

Fellow workers, we call you to this goal, to this struggle! We speak not of a new party or of competition with the existing economic organizations. What we say is that you should understand and embrace the ideas of revolutionary syndicalism and socialism and carry them not only into the shops and factories but also fill the trade unions with them. There is no point in splintering existing power, rather we should enhance and redirect the already organized forces. The point is to stop being forced to fight each other and to turn more efficiently against our great common enemy. You know well, we are few and shall remain few for quite a while. Carry into the common economic struggle the great force of the ideas of new syndicalism and socialism, so that its self-sacrificing courage and fighting spirit may increase many fold. We believe and confess that this is the way to serve the present and the future of the working class. We shall be your trusted comrades in this service at all times.



*József Lengyel, Ottó Korvin, János Lékai and Antal Mosolygó – members of the Group of Revolutionary Socialists*

## – Barricade Pamphlets –

### Ervin Szabó and the Syndicalist Attempts in Hungary



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## Ervin Szabó and the syndicalist attempts in Hungary

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of the industrial workers in Hungary was low in comparison with the number of the agricultural workers. There were 800 thousand industrial workers, 300 thousand of them worked in the factories. In the next decade, the number of the industrial workers became almost two times more. Their wage was less by approximately 40-50 per cents than the wage of the West-European industrial workers. The workers drudged 12 hours a day in the workshops, sometimes even more. A lot of them had come from the villages, dreaming about a better existence. The process of urbanization went on – the towns pulled to themselves an ever-increasing fresh workforce. Between 1870 and 1900, the capitalist economy established 80 textile factories in Hungary; between 1900 and 1913, 220 new textile factories were produced by the ambitious capitalism. Between 1858 and 1913, the total number of factories grew from 2747 to 5521. The capitalist production liquidated more and more the ruling feudal relationships.

The activity of the working-class movement in Hungary grew together with the level of exploitation. The social democratic movement (which followed the pattern of the German orthodox social democracy) had a primary influence within the working class, and determined its orientation. The Social Democratic Party had been and remained consequently reformist, just like its foreign companions. They couldn't be „accused” of revolutionary behaviour and internationalism. The Second International affected directly all over in this region, too, and it won the honest status of capitalism's watch-dog. The aim of this organization – which was essentially a Marxist church – was the defence of the workplaces and labour laws, and it became a trained hero of the democratic rights of freedom, just like its representative in Hungary, the Social Democratic Party. This party awaked the vision of the red spectre for a time in the minds of the bourgeoisie, but in the reality, it was a calm, crumb-picking pigeon, which liked most of all to shit on the proletariat. The party was accomplished with the trade unions, which pressed close to the party in an Edenic harmony, and in which „the self-conscious worker could find a home” when he/she joined one of them. They organized strikes, published newspapers, collected money for cultural work, established workers' clubs, reading circles. This way, they also created those possibilities of coming to consciousness, which sometimes (as „revolutionary sparks”) swept through the social democratic tombs.

These two pornographic political formations (interwoven with each other) filled that left-wing space on the political palette which democracy had reserved for them. Their main desire was the universal suffrage, this way they wanted to take that place in the parliament which was their due. Everything was subordinated to this „noble”, counter-revolutionary goal. With its effective bourgeois functioning, the party gave birth to its opposition, the activity of which

Every action and every weapon of the economic organization must be aimed at one purpose: the struggle. For every program, be it aimed at the state or the employers organization, the practice of direct action is to be developed in every member. Whenever the achievement of a material mental moral interest of the workers depends on the employers or on the state, they must be prepared to fight for it by immediate pressure, and, if need be, by strike. If the state has to be forced to comply, this too must be achieved either by immediate action or by the means of political parties continuously disturbing the peace of the electors.

Fight against everything that stands in the way of such a struggle! The state and the ruling classes try to set the armed forces against the unarmed fighting force of the working class. Even in Germany, where hitherto a few gendarmes seemed sufficient to curb strikes or demonstrations, the army is used ever more against the workers and machine guns threaten the fighters. Hence, one of the most urgent tasks of the economically organized workers is to blunt, to damage, and finally to wrest from the hands of their enemies this weapon. That is why antimilitarist propaganda is important, essential, and indispensable in the economic struggle of the workers.

