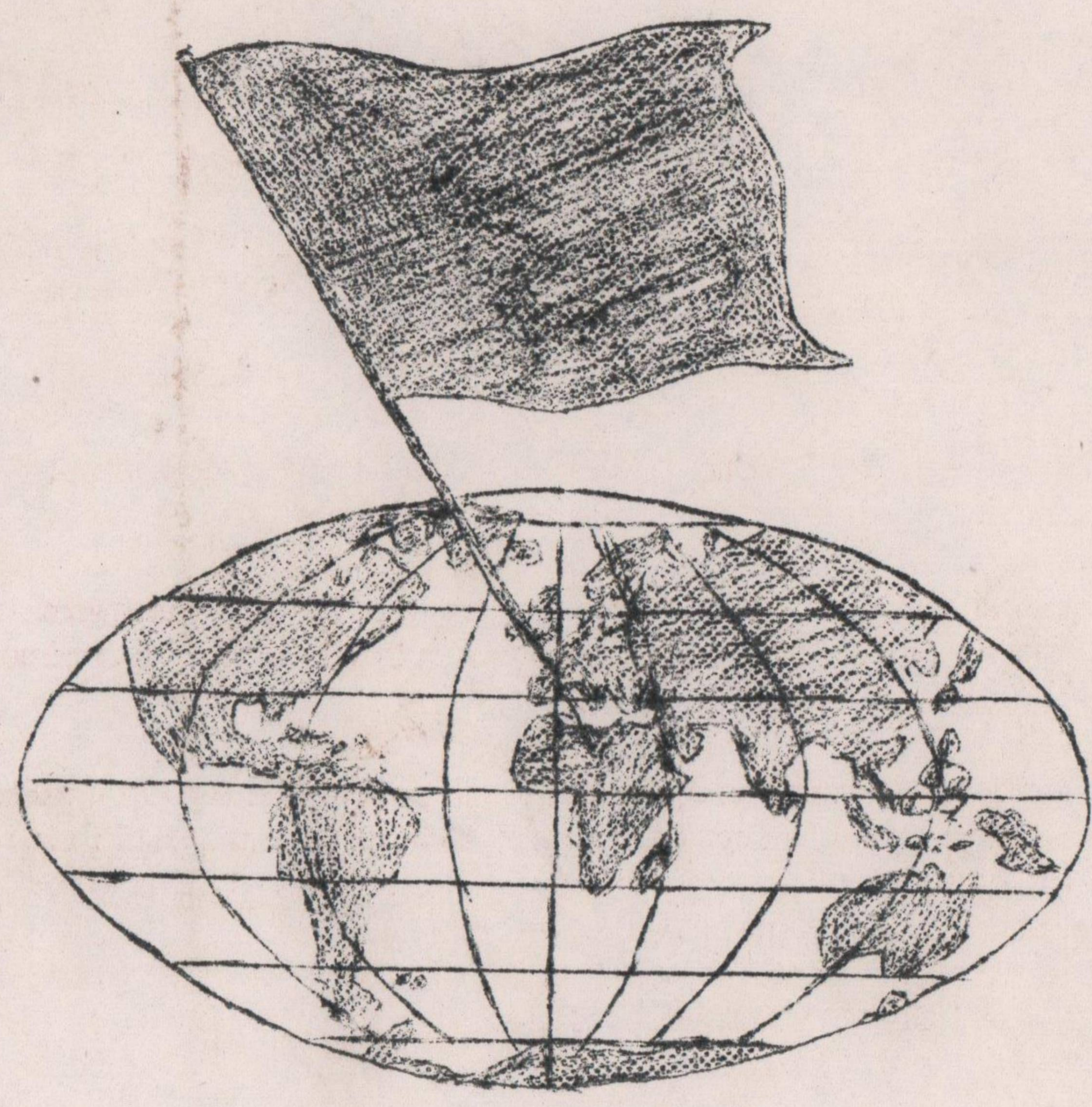


Organisation of
Revolutionary Anarchists (G.B.)
delegates reports.
N.B. translations of the key
documents to follow as pt.2.



