

KONSTANTINOS SPERAS

The Life and Activities of a Greek Anarcho-Syndicalist

BY LEONARDOS KOTTIS

Translation by James Sotros

Edited by Paul Pomonis

Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) was one of the pioneers of the working class trade-union movement in Greece. He spent the biggest part of his life in prison and in exile. He fought with all his might for the emancipation of the working class, for an autonomous trade-union movement, for a society without slaves and bosses. He represented revolutionary syndicalism and as a consequence he incurred the wrath of the State and the Communist Party. He was slandered, his work and actions were distorted and eventually he was murdered, along with dozens of other working class militants, in the name of the one and only "orthodox" way to socialism.

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2006

Konstantinos Speras: The Life and Activities of a Greek Anarcho-Syndicalist
by Leonardos Kottis.

Written as the preface to the book by K. Speras *The Strike of Serifos, that is narration of the bloody scenes of 21 August 1916 in the mines of Megalo Livadi of Serifos*. Translation by James Sotros. Edited by Paul Pomonis. Notes by Leonardos Kottis and James Sotros.

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What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is a political theory which opposes the State and capitalism. It says that
people with economic power (capitalists) and those with political power (politicians of
all stripes left, right or centre) use that power for their own benefit, and not (like they
claim) for the benefit of society. Anarchism says that neither exploitation nor
government is natural or necessary, and that a society based on freedom, mutual aid
and equal share of the good things in life would work better than this one.

Anarchism is also a political movement. Anarchists take part in day-to-day struggles
(against poverty, oppression of any kind, war etc) and also promote the idea of
comprehensive social change. Based on bitter experience, they warn that new
'revolutionary' bosses are no improvement: 'ends' and 'means' (what you want and how
you get it) are closely connected.

INTRODUCTION: NO ANARCHIST IS AN ISLAND

I love Pietro Gori's line "Give flowers to the rebels who failed" but that means we have to
know who they are. This pamphlet is partly a simple commemoration of a life spent
struggling for anarchism. But more than that, it is an opportunity for learning. Not simply
learning the names of more anarchists, but to see what they tried to do, and how it turned
out.

All histories are also stories. Those who see their happy end as the rise of the Workers'
State or the triumph of capitalism have nothing useful to teach us. Or rather, they teach it
despite themselves. History is made of facts in the same way that walls are made of stones.
Here and there one sticks out (often awkwardly!) which is part of *our* story. Often the
rubble, buried out of sight, used as the foundation for *their* wall lets us reconstruct the
resistance they'd rather have us forget. That means we have to dig.

But enough metaphors. Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) was a Greek
anarcho-syndicalist. And he was not an island, but one of many anarchists active in the
working class movement. To be honest, when I read about the contacts between
anarchists, socialists and communists (which were possible in the early 1920s), I have a
great temptation to cry out "Don't trust them!" But that's hindsight.

In Greece (like many other countries) the mythical glamour of the Russian Bolsheviks
sucked many militants into the counter-productive surrender of independent thought and
action to the "revolutionary" vanguard. Speras resisted that trend, and paid the price paid
by so many other revolutionaries. We're happy to be presenting this pamphlet as a
contribution towards telling the broader story of the anarchist struggle in Greece – and the
world.

KSL

January 2006

LIBERTARIAN CHRONICLES

Comrades who can read Greek will be pleased to hear that the Libertarian Historical Archive (Eleftheriako Historiko Archeio) have recently begun publishing "Libertarian Chronicles" (Eleftheriaka Chronika)

Contents of issue No 1:

James Sotros, "Plotyno Rhodokanaty: A Greek Anarchist in Mexico of 19th century" (p. 3-29),

Pedro Siler, "The Socialist newspaper *El Hijo del Trabajo* (1876-1884)" (p. 30-41) and Plotyno Rhodokanaty, "Cartilla Socialista" (p. 42-62).

Editorial by Linos Kottis for the Libertarian Historical Archive (Eleftheriako Historiko Archeio)

The magazine will be published twice a year. Comrades Linos Kottis, Dimitris Troaditis and Spyros Fragos are collectively responsible for this publication.

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KONSTANTINOS SPERAS THE LIFE AND ACTIVITIES OF A GREEK ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST

THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF THE PERIOD (1904-1918)

*"...It was a war between satisfied and hungry robbers
in order to divide the world anew..." Agis Stinas*

When in 1904, the two big European camps, the Central Powers [Germany, Austria] and the Entente [France, Britain, Russia] were formed, the preconditions for the slaughter of peoples in the first worldwide capitalistic confrontation were also set.