Direct action, strike, and the ever-widening participation in antimilitarist propaganda will mobilize more and more fighting workers for common struggle. Strikes will become more and more frequent and widespread, the working class will grow more and more militant, and the increased unreliability of the armed forces will make the resistance of the state and the ruling classes weaker and weaker. Everything leads to the moment when the workers challenge the capitalist society to a last decisive battle by a great, all-embracing, general strike.

Thus will the general strike become the final weapon of the economic organizations must follow their own, distinct goal: socialism.

It may fail often, may be defeated again and again, but once it succeeds, it cannot be followed by anything but the socialist society, in which capital will no longer dominate the working class, but in which the working class, the community of all producers will be the masters of the great productive forces of society. That is socialism. That is why we say that the economic organizations must follow their own, distinct goal: socialism. No other existing organization can achieve the aim of syndicalism; the economic liberation of the working class, its becoming its own master, that is, socialism, cannot be reached by any other path. The trade unions' distinct goal cannot be anything but to fill the souls and minds of their members, who suffer through the economic struggles, with the great ideals of socialism, so that they have spiritual strength in the misery of today and that they be ready and mature for the time, when mankind, having eliminated the domination of capital, establishes its new society, to fill the new institutions with the spirit of socialism and to form their mutual relationships in that spirit.

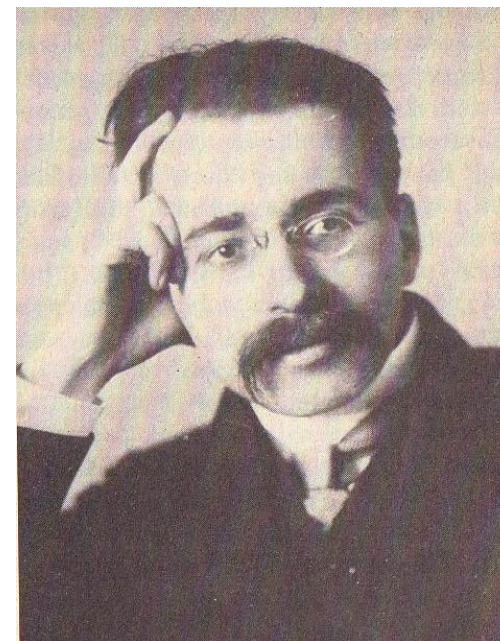
final act of stopping profit: suspension of work. That is why the paramount and distinct weapon of the economic organizations, their indispensable and supreme fighting mode, is the strike. This holds true for semi-feudal Hungary just as much as for republican France and democratic America. Under the rule of capital there can be no political organization, there can never be so much liberty as to make strikes unnecessary.

Hence, all formal and tactical questions of the economic organizations fight have to answer one question: how can the working class strengthen this main weapon of its struggle, how can the greatest success of strikes be assured. In less developed countries, where the industrial centers are but loosely connected, or in underdeveloped branches of an industry, where the employers exploit labor in small, insulated enterprises, the working class will organize its fight also in loosely connected, local units. As industrialization progresses, as the employers unite and confront their workers in the form of major, national associations, the workers will also unite. From the grassroots up their local unions will concentrate into national organizations, in order to oppose massed force against massed power. However, whether they are set up locally or unite in national or industrial organizations, the unions may have only one task: to develop and serve the working class's preparedness for strike.

Therefore, the functions of the economic organizations must not be hampered by such things which serve rather to reduce their fighting ability, impede their mobility and increase their risks. If the working class needs institutions for supporting the victims of unemployment, illness, disability, or other calamities, such insurance companies (mutual help societies, sickness benefit funds) should be established independently of the fighting organization. For the mixing of these insurance purposes with the aims of the fighting organization leads only to the accumulation of an ever larger number of members, usually with little class consciousness, in order to increase insurance capital, and then to shield both members and wealth from any risk of struggle. In the last resort, when these associations are eventually forced to fight, they enter the field with members unused to and untrained for struggle, and, in spite of their filled coffers, lose out against the still much richer and more powerful organization of the employers. Can't we see this happening in several cases of the major industrial countries, whenever their rich and large organizations have to face hard struggle? Wasn't this the lesson of the German iron workers and miners? Or of the great Swedish strike?

