

# **Anarchism and the Working Class: The Union of Russian Workers in the North American Labor Movement, 1910s**

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## Abstract

Thousands of Russian anarchist immigrants, organized by the Union of Russian Workers (URW), took part in a surging union movement and strike wave that broke out across North America in the 1910s. However, they have received scant attention from historians, and no account of the URW exists. My dissertation fills in this gap by detailing the activity of the URW against the background of the rising labor movement, and it considers the question of anarchism's relationship to the working class. Historians have traditionally situated anarchism outside of the labor movement, yet the Russian anarchists in North America joined both radical and mainstream unions, and URW leaders recruited migrants explicitly by appealing to their class interests as foreign workers exploited by American capitalism. The study highlights the anarchists' involvement in labor organizing, and it centers their perspectives to help narrate a history of the period. It first traces a history of the international anarchist movement along with migration patterns to North America in order to contextualize the research and shed light on the origins of the URW and why their story matters.

Utilizing anarchist publications, local English-language newspapers, government surveillance files, and archival materials, the study finds that URW members made a wide array of contributions to the emerging industrial union movement in the United States and developed a critique of American capitalism that ranged beyond the immediate strikes. It argues that alongside the Industrial Workers of the World, the URW helped to push labor to the left and prepare the ground for the rise of major industrial unions with socialist leanings in the 1930s. Simultaneously, the study shows how the URW harnessed its strength in North America to make substantial material contributions to the anarchist movement in Russia, in the lead up to the 1917 revolution, while developing an anti-Bolshevik critique also echoed by subsequent movements on the left. By locating Russian anarchism and the URW in the labor movement, this study challenges historiographical claims which deny anarchism's working-class character. Thus, it contributes to a growing body of newer research which finds the anarchist movement rooted in labor and working-class organizing.

Anarchism; Working Class, Russian; North America; IWW

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# Chapter 1.

## Introduction

*“The theoreticians of communist anarchism (Bakunin, Kropotkin, & others) based their theories on the experience of the labor movement and considered [them] valuable only insofar as the masses...recognized in these theories the systemization of their own hopes and aspirations.” - Maksim Raevsky, editor of New York-based Russian anarchist newspaper Golos Truda (Voice of Labor), 1917.<sup>1</sup>*

In the 1910s, Russian anarchists worked as longshoremen in Erie, meatpackers in Sioux City, shirtmakers in Brooklyn, and weavers in Paterson. They took part in dozens of strikes, from New York City docks to brass and munitions factories in Connecticut, steel mills and coal mines around Pittsburgh, and shoe workshops in Detroit. Many of these strikes occurred in collaboration with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and other North American unions, and they were coordinated through the Union of Russian Workers (URW), an anarchist federation that recruited Russian migrants and facilitated their engagement with labor organizing.<sup>2</sup> This study details the activity of the URW and argues that the thousands of Russians organized in this anarchist federation made diverse and widespread contributions to the insurgent labor movement in the United States that exploded over the course of the decade. These contributions have not been acknowledged by historians, yet they helped develop a critique of North American capitalism that ranged beyond the immediate strikes. The URW, alongside organizations like the IWW, offered a vision for the labor movement that was more radical, militant, and inclusive than the craft unions of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Anarchist organizers called attention to injustices in the workplace and society to stimulate rebellion and persuade other workers on the merits of their ideas. The URW was part of what historian David Montgomery has called the “militant minority,” which he defined as the “men and women who endeavored to wield their workmates and neighbors into a self-

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<sup>1</sup> *Golos Truda*, February 2, 1917, 2.

<sup>2</sup> The full title was the “Federation of the Unions of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada”—a group of federated Russian organizations (“unions”) spread across the continent. Hoping to avoid confusion, I use the singular “Union of Russian Workers” or URW when referring to the federation as a whole.

aware and purposeful working class.”<sup>3</sup> By promoting radical direct action and by “boring from within” mainstream unions, the URW helped push labor to the left and prepare the ground for the rise of major industrial unions with strong socialist currents in the 1930s, led by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). At the same time, the URW built an organization in North America that provided real material support for the anarchist movement in Russia in 1917, while developing an anti-Bolshevik critique that was also echoed by later movements on the left.

This study examines Russian anarchism in North America in the context of the rise of the labor, socialist, and syndicalist movements during the early twentieth century. In addition to the expansion of the IWW, which formed in 1905, the Socialist Party of America had been founded in 1901 and grew steadily into the 1910s. These new mass, left-wing movements, which included anarchist immigrants from many countries, reflected the emergence of broader progressive forces in response to the excesses of Gilded Age capitalism. Russian immigrant anarchist activities and views are centered here to help narrate a history of the period that offers a critical perspective of the Progressive era in the United States.

The thesis draws attention to the working-class character of the Russian anarchist movement in the 1910s. The URW, for example, recruited Russian migrants by explicitly appealing to their class interests as foreign workers exploited by American capitalism. E.P. Thompson wrote that class formation evolves from common experience when people “feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs.”<sup>4</sup> The formation of a working class is revealed “in the growth of corresponding forms of political and industrial organization.”<sup>5</sup> Class formation, in other words, is driven by the workers themselves, emanating from their experiences on the job. Most Russians who joined the URW had been peasants from the southwestern part of the Russian Empire and anarchists recruited and organized them around the issue of class. The Russian workers’ class enemies in

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<sup>3</sup> David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The workplace, the state, and American labor activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.

<sup>4</sup> E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), 9-11, 194.

<sup>5</sup> Thompson, *English Working Class*, 194.

North America were the large industrial capitalists and pro-tsarist elements in Russian migrant communities that assisted in the suppression of workers' organizations. As radicals inspired by the theories of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, Russian anarchists in the US joined the strike movement, because they believed in workers' agency to change the world through direct action.

My findings are at odds with major historiographic interpretations of the anarchist movement. For example, historians have often situated anarchism outside of the labor movement. In his 500-page history of anarchism, George Woodcock concluded that anarchism was primarily a movement of peasants, artisans, the gentry, the *lumpenproletariat*, and *déclassé* intellectuals and artists, with only small and ephemeral pockets of support among industrial wage workers.<sup>6</sup> For Eric Hobsbawm, anarchism was not a working-class movement, but a peasant millenarian movement led by artisans, the *petit-bourgeoisie*, and bohemian artists.<sup>7</sup> Hobsbawm made generalizations about anarchism based on his influential study of the Spanish anarchists, but such generalizations either obscured more complex realities, or were simply unfounded as subsequent research has shown.<sup>8</sup> Yet the assumption that the anarchist movement was outside labor and not of the working class persists.

Another related example challenged in this study is the idea that the anarchist movement is absolutist. James Joll stated that anarchism is "necessarily an all or nothing creed" while Paul Avrich agreed that anarchists in Russia refused "to accept anything but the Golden Age."<sup>9</sup> Woodcock, likewise, claimed that "anarchists who followed Bakunin and

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<sup>6</sup> George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 26-27, 469-470.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Manchester: University Press, 1959), 2, 76, 83. See also E. J. Hobsbawm, *Revolutionaries: Contemporary Essays* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1973), 82-91.

<sup>8</sup> Several scholars have refuted Hobsbawm's core arguments relating specifically to the Spanish anarchists. See Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia, 1868-1903* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Jerome R. Mintz, *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); George Richard Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and the Working-Class Movement in Spain, 1868-1898* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Noam Chomsky, *Chomsky on Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 40-100.

<sup>9</sup> James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 257-258; Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 5.

Kropotkin were political and social absolutists” who had “contempt for...the kind of improvements in working conditions and wages which trade unions sought.”<sup>10</sup> Hobsbawm wrote that anarchists did not view social revolution in terms of class struggle, or “a long war against its enemies,” but expected the millennium to come at once through “messianic strikes.”<sup>11</sup> He argued they only sought immediate, total revolution and showed no interest in obtaining shorter-term improvements.

For these reasons—anarchism’s supposed disconnect from labor together with its absolutism—both Hobsbawm and Woodcock have characterized the anarchist movement as an accident of time, situating it “outside history.”<sup>12</sup> Hobsbawm argued that anarchism was a “pre-historic” and pre-political movement, because it had proved incapable of adapting to modern conditions and was only a temporary phenomenon.<sup>13</sup> Hobsbawm described anarchism as a “primitive” revolutionary movement—and not a genuine social movement—in contrast to modern revolutionary movements represented by Socialist and Communist parties.<sup>14</sup> In this reading, anarchism was an idea that failed and only a curiosity that lies dead in the past rather than an historical movement of any relevance. Thus, both Woodcock and Hobsbawm argued that the anarchist movement died in the late 1930s after Francisco Franco’s army wiped out anarchism’s stronghold in Spain, and the movement disappeared rather than adapt.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 472. Joll suggested that trade unions made anarchism obsolete. Joll, *The Anarchists*, 257-258.

<sup>11</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 89-90.

<sup>12</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 2, 10; Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 27, 34, 469-470.

<sup>13</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 1-2, 4, 10, 92. Historians of anarchism have pointed out how the tendency to dismiss anarchism along these lines is a longstanding Marxist tradition. See for instance Joll, *The Anarchists*, viii; Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta’s Experiments with Revolution, 1889-1900* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 57-58, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 468. The Communists were at least as responsible as the Fascists for violently suppressing the anarchist revolution in Spain, which is perhaps why Marxist historians claimed anarchism in Spain “failed” because of its own internal flaws. See, for example, Burnett Bolloten, *The Grand Camouflage: The Spanish Civil War and Revolution, 1936-1939* (New York: Praeger, 1968) and Chomsky, *Chomsky on Anarchism*, 40-100.