I.A.F

World Anarchist Congress : Paris August 1-4th

1971

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Report number one : delegates impressions &
notes.

ORA.
138, Ponnymead
Harlow, Essex.

CHEZ LES ANARS

* the following report was sent to us by a comrade who for various reasons remains anonymous. He is not British but our delegates can vouch for him and the validity of his comments; for our own conclusions see the political report, etc.

The second international congress of anarchist federations (C.I.F.A. II) was recently held in Paris, more or less clandestinely, on the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th of August (1971).

This congress was the successor to that held in Carrara, Italy, in August 1968, where the IAF (International of Anarchist Federations) and its committee of international relations (C.R.I.F.A.) were created.

During the past three years, the CRIFA has been based in Paris, originally in liason with the FAF (Federation des Anarchistes Francais) and later with ORA (Organization des Revolutionnaires Anarchistes), a far more militant French grouping. The internal French situation had distinct repercussions for this second congress, which was attended by still another French organisation - U.F.A. (Union Federale Anarchiste).

55 delegates representing groups and federations from 21 countries participated in the Paris congress, along with 168 observers (among whom were one Rumanian who had to leave abruptly for reasons of security, and three Spanish anarchists coming directly from inside Spain and whose presence was unannounced to the congress).

Votes were seldom taken. One vote was given to each of the French groups, and one to each of the represented countries. These were:

Italy, West Germany, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium, Scotland (whose delegation included English militants), Spain, Portugal, Bulgaria, Japan, Vietnam, Quebec, Canada, USA, Mexico, Columbia, Costa Rica, Uruguay (whose delegation included one representative from the Argentinian TUPAC), and Cuba (whose delegation left the congress after the second day. The delegation from Belfast was unable to attend due to events in Northern Ireland.

The Paris congress cannot be called a success. Whatever that means. Too much time was lost to the senile histrionics of various relics of the anarchist movement of the thirties. Instead of gracefully retiring, these elements actively discouraged younger militants from engaging themselves in the International. A counter-congress arose among the younger delegations, who occasionally threatened to pull out of the official one, and met in small groups where the real work was done and contacts made (More on this below.)

Time was lost too, to the disputes going on within the French movement. ORA, who organised the congress, was constantly being attacked by the F.A.F. and U.F.A. The theoretical substance of these attacks was soon lost on the non-French participants, who realised that they were only serving to block the congress.

Inadvertently, however, one fundamental theme managed to dominate the official congress: the relation of anarchist ideology and practice to struggles of national liberation.

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This theme was introduced during the first two days, which were virtually lost over the issue of the participation/presence of the Cuban delegation.

The congress opened with the report of the outgoing secretariat of the CRIFA. This included a severe critique of orthodox european anarchism. A split in the French movement between "traditional" anarchism, and libertarian communism (or "anarcho-marxism"), immediately became apparent as both tendencies prepared for a debate which would lead the congress to declare its adherence to one or the other. This split underlay the proceedings of the entire congress, but only became explicit during the final debates on national liberation and was never resolved by the congress as a whole.

It was eclipsed, though, shortly after the secretariat's report, by a 'point of order' raised by the Spanish delegation (actually the Federacion Anarquista Iberica - an exile group which claims to be in constant touch with anarchist militants inside Spain). Far too vaguely they alluded to the 'reformist' position of the Movimiento Libertario Cubano en Exilio (MCLE), and to 'compromising' actions committed by Souchy, one of the delegates, when he was in Spain in 1964. The imprecision of the FAI's charges caused an absurd waste of time, which was augmented by attempts by the FAF and UFA to use the congress to embarrass and censure ORA. Many delegations tried unsuccessfully to move the congress on to its next business; the English delegates pointed out that the FAI had as much as anyone to answer for with regard to reformism and past 'errors'. A Commission was finally appointed to investigate the case of the Cuban movement and to make its report to the congress the next day.