We don't advocate small economic organizations; to the contrary, we hold that they will and have to grow together with industry and the frequency of confrontations. But whether small or large, whoever belongs to them should be ready to fight and not look for sickness benefits. More or fewer workers—but fighters! Ten courageous men are worth more than a hundred peaceable, sheepish (albeit honest and decent) ones.

crystallized until 1906. (We would like to mention that already in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there existed an organized anarcho-communist movement in Hungary, which stood against social democracy and the capitalist order in general. It was the Group of Radical Socialists, the history and one document of which was earlier published by us in English, too.) The activists around Ervin Szabó gradually withdrew from social democracy, but didn't break with it totally. The same can be said about Ervin Szabó, who continuously attacked the behaviour of the party, while he kept up his relationships with left-wing intellectuals until his death. On the other hand, the circle of Ervin Batthyány and his comrades had emerged, and it found comrades among Szabó's circle, and made an attempt of organizing the anarchist movement in Hungary. Through its papers, articles, debates and lectures, this interwoven current attacked social democracy permanently and in an increasing degree. Batthyány established journals with his comrades, and kept up close comradely relationships with Ervin Szabó.



*Ervin Szabó*

In 1906, the journal *Testvériség* (Fraternity) was founded. This was an organ of social democracy, but it turned more and more against its party, and the anarchist publications became frequent in it. The central leadership of the party

couldn't bear this „shame”, and put its hand on the journal. A little after, Batthyány launched the journal called *Társadalmi Forradalom* (Social Revolution), in which the influence of William Morris, Piotr Kropotkin, anarcho-communism and the CGT mingled with each other. But the effect of this journal was not large enough to help the formation of an active, strong anarchist movement in Hungary – an eclectic, mottled, decentralized organ, which contained different opinions, was obviously not enough for this aim. They stressed a lot the false idealist model – which was followed by a lot of „idealist anarchists” –, according to which the working class can and must be influenced first of all through its „consciousness”. On a recent comradesly leaflet from Greece, we read: „The school brings light only when it is burning!” This says enough about the ardour of the enlighteners! The separation of propaganda activity from the everyday misery and struggle, the mere citation of Kropotkin, Tolstoy and others without taking into account the social conditions, led to isolation. The working class movement (being, in advance, under social democratic influence) didn't take this current into its good graces.

During the first half of 1907, the edition of the journal went into the hands of the Budapest Group of Revolutionary Socialists. This group existed also before, and it maintained contacts with the Italian *Il Libertario* (from La Spezia), with *L'Aurora* and with the Swiss *Le Reveil*, among others. Anti-militarist propaganda, direct actions and the general strike was in the focus of their efforts. The group was composed of about 200 militants. They traditionally followed the liberal tolerance and ideological heterogeneity of their predecessors, mated anarchism with syndicalism, cheering Ravachol and scolding the „police socialism” (that means, social democracy) at the same time. They were influenced by the agrarian-socialist ideas and the Tolstoyan-gnostic millenarian views of the beginning of the century. (At the beginning the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the agricultural proletariat waged numerous struggles, a peculiar form of whose was the harvester strike. The working-class movement in this period was far more extended in the villages and market-towns than in the industrial centers. The agrarian-proletarian movement's messianistic, religious-chialistic socialist views and the lower tempo of the agriculture's capitalist development could be the reason for the fact that Ervin Szabó paid less attention to it than it deserved – though he dealt several times with the past struggles of the „agrarian communists” in his writings. Of course, there were thin connections, links between the agrarian socialists and those in the towns, but they couldn't organize themselves organically. In addition, at the time when the anarcho-syndicalists managed to organize themselves into a group, the more radical wing of the agrarian socialist movement was already decomposing and, according to this, their efficacy was vanishing. Before long, we are going to publish in English a document of the agrarian socialist movement and a sketch of its history.)

whether they wish to fight against capital but whether they are believers in universal suffrage?