The extremely rapid industrial growth led to the strengthening of each national bourgeoisie. Overproduction created the urgent need for the opening of new markets that would offer bigger profits and power. The need for raw materials, mainly for oil, led each national bourgeoisie to turn to the East. The big banking institutions contributed to that direction by lending huge sums to the European governments. Their aim was on the one hand to harvest the profits from the investment of capital in the military industries and on the other to control the financially underdeveloped countries.

From 1910 onwards, the Great Powers undertook an unprecedented operation of militarisation of their own peoples through the continuous renewal of their military equipment and the introduction of mass conscription and extended military service. The peoples had to be taught discipline and obedience.

The will of the international bourgeoisie for economic and political power, conveniently misnamed "national vision", eventually led millions to the slaughterhouses of the battlefields and the trenches.

The socialist movement, through the Second International, stood unable to defend the principles and the visions of the working class. The socialists and social-democrats, followed their acceptance of parliamentarism and their participation in the established power structure with the espousal of nationalism, turning themselves into social-patriots. In the anti-militarist camp only the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, the Dutch council communists, the Italian Bordiguists of the Socialist Party and the German Spartakists remained. The Second International collapsed and Rosa Luxemburg declared ironically: "*Proletarians of all countries, unite in times of peace and cut the throats of one another in times of war.*"

The murder of the successor of the Austro-Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo (28/6/1914) provided the pretext. In the following four years sixty declarations of war were announced and peoples started killing each other on four fronts: the Western, the Eastern, the Italian-Austrian and the Balkan fronts.

In October 1914, Turkey entered the war on Germany's side and the Great Powers started offering territorial acquisitions to recruit the Balkan countries to their side. The Entente's plan for a tripartite alliance between Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece failed. In 1915 the Entente offered Greece the annexation of the Asia Minor coast and Cyprus while Kavala¹ was offered to Bulgaria.

Greece's position was shaped by the rivalry between the Germanophile king Constantine, who advocated a policy of neutrality that favoured Germany, and the Anglophile prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos², who leaned towards the Entente forces. The Greek socialist organisations limited themselves to publishing a handful of anti-war manifestos. The Socialist Workers Federation of Salonica – known as Federacion³ – numerically the largest working class socialist organisation of that period – favoured a policy of neutrality. However it failed to dissociate its policy from the royalist false slogan of neutrality, thus coming to identify itself with them. In the elections of 1915 the royalists and Federacion presented a common electoral list. Federacion sent two deputies to the Greek Parliament, Ar. Sideris and Al. Kouriel.

The remaining socialist groups sided with the Entente forces, following the example set by their European comrades. On 14/7/1914 the Pan-Hellenic Workers Federation (Panellinia Ergatiki Omospondia – PEO), in a document addressed to its organisations, pointed out the imminence of war and expressed its opposition denouncing *"the war which is being masterminded by the mighty, the organs of the plutocrats..."*

Venizelos, who represented politically the interests of the high bourgeois class, believed that the annexation of the Asia Minor coast and the incorporation of the financially robust ethnic Greek population of Turkey, would result in the creation of a dynamic new state. As a matter of fact, he did not hesitate to cede Kavala to Bulgaria, when he deemed this favourable to his plans.

The refusal of Constantine to agree to the participation of Greek forces in the Gallipoli campaign against Turkey, in February 1915, led Venizelos to resign. However he regained his post, after winning the elections carried out in June of the same year.

When Bulgaria attacked Serbia, Greece called a general mobilisation. The refusal of the king to sign the decree forced Venizelos to resign for the second time (22/9/1915). Venizelos, anticipating an unfavourable electoral result, due to the non-participation of thousands of conscripts, chose to abstain. From then on Salonica became an Entente military base, while Entente forces occupied, unopposed, various Greek cities (Corfu, Argostoli, Karabournou etc). The joint Bulgarian and German troops occupied Roupell and Kavala. The 4th Greek Army Corps surrendered and its men were transported to Germany as prisoners of war while French troops occupied Piraeus.