Briefly, the commission reported that the political line of the MCLÉ, "reformist and liberal bourgeois", as well as the objective comportment of Souchy, had "seriously compromised the activity and character of the international revolutionary anarchist movement". Implicit in the report was the accusation that the MCLÉ was in close liason with Cuban groups in Miami which had been infiltrated by the CIA.

The report was passed easily by the congress, partially because of its vociferous endorsement by the Costa Rican and Uruguyan delegates, probably the most brilliant figures at the conference. The Cuban delegates solved the problem of their 'exclusion' from the congress (which had apparently been the object behind the FAI's imprecision) by withdrawing voluntarily. Although the first two days were largely taken up by this 'jaleo', a number of delegates gave reports on the internal situations and anarchist movements in their countries. These reports continued into the third day, which passed fairly smoothly, especially when compared to the first two, where pandemonium and near fist fights were common, and where many young comrades who had no interest in watching the impotent tirades of the older delegates were tempted to leave the congress.

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Taking these delegates' reports as being relatively symptomatic of the international anarchist movement, it appears that there are roughly three current tendencies at work.

The first can be called traditional, a confused mixture of ideas whose evolution seems to have stopped with the defeat of the Spanish Revolution, and yet, with its blatant vocabulary fetishism, admits any stream convincingly (academically) presented as Anarchist. This tendency is relevant only with regard to exile groups and to countries with strong historically-rooted anarchist movements (such as France and Italy) where the traditionalists are still active.

The French situation is a microcosm of the larger problem. May '68 marked a point which left the traditional groups far in the past. The French ORA (which originally split off from the FAF) has tried to elaborate a revolutionary (and contemporary) line capable of meeting French imperatives. Their orientation stems from the Archinov platform and can be roughly defined as anarcho-marxist or libertarian communist. This is the second current tendency. Its field of action is solidly located in the context of left-wing, working class and third world politics.

It must be stressed that any tension between the first and second tendencies exists only within the French movement and the exile groups.*

ORA constantly hoped that the congress would elaborate a precise revolutionary position, close to its own views, which the international would accept. This was prevented, not on the international level, but by the two old-fashioned French groups and by the exile groups (who showed little comprehension of the issues involved). For the vast majority of groups at the congress, this was no issue at all; they were already libertarian communist in orientation and prepared to use marxism as an analytic tool.

* this is the comrade's personal opinion, and not ours. EDS.

The third tendency can be described as one based firmly on anarcho-communism but which works on other levels besides "class struggle", the most obvious example being the "counter-culture". Here the particular conditions of the various countries represented at the congress showed their effect (for eg. violence is accepted and non-problematic for the Latin-Americans; for the Danes and others it is rejected in the context of their own situation but taken as necessary in certain foreign cases). This third tendency can be called multi-dimensional, but its plurality poses no legitimate problems for the organisation of the international since the underlying base of libertarian communism is constant. The only problem (apart from ideological dogmatism) concerns certain group's understanding of situations completely foreign to them. Far too often at the congress, the international perspectives of many delegations were epiphenomena of their particular national situations.

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The issue of national liberation, raised by the Cuban question and touched upon in most of the third days reports, occupied most of the fourth and last day of the congress. Anarchist theory, of course, posits a blanket condemnation of all statist regimes. But the contradictions inherent in this position arise on the level of praxis. The Cuban case is a paradigm. Strongly anti-Castro (and in exile) they compromised themselves in the pro-American camp; their position, once clarified to the congress, was uniformly rejected. However, this crude level of the dilemma of emphasis is sometimes hard to avoid; the best (and most obvious) guideline is that the "prime enemy" must be defined in terms of where the anarchists are actively engaged. (In cases of transferral from one to the other of the two superpower blocs, this means that the exile groups are virtually lost and useless apart from simply supplying information to local anarchists). And it remains the case that the present anarchist international represents militants drawn overwhelmingly from the Western bloc. For this international the prime enemies remain capitalism and American imperialism.