Let us underline once again: we do not dispute that the democratization of Hungary would help the working class. We do not deny that if the bourgeoisie is unable to complete this task alone, the working class should take part in the struggle. Let them form a political party and fight for universal suffrage. And those who like democracy more than socialism, let them go into politics with all their energy. But let them not make the economic organization satellites of the political fights! The trade unions should not for a moment be derailed from their main goal, to be organs for the struggle against capital, bases of a non-capitalist society—now, as well as in the future!

Say not that trade unions without a parliamentary party cannot achieve anything. What brought about that little that the unions had achieved so far? Merely their economic power! And the little weight that the party now has is due to what? To the same! And not the other way around, that the unions should be indebted to the party. Not only the great tasks of the future, but even the immediate interests of the Social Democratic Party demand that the economic organizations be their own masters, go their own way, fight their own struggle, and follow their particular aims.

Unions, be your own masters! Nobody should be your guardians, not even the workers party. No political interest should interfere with your economic decisions. Only the needs of the fight against capital shall decide what's to be done.

Unions, go your own way! Follow the road of economic struggle! Let the single members be free to participate in partisan struggles, but the organization itself, as a body, as the representative of the economic and moral interests of the working class should never leave the road that leads immediately to the fulfillment of the basic needs of the workers: the immediate economic struggle.

Unions, fight in your own manner! The weapons of syndicalism are different from those of parliamentary politics. Economic fights are not decided by majority. If the principles of majority democracy would decide economic struggles, then all confrontations with capital should bring the victory of the workers, for they, clearly are in majority and there are certainly more people who want higher wages and lower working hours than those who don't. Economic struggles were always fought out by a conscious, leading minority, and they could decide the fight only when they were ready to throw in their entire life and energy even for the most immediate target.

The action to which the conscious minority of the working class applies all its force and power, with which it stands or falls, is the strike. The strike is the final word in economic struggle, the final threat, the final deed. No economic action against capital can have a chance of success unless it is backed up by the

obtaining handsome garments. It seems that the working class is on its way to becoming just like such a person.

Instead of remembering that the political form of society was always the fruit of its economic organization; instead of keeping in mind that liberty always depended on the outcome of economic struggle; instead of drawing the only possible conclusion that the basis of the entire society—that of a future society no less—lies in the fighting organization of the opposing classes; instead of being keen to spend their best energies on such economic organizations and economic struggles—instead of all this we see that it spends its best mental capacities, all the treasure of its enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, and courage on the struggle for the form of government and places these at the feet of the idol of democracy, as if this idol and not—a hundred times more so—immediate economic struggle, could eliminate all its sufferings. And when the government stands in its way, when the ruling classes mobilize the power of the state against the working class, then, instead of applying an opposing force against the state, the workers sacrifice life and limb to conquer a piece of the state through parliament or even take it over, while it is obvious that the state cannot be anything else but the state of the economically ruling classes and the workers can be its masters not by votes but by their increased economic power.

In this schizophrenic fight the working class cannot become conscious of its real tasks. In the economic organization one fact dominates their soul the fact of fighting capital. Their consciousness is filled with the idea that all the good they can achieve is to be gained in the struggle against capital. The basis of its entire moral and intellectual betterment is higher wages and shorter working hours; these are the objects of the everyday struggle. In this daily struggle the soul of the workers is filled with hatred for capitalist domination and from this hatred and fighting spirit emerges the wish, the hope, the will for a society in which the powers of capital do not lord over the workers, where capital, wealth, the source of liberty belongs to him, to the producer—for socialism. In the political organization, however, he is told that what moves the worker in the economic struggle, to overcome capital and achieve socialism, cannot be achieved but through the state, through political power; that first governmental power has to be achieved and a majority in the legislature; that he has to elect deputies and reform the state in a democratic process; and the economic organizations serve no other aim but to strengthen the working class for the task of democratic reforms. The principles of democracy are pronounced with such a devotion and assiduity that the trade unions of the Hungarian working class cannot now be regarded as anything else but the branches of a political party, the Social Democratic Party. And we have frequently experienced that economic interests had to be silenced for the sake of politics.