On 17 August 1916, pro-Venizelos army officers staged a coup in Salonica aiming to force Greece's entry to the war on the Entente side. This was the so-called movement of "Ethiki Amyna" ("National Defence"). Greece was subsequently divided in two states,

one Anglophile the other Germanophile. During the winter of 1916-17 the population of the Aegean islands and Athens suffered from starvation due to the blockade imposed by the "friendly" allied fleet. Venizelos, supported by the British and the French, soon prevailed. King Constantine abdicated and went to self imposed exile, and Alexander, Constantine's second son, was proclaimed the new king. A regime of fear and terror befell the country. It was not aimed solely at the royalists, but targeted mainly the reservists who refused to serve in the army. Thus the general mobilisation that Venizelos had announced was imposed on the population.

On 11 November 1918 the war ended with the capitulation of Germany and the signing of the armistice. The victors, with their eyes fixed on the Mosul oilfields, assigned to Greece the task of looking after their interests in the region.

Throughout the war, Greek enterprises had derived enormous profits, as a direct or indirect consequence of the war. As a matter of fact, war profits had been so scandalous that the government was forced to impose restrictions on imports, regulate tariffs and impose additional taxation. Venizelos, more powerful than ever, attempted to realise his expansionist plans of Greece extending on *"two continents and five seas."* His policy came to a tragic end with the Asia Minor disaster [resulting in the total expulsion of the Greek population of the Asia Minor coasts (including Smyrna/Izmir) as the result of these political manoeuvres. Note that most of these Greeks had been born there etc. Over 1,500,000 Greek refugees moved to Greece from Asia Minor.]

THE LIFE AND ACTIVITIES OF KONSTANTINOS SPERAS (1893-1943)

His grandfather's or great grandfather's name was Konomos. He was adopted by Theofilos Speras, a descendant of the Phanariote Sperantzas family, which had moved to the Cyclades Islands⁴ from Romania. Kostantinos' father's name was Georgios and he was a seafarer. His mother's name was Polyxeni, née Peloponnesios. Kostas or Konstantis, as relatives and friends called him, was born in 1893 in Western Lotzia on the island of Serifos.

In 1907, at the age of 14, he found himself in Alexandria in Egypt. There he studied in the French School of the Frères. Two incidents from that period of the life of the future tireless syndicalist have been recorded⁵. He participated in an adolescent swimming contest and won it, something absolutely normal for a boy born and raised on the island of Serifos. The Headmaster however chose to present the award to the son of a prominent family of the Greek community of Alexandria. During some school exams, Speras was accused of cheating and he reacted by throwing the inkhorn straight at the headmaster, splitting his head open.

He married Eleni Vardoulakis and had two daughters, Moscha and Paraskevi.

THE EARLY YEARS

In Egypt he worked as a tobacco worker and came in contact with anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, mainly Greek and Italian immigrants, who during that period were very active among the tobacco workers of Alexandria and Cairo. He travelled to many European countries and was fluent in French and Arabic. When he returned to Serifos, financial hardships forced him to sell his mother's allotment. Soon he was immersed into intense syndicalist and political activity. He was among the founding members of the Labour Centre of Athens (Ergatiko Kentro Athinas – EKA) in March 1910.

Speras became also a member of the Socialist Centre of Athens (Sosialistiko Kentro Athinas), at a time when socialists of various orientations rallied behind this organisation founded by Nikolaos Giannios⁶.

In March 1914 he found himself in Kavala, where he participated in the big tobacco workers' strike, during which he was arrested and sent to the Tripoli prison.

In 1916, on the demand of the local miners, he returned to Serifos, where he set up the local union, the Union of Workingmen and Miners of Serifos (Somateio Ergaton Metallefton Serifou) and became its first president. He also drafted the Union's Constitutional Resolution, which is considered one of the most radical and revolutionary of that period. As the Union's president he undertook the defence of the rights of the workers against the absolutism of the mining company, which maintained very close links with the Athens governments.

When the workers realised that their continuous protests in the Syros and Athens newspapers bore no results whatsoever, the historic strike of August 1916 broke out. The strike was bloodily suppressed by the royalist gendarmes who came to the bosses' help. The clashes between the miners (assisted by their families) and the troops left 4 workers and 4 gendarmes dead and dozens injured. The dead workers were Michael Zoilis, Themistoklis Kouzoupis, Michael Mitrofanis and Ioannis Protopapas.

In the wake of the strike Speras was arrested and imprisoned along with other strikers in the Syros jail. It was there that he wrote a chronicle of the events of the strike, which was firstly published in 1919 under the title *The Strike of Serifos, that is narration of the bloody scenes of 21 August 1916 in the mines of Megalo Livadi of Serifos*. In 1917 he was transferred to the jail at the Firka Fortress of Chania, Crete. While kept there, he addressed an appeal to the Labour Centre of Chania (Ergatiko Kentro Chanion), seeking their support⁷.