But given the fact that in many countries opposition to American Imperialism arises in the form of "struggles of national liberation", often under marxist-leninist guidance (but just as often deviated by national bourgeoisie), a 'choice between evils', contradictory to anarchist thought, is sometimes imposed practically on anarchists who act. The debates on national liberation were complex, but one fundamental point was underlined: while anarchists must remain anti-bolshevik in organisation and practice, the emphasis of their actions must not fall to the level of impotent purism. Instead of being unengaged and theoretically critical (however correct) anarchists must locate themselves in movements of national liberation, in order to prod them in a revolutionary direction, preventing both Stalinist take-overs or the simple exchange of ruling classes.

The congress revealed a certain lack of understanding among anarchists fighting American imperialism, those from the Eastern bloc, and those from relatively "neutral" capitalist countries. Motions of solidarity with various "struggles of national liberation" were introduced on the fourth day of the congress but were not voted upon as a result of their imprecision. One German delegate interjected: "Quit the verbal masturbation. Solidarity is action."

But the motions, particularly those from the french ORA, were also introduced in an attempt to crystallize and define the revolutionary content of the international. Here the split between the first two tendencies outlined above became most clear as the traditionalists made a last attempt to bait ORA. The nature of the international remains vague.

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The following is a brief summary of the delegations which participated at the congress. Obviously incomplete, it is given in order to cover certain miscellaneous information and to try to present some impression as to the character of the congress

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In the debates on national liberation, the only speaker to convincingly use the purist anarchist condemnation of all statist regimes, without distinction, was the delegate from Vietnam,*who simply saw all of Southeast Asia as a pawn being destroyed by various imperialisms. With his self-avowed Taoism he was one of the few participants at the congress to extend anarchism into a mystical dimension. He was pleased to remind certain distinctly anti-mystical temperaments at the congress that Lao-Tze figures as the world's first anarchist.

The delegate from JAPAN spoke very little, due to his uncertainty with French, but gave an excellent report on the Japanese situation. He was generally quite disheartened by the European absurdities.

The delegation from SPAIN (really the FAI in exile) was a pathetic travesty of whatever the FAI had been in the past. Not unsurprisingly they showed a solid knowledge of anarchist ideology, but one got the impression that their politics stopped in 1939.

The delegate from MEXICO has to be included with the Spanish FAI; his federation is fundamentally a Spanish exile group, and he has little contact with the younger (and active) Mexican anarchists.

The delegation from BULGARIA was also thoroughly out of touch, but it too was able to demonstrate a considerable acquaintance with anarchist ideology. This, however, came as a surprise, since the delegation generally behaved like a gang of pompous bureaucratic fools. Future internationals should restrict their participation severely.

The delegation from PORTUGAL (also an exile group) participated little, and when it did was incomprehensible as a result of the extreme senility of its speakers.

The delegations from FRANCE have already been covered. Just note the antagonism between FAF and UFA on the one hand, and ORA on the other. (Different anarchist currents exist in France, such as the spirit behind the weekly CHARLIE-HEBDO, but were not represented at the Congress.)

The delegations from Germany (Mainz and Berlin) were products of the German New Left of the 'sixties. They were experienced, competent and earnest.

The delegation from ITALY was also quite competent, although their spokesman was too old for his job and was prone to rant along with the other 'veterans'. The Congress was presented a resume of the Milan and Rome bombings, the assassination of Pinelli, and the Valpreda case. At last the Italian anarchists have been able to document proofs concerning the whole affair, which not only testify to the innocence of the various anarchists arrested but also to the attempted fascist coup d'etat which had the active support of the CIA and the Greek regime. The Italians are calling for a world-wide propaganda campaign to focus on the upcoming Valpreda case.