Can the economic organizations in this situation fulfill their socialist, revolutionary calling? Can they become strong when new members are not asked

The members of the Budapest Group of Revolutionary Socialists consumed the menu of a peculiar devil's kitchen, which could contain the rejection of violence as well as Darwin, Malatesta, Kropotkin and the popularization of the proletarian revolution. They ate and let their comrades eat with good appetite the “delicacies” of the mutually contradictory ideologies and views. In the meantime, Ervin Szabó had moved more and more towards left from social democracy, and in 1909, he broke with it organizationally. His movement activity was enmeshed by his contacts with anarchism from the beginning – he established the “Holy Trinity” of Marxism-anarchism-syndicalism. In his early years he maintained contact with Russian revolutionaries, and he began to criticize social democracy more and more profoundly. He went through its schools, but already in 1902, he stood up for the real proletarian currents beyond social democracy. In Italy, he got acquainted with the syndicalist Robert Michels – Ervin Szabó was influenced by him and kept contact with him through correspondence. His relationships widened, and his critical commentaries became more and more consequent. In 1904, he established contact with Hubert Lagardelle, who was the founding editor of *Mouvement Socialiste*. They regarded each other as comrades, and Ervin Szabó published his article “Syndicalism and Social Democracy” in the journal of Lagardelle. In the beginning of the article, the author stated that the conditions of Hungary were unsuitable for absorbing the writing, and it couldn't fall on a fertile soil. He had right. Social democracy managed to conquer the larger masses of the workers for itself, and this conquest has gone on until today. In the recent elections (they were held in April, 2006) the bigger part of the working class voted once again for social democracy, which has already taken off his Marxist dress, in order to put on the liberal gown. The problem is posed just like before, since the democratic illusions proliferate boisterously among the working class.

The fact that the workers adopted the political tasks and the ideology of the bourgeoisie is explained by Ervin Szabó by pointing at the backward economic development and the lack of political rights, and he watches the gaining ground of social democracy in the mirror of this analysis. This explanation isn't satisfactory for today and it wasn't reassuring already in that period. In Hungary, the bourgeoisie usually spread his ideology successfully, after revolutionary periods started the times of repression, of economic and political reprisals, to which the divided class couldn't actually react as a militant class, that means, as proletariat. It managed only to create the faction of the proletariat, and, in fact, only the functioning of several groups, the growing strike-mood and the small signs of everyday protest show that we are alive. Of course, this is not a specifically Hungarian phenomenon. The growing democratic illusions go hand in hand with the “Canaan vision of the EU”, the economic legend of joining Western Europe is effective, while the trade unions have become so weak, that at the 1<sup>st</sup> of May several hundreds of democratic heads were protesting against the

bourgeoisie and imploring for “observing the rights of the employees”. The trade unions perform their job without real workers’ support. This would be OK, if at the same time, the working-class movement woke up. But the murderous bourgeois angel of the times goes on flitting to and fro.

In 1910, in the circle of Ervin Szabó emerged the idea of manifesting the synthesis of “revolutionary Marxism” and syndicalism and making an attempt to create the syndicalist movement in Hungary. Szabó wrote the manifesto. Already in his writing “Syndicalism and Social Democracy” he – “as a Marxist” – laid stress on economic struggles, but this way he differed completely from orthodox Marxism, which stressed the importance of political struggles. It’s obvious, that the influence of anarcho-syndicalism became stronger in his views, since he – together with Sándor Hanesz, the Serbian Krszta Isskruljev, Ignác Bellér and another comrades – now regarded the general strike as the main weapon of class struggle. The propagandistic manifesto published below doesn’t promise vivid, new perceptions even in comparison with the usual anarcho-syndicalist stereotype. It reflects the lack of echo from the proletariat and the general failures of syndicalism – which were crowned in 1914, when several activists were squeezed out of the working-class movement once and for all by their bourgeois ideological theses and their nationalist ardour. Contrary to the statements of Szabó on Marx and Bakunin which were vivid and clarifying, this writing is absolutely typical.