More recently, Peter Marshall has noted anarchism's revival in the second half of the twentieth century. Anarchist ideas such as workers' control, participatory democracy, and the importance of freedom and autonomy in left organizing, re-emerged in 1960s and 1970s social and radical movements, partly in opposition to the authoritarian and sclerotic Communist Parties. Indeed, Marshall agreed with activist Daniel Guérin who had argued that anarchism proved more adaptable to modern conditions than state communism, as ideas promoted by the URW and other early twentieth century anarchists became prominent in left organizing once again, globally.<sup>16</sup>

However, Marshall's own history did not include class struggle as a primary component of anarchism. Instead, he defined an anarchist solely as one who rejects the State and government, leaving out any mention of class or how the anarchist movement, which formed at the International Workingmen's Association ("International") in the 1860s, came to life through its opposition to both the State and capitalism. In fact, Marshall includes contemporary right-wing interpretations of anarchism—anarcho-capitalism and libertarianism—in the anarchist tradition, instead of emphasizing the movement's opposition to capitalism.<sup>17</sup> Elsewhere, Marshall has noted how the anarchist movement peaked during the Russian and Spanish revolutions, but class struggle was at the heart of these anarchist movements; logically, if anarchism peaked in movements characterized by their opposition to capitalism, then that should be considered a defining feature of the ideology and movement.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, historians have characterized the anarchist movement as one that lacked organization and practical ideas. Hobsbawm wrote that anarchists, failing to understand the importance of organization, strategy, and tactics, watched as their movements

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), xi-xii. Marshall has noted how Woodcock and Joll later retracted their obituaries of the anarchist movement, if not any of their other claims. Hobsbawm also recognized anarchism's re-emergence but attributed it to bohemian artists and maintained his central argument.

<sup>17</sup> Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, xii-xiii.

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, x. Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt explain in greater detail why it is incoherent to remove the class struggle component from definitions of anarchism. *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 41-43.

collapsed after periodic uprisings every decade or so.<sup>19</sup> Instead of planning or organizing uprisings, argued Hobsbawm, anarchists let the peasants decide when to rebel.<sup>20</sup> Woodcock, similarly, wrote that anarchists lacked organizational coherence and the concrete ideas and proposals needed to both sustain a movement over time and appeal to the working class.<sup>21</sup> Such apparent discontinuity and organizational incoherence were, in their view, further proof that the anarchist movement was disconnected from the larger historical process.

In contrast to this historiography, my study contributes to a growing body of literature that counters such narratives by finding anarchism firmly rooted in working-class organizing and the labor movement. Newer research in the field suggests that from the late nineteenth century to at least the 1930s, anarchism was primarily a working-class movement insofar as it was composed largely of urban and rural workers united around their class interests. It is clear that anarchism was not dominated by highly skilled artisan workers or the “petty bourgeois peasantry,” and indeed anarchism’s social base was as “proletarian” in composition and character as Marxist parties.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, since the founding of anarchism as a movement during the International, the only anarchist groups that attracted large numbers of supporters were those committed to organizing workers, while anarchist tendencies that rejected working-class organizing, such as the anarchist individualists and many of the terrorist factions, did not have substantial followings. Strong

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<sup>19</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 89-91. Even anarcho-syndicalism, which marked a “halting step toward organization, strategy, and tactics” was for Hobsbawm wholly insufficient.

<sup>20</sup> Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 79, 86. Temma Kaplan has argued persuasively that Hobsbawm confused lack of coercion for lack of organization. Kaplan has shown how anarchist uprisings in Spain were organized in advance and timed to maximize their leverage in negotiations.

<sup>21</sup> Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 471-472.

<sup>22</sup> John Copp and Anatoly Dubovik have both found that the majority of anarchists in the 1917-1920 revolution identified as workers, and that the movement’s largely proletarian social composition was nearly the same as that of the Bolsheviks. John Copp, “The Role of the Anarchists in the Russian Revolution and Civil War, 1917-1921: A Case Study in Conspiratorial Party Behavior During Revolution” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993) 12-13, 25, 55-56, 62, 70. Copp indicated that anarchists were particularly strong among metalworkers and also in the postal and telegraph trade unions. Dubovik finds that anarchists were strongest among machinists, railway workers, metallurgists, and food industry workers. Dubovik, “Russian Anarchists in the Labour Movement,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016): 29-31.

anarchist movements emerged in western Europe, the United States, and Argentina, for example, and these movements were made up primarily of industrial wage workers often organized in revolutionary unions.<sup>23</sup>

Additionally, the anarchists had a broader conception of what constituted “working class” than Marxists; the latter’s singling out of the industrial proletariat as the driver of revolution marginalized other exploited classes, such as poor peasants. The Marxist view, wrote Russian anarchist and URW member L. Lipotkin in May 1917, counter-productively divided “into two hostile sides the great army of laborers [workers and peasants] and consequently serves to weaken the force of this army’s attack on the stronghold of capitalism.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, in countries containing large groups of peasants, such as in Spain, Ukraine, and Mexico, anarchist movements were mixtures of workers and peasants. In Spain, the anarchists drew substantially on peasant workers but still primarily on urban wage workers, as anarchists dominated the CNT (Confederation of Labor), the country’s largest trade union.<sup>25</sup> Even the anarchist movement led by Nestor Makhno, described by Hobsbawm as a perfect example of peasant millenarianism, had the backing of workers, unions, and the factory committees in the large area of Ukraine, centered in Gulay-Pole, under anarchist control. This region had been a “highly commercialized economy” with steam mills, iron foundries, and with a focus on agricultural machine production. The peasantry and the working class enjoyed close relations, and many peasants in the region took work as wage-earners in industrial centers, depending on the season, before returning to their villages—thus blurring the worker and peasant

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<sup>23</sup> For example, see David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917-1945* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 304, 311-313, 323; Geoffroy de Laforcade, “Straddling the Nation and the Working World: Anarchism and Syndicalism on the Docks and Rivers of Argentina, 1900-1930,” in *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, eds. Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt (Boston: Brill, 2010), 321-362; Schmidt and van der Walt, *Black Flame*.

<sup>24</sup> *Golos Truda*, May 18, 1917, 2. Turning peasants into enemies also led to unspeakable atrocities in the countryside under Bolshevik and Soviet rule.

<sup>25</sup> Esenwein, *Anarchist Ideology and the Working Class*, 5-6; Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia*, 25-29.

distinction.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere in Russia, the anarchist movement had the same social base of support—largely proletarian—as that of the Bolsheviks.<sup>27</sup> My thesis reinforces arguments and research that identify anarchism as a movement of the working class—of industrial wage workers and poor peasants.

Since this study focuses specifically on Russian immigrants who became industrial wage workers and anarchists when they moved to North America, it contributes more directly to the latest research on immigrant anarchism. In recent years, scholars have tapped underused foreign-language sources, principally newspapers written by the anarchists, to enrich the work on anarchist groups in the United States and Canada, and many of these studies also illuminate anarchist activity in the labor movement.<sup>28</sup> Kenyon Zimmer has argued that most anarchist immigrants in the US did not arrive as anarchists but joined the labor and anarchist movements as a result of their experiences as exploited foreign workers. I consider this question and find evidence to support Zimmer's argument as it applies to the Russians, and more broadly, Russian speakers in North America, many of whom were Jewish, Ukrainian, and Belarusan.

Paul Avrich's study on the Russian anarchist movement, published in 1967, is the only thorough and comprehensive study of the Russian anarchist movement in any language. As indicated, however, Avrich's research did not extend to the anarchists' activity abroad in between the revolutions, and therefore the discontinuity narrative on

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<sup>26</sup> Alexander Shubin, "The Makhnovist Movement and the National Question in the Ukraine, 1917-1921," in *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, eds. Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt (Boston: Brill, 2010), 148-149, 153. Makhno's first known political act was his participation as a striking worker at the Kerner factory in 1905, where the workers demanded improved conditions.

<sup>27</sup> For Marxists and Soviet historians, anarchism was a movement of the "petty-bourgeois peasantry" because it had to be, according to their doctrine: only Marxian socialism was suitable for the proletariat. See also Berry, *French Anarchist Movement*, 313.

<sup>28</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Kirk Shaffer "Tropical Libertarians: Anarchist Movements and Networks in the Caribbean, Southern United States, and Mexico, 1890s-1920s," in *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870-1940*, eds. Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt; Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007); Michael Miller Topp, *Those Without a Country: The Political Culture of Italian American Syndicalists* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

anarchist groups is reinforced in the interpretations of the Russian anarchist movement. Historians have observed anarchist involvement in the 1905 and especially 1917-1920 revolutions, but Woodcock, for example, wrote that their “activity both in Russia and among the expatriates fell away during the years of the First World War.”<sup>29</sup> Avrich has also stated that after the repression and exiles following the 1905 revolution “the movement fell dormant” until 1917. If this is arguably true insofar as their activity within Russia is concerned, it overlooks their activity abroad. Viewing anarchists through a national framework has triggered a saltwater fallacy effect: historians have not paid sufficient attention to the émigré and transnational character of movements. Activity among anarchists in Russia only “fell away” because it was systematically repressed, but before the war began in 1914, Russian anarchists were very active in western Europe, Canada, and beyond. Before the US entered the war in 1917, Russian anarchists in the US had significant latitude to fortify their ranks and experiment with their ideas. In recent years, Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian scholars, such as Dmitry Rublev, Vladimir Sapon, and Anatoly Dubovik, have written valuable studies on different aspects of the anarchist movement of the early twentieth century.<sup>30</sup> My study draws on this historiography, which complements Avrich’s work and helps to establish the background, context, and significance of Russian anarchism in North America.<sup>31</sup> These historians shed light on the URW’s origins and connections to the anarchist movement in Russia, but they too have not shown as much interest in the anarchist diaspora.