The delegation from SCOTLAND (which included two representatives from the British O.R.A.) was what one would expect: rational and intelligent. The Scots/ORA proposed to take over the next international secretariat, in hopes of providing a more international (as opposed to southern European) liaison service, but were defeated by the Italian Federation (proposed by Mexico and seconded by the FAI) by a vote of 9 to 3, the rest abstaining or refusing to vote. Both had strong positions in posing their candidature, but it was the proven strength of the Italian organisation which carried the vote.

The delegate from QUEBEC gave a good report on the Quebecois situation, and stressed the necessity of uniting 'straight' politics (for him the politics of the FLQ) with what he termed the 'Revolution of Madness'. No one who didn't already know what he was talking about understood his point.

The delegations from COLUMBIA and the USA participated little and acted more as observers.

The delegations from HOLLAND and BELGIUM were thoroughly pissed off with the histrionics at the congress itself and preferred to participate in the small groups, where the real work was done and the contacts made.

The delegations from COSTA RICA and URUGUAY were superb on all levels. Their analyses were highly sophisticated and to the point; this partially as a result of their direct engagement with guerilla action in their own countries. (The Uruguayans are in liaison with the Tupamaros.)

*the delegate for Vietnam lives in Europe. EDS

The delegate from CANADA, being relatively bilingual and having a fair acquaintance with the realities facing different groups (the french situation, exile groups, counter-culture movements etc) was constantly having to make translations and explanations between various antagonistic sectors, largely without success.

The delegation from DENMARK was numerous and very young. Their presence seemed a sexual threat to many of the older participants, who are easily intimidated by any embodiment (imagined or otherwise) of the liberation they prefer to treat only in theory. The Danes were constantly criticised as not being "serious" although their critics were the real clowns of the congress.

The only speech made to the congress by the delegate from NORWAY was one of its unquestioned highlights. Apart from his own language he spoke only a broken docker's English. The effect was totally comic but also to the point as he ripped into the older delegates as "fuckin idiots" and into the congress as a "fuckin circus". Behind his speech was the simple observation that concerning too many participants there was a huge discrepancy between their professed anarchism and their very non-anarchistic comportment.

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It is this discrepancy in fact which will remain the central organisational problem for future internationals. Divergent political lines, if they confront one another intelligently, will only be of secondary importance. Differences between young and old, nordics and latins, were constantly being posited as the weakness of the congress, but these differences were transcended often enough to indicate that the malaise (for the international) lies elsewhere.

Parallel to the 'official' meetings was a counter-congress which met informally in the evenings and was truly anarchist in structure and spirit. All the really productive work of the Paris congress, from discussion and organisation of international strategy for the Valpreda case, translations of articles, exchange of tactical ideas based on the experience of those participating, to general news, discussions of ideology and making personal and group contacts, was done in this latter "counter-congress" structure. The absence of those responsible for wasting so much time at the official congress was conspicuous and welcome. These elements do nothing as anarchists beyond preparing for congresses and writing endless attacks on others. Keep them out of the international and it might become a useful organisation, which now it is not.

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The next international congress will be held in Italy within one year.

D. Paris 10/8/71

there are literally hundreds of pages of the main documents - reports of local situations, position documents, etc. We would appreciate help from any french/spanish/italian speakers in their translation. The second part of the report, which will contain these documents (including the Cuban position) will be sent to ORA comrades and any others who want to see them and send some cash to cover our costs.

we are sending these reports out to other countries and hope that, the comrades will join us in discussing the problems of the congress and of the international. We shall be pleased to receive material on this.

Political Report

The report above gives all the main features of the congress, the following are attempts to draw some conclusions. They are my own opinions and the other comrades who were delegates will no doubt make their own observations.