When Szabó – yet under the aegis of social democracy – published the selected works of Marx and Engels, in one of the prefaces he wrote: “In France, Georges Sorel and his company around *Mouvement Socialiste*, the Italian Sorelists: Arturo Labriola and others, are devoting all their efforts with not little success to drive back the working-class movement to the basis of the Marxian International’s brightest period... And maybe before long, the par excellence Marxist country, Germany will also feel the breath of this strong Marxism, freed from the fetters of political necessities.” At time of the publication of the manifesto, they also hoped to create the foundations of a new Marxist-anarchist-syndicalist working-class movement. They were wrong.

Neither the manifesto, nor the other writings of Ervin Szabó managed to understand the class struggle in its totality. The stigma of isolation compelled them to theoretical activity. The signs of this can be followed best of all on the columns of *Társadalmi Forradalom*. By the way, they wanted to publish their own journal but didn’t have financial basis for it.

In one of his rather forgotten works entitled “A tőke és a munka harca” (The Struggle Between Capital and Labour), which was published in 1911, he wrote: “It must be admitted that capitalism makes a social mission when it organizes the production and clothes it with the forms of the highest productivity. And if this costs tears and blood – and we now how much tears it brings and how much blood it sheds –, it is possible to fight against it only on

not the same as the class struggle of the workers, and socialism is not equal to social democracy. It is time to make it clear: the true class struggle is fought in the field of economic confrontation and true socialism cannot be achieved through the state, even the most democratic one, but only on the ruins thereof.

Your leaders know this well and even told you something along these lines, and made economic organizations and prophesied about the coming of socialist society. But what are those words worth when their actions day by day deny these beautiful ideas?

Or do those economic organizations that give priority to the service of a political party instead of the economic confrontation of the capitalist class—the true class struggle—in fact subscribe to class - struggle? The best forces of these organizations, leaders, staff, money, and time, are wasted not on economic confrontation but in political struggle. Do those organizations in which the worker may hear about many things, but in which the A and Z, the top and the bottom of everything is the praise of democracy, of universal suffrage, and parliamentarianism, really educate you for socialism?

Let us look once at this ceaselessly cited and praised-to-heaven democracy! Is it really the source of all happiness? Does the welfare and future of the working class really depend on it?

We believe, comrades, that political forms, whether they are called aristocracy, democracy, absolutism, republic, or what have you, are not basic factors of human happiness. Always and under all conditions it was the organization of social production that defined all other organizations of society, and no political regime could ever end the bitterness of hunger, misery, and the fight for daily survival. Rather the economic struggle of classes was always that force which granted the one more, the other less, and modified according to this ever-changing balance of economic struggle the entire form and image of society. When the economic struggle of the oppressed classes achieved more, then political oppression also diminished, liberty grew, and the ruling classes had to give up some of their power; and conversely, whenever the system of production and the economic class struggle pushed down the fighting producers, their rights were curtailed, too.

From this it does not follow that you should not be concerned with the form of that state by which the wealthy classes dominate your life. Man lives not by bread alone. One wishes not merely to have one's fill, but wants to be well-dressed as well. We may say that the form of the state is the clothing of society; if we have had our fill, that is, if our economic struggle was successful, we don't want to be cold, and we even gain strength for the struggle for our food when we can fight in well-fitting clothes. Therefore, it is not irrelevant for the working class what type of state is the political organization of society.

However, we would surely find foolish and self destructive someone who spends his greatest efforts not on securing the basic necessities of life but on



*The ensign of the Hungarian anti-militarists*

**Ervin Szabó**  
**Syndicalism. Manifesto to the Workers of Hungary**

Fellow Workers!