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<sup>29</sup> Woodcock, *Anarchism*, 415-416.

<sup>30</sup> I am indebted to Malcolm Archibald of Black Cat Press who has helped keep me abreast of the latest research on the anarchist movement by Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian historians, relevant portions of which are cited in this study. The most recent publication is by V. V. Kriven’kii *Anarkhistskoe Dvizhenie V Rossii V Pervoi Chetverti XX Veka: Teoriya, Organizatsiya, Praktika* [The Anarchist Movement in Russia in the First Quarter of the 20th Century: Theory, Organization, Practice] (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Dubovik supplements Avrich’s account on anarchist participation in the Russian labor movement in the 1905 and 1917 revolutions. Rublev provides biographical information on some URW figures and insight on Russian anarchist views on the First World War. Anatoly Dubovik, “Russian Anarchists in the Labour Movement,” 29-31; Dmitry Rublev, “The Russian Anarchist Movement During the First World War,” trans. Malcolm Archibald. Originally a conference presentation, “From the history of anarchism – the 200th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Bakunin” at the Institute of History and International Relations, University of Szczecin (Poland), in May 2014.

Finally, existing historiography on the Russian anarchists in North America has obscured their connections to the labor movement. Scholars of the 1919 red scare, for instance, have noted how the URW was the first target of the so-called Palmer raids, which led to the largest political deportation in US history: close to 250 URW anarchists were shipped back to Russia in December 1919. However, red scare historians have advanced the erroneous notion that the URW was a harmless social club rather than a serious political or labor organization.<sup>32</sup> This thesis demonstrates that the URW was a strong anarchist organization and aims to fill in a gap in the literature on the Russian anarchist movement by detailing its activity in North America in between the revolutions.

To tell the story of the Russian anarchists in North America, my study draws primarily on previously unused primary source material. The principal source is the anarchist newspaper *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labor), which the URW published from March 1911 through May 1917 and used as a recruiting and organizing tool. A close reading of *Golos Truda* is supplemented by extensive use of local English-language newspaper coverage in North America of events involving URW members. Primary sources consulted also include other Russian anarchist, syndicalist, and socialist newspapers, in addition to memoirs and histories by participants in the Russian left community in the United States during the period, as well as US government surveillance records.<sup>33</sup> Historiography on the labor and anarchist movements in North America is referenced throughout in order to provide a more complete picture of the Russians' activity.

Each chapter of the thesis explores the URW's, and more broadly the Russian anarchist movement's, relationship to the working class and the labor movement. Chapter 2 provides an overview of nineteenth and twentieth-century anarchist and labor history to establish a context for the rest of the work. Russian anarchist émigrés in North America drew on the traditions of the revolutionary populist (Narodnik) movement in Russia and the anarchist and syndicalist movements in Europe, North America, and Russia.

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<sup>32</sup> See Mark Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 53-81.

<sup>33</sup> These memoirs include an unpublished manuscript on the Russian anarchist movement in North America by long time URW member L. Lipotkin: *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie v Severnoi Amerike: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Russian anarchist movement in North America: Historical essay] (undated manuscript written at some point in the 1950s, hereafter cited as Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

Therefore, the first part reviews touchstone events and phenomena in Russia and Europe dating back to the 1860s, including the International, the Russian revolutionary movement, French syndicalism, and the 1905 Russian Revolution. It describes the development of anarchism in relation to these broader movements, while highlighting anarchism's connection to labor. The second half of the chapter discusses immigration trends from Europe and Russia to North America from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century and the corresponding emergence of anarchism and industrial unionism in the US and Canada. Reviewing the history on both continents establishes the URW as an extension and continuation of the historical anarchist movement and broader radical currents. It also shows how and why the Russian anarchists moved more decisively toward labor organizing, in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution, as a means to advance their objectives. After the revolution, anarchists and other Russians fled the empire, and the chapter ends with a discussion of the URW's immediate roots in North America.

Chapter 3 details URW activity from 1911 to 1914, beginning with the release of the first issue of URW's newspaper, *Golos Truda*, in March 1911. The content and level of the URW's activity was often tied to developments in the labor movement and economy. For example, the insurgent national strike movement in the US had not yet materialized by 1911, and the URW spent the year gradually building the federation and affiliated Russian trade unions while outlining its vision; they were not active in strikes that year. 1912's "Bread and Roses" strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts and 1913's weavers' strike in Paterson, New Jersey—mass strikes led by immigrant workers and the IWW—emboldened the radical labor movement, and URW groups in both the US and Canada began to participate more actively in strikes and labor organizing. In 1914, the US economy went into a recession and unemployment rates skyrocketed, which put a strain on the URW; however, in July, the anarchists held their first continental convention in Detroit where they drew up the federation's principles, and in September *Golos Truda* began publishing weekly rather than monthly, two important developments. The chapter shows how the URW took a pragmatic approach to organizing by tailoring their ideas and tactics to appeal to workers and peasants as they built the federation. It argues that by grounding its efforts in practical, working-class organizing, the URW enabled Russians to take part in some of the important labor struggles of the period while the federation itself became the unofficial Russian branch of the IWW and a part of the broader revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist movements in North America.

Chapter 4 shows the URW becoming increasingly integrated into the US labor movement. In the first half of 1915, unemployment rates remained high before orders from Europe for ammunition and supplies revived both the US economy and the labor movement. In mid-1915, workers began striking in larger numbers, demanding their share of the profits from the war, and by early 1916 capitalists were facing a large-scale rebellion among workers of all skills. In 1916 and 1917, the number of strikes across the country reached record highs forcing many mainstream unions to adapt to this new intense spirit of direct action, and a surging “new unionism” took hold. The URW was on the forefront of many of these struggles, and the federation began attracting Russian workers in large numbers as it became part of the broader industrial union movement. The chapter examines the URW’s relationship with the IWW and the differences between the URW’s anarcho-syndicalism and the IWW’s “boring from without” approach. Finally, it looks at how the URW’s popularity among immigrant workers in the US enabled the federation to make material contributions to the anarchist movement in Russia; the URW was able to raise a substantial amount of money for the cause, and the anarchists took a leading position on Russian political committees set up after the February Revolution to determine who would receive financial support from the Provisional Government for repatriation to Russia.

Chapter 5 looks at mutual aid organizations founded by Russian and Jewish anarchists in the US, which functioned as alternatives to state and church-run groups. As URW groups became fixtures in Russian communities in North America, they encountered hostile opposition from leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church in America, a competitor for the allegiance of Russian immigrants. We can see in these confrontations how the URW’s labor organizing goals in the United States intersected with the anarchists’ struggle against the Russian church and government. After examining a few examples of these interactions, the chapter sheds light on some of the important social organizations founded by or affiliated with the URW, such as the Society for a Russian Worker-Immigrant Home, the Russian division of *Arbayter Ring* (Workmen’s Circle), and the Anarchist Red Cross.

Finally, Chapter 6 considers the impact of the URW by summarizing its development after 1917 in North America and outlining roles played by some prominent URW members in the Russian Revolution and Civil War.

## Chapter 2. Setting the Scene: From Russia to North America

Russian anarchists in North America consciously drew on a rich tradition of thought, activism, and debate as they confronted capitalism and developed their own ideas. For instance, *Golos Truda* writers frequently referenced the 1870s revolutionary populist movement in Russia, the 1905 Russian Revolution—which they were directly connected to—the 1886 Haymarket Affair in the United States, and the syndicalist movement in France. Thus, this chapter reviews the major movements in Russia, Europe, and North America that inspired the Union of Russian Workers. To fully understand and appreciate the Russian anarchists' activity in America, it is necessary to grasp the significance of events that led to the formation of the URW. The chapter also examines migration trends and changes in industrialization, dating back to the nineteenth century, that created space for the rise of industrial unionism and anarchism in the United States.