The Cubans (MCLE)

- 1 The position, as advanced in the documents sent to the conference, of the Cubans was reformist eg. disavowal of revolutionary struggle, 'educational gradualism' etc.
- 2 The conduct of Souchy, and the enmity of the FAI to him personally, was not put before the congress in any way that would have enabled a clear idea of the affair to emerge. We attacked the FAI for their hypocrisy in 'hunting reformists' The truth about Souchy is not known, the accusations have still to be proved.
- 3 The link with the CIA was not proven at all. This accusation carried the most weight and it should be proved or withdrawn.
- 4 If the accusations are made explicit they provide the basis for a political clarification of revolutionary anarchism. This political necessity has nothing to do with the organisational fetishisms of the FAI. It cannot be achieved by innuendo and a witchhunt. The organisational manoeuvres of the congress must be condemned. It was sheer farce to talk about 'the integrity of international anarchism' in a conference dominated by the benign presence of Madame Montseny, with purely imaginary delegations, with three french votes etc.
- 5 When the international movement decides to take the international into its hands and away from fossils and congress-freaks we may well find that we cannot work with some people because of their counter-revolutionary politics. When this happens we must ensure that such differences are recognised clearly, that all sides are put, and that any separations are based upon understood principles, NOT upon organisational manoeuvres.

The Spanish exiles

- 1 The influence of the FAI was predominant in the congress for a number of reasons.
 - i) each of the warring French factions vie for its favour. This gives the FAI great power and no responsibility. (Not to mention votes in the congress.) Its assets and aid can make or break any French tendency.
 - ii) the FAI's influence extends over the other exiles (Bulgarians and Portugese in particular), giving them further weight. The exiles recognise that their influence exists only as long as the FAI is dominant.
 - iii) not satisfied with this the FAI interferes to the extent of trying to arrange 'delegations' from Spanish exile groups to represent South American countries, over the head of the indigenous movements who are both younger and more active. (eg. Mexico and Venezuela).
- 2 The FAI must face up to their responsibility for the 'mistakes' made during the Spanish Revolution. Ex-ministers do not make the best accusers in heresy-trials.
3. The whole question of 'exile' movements and fair representation at the congress must be dealt with in the open. The allocation of X delegates and Y observers should either be based upon an agreed standard or admitted for what they were - the fancy of the organisers. Either conferences are representative of the real movement and make decisions, or, they are not, and provide only a forum for discussion, they should not be the latter pretending to be the former. Bona fide movts should make clear their attitude towards the international if it continues to be

the present "fuckin circus".

The Internal French situation

- 1 The following is a personal evaluation. The ORA is the best of the French groups. Hard-working, spending a great deal of time in outlining collective positions, concerned to explain its ideas and plans. It is firmly based upon anarcho-communist principles. Its drawback is its tendency to seek political victory by manoeuvres eg. the passing of resolutions, regardless of the quality of the debates or whether the points were understood, annoyed me greatly, even when i was in agreement with the points. The ORA's impatience with the appalling state of the rest of the French movement (as exhibited at the congress) and the really vicious enmity between these factions helped to explain and to partly excuse this tendency. The ORA's sense of isolation makes them 'harder' than, for their own good, they ought to be. (We shall be reproducing a lot of the French ORA material for comrades to make their own evaluation.)
- 2 The FAF is the AFB/Freedom rolled into one - a political mess, and organisation -al quagmire. With a small clique ^{who} won't answer to anyone in the middle. Some of the FAF autonomous groups were good. Their political statements were loose but they tried to communicate and debate. The FAF/Monde Libertainaire centre are no use though.
- 3 The UFA. I was not able to make much of a conclusion on. They tried to sit half-way between ORA and FAF. Their position was not clear. (we shall be translating some of their material for latter distribution).
- 4 The French groups insisted upon forcing their arguments on the congress. To avoid this in future the CRIFA should either change completely the basis of 'delegations' or have only one per country (with all factions included). Also, since they have thrust it under our noses, the French groups would do us a service to communicate their differing positions to the international movement.