The Hungarian working class has been fighting for forty years for universal suffrage. We don't say that this fight was in no way in the interest of the working class. It is very much in the interest of the working class that the power of the state should rest with a less heavy hand on its organizations and that the organs of legislation and administration should place fewer obstacles in the way of the working-class movement and its institutions. As far as the struggle of the working class is aimed at the democratization of Hungarian legislation, we have nothing against it. And we also admit that this long struggle can proudly look back at not a few courageously fought battles which will always remain part of the history of the working class.

However, while we state all this, we cannot suppress a serious concern: for two generations the struggle for universal suffrage was fought almost exclusively by the working class, hence, it is no wonder that the best members of the working class are convinced that class struggle and struggle for democracy are the same. For two generations the working class was told about the struggle for democracy by men who had learned their ideas from the great socialist thinkers, hence, it was easy for the workers to assume that socialism and democracy are identical and, therefore, called the party of radical democracy the Social Democratic Party. Now, after forty years, when a genuine industrial working class begins to reach mass size and a mass organization in Hungary, it is time, comrades, that the warning be made loud and clear: the fight for democracy is

one terrain: there, where capital and labour meets directly, within the walls of the factory itself." From the myths of ouvrierism, the economic struggle and the general strike steps out the skeleton of anarcho-syndicalism, which have been discredited historically since then. One of his critics drops a remark, hinting at his syndicalist activity: "Ervin Szabó criticized reformism without stepping out from its magic circle."

Rosa Luxemburg wrote in the heat of the mass strike debate: "The working class doesn't have two distinct class struggles, an economic and a political class struggle, there's only one class struggle." Let us keep in mind this very important statement, because to become able to get square with the totality of capitalism and its ever stronger totalizing ambitions, we have to free us from the comedy of the separation of political and economic struggles. We have to regard the round dance of the workshop, the factory, the school, the physical and the mental exploitation, production and consumption, in general: the rotation of capitalism's weekdays. Syndicalism rejects the organic centralization of the proletariat just like social democracy or bolshevism. It buries us alive in the factories, workshops – the hell of the world of labour, just like the trade unions... The general strike remains a mere illustration of the class struggle if it isn't coupled with the revolution of the totality – that means, with the dictatorship of the proletariat, which doesn't think in transitions, doesn't ponder and use tactics, but acts consequently, the harmonic unity of revolutionary program and act pushes aside the curses and sins of the old working-class movement, and the power-mad lust of its inquisitors. The company of Szabó didn't recognize that the strike can only be a device but not a goal. Moreover, they only partially recognized that the trade unions aren't autonomous workers' organizations, but a quite effective bourgeois force against the class struggle, which can become really powerful through the self-restricting fervour of the workers.

Szabó and his comrades really wanted the working class to establish its own organizations and fight against the world of capital. Their defeated attempt serves with a lot of lessons. First of all, they could become aware of the fact that they couldn't act effectively as "working-class activists without working-class movement". The group remained alone and didn't manage to enlarge itself neither in Hungary, nor internationally. But the hard core of its activists continued their struggle, which was marked by elements of syndicalism but in which syndicalism never became a dominating practice. So, anarcho-syndicalism more or less remained an element in the Hungarian proletarian struggles, but it played a subordinate role. We can see it in the anarcho-communist movement which grew stronger from 1917 on, and in which Ervin Szabó was one of the activists among a lot of others. During the death orgy of the bourgeois war, he became the direct theoretical leader of the Group of Revolutionary Socialists (in

which participated Ottó Korvin, Tivadar Sugár, Ilona Duczynska and other comrades), which accepted the program of Zimmerwald.

At the same time, almost no signs of the new revolutionary movement can be found in the writings of Szabó. He even wrote an article in 1917 entitled “Imperializmus és tartós béke” (Imperialism and Lasting Peace), related to which his “mature” critic, József Révai says, that a totally false picture of imperialism developed in Szabó: there’s a “good imperialism” in England with free trade, and a “bad imperialism” in Germany with protective tariff. (Révai was a comrade of Szabó during the proletarian struggles at the end of the war, later he became a Stalinist. He wrote his critique already in his Stalinist period, nevertheless, it is often apt.) At the same time, Szabó cheers internationalism and the Russian revolution on illegal leaflets!