### Theory

Anarchism as an organized movement was set in motion in the 1860s and 1870s when supporters of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin took part in the International Workingmen's Association ("International"), which represented numerous workers' organizations primarily from countries located in western Europe. The long-time Russian revolutionary Bakunin, who had spent years in Russian prisons before escaping Siberian exile, became the principal founder of the revolutionary anarchist movement, during these years. Bakunin and the sections of workers under his influence joined the International in 1868 and became the main rivals of Karl Marx's socialist faction for ideological leadership of the association.<sup>34</sup> While Marx and Bakunin envisioned the same goal in theory—a classless, stateless world brought about through a social revolution—their ideas on how to achieve that end diverged. The main dispute was over the question

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<sup>34</sup> Proudhon was the first self-described anarchist, but he was not a revolutionary; though his ideas influenced Bakunin and others, Proudhon favored a gradual, peaceful replacement of capitalism and the state with anarchism. Moreover, *Golos Truda* writers, as revolutionary anarchists, generally did not cite Proudhon as an inspiration. For these reasons, Proudhon's thought is not considered here.

of political power. For Marx, the working class needed to be organized into a political party as the means to seize power. The working-class party would then consolidate its hold on state power—through a “dictatorship of the proletariat”—to defeat the bourgeois counterrevolution, before abolishing the state and allowing communism to take hold. Bakunin argued that Marx’s plan was deceptive: a transitional “workers’ state” would create new forms of domination and class oppression, and rather than “wither away,” it would become an authoritarian bureaucracy run by “Marx and his friends.”<sup>35</sup> Instead of aiming to win state power through a political party, Bakunin argued that revolutionaries should focus on organizing workers in trade unions across national boundaries as the means to improve working conditions, develop class consciousness, and eventually carry out a complete social revolution, as soon as workers recognized their capacity to do so.<sup>36</sup>

The term “social revolution” was used to distinguish radicals’ conception of revolution from the disillusioning “political” revolutions of the late 1840s. For anarchists, a social revolution was defined as transformational change rather than mere replacement of one political government with another. For many on the left, the 1871 Paris Commune had the makings of a social revolution—however briefly it lasted—and constituted something upon which future revolutions could be based.<sup>37</sup> For anarchists, social

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<sup>35</sup> Bakunin wrote: “They [Marx & Engels] insist that only a dictatorship (theirs, of course) can create popular freedom. We reply that no dictatorship can have any other objective than to perpetuate itself...Liberty can be created only by liberty.” Anarchists rejected ends-justify-means rationales in the context of revolutionary struggle, arguing that a result is shaped and determined by the means chosen to reach it. For instance, Bakunin wrote of a “flagrant contradiction” in Marx’s vision wherein “anarchy, or freedom, is the goal, and the state, or dictatorship, the means. Thus, for the masses to be liberated they must first be enslaved.” Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. and ed. Marshall S. Shatz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 179.

<sup>36</sup> For Bakunin and his supporters, the International itself “was to create an international federation of trade unions that would assist each other in their struggle against capitalism” and set the stage for the revolutionary displacement of capital and state. Robert Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy We Invoke It: The First International and the Origins of the Anarchist Movement* (Oakland: AK Press, 2015), 116-117, 120.

<sup>37</sup> Both Marx and Bakunin saw the Commune as “the prototype of a new society.” Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 231. For Bakunin, a social revolution would more specifically lead to the anarchist ideal for society: “end of want, an end to poverty, the full satisfaction of all material needs through collective labor equal and obligatory for all; then, an end to all masters and to domination of every kind, and the free construction of popular life in accordance with popular needs, not from above downward, as in the state, but from below upward, by the people themselves, dispensing with all governments and parliaments – a voluntary alliance of agricultural and factory worker associations, communes, provinces, and nations.” Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, 33.

revolution entailed collectivization of property and land, with workers taking direct control over the production of goods; these new societies would be administered not by a centralized state but through interconnected producers' cooperatives and federations, voluntarily assembled.<sup>38</sup> Bakunin and his supporters argued that in the course of the revolution workers should destroy political power—since power corrupts all those who possess it—and replace it with a system of autonomous but federated communes. No one commune would have power over another, and they would be based on “the voluntary organization of the workers from below upward,” a condition Bakunin defined as both “freedom” and “anarchy.”<sup>39</sup> Anarchism was based on the idea that workers have the ability to manage society themselves and in a much more egalitarian, just, moral, and efficient manner than under capitalism and nation-states, even “socialist” ones.

In the 1870s and 1880s, anarchist theorists such as Peter Kropotkin and Errico Malatesta developed Bakunin's ideas on social revolution and anarchism. Bakunin had imagined an anarchist society where land and resources were collectivized but workers were paid based on how much they produced and how difficult the job, an idea known as anarchist collectivism. “Anarchist communism” as outlined by Kropotkin, Malatesta, and others such as Élisée Reclus, would abolish the wage system, and this tendency became the dominant one in the movement, though it was consistent in spirit with Bakunin's ideas.<sup>40</sup> Anarchist communism envisioned stateless, decentralized societies organized through a system of federated workers' and peasants' communes or a “grouping of

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<sup>38</sup> See for instance Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 14-20, 24, 73.

<sup>39</sup> Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, 179. On Bakunin's thought in relation to Marx, see Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006); Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men's Association*, (Oakland: PM Press, 2016); Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*.

<sup>40</sup> Anarchist-communist theorists Kropotkin and James Guillaume were in any case flexible on this point, foreseeing a gradual conversion from collectivization to communism and open to communal autonomy in determining how the products of labor would be shared. There is also no reason to think Bakunin would have opposed anarchist communism. Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 229.

equals.”<sup>41</sup> Kropotkin was one of the leading figures in the anarchist movement for over 40 years and along with Bakunin the most influential thinker on the URW and broader Russian anarchist movement. In Kropotkin’s ideal future, every able-bodied person would perform manual labor for four or five hours a day to provide for society but were then free to read, write, and socialize as they wished. Instead of a wage-based economy, people would take whatever they needed from a storehouse of goods. Using statistics available in his day, Kropotkin calculated that there were more than sufficient resources to provide for everyone on earth if only such resources were distributed rationally and equitably.<sup>42</sup>

## Practice

How did anarchists work toward achieving their goals? After Marx expelled the anarchists from the International in 1872, they held a series of “anti-authoritarian” international congresses from 1872 to 1876 where debates focused on the organization of the working class.<sup>43</sup> Following up on arguments at the International, the anarchists reaffirmed their position that revolutionaries should organize workers in trade unions and other working-class organizations. Moreover, most of the delegates supported workers’ strikes for basic improvements (“partial strikes”), because such strikes foster class consciousness, advance the class struggle, and would eventually culminate in a general strike “as the principal means of inaugurating the social revolution.”<sup>44</sup> Disciples of Bakunin

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<sup>41</sup> By 1880, Kropotkin no longer saw the commune as a “territorial agglomeration; it is rather a generic name, a synonym for the grouping of equals, knowing neither frontier nor barriers.” Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 233-234. There were no blueprints, only guidelines; specific characteristics of these societies would be worked out among those organizing them.

<sup>42</sup> Kropotkin’s most persuasive argument on this front appears in *The Conquest of Bread*. Anarchist communism might alternatively appear as “communist anarchism,” the idea being to distinguish it, not only from collectivism, but more significantly from the version of communism advocated by Marxists and other tendencies based on seizing state power.

<sup>43</sup> Marx’s ideology and tactics—e.g. assuming control over the International—were both regarded as authoritarian in character, so anarchists and other socialist “anti-authoritarians” joined forces in a new series of congresses. Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 197-213. Meanwhile, the IWA (International) itself went into decline after 1872. Robert Graham argues persuasively that the anti-authoritarian International congresses were the true successors of the IWA.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 204. See also 198-199, 202, 204, 206.

also called for a “revolutionary alliance between the city workers and peasant masses.”<sup>45</sup> The federations represented at the anti-authoritarian International congresses were themselves largely working class in composition, including the Italian Federation which had 30,000 members. Students, teachers, and other intellectuals were also represented in several sections.<sup>46</sup> For many anarchists including Kropotkin, it was essential for revolutionaries to maintain “continual contact with the masses” whether those masses were industrial workers or peasants.<sup>47</sup>

In western Europe, principally in Germany and England, the masses were increasingly located in the new industrial working class, but in countries such as Russia, over 90 percent of the people were peasants. Making contact with the peasant masses thus defined the character of the Russian revolutionary movement for most of the 1870s. Groups and movements, including chiefly the Chaikovsky circle, in which Kropotkin was active, and the “going to the people” [*khozhdenie v narod*] student movement, focused on educating and learning from the Russian people, both peasants and workers. Before the *v narod* movement began in 1873—when hundreds if not thousands of students and intellectuals went to live among peasants—the Chaikovskists, mostly intellectuals who espoused a mixture of socialist, populist, and anarchist ideas, had started organizing

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<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 201.

<sup>46</sup> Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 206.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Kropotkin, *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*, trans. and ed. Martin A. Miller (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), 126-127. Though anarchists enthusiastically supported the rise of the Paris Commune, on its nine-year anniversary Kropotkin later argued that the Commune had not stood a chance against its enemies because the French masses had not been invested in its triumph. This was the fault of the communard leaders who had tried to defer social revolution in the name of consolidating the Commune and achieving victory first. By deferring the revolution, Kropotkin argued, most people could not see how the Commune would bring them material and moral well-being and therefore had not come to its aid. It failed because the communards had lost contact with the masses. The Commune could only have succeeded if the communards had tried to “consolidate the Commune by means of the social revolution.” The lesson he learned from the experience of the Commune was that workers needed to take possession of social capital “on the spot.” He attributed the “let us first make sure of victory, and then see what can be done” mentality to an outdated phase of socialism—a veiled attack on the Jacobin and Blanquist leadership.

factory workers in 1871, in St. Petersburg and beyond.<sup>48</sup> According to Franco Venturi, this organizing campaign by the Chaikovskists marked the start of the working-class movement in Russia;<sup>49</sup> Kropotkin described his efforts, along with other Chaikovskists, to recruit workers: living among groups of textile workers, stone workers, carpenters and others, “our comrades had become part of the family,” wrote Kropotkin. “All night through they discussed Socialism with them,” and he added that the Chaikovskists “revolutionary propaganda met with considerable success.”<sup>50</sup> Soon formed the Northern Union of Russian Workers, consisting mostly of metalworkers, as a working-class counterpart to the broader radical populist movement.<sup>51</sup> The Northern Union called for the destruction of the Russian state and by 1879, all working-class districts in St. Petersburg had organized groups linked to the Union. Among the radicals in the populist movement were self-described “Bakuninists.” For instance, Bakuninists were behind the first working-class newspaper in the Russian Empire, *Rabotnik* (The Worker), which was edited by Zamfir Ralli, who had also been a participant in the 1872 anti-authoritarian St. Imier Congress.<sup>52</sup> Bakuninists, also referred to as the “rebels” [*buntary*], may have been best known for attempting to incite peasant rebellions in the countryside but in fact, they also agitated

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<sup>48</sup> Kropotkin praised the “going to the people” movement for recognizing the importance of establishing “an intimate connection” between revolutionists and the masses, and understanding what the peasants wanted rather than just imposing a program on them. He wrote that the movement’s fundamental goal was to improve the conditions of poor peasants. Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 144-145.