"traditional" versus "anarcho-marxist"

- 1 This characterisation is wrong, in my opinion. The historical movement has always contained a tendency firmly based upon the class struggle eg. Bakunin-Malatesta-Bernerri. The problem is not so much a fight between explicit tendencies but a fight FOR explicit tendencies - against those who want to claim the 'only' revolutionary road and those who would mix liberalism, individualism and libertarian communism and use 'theory' (derived at will from either) to explain every temporary accomodation to events.*
(*In Britain the first tendency is represented by the Black Flag and the second by the people with the immortal statement of principles containing the brilliant reference to 'the state and its armed wings - capitalism'.)
- 2 The real division, which cut accross ages, national temperaments etc, was the one between those who saw the congress as a means of serving activity, by the exchange of information and joint planning, and those whose only interest was to warm their egos with the fire of each others' bombastic speeches. As has been mentioned, they took up most of the time but were never at any of the discussions on work. This is not to argue that the congresses should be informal and/or totally formless. On the contrary, their basis should be debated and agreed by the international movement. Then we can clear the way for truly representative meetings of anarchist militants, without the dead wood. In this context political debates will not take the form of compromised old men savaging other old men they accuse of being compromised. One of the english ORA comrades made the point in a speech when she told these people, " we respect you, we wish to learn from you, but we will not be lectured and we want the right to discuss. The knowledge and experience you have is necessary to the movement, but it is the property of the movement and not something which gives you privilege."

National Liberation struggles

- I Missing from all the 'resolutions' was the one basic principle around which the question must turn. The class nature of the movement and of its leaders. In many situations in the third world 'national liberation' is the slogan of stalinist led movements which aim to establish 'national' capitalisms as distinct from colonial status. The role of stalinism/maoism as an ideology for the national bourgeoisie is worth looking at.
- 2 It follows from this characterisation that there are a number of features by which one can attempt to draw something of the nature of particular 'national liberation' struggles.
 - i) does it serve a local capitalist class/stalinist bureaucracy.
 - ii) will its objective situation enable the mobilisation of the people to end at this stage.

To take two examples which anarchists must argue about. In Quebec the quebeccois bourgeoisie is the tool by which the province has been held; the economic situation of the quebeccois in relation, firstly to Canadian society in general, and, secondly to the dominance of US capital in Canada, means that these second class citizens are expressing social and political aspirations in supporting the demand for national independence. That these demands must be anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist from the start.

to judge the situation by the two criterion above I would answer to i) no, in fact it is opposition to it, and ii) the demand for 'national liberation', in this situation, encompasses social revolution.

Now, try to think about Ireland as it is, not as various editorials in the anarchist press would have it (eg. 'when sectarianism is overcome' etc). Take the above paragraph and change Quebec to Ulster, Canada to UK, etc. In answer to question i), we have, - the eire bourgeoisie is as much a tool of UK capitalism as Stormont. The demand for a united Ireland threatens Lynch as much as Faulkner. The continuance of struggle threatens the liberals and stalinists with complete and public bankruptcy -, see the headline in the Morning Star 'end the violence' (27.8.71). Only the working class can 'unite Ireland', only on a social programme can the rebellion become a revolution, and only through revolutionary action around a social programme can the sectarianism be ended.

General

- I Just as we in ORA have disagreed with the formulation of 'waiting' til we're bigger'; of creating local federations when we have full groups, and a real national federation when we have real locals, because we do not see it as possible to separate each stage. Just as we have argued that the development of a good local groups demands full contact with the experience of other, new and old groups; so we should recognise that particular national situations are of interest to our own movement, their experience should be related to ours.
- 2 A number of foreign comrades, from groups who are close to us politically, will be coming over to the November conference. If it is possible we should try to maintain a high level of contact. This is a full-time task as important as the production of our propaganda. Particularly since the situation of the international is shaky and the contacts made now may help in the creation of a healthy international.

Keith Nathan London 27.8.71