In August 1918, Speras in collaboration with Kostas Bastounopoulos, a moderate socialist, and others founded in the town of Ermoupoli of the Syros island, the Educative Labour Society (Morfotikos Ergatikos Omilos)⁸. The Society assisted in the publishing of the newspaper *Ergatis (Worker)*, the organ of the Labour Center of Cyclades (Ergatiko Kentro Kykladon)⁹.

THE 1ST CONGRESS OF THE GREEK GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (GSEE) 21-28 OCTOBER 1918

Speras actively participated in the fermentation that led to the foundation of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE), representing the anarcho-syndicalist tendency. This tendency comprised a large number of delegates and its main representatives were Kostas Speras, Giannis Fanourakis and Stavros Kouchtsoglou¹⁰.

During the Congress Speras, who it should be noted was the first to address the delegates, upheld the principle of the class struggle. He argued that the Confederation should remain free from the influence of all political parties while he backed the anti-parliamentarian action of the Confederation members. These positions were in full agreement with those that the European anarcho-syndicalists would adopt five years later during the Congress of Berlin¹¹.

The representatives of the various socialist tendencies of the era put forward views opposed to those of Speras and the other anarcho-syndicalists. They argued in favour of the close interrelation between the GSEE and the Socialist Party (Sosialistiko Komma) – which was to be founded a few weeks later. In this frame they presented a draft resolution, whereby the Confederation had to remain independent solely from any bourgeois influence. The issue was debated long and hard during the Congress and the representatives from both tendencies doggedly stood their ground. Quite characteristically E. Delazanos – one of the delegates from the "Proodos" (Progress) Federation and a close ideological ally of socialist N. Giannios – addressing the Congress shortly before the voting said: "*Workers beware! Do not fall for the beautiful words of the anarchists. The first instance of anarchy must be crushed. 'Outside of all politics' is an anarchist slogan, which in effect serves the interests of the bourgeoisie.*" (!)

In the voting that was carried out, the authoritarian socialists' resolution was voted 158 to 21.¹² This voting marked in a tragic way the course of the working class movement of Greece, which henceforth was to be dragged on, tied to the influence of the state or the political parties – particularly the Communist Party – and their objectives, so that we can now answer with certainty the question "*who really did serve in practice the interests of the bourgeoisie?*"

However, Kostas Speras was elected member of the Supervising Committee of GSEE and his election confirmed the dynamism of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency during that period.

THE FOUNDATION OF SEKE (4 NOVEMBER 1918)

It must not come as a surprise that a few weeks later, on 4 November 1918, the most prominent representatives of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency participated in the founding Congress of the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Elladas

– SEKE), which was subsequently to evolve to the Communist Party of Greece (Kommounistiko Komma Elladas – KKE).

Judging by the positions they upheld in the period from the founding Congress up to their expulsion, it is obvious that the anarcho-syndicalists did not oppose the creation of an independent and diverse socialist body. However they did not confer on it the vanguard role and paternalistic relation towards the working class movement, as the other socialists did.

It did not take long before things between the two hostile tendencies came to a head.

In March 1920, Kostas Speras participated as special secretary in the conference of miners and coal miners held in Athens, aiming at the foundation of the Miners' Federation.

THE 2ND CONGRESS OF SEKE (APRIL 1920)

In the Congress, Kostas Speras and Giannis Fanourakis were expelled from the party as "anti-party elements"... The newspaper *O Rizospastis* (*The Radical*) – the future official organ of the Communist Party – also reported the attempt to expel Speras from GSEE. However this turned out to be impossible, due to the considerable influence that Speras exerted on the Athens working class and on a large number of its delegates.

On 17 May 1920 Speras was arrested and the newspaper *Kokkini Simaia* (*Red Flag*), the organ of the Communist Organisation of Athens (Kommounistiki Organosi Athinas) reported: "...to us this is an honour because our comrade is jailed for his working class ideology..."

THE 2ND CONGRESS OF GSEE (30 SEPTEMBER-3 OCTOBER 1920)

In the 2nd Congress of GSEE, in which Speras participated as the secretary of the Association of Tobacco Workers of Athens¹³, the anarcho-syndicalist tendency turned out particularly strong, consisting of one third of the delegates.