<sup>49</sup> Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 471, 507-513.

<sup>50</sup> Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 512-513. To bring about the “practical realization” of anarchism, Kropotkin later wrote, anarchists must participate in the workers’ daily struggles and “seek to broaden theoretical notions and awaken the spirit of independence and revolt” in the context of escalating the economic struggle. Quoted in Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 232.

<sup>51</sup> Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 551-577. The platform of the Northern Union of Russian Workers reflected both socialist and anarchist influences. Around the same time, a Southern Union of Russian Workers was organized in Ukraine, with a similar set of priorities.

<sup>52</sup> Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 527, 529, 560; Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 198. Ralli’s real name was Zamfir Arbore.

among industrial workers.<sup>53</sup> The populist movement's initiatives to enlighten both workers and peasants, however, were suppressed.

Toward the end of the decade, the Russian state intensified its crackdown on radicals and began imprisoning the movement's leaders *en masse* in order to crush it. In response to state repression, a determined faction of Russian revolutionaries embraced targeted violence.<sup>54</sup> *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will) assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881; in a letter to the new tsar, they stated that they abhorred violence but characterized their act as a "miserable necessity."<sup>55</sup> Kropotkin wrote that the bulk of the populist movement opposed violence, but because the state had made peaceful change impossible, a turn toward violence was inevitable.<sup>56</sup>

*Narodnaya Volya* had an impact beyond Russia. Inspired by the boldness of *Narodnaya Volya*'s insurgency, and as a response to the repression of the anarchist movement in Europe, anarchists at the London Congress in 1881 endorsed the tactic of "propaganda by the deed," including targeted assassinations.<sup>57</sup> The original idea of "propaganda of the deed," however, did not include assassinations. Around 1876, Bakunin and others had imagined propaganda by deed as collective acts intended to inspire rebellion among the masses.<sup>58</sup> This usually took the form of street protests in defiance of the law, and anarchists also called for local expropriations of resources, i.e. taking "social

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<sup>53</sup> Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 561, 580.

<sup>54</sup> The "Trial of the Hundred and Ninety-Three" in 1877-1878 and its consequences triggered this turn toward assassinations. Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, 587.

<sup>55</sup> Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 155-156.

<sup>56</sup> Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 146.

<sup>57</sup> James Joll, *The Anarchists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 109-110. Germany's 1878 Anti-Socialist Laws pushed many anarchists and socialist revolutionaries to embrace propaganda by the deed.

<sup>58</sup> Propaganda by the deed could include any "exemplary action" or demonstration that might prod the masses into rebellion. Anthony D'Agostino, *Marxism and the Russian Anarchists* (San Francisco: Germinal Press, 1977), 80-81. For a sophisticated explanation of the concept, see Davide Turcato, *Making Sense of Anarchism: Errico Malatesta's Experiments with Revolution, 1889-1900* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 73-76.

capital” into common ownership as a way to mobilize diffident workers.<sup>59</sup> But as anarchists in Europe became more prominent over the decade—through the organization of workers, dissemination of propaganda, etc.—state repression increased as conditions for workers and the poor worsened, and as a result anarchists contemplated taking more extreme measures in response. Opinion within the movement was divided, but by 1881, assassinating state officials deemed most responsible for oppression had received sanction from the London Congress, though anarchists would regret it. After several political assassinations mostly in western Europe, anarchism became associated with terrorism. Instead of inspiring rebellions, the assassinations may have inhibited the growth of the anarchist movement.<sup>60</sup>

This deviation was unfortunate because throughout the 1880s and 1890s, most anarchists remained devoted to labor organizing. In Spain, for instance, anarchists held a leading position in the labor movement, with strong support among both urban and rural workers, beginning in 1870 and continuing through 1890s. In the United States, discussed more below, anarchists made significant gains among workers and unions in the 1880s. In France, “syndicalism”—named simply after syndicates, the French word for labor union—was a movement led in part by anarchists that spread to other European countries. Syndicalist unions embraced direct action, which usually took the form of strikes, to push for reform and revolution, rather than ally with political parties to seek change through parliaments. Revolutionary syndicalists argued that unions should function as both vehicles for class struggle and the cells or foundations of a new society.<sup>61</sup> Seeing the logic and possibility in fusing anarchist and syndicalist ideas, French anarchists in large numbers joined unions to push for their ideas, and the emergence of the syndicalist movement reinvigorated anarchism as anarcho-syndicalism became the leading left-wing

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<sup>59</sup> Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 217, 221-222, 226, 232, 262.

<sup>60</sup> As Kropotkin pointed out, “You do not kill a man to make propaganda. You kill him because he is a viper and you hate him.” Quoted in Graham, *We Do Not Fear Anarchy*, 261. The anarchists’ sensational tactics did attract support and interest from other radicals, intellectuals, and artists.

<sup>61</sup> See Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 73; Joll, *Anarchists*, 178-179.

tendency globally.<sup>62</sup> After propaganda of the deed appeared to fail as a tactic, the idea of carrying out social revolution through the labor movement became even more essential to the identity of anarchists in Europe, beginning in the 1890s and into the new century.

### **Anarchism in Russia: 1904-1907**

Though Bakuninists such as Zamfir Ralli, Sofya Bardina, and Sergey Bobochov had been involved with the revolutionary populist movement, the first active and explicitly anarchist groups did not emerge in Russia until early 1904.<sup>63</sup> They were particularly prominent in the borderlands and especially so among Jews in the Pale of Settlement, who had become the targets of state-sanctioned pogroms.<sup>64</sup> Radicalized by living conditions but dissatisfied with “the suffocating atmosphere of the political Socialist parties”—the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries—many workers, peasants, and intellectuals of different nationalities, influenced by Bakunin and Kropotkin, formed numerous anarchist circles.<sup>65</sup>

During the events of the 1905 revolution, anarchism in Russia finally took shape as a separate movement within the broader socialist milieu. In January, thousands of workers marched on the Winter Palace with a petition demanding an eight-hour work day,

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<sup>62</sup> Other aspects of the syndicalist movement influenced anarchist organizational strategies. The French *bourses du travail* or local, labor councils aided the *syndicats* by working closely with them to provide, “a focal point for the social and cultural life of the working-class community.” The *bourse* helped workers find jobs, offered educational courses and library services, created mutual aid societies, and established strike funds, among other activities. Anarchist groups such as the URW would experiment with many of these practices. Joll, *The Anarchists*, 180-184; Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 67.

<sup>63</sup> N. Rogdaev, “On the Anarchist Movement in Russia: Report to the International Anarchist Congress at Amsterdam,” in Mauro Antonioli, ed. *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam (1907)*, trans. Nestor McNab (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), 186-187. Anarchist Nikolai Rogdaev wrote of the “harsh years of reaction” that radicals faced in the aftermath of *Narodnaya Volya*’s assassination. Before 1903-1904, Rogdaev added, anarchist ideas had been inaccessible to the Russian public.

<sup>64</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 16-18.

<sup>65</sup> Rogdaev, “Anarchist Movement in Russia,” 184, 186. Anarchist groups initially only recruited among city workers before attempting to expand into the countryside.

higher wages, and the establishment of a constitutional republic.<sup>66</sup> In what became known as Bloody Sunday, guards fired on the workers, killing and wounding several hundred. Rather than terrorize the Russian people, Bloody Sunday triggered mass strikes and gave new force to a burgeoning labor movement; worker and student demonstrations broke out across Russia. In October 1905, a general strike wave in many parts of the empire shut down cities and forced the tsar to issue concessions outlined in his October 30 Manifesto. Commenting on the ongoing events in November 1905, Kropotkin emphasized how the strikes had been initiated and led by workers themselves rather than any of the political parties. He also noted how tsarist authorities had been frustrated and stymied by the effective use of this “new weapon,” the general strike, which Marxists had opposed, dating back to the International.<sup>67</sup> The workers would realize, predicted Kropotkin, that the general strike could also be used “to make industry the means not of personal enrichment but of satisfying the needs of the community.”<sup>68</sup> Noting the formation of the first St. Petersburg soviet, which had risen up spontaneously out of the general strike, Kropotkin argued that the revolution marked the Russian labor movement’s ascendancy, which was complemented by a series of well-organized peasant uprisings that “displayed a wonderful unanimity of action” with the strikes in cities.<sup>69</sup>

The revolution hastened the growth of Russian anarchist groups, as they threw themselves into the action. Anarchists led strikes at electrical and gas utilities, at foundries and machine plants, and were active in numerous trade unions, including among printers, patternmakers, electrotechnologists, lithographers, and metallurgists.<sup>70</sup> They were also

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<sup>66</sup> Reginald E. Zelnick, “Revolutionary Russia 1890-1914,” in Gregory L. Freeze, *Russia: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 251; Rogdaev, “Anarchist Movement in Russia,” 179.

<sup>67</sup> Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 278-279, 269. Kropotkin noted further how ideas from the European labor movement had already penetrated Russia and helped inspire the great strikes of 1896-1900 in St. Petersburg and central Russia, as an example, along with the success of the Bund, a Jewish labor organization.

<sup>68</sup> Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 288.