The group around Szabó actively agitated against the war, and the class struggle movement became wider and wider. A lot of enthusiastic young communists got in touch with Szabó and his comrades. Antal Mosolygó (a member of the group) got to know the IWW through Szabó, and became a devoted follower of this anarchist organization, the brochures of which went from one hand to another. Some comrades arrived from the circle around Kassák, others from the Galilei circle. At this time the many-colored organization didn’t have a common platform, anarcho-communism was mixed with syndicalism, pacifism with class militancy, but the movement soon went beyond the ideological motley and the anarcho-communist activism got the upper hand. The hatred of the bourgeoisie and the war became a centralizing force.

The proletarian revolution in Russia had influence also in Hungary. In the first half of 1917, 20 thousand Hungarian soldiers deserted, the strikes spread. Already at the beginning of the war there was a big unemployment. In the building industry, 4140 workers out of 12400 were unemployed. The imperialist war also raised the length of the workday, there were branches in which the workers drudged 78 per week (in 1917). The wages fell quickly, and if there were cases when the payment of the workers rose, it was because “the front”, the proletarian-trampling war raised them – the conjuncture made by the capitalist war sometimes led to the increase of wages. Because of the war production, the capital at the most of the companies rose: in 1914. A half of the industrial joint-stock companies finished the year 1914 with gain. In 1917, 75 per cent of them were profitable. The social democratic puppets had still barked that the working class had to act for the reform of the suffrage and not for the revolution.

At the end of 1917 began the agitation for the forming of workers’ councils – remembered later Gyula Hevesi. The council movement ripened and came to life, but its social democratic features stood out, and it acted under social democratic influence... At the same time, the Group of Revolutionary Socialist spread leaflets in workshops and army barracks, the leaflets reach also the front. In 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1918, the group organized a demonstration against the

conditions of the conclusion of peace at Brest. (We don’t know the members’ exact opinion about the twitching in Brest, but their revolutionary ardour could defy the bolshevik class peace.) Several comrades had been arrested, others took their places.

The bourgeois friends of Szabó (people like Mihály Babits, the humanist poet, Oszkár Jászi, the leftist-liberal sociologist and other soft-hearted literate men) didn’t know anything about his illegal movement activity – because he conspired in the front of them. Because of his ethical idealism and his too intellectual cast of mind – and because of his inconsistency which was a result of these – he didn’t break with those, who were separated from him “only” by a class front. This infantilism worked perfectly from the point of view of conspiracy, but at the same time, he had to face up day by day to the fact that he shakes hand with those, against whom he wages war. This phenomenon is not rare in the revolutionary working-class movement even today.

Szabó was tubercular and he was flat on his back from the summer of 1918 on. He died in September of that year. In October, the revolutionary wave accelerated as an avalanche. Soon the Communist Party of Hungary was formed, and after a few months the bolsheviks, the anarcho-communists and the syndicalists fused with the Social Democratic Party – announcing the formation of the Soviet Republic of Hungary.

This fusion foreshadowed the crushing of the revolution. Faced with the orders of the Soviet Government (the “Revolutionary Governing Council”, as it called itself), the more consequent elements turned against it, and continued their struggle against the bourgeoisie. “In the post-war period, a saying went in the Hungarian anarchist circles: ‘If he (Ervin Szabó) lived to see, he would surely have impeded the forming of the bolshevik dictatorship.’” – wrote the anarcho-syndicalist A. Dauphin-Meunier. This statement is naïve, but let’s look at his writings and his biography, and search the signs of this...

At last, we would like to draw the reader’s attention to the fact that in a former English-language publication about him, we wrote, that Ervin Szabó wasn’t an eclectic militant. Well, this is a half-truth, because he was quite consequent in his analysis of the Marx-Bakunin dispute and in some other questions, but he was no less eclectic in the alloying of Marxism-syndicalism-anarchism in general...

*Barricade Collective*  
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