No sooner had the Congress opened than Speras proposed the withdrawal of GSEE from the social-democrat Trade Union International of Amsterdam and its adherence to the Third International. The opposition to this proposal came from the part of the SEKE. (!) It must be noted though, that during that period, all the major working class anarcho-syndicalist federations were actively participating in the process of the foundation of the Third International.

The central issue of the Congress was GSEE's collaboration and interrelation with SEKE. Speras and the other members of the anarcho-syndicalist tendency advocated the independence of the Confederation, while the SEKE members insisted on the collaboration between the two bodies. The latter view was voted 157 to 54.

The second issue of the Congress was the question of the parity between SEKE and GSEE. The anarcho-syndicalists through Giannis Fanourakis argued that the two bodies

(SEKE and Confederation) should be represented by an equal number of delegates, who would stand on an equal footing in all political issues. The SEKE supporters insisted that the party should assume the guiding role and in the subsequent voting they confirmed their domination with 107 delegates voting for their motion against 40. As a matter of fact, when during his address, N. Dimitratos (one of the SEKE supporters) attributed the political guiding role to SEKE and the responsibility for the trade union movement to the GSEE, Speras reacted furiously. Reading a relevant circular of the Third International, he upheld the unified and mass character of the Confederation and denounced "those who sought to divide" the working class.

In his addresses, Speras supported the direct democratic operation of the unions: The workers should directly participate in the decision-making process through rank and file assemblies. Thus he came in direct opposition with the SEKE leadership group, who upheld that this right belonged exclusively to the industrial workers. (!)

The contribution of the anarcho-syndicalist group in the amendment of certain statutes of the GSEE was equally important. They proposed the decentralisation of the decision-making process from the Federations to the local Labour Centres. Speras also advocated that workers should be organised not in craft union federations but in unified workplace federations, a principle upheld until the present day by the anarcho-syndicalist organisations.

THE GROUP-NEWSPAPER "NEA ZOI" (1921)

Despite his ejection from SEKE, Speras maintained his influence on the working class masses. He was elected secretary of the dynamic Federation of Tobacco Workers and induced many to abandon SEKE. Along with them, he formed a cohesive group, "Nea Zoi" ("New Life"), which in March 1921 published a bi-weekly communist newspaper under the same title. ["Nea Zoi" was a communist organisation and paper but not exclusively Marxist or Leninist. Most members were anarcho-syndicalists or anti-authoritarians, and had no adherence to the "orthodox" Communist Party etc. At the start they supported the 3rd International but withdrew their support as many anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists did this period.]

The group exerted an important influence over the working class of Athens and Speras with Fanourakis participated for a considerable period of time in the administration of the Labour Centre of Athens (EKA).¹⁴ They collaborated with other groups and organisations which had been formed in the wake of the far left's expulsion from SEKE, such as the group "Kommounismos" ("Communism") and the Anexartiti Kommounistiki Neolaia (Independent Communist Youth), both followers of the tenets of Russian Bolshevism.

In November 1921, following the strike called by the Federation of Tramway Workers, Speras was once again arrested and jailed in the Sygrou Prison.¹⁵

THE INDEPENDENT WORKERS PARTY (1922)

In the winter of 1922 the organisation "Nea Zoi" ("New Life") founded the Independent Workers' Party (Anexartito Ergatiko Komma – AEK). Similar moves by syndicalists were to take place a few years later in Europe.¹⁶

The majority of the new party's members were workers. The newspaper *Ergatiki* (*Labour Gazette*) reported that workers were joining the new party en masse throughout Greece.¹⁷ Its labourist character as well as its distance from the tenets of the Third International were reflected in AEK's Declaration of Aims and Principles: "*The workers, through their unified confederation, over and beyond their political differences, can promote their interests.*"

The dissolution of AEK came about in 1925 as a result of the Pangalos dictatorship.

3RD CONGRESS OF GSEE (28 MARCH 1926)

Much has been written by historians, academics or not, over the expulsion of Speras from the GSEE on 28 March 1926. Almost all of them reproduce the testimony of Avraam Benaroya (Speras' principal opponent ever since the GSEE's first Congress),¹⁸ which characterises the expulsion of Speras as "*an enemy of the working class*" as "*fair*". However, they all fail to mention Speras' arguments.