<sup>69</sup> Kropotkin, *Selected Writings*, 287, 272-273, 290.

<sup>70</sup> Dubovik, “Russian Anarchists in the Labour Movement,” *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 66 (Winter 2016), 29-31.

involved in strikes among bakers, milkmen, tailors, and shoemakers.<sup>71</sup> The Kropotkin-allied propaganda organ *Khlieb i Volya* (Bread and Freedom), based in Geneva but distributed in Russia, urged anarchists to join strikes and unions and therein push for general strikes to bring about a social revolution. Daniel Novomirsky's south Russian group of anarcho-syndicalists based in Odessa reinforced this message.<sup>72</sup> Novomirsky's faction recruited thousands of workers from Ukraine and Novorossiia, prominent in strikes of sailors and dockworkers in and around Odessa.<sup>73</sup> Novomirsky's group and the *Khliebovoltsy* were the two most influential pro-syndicalist factions in the Russian anarchist movement.<sup>74</sup>

In many respects, the revolution was more like a war between a radicalized mass and the state, and anarchists fought on the front lines. Beyond strikes, anarchists took part in widespread "expropriations," defined by anarchist Nikolai Rogdaev as "forced re-appropriation of sums of money from the tax authorities or the bourgeoisie to obtain funds for propaganda...arms, workshops, organizing escapes, aid to imprisoned comrades or those on the run...and their families...Russian anarchists distributed money to striking workers and the unemployed."<sup>75</sup> In Odessa, Ekaterinoslav, and Tiraspol', for example, anarchists took possession of print works to publish and disseminate their propaganda

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<sup>71</sup> N. Rogdaev, "The Activity of Anarchists in Russia: Report sent to the Congress at Amsterdam by Orlovskiy and Rogdaev," in Maurio Antonioli, ed. *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam (1907)*, trans. Nestor McNab (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009), 166-168. According to Rogdaev, anarchists in Belostok (Bialystok) led a general strike of textile workers in May 1905.

<sup>72</sup> N. Rogdaev, "On the Anarchist Movement in Russia," 191-192; Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 77-79.

<sup>73</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 77-78; Dubovik, "Russian Anarchists in the Labour Movement," 29-31; Rogdaev, "Activity of Anarchists in Russia," 167. One of the south Russian's groups unions near Odessa functioned as a labor exchange that filled vacancies on Black Sea ships; the sailors also managed the union themselves. Novomirsky identified as anarcho-syndicalist to indicate a commitment to both anarchism and labor, and with an emphasis on class struggle.

<sup>74</sup> The *Khliebovoltsy* included Maria Goldsmit and G. Gogeliia, both of whom later contributed to URW newspapers, in addition to Maksim Raevsky, editor of *Golos Truda* from 1914 to 1917. Novomirsky's presence on the pages of *Golos Truda* was also palpable.

<sup>75</sup> Rogdaev, "Activity of Anarchists in Russia," 172. Expropriations could involve robbing banks. It was not theft, they argued, since the wealth had originally been stolen from the people, and the money was put toward the revolutionary cause.

while paying the workers for their labor. During a strike in Belostok (Bialystok), anarchists expropriated food warehouses and depots in the city to distribute to striking workers.<sup>76</sup> They also organized “mobile defense units” to defend Jews against state-sanctioned pogroms in places like Belostok, Odessa, and Ekaterinoslav. In these skirmishes, they engaged in armed combat with the police and Cossacks, with many casualties on both sides, and anarchists also targeted certain commisars and police spies for assassination.<sup>77</sup> At the 1907 International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam, Nikolai Rogdaev gave a partial justification for such attacks, arguing that the individuals targeted during the revolution had committed particularly heinous acts against the people.<sup>78</sup> Terrorist attacks and expropriations were not unusual in the context of the revolution, as SDs and especially the SRs were heavily involved in this activity as well. Rogdaev asserted that expropriations, including taking possession of factories and mines, had broad popular support and that even terrorism had been chosen by the masses as a method of struggle.<sup>79</sup> However, some radicals including anarchists took extreme measures even by the revolution’s standards, which were more difficult to understand for a movement that began, at the International, by emphasizing morality and arguing that means deployed during revolutionary struggle shape ends. The anarchist factions *Chernoie Znamya* (Black Banner) based in Odessa and *Beznachalnie* (Without Authority) in Kiev and St. Petersburg committed “motiveless” [*bezmotivnyi*] attacks on public places

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<sup>76</sup> Rogdaev, “Activity of Anarchists in Russia,” 173, 166-167.

<sup>77</sup> Rogdaev, “Activity of Anarchists in Russia,” 164-166.

<sup>78</sup> Rogdaev, “Activity of Anarchists in Russia,” 164-165. They also threw bombs at Cossack barracks and burned government documents. Rogdaev himself fought behind the barricades during the revolution and would co-edit the Paris-based pro-syndicalist anarchist communist newspaper *Burevestnik* (Stormy Petrel), from 1906 to 1911, with future *Golos Truda* editor Raevsky, so his commentary here is valuable and relevant, as his views were consonant with Raevsky’s and the URW’s.

<sup>79</sup> Rogdaev, “Activity of Anarchists,” 161-162; “On the Anarchist Movement in Russia,” 179. In his September 1907 report to the Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam, Rogdaev provided what he described as “very conservative, approximate” estimates of casualty figures among anarchists during the revolution up to that point: 100 anarchists died in clashes with police, 100 had been executed by the state, while a 100 more were in forced labor camps. “Activity of Anarchists,” 174.

such as restaurants and theaters, while issuing a death sentence against the entire bourgeoisie.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to practicing “motiveless” terror, ideological absolutism characterized the views of the *Chernoznamentsy* and *Beznachal'tsy* on the topic of labor. They were “anti-syndicalist” anarchist communists who refused any association with the union movement. These radicals opposed worker strikes for pay raises and reduced hours, viewing such partial improvements as counter-revolutionary insofar as they would, it was argued, delay or prevent rather than advance the cause of social revolution.<sup>81</sup> These anarchists would, as Avrich put it, settle for nothing less than the Golden Age, on the spot—but they were a minority. They identified as anarchist communist, professing a belief in Kropotkin’s vision of a stateless world of federated communes, but they differed from Kropotkin and Novomirsky in seeking to achieve this goal through insurrectionary and often indiscriminate violence rather than mass organizing.<sup>82</sup> Despite their absolutism and preoccupation with terrorism, however, even these anti-syndicalist groups were dominated by workers and students rather than peasants or any other classes.<sup>83</sup>

Similar to what occurred the previous decade in Europe, opinion within the Russian anarchist movement on the effectiveness of terrorism grew increasingly unfavorable, especially in cases where the given justification felt more like hollow rationalization. Of note was *Chernoie Znamya*’s bombing of a café frequented by intellectuals and the petty bourgeoisie, which prompted Novomirsky to ask: “Do the revolutionaries really have nothing better to do than throw bombs into restaurants?”<sup>84</sup> Maksim Raevsky of the *Khlieb*

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<sup>80</sup> See Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 35-71.

<sup>81</sup> Rogdaev, “On the Anarchist Movement in Russia,” 192-194; Dubovik, “Russian Anarchists in the Labour Movement,” 29-31; Rublev, “The Russian Anarchist Movement During the First World War.” Available at the Kate Sharpley Library: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/qrfksw> (accessed June 8, 2018). Anarchists of this school advocated “the worse the better” or, in Marxist discourse, a form of accelerationism. They condemned as sellouts the anarchists in western Europe.

<sup>82</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 44, 49, 51.

<sup>83</sup> Avrich wrote that attempts by anarchist-communists during these years to recruit peasants were met with considerably less success than appeals to the urban working class. *Russian Anarchists*, 56-58.

<sup>84</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 61.

*i Volya* group, and future editor of the Union of Russian Workers' newspaper *Golos Truda*, condemned the indiscriminate acts of violence perpetrated by *Chernoe Znamya* and *Beznachalie* as "Nechaevist tactics."<sup>85</sup> For influential Russian anarchist theorists and actors such as Kropotkin, Rogdaev, Novomirsky, and Raevsky, the *Chernoznamentsy* and *Beznachal'tsy* had misunderstood anarchism and Bakunin's message. Despite Rogdaev's partial justification for anarchist violence in his report to the 1907 congress in Amsterdam, he stated that terrorism directed at bystanders "had no relationship to anarchist theories" and that *Beznachaltsy's* methods had been ineffective.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, as Nechaevists who used ends-justify-means arguments to rationalize their crimes, they had rejected the teachings of Bakunin and Kropotkin and were therefore arguably not even anarchists.

These repudiations signaled a turn away from terrorism for the Russian anarchist movement. The inability of *Chernoe Znamya* to gain support among the masses or put a dent into the state with their methods, together with the relative success of experiments with anarcho-syndicalism, helped shift the movement into a fuller embrace of labor organizing, at least as a means to spread anarchist ideas and further revolutionary objectives, and as an alternative to terrorism. In 1907, Rogdaev noted that growing strength of the union movement in Russia and the "new currents...within the working class whose relationship with German Socialist Anarchism and the revolutionary syndicalism of the Latin countries is undeniable."<sup>87</sup> As chapters three and four show, the Russian anarchists in North America practiced a type of anarchism that reflected the broader movement's turn toward the labor movement—a turn that was significantly reinforced by the rise of syndicalism in Europe and the industrial union movement in North America, which provided space for anarchist ideas. Concentrating on the labor movement more

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<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 62-63. In the late 1860s, the infamous Sergei Nechaev not only advocated indiscriminate terrorism but also murdered at least one of his own associates. The "motiveless" terrorists of the 1905 embraced the connection to Nechaev, often citing his words as inspiration, as Nechaev's legacy had continued to haunt the anarchist movement. Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 50.

<sup>86</sup> Rogdaev, "On the Anarchist Movement in Russia," 190, fn. 13. Rogdaev also noted that *Chernoe Znamie* and *Beznachalnie* had taken the principle of expropriation "to absurd levels" by using anarchism as a pretext to rob anyone who happened to be walking down the street.. Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 115.

<sup>87</sup> Rogdaev, "On the Anarchist Movement in Russia," 181.

persuasively addressed the question of how to realize, or at least work toward, anarchist goals.<sup>88</sup>

## Russian Migration to North America

After the 1905 revolution, tsarist authorities arrested and imprisoned thousands of radicals. Anarchists who evaded the repression fled abroad, mostly to Europe and North America. The émigré movement to North America coincided with an already existing migration trend in the first decade of the twentieth century, which the aftermath of the revolution expedited; a surge in migration from Russia occurred as peasants moved alongside émigrés.<sup>89</sup> Lack of economic opportunities together with political repression fueled migration from Belarus and Ukraine.<sup>90</sup> Many subjects of the Russian Empire had been radicalized by the events surrounding the 1905 revolution, including *Golos Truda*'s first editor August Rode-Chervinsky, who was from a small town in Belarus, and one of the URW's other leading organizers, Vladimir "Bill" Shatov, who arrived to New York via Ukraine in 1907.

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<sup>88</sup> In a letter to Alexander Berkman in 1908, Kropotkin urged anarchists in America to merge with the mass of workers. "So long as they remain a knot, a handfull [sic], aristocratically keeping apart from the mass of the working men...their efforts will remain fruitless and their teachings will appeal more to the intellectual bourgeois...and will do nihil to remove the the oppression of the rich upon the poor, of the owner on the proletarian, the Ruler upon the Ruled one." International Institute of Social History, Alexander Berkman papers. Available at [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist\\_Archives/kropotkin/kroptoAB/PKtoABreBlast.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/kroptoAB/PKtoABreBlast.html) (accessed June 1, 2018).

<sup>89</sup> Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusian Immigration from the Russian Empire to Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 32. Kukushkin observes that lines were often blurred between workers and "agriculturalists" (peasants) with many identifying as *chernorabochii*—general or unskilled laborers. Some migrants were also skilled workers, including carpenters, blacksmiths, and weavers. 47-48, fn. 216.

<sup>90</sup> See for example Vitaut Kipel, *Belarusans in the United States* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), 99-102. Kipel has written that the 1861 land reform neglected to provide Belarusian peasants with land, which in the long run created a massive surplus of agricultural labor. A famine at the start of the century, Kipel added, along with Russian political repression had also driven emigration. In general, population in the empire significantly expanded from the 1860s into the new century, causing various patterns of migration, especially peasants moving to cities.

To contextualize the phenomenon of Russian and anarchist emigration to North America, it is necessary to consider broader global migration patterns that began in the nineteenth century. Migration from Russia to North America followed previous movements from Europe: Germans settled in the mid nineteenth century and continued migrating *en masse* toward the end of the century; large numbers of Italians began moving to North America in the 1860s after unification failed to improve the lives of workers and peasants; in the wake of the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, repression and pogroms triggered a largely Jewish emigration from Russia and Eastern Europe; and in the first decade of the twentieth century, Slavs from Russia and Russian-ruled Ukraine and Belarus also began migrating in substantial numbers, as a result of both lack of economic opportunity and political repression. As emigration from Russia increased, German migration declined significantly. To illustrate these shifting trends, in 1882 approximately 250,000 Germans migrated to the United States compared to 70,000 from territory in the former Russian Empire. The figures were reversed by 1907 when in that year over 250,000 migrants came from Russia and 300,000 from Italy while less than 40,000 arrived from Germany.<sup>91</sup> According to one estimate, over 200,000 people from the Russian Empire migrated to the United States from 1880 to 1890, 500,000 from 1891 to 1900, and almost 1.6 million from 1901 to 1910.<sup>92</sup>

It is important to note that these figures on emigration from Russia include all nationalities from the former tsarist empire—Jews, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Tartars, etc. alongside ethnic Russians. According to Vladimir Wertsman, of the 1.6 million people who emigrated to the US in the first decade of the twentieth century, only around 70,000 were of Russian stock.<sup>93</sup> In his recent study on emigration from the Russian Empire to Canada, Vadim Kukushkin argues that the majority of the early

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<sup>91</sup> See Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 49-50. These patterns in turn explain why the German, Italian, and Yiddish anarchist movements in North America were established before the Russian movement appeared in the 1910s.

<sup>92</sup> Vladimir F. Wertsman, "Russians," in Dirk Hoerder with Christiane Harzig (eds.) *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s: An Annotated Bibliography: Volume 2: Migrants from Eastern and Southeastern Europe* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 109.

<sup>93</sup> Wertsman, *Immigrant Labor Press*, 109. Robert A. Karlowich similarly reported that from 1899 to 1914, the number of "true" Russians who emigrated to America was only 142,000. Karlowich, *We Fall and Rise: Russian Language Newspapers in New York City, 1889-1914* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1991), 24.

twentieth century “Russian” migrants to North America were in fact Ukrainian and Belarusian. For example, Kukushkin’s research shows that of 6,677 migrants who turned up at the Russian Immigrant Home in New York from 1908 to 1913, 55 percent were born in Belarus and twenty-four percent were born in Ukraine.<sup>94</sup> Kukushkin identifies the main donor provinces as Vil’na, Grodno, and Minsk in Belarus and Podolia, Volhynia, Kiev, and Bessarabia in Russian Ukraine.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in his history of the Russian anarchist movement in North America, L. Lipotkin identified the provinces of Grodno, Minsk, Volyn, and Kharkov as the main sources of Russian immigration to the United States from 1904 to 1914—in other words, territory located in Russian-ruled Ukraine and Belarus. Russian anarchist Viktor Lynn, who moved to the US in 1912 and joined the Brooklyn branch of the Union of Russian Workers, likewise said that most Russians who joined the URW had been peasants from the Russian Empire’s southwestern and western provinces.<sup>96</sup>

Kukushkin and others have noted the causes of this confusion, which were two-fold. US and Canadian officials identified all migrants from the Russian Empire as Russian while Belarusian and Ukrainian migrants themselves often identified as Russian or “White Russian,” and “Little Russian,” and many simply, as Kukushin writes, “did not understand the very concept of ‘nationality’, which had little relevance to the life-worlds of East European peasantry.”<sup>97</sup> Research suggests that the “Russian” socialist and anarchist movements that emerged in North America included at least as many Ukrainians, Russified Jews, and Belarusians as ethnic Russians.

The history of Russian imperialism therefore complicates any discussion of “Russian” immigration and anarchism. The anarchists and workers discussed in this study

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<sup>94</sup> Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers*, 3-29, 32, 45. Kukushkin adds that most migrants in this period not only came from provinces in Belarus and Ukraine but that most were ethnic Belarusian and Ukrainian—as opposed to other nationalities who lived in these territories. On the practice of labeling Belarusian immigrants “Russians,” see also Kipel, *Belarusians in the United States*.

<sup>95</sup> Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers*, 32-33. Emigrants also included Russian Poles and many non-Slavic groups including Ossetians, Georgians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians, many of whom were also identified as “Russian,” 5.

<sup>96</sup> L. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie v Severnoi Amerike: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Russian anarchist movement in North America: Historical essay] (undated manuscript written at some point in the 1950s, hereafter cited as Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*), 110; Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 369.

<sup>97</sup> Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers*, 45.

were mixed national and ethnic groups dominated by Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusans, and Jews.<sup>98</sup> That said, migrants who identified with the Russian-speaking anarchist movement—due to historical ties of language and culture—are generally referred to here as Russian. Given the strong indications that most individuals connected to it were Ukrainian and Belarusan subjects of the Russian Empire, one hesitates to continue calling them “Russian” anarchists. Yet while it is important to recognize the ethnic diversity of the group, researchers must rely on the materials the anarchists produced. They wrote in the Russian language and, moreover, did not typically comment on questions of ethnicity; anarchists, after all, had sought to transcend national and ethnic difference in pursuit of their ideal of a world without borders and the customs that divided people by ethnicity and religion. As Emma Goldman wrote, the “community of ideas with us often means more than community of blood.”<sup>99</sup> Regardless of where they came from in the land of the Tsars, they united around a set of ideas. However, when Russian anarchist publications in North America identified different national and ethnic groups among their ranks—including Ukrainians, Jews, Belarusans but also Poles and Lithuanians—I draw attention to this information, as it provides a more complete picture of the movement. Because of these complexities, any study of the transnational “Russian” anarchist movement, and particularly the group that emerged in North America, also serves in part as a history of Ukrainian, Belarusan, and Russian Jewish anarchism.

Russian Jewish anarchist history, it should be noted further, is distinct. Through their unique experience of persecution in and emigration from the Pale of Settlement, Jews from Russia were instrumental in establishing a strong Yiddish speaking anarchist movement in America. Historians have shown that in the 1880s and 1890s, many radical, “Russified” Jewish socialist intellectuals chose to learn or re-learn Yiddish after moving to the United States in order to disseminate revolutionary propaganda among the burgeoning Jewish proletariat, whose ranks swelled as a result of migration from the Pale. While these Jewish intellectuals revered the Russian revolutionary movement and had initially formed

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<sup>98</sup> In this sense, Avrich’s description of the URW as the “Slavic” rather than Russian counterpart to the IWW might seem more apt, except that western and southern Slavs (Serbs, Croats, etc.) did not appear to be among the URW’s ranks. It would also discount the Jewish presence in the URW.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 7.