The attack against Speras was orchestrated by the leadership of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE – the former SEKE) and was initiated on the second day of the Congress by the KKE delegates Giakoumatos, Marnieros and Evangelou. The sophisticated falsification and pillorying of any dissenting voice were to form the official tactic for "settling scores" of the leadership groups of the Communist Party of Greece for the next seventy years.

Speras denounced the Communist Party for unleashing a war against him, as a result of which he could not even get a job. The reason was Speras' opposition to the adherence of the GSEE to the Third International.¹⁹ He declared himself an anti-militarist and countered the accusation thrown at him of being "*a state agent*". He denounced Evangelou (one of the leaders of the KKE) for attempting to bribe his way to the post of General Secretary of the GSEE over the sum of fifty thousand drachmas promised to the Alliance of the Working Classes (a socialist grouping) via the journalist Vouros.

In the afternoon of the fourth day of the Congress, Tuesday 31 March 1926, following a motion by Tzimas (another KKE delegate), Speras was expelled from the Confederation despite the protests of various delegates.²⁰

HIS MURDER (14 SEPTEMBER 1943)

We do not know much about Speras' life, following his ejection. What we do know though, is that from 1930 onwards he worked as a ticket booking clerk in the Athens railway company. For a brief period he resided at the Kolokyntou area, subsequently moving to Metaxourgeo, at 68 Kolonos Street, in the ground floor of an old two-storied

house, consisting of a bedroom, a hall and a kitchen. In 1931 he married again to Marina Stamataki and had another daughter, Artemisia-Nefeli.

It is certain that he participated in the railway workers movement and in the big strikes that broke out during that period. It is equally certain that he clashed with the leadership group of this trade-union (under the leadership of reformist D. Stratis).

Speras wrote a *History of the Working Class Movement*, which unfortunately was stolen in 1957 by D. Stratis and has been missing ever since.

During his life Speras had been arrested, jailed or sent into exile 109 times. His last stint inside was during the Metaxas dictatorship, when he spent time in the prison of the island of Skopelos. He was released, half dead, shortly after the Greek-Italian war was declared [on 28 October 1940]. His life had been saved by a doctor from Serifos who treated him totally for free. During the German occupation of Greece he was living with his family at Metaxourgeo.

On 14 September 1943, Captain Orestis (pseudonym of Christos Moudrihas, a prominent KKE rank and file member and one of the leaders of the communist led guerrillas) summoned Speras to a meeting in the village of Mandra (a remote place outside of Athens). Sensing his end drawing near, he bode farewell to his family and left off for the meeting. Shortly afterwards Moudrihas and his followers decapitated him and scattered his remains somewhere in Western Attica. The precise location has remained unknown ever since...

In his recollections, Agis Stinas²¹ wrote that the name of Speras figured in the lists of proscriptions, drawn up by OPLA²² alongside those of other working class militants, members of the communist Left Opposition or anarchists who opposed KKE.²³

Konstantinos Speras was one of the pioneers of the working class trade-union movement in Greece. He spent the biggest part of his life in prison and in exile. He fought with all his might for the emancipation of the working class, for an autonomous trade-union movement, for a society without slaves and bosses. He represented revolutionary syndicalism and as a consequence he incurred the wrath of the State and the Communist Party. He was slandered, his work and actions were distorted and eventually he was murdered, along with dozens of other working class militants, in the name of the one and only "orthodox" way to socialism.

Written by Leonardos Kottis in July 2000 on the island of Paros, Greece, as the preface to the book by K. Speras *The Strike of Serifos, that is narration of the bloody scenes of 21 August 1916 in the mines of Megalo Livadi of Serifos*. This book was published in Athens, Greece, in 2001 by the Libertarian Historical Archive and the Vivliopelagos Editions.

Translation to English by James Sotros, in February 2005 in Melbourne, Australia. Editing by Paul Pomonis.

Notes by Leonardos Kottis and James Sotros.

ACRONYMS

AEK Anexartito Ergatiko Komma – Independent Workers' Party
EKA Ergatiko Kentro Athinas – Labour Centre of Athens
GSEE Geniki Synomospondia Ergaton Elladas – Greek General Confederation of Labour
KKE Kommounistiko Komma Elladas – Communist Party of Greece
OPLA Organosi Prostrasias Laikou Agona – Organisation of Protection of Popular Struggle (KKE police)
PEO Panellinia Ergatiki Omospondia – Pan-Hellenic Workers Federation
SEKE Sosialistiko Ergatiko Komma Elladas – Socialist Workers' Party of Greece

NOTES

- 1, Kavala. A town in northern Greece.
- 2, Eleftherios Venizelos. Probably the most prominent Greek politician. Under his leadership the Greek State more than doubled its territory. A bourgeois politician who served many times as a prime minister of Greece until the 1930s.
- 3, Socialist Workers Federation (better known as Federacion) founded in 1909 – before Thessalonica was “liberated” by the Greek army – by Jewish, Bulgarian, Turkish and Greek workers.
- 4, Phanariotes: Greeks from Phanari, one of the Greek areas in Istanbul. All – or most – of them were from well established families, and had high positions in the Turkish state mechanism, in the army etc. In the Cyclades, the name Sperantzas is associated with church builders.
- 5, As narrated by Speras' third daughter, Artemisia-Nefeli.
- 6, Nikolaos Giannios (1885-1958), wrote in the everyday spoken Greek language (called Demotiki) and contributed to the literary revue *Noumas*. He described himself as Socialist-Marxist. Twice, in 1911 and in 1917, he founded the organisation Sosialistiko Kentro (Socialist Centre), which later mutated into Sosialistiko Komma (Socialist Party). He published many newspapers and corresponded with European social-democrat organisations.
- 7, P. Papamanousakis: *To Ergatiko Xypnima sta Chania (The Workers' Awakening in Chania)*, self-published, Athens, 1977, p. 32-33.
- 8, Newspaper *Socialismos (Socialism)*, Second Period, issue 40, 2/9/1918.
- 9, During that period, workers throughout Greece were founding Labour Centers (Ergatika Kentra), as umbrella organisations for smaller local trade unions. These Labour Centres played a decisive role in the creation in 1918 of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE).
- 10, Stavros Kouchtsoglou was one of the most prominent Greek anarchists of that period. He was self-taught and was very active in Egypt, Greece and Turkey. He wrote pamphlets and articles and had personally met Errico Malatesta.

- 11, The Congress of Berlin convened from 22 December 1922 until 2 January 1923 [and led to the founding of the IWA-AIT, see note 19.]
- 12, Gianis Kordatos, *Istoria tou Ellinikou Ergatikou Kinimatos (History of the Greek Workers' Movement)*. Boukoumanis Publications, Athens 1972, p. 307.
- 13, Speras had signed a statement issued by the Association of the Athens-Piraeus Tobacco Workers, as its secretary. Newspaper *O Rizospastis (The Radical)*, 12/10/1920.
- 14, C. Nikolopoulos, *I Alli Opsi tou Ergatikou Kinimatos – 1918-1930 (The Other Aspect of The Working Class Movement – 1918-1930)*, self-published, Athens 1983.
- 15, Newspaper *To Vema tis Kyriakis (The Sunday Tribunal)*, 19/11/1978.
- 16, Angel Pestaña, [previously a leading (reformist) member of the Spanish CNT, founded the Partido Sindicalista (Syndicalist Party) in April 1933.]
- 17, C. Nikolopoulos, *ibid.*
- 18, Avraam Benaroya. A Sephardic Jew from Salonica and one of the founders and leaders of the Socialist Workers Federation (better known as Federacion) of Salonica. He was among the founding members of KKE. Shortly afterwards he was expelled and pursued social-democrat policies. He settled in Israel in the 50's where he died in 1979.
- 19, In the Moscow Congress, held in the summer of 1920, the revolutionary libertarian syndicalist organisations withdrew denouncing the Bolshevik autocracy. In 1922 these organisations founded the International Workers' Association (IWA-AIT) in Berlin.
- 20, Newspaper *To Vema tou Ergaton (Ôhe Workers' Tribunal)*, 4 April 1926.
- 21, Agis Stinas. (1900-1987). He was born in Corfu and was one of the founders of KKE. He left KKE in 1933 and espoused Trotskyism. In 1947 along with Cornelius Castoriades and others he broke his links with Trotskyists and turned to council communism. From the '60s onwards Agis Stinas came increasingly close to anarchism.
- 22, OPLA (Organosi Prostrasias Laikou Agona – Organisation of Protection of Popular Struggle), was the police of the Communist Party (KKE) during the German occupation of Greece. It is responsible for dozens of murders of Trotskyists, anarchists and left communists who opposed the Communist Party's line.
- 23, On 28 October 1943, the newspaper *O Rizospastis (The Radical)* – official organ of KKE to the present day – printed the following line: “...we arrested that creep Speras...” (!!!)

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