Russian speaking groups predominantly in the New York area, Russified Jewish anarchists such as Alexander Berkman, David Edelstadt, and Saul Yanovsky decided to embrace the Yiddish language and culture as a means to convey their ideas. “The once-Russified intellectuals,” writes Kenyon Zimmer, “had been ‘Yiddishized’, and they in turn translated anarchism not only into the Yiddish language but also into a specifically Yiddish idiom and culture.”<sup>100</sup> Russian Jewish anarchists and socialists adapted their ideas and approaches in response to the rise of a Yiddish-speaking Jewish working class in the United States, as artisans and intellectuals alike became “proletarianized” through sweatshop labor primarily in the needle trades industries.<sup>101</sup> Yiddish anarchism became a leading tendency in the broader Jewish-American labor movement, and through the creation of their own institutions, Yiddish anarchists had separated themselves from their Russian past.

### **The Eight-Hour Strike and the Haymarket Affair**

In addition to migration patterns, the activities of immigrant anarchists in North America can only be understood within the context of developments in the labor movement. Most migrants, including Germans, Italians, and Russians moved to North America primarily in search of employment, and the industrialization of North America was completed largely with the use of cheap, migrant labor and not by accident—corporations had lobbied for open borders to create a reserve army of labor at their disposal.<sup>102</sup> Workers were easy to replace, and in an unregulated labor market companies could dictate the terms of engagement. This resulted in ever increasing demands on workers, which in turn generated unrest among migrants and labor in general. Beginning in the late nineteenth

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<sup>100</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 19-23, 22-23 (quote).

<sup>101</sup> Ezra Mendelsohn, “The Russian Roots of the American Jewish Labor Movement,” in *East European Jews in Two Worlds: Studies from the YIVO Annual*, ed. Deborah Dash Moore (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 278-280.

<sup>102</sup> Zimmer notes that “by 1880 immigrants and their children comprised the majority of the American industrial working class, and by 1907, foreign-born workers alone accounted for more than half of all employees in mining and manufacturing.” *Immigrants Against the State*, 2. Deliberately misleading advertising campaigns had also drawn in many migrant workers. See Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*, 27-28.

century, the frustrations of workers became more acute: through mechanization, the de-skilling of labor, and the introduction of speed-up measures, for example, corporations sought to maximize profits while establishing managerial control over workplaces.<sup>103</sup> Existing craft-based unions proved incapable of protecting workers against this onslaught of corporate power, and the demand was palpable for new types of union organizing.

Industrial unionism in North America first appeared in the late nineteenth century. An industrial union would have jurisdiction over all jobs in an industry versus the craft union model where numerous unions represented the various workers according to task performed. In the 1880s, the Knights of Labor started to move beyond traditional craft unionism by welcoming “unskilled,” migrant, and unemployed workers into the union while embracing the concept of organizing all workers into one union, and consequently became a powerful organization that for example won a major victory in a successful strike against Jay Gould’s railroad monopoly in the southwest in 1885; but ultimately the Knights’ leadership was unwilling to take on the entrenched power of capital and soon lost the support of workers.<sup>104</sup>

In the same decade, anarchists, most of whom were German and Bohemian immigrants, became a force within the US labor movement.<sup>105</sup> In 1883, anarchists held a congress in Pittsburgh where they produced a manifesto that laid the groundwork for the organization of the anarchist movement in North America. The Pittsburgh Manifesto called on anarchists to become more active in unions and launched the International Working People’s Association (IWPA), which was affiliated with the anarchist organization based

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<sup>103</sup> On the transition from competitive to monopoly capitalism in North America and its implications, see Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990), 13-19. As corporations began monopolizing industries, they introduced measures to increase productivity aimed at both maximizing profits and eliminating workers’ control, which had previously been won through the struggles of skilled workers and artisans.

<sup>104</sup> Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement, Volume 2: From the Founding of the American Federation of Labor to the Emergence of American Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1955), 47-92. Terence Powderly, leader of the Knights, and other leaders abandoned direct action as a tactic and refused to support the decade’s eight-hour movement.

<sup>105</sup> Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago’s Anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 28.

in London, England, the Black International.<sup>106</sup> By spring 1885, the IWPA had 80 federated branches across the country, 3,000 members, and thousands of other sympathizers.<sup>107</sup> IWPA leaders such as Albert Parsons and August Spies argued that anarchists must build their movement by appealing to workers, joining unions, and supporting basic class demands for shorter hours and higher wages.<sup>108</sup> Unions were seen as vehicles for both day to day struggles and revolutionary cells for the foundation of a new classless society run by the workers themselves. The anarchists' ideas and activism appealed to many workers, and anarchists founded the Central Labor Union in Chicago in 1884, a federation of local unions, which by 1886 represented the 11 largest unions in the city and over 6,000 workers of all skills, mostly immigrants.<sup>109</sup>

In addition to the introduction of speed-up measures and new machinery that made life harder for workers, economic recession helped foster this support for the anarchists. Unemployment rates had climbed to 13 percent in 1884-1885, and the failure of the political system to enact reforms for workers persuaded the labor movement to embrace direct action.<sup>110</sup> Thus arose a national movement for an eight-hour workday, pioneered by

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<sup>106</sup> The color black, and more specifically the black flag, became associated with anarchism after anarchist Louise Michel marched through the streets, during a Paris demonstration, in 1883 holding up a black rag fastened to a stick and "with layers of blood upon it from those who wanted to live by working or die by fighting," wrote Michel. She described it as "the banner of strikes and of suffering." Quoted in Graham, "We Do Not Fear Anarchy," 245. Previously, anarchists had carried the red flag alongside other socialists. Now the black flag would help distinguish them as a separate movement.

<sup>107</sup> Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 72-73; Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 108; David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1989), 136. Disappointed in electoral politics, many workers left the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) to join the anarchists' ranks. For instance, New York's Social Revolutionary club left the SLP and became an anarchist club. Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 96-97; Avrich explained that the powerful anarchist orator Johann Most, and his fiery speeches calling for an all out war of the poor against the rich, "drove the SLP to the wall." Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 55, 67.

<sup>108</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 137; Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 105-106.

<sup>109</sup> Nelson, *Beyond the Martyrs*, 40-44, 181-182.

<sup>110</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 124. As Foner explained, labor simply saw many more gains through unionization and striking than through legislation, so it was not a hard call. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2, 115.

the newly formed American Federation of Labor. After some internal debate, the anarchists decided to energetically support the eight-hour drive as a “class movement against domination, therefore historical, and evolutionary, and necessary,” explained Parsons.<sup>111</sup> The anarchists “attained prominence in” and invigorated the eight-hour movement by appealing to large numbers of immigrant and unskilled workers, and by injecting the campaign with militancy and a class analysis.<sup>112</sup> The labor movement called for a general strike to take place on May 1, 1886, and preparations for the strike were the strongest in Chicago, due largely to the efforts of the anarchists.<sup>113</sup> 400,000 to 500,000 workers participated nationwide in the general strike, and 180,000 won the eight-hour day on May 1 or shortly thereafter.<sup>114</sup> Historian of the German anarchist movement in the United States, Tom Goyens, estimates that there were 10,000 anarchists in America around this time, half of whom lived in Chicago.<sup>115</sup>

The eight-hour movement led to the Haymarket tragedy. On May 3, police responded to a strike at the McCormick plant in Chicago by firing on the strikers and killing four. Anarchists held a protest the following day at Haymarket square, and someone threw a bomb into the ranks of about 200 policemen in the process of shutting down the meeting. In reaction, the police fired indiscriminately into the crowd, killing numerous people including some of their own. All told, there were at least 12 dead on both sides with 200 wounded. Police and city officials went on a war path, hunting down anarchists across the city and putting the leaders of the movement on trial. Parsons and Spies together with George Engel, Samuel Fielden, Adolf Fischer, Louis Lingg, Michael Schwab, and Oscar Neebe were tried and convicted. However, none were convicted of actually throwing the bomb—state prosecutors provided no evidence for this—but were held responsible

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2, 102. A minority tendency in the IWPA, led by Johann Most, had opposed piecemeal reforms, trade unionism, and the eight-hour movement, though Most soon moved toward an embrace of anarcho-syndicalism in the late 1880s into the 1890s. Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 100.

<sup>112</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 130-131, 137-138.

<sup>113</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2, 102.

<sup>114</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 139; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2, 104.

<sup>115</sup> Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 147.

nevertheless. For capitalists and the state, the trial was a means to discredit both the anarchist movement and the broader eight-hour campaign.<sup>116</sup> However, this was only partially effective; after the subsequent repression of labor and especially the anarchists, the workweek on average had still fallen from 62 to 59 hours in 1886, and nearly 200,000 workers had won a shorter day.<sup>117</sup> The German-American anarchist movement went into decline, and politicians and the press created a lasting image of anarchists as crazed foreign bomb-throwers, but the executions also stimulated support for the anarchist movement, and the Jewish and Italian movements expanded in the 1890s.<sup>118</sup>

### **Industrial Workers of the World**

The ideas of the Chicago anarchists remained influential and industrial unionism's time had come. In the 1890s the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) emerged as a major industrial union that sought to federate all miners' unions while embracing militant direct action, and to this extent made progress in meeting worker demands in that large industry. Then in 1905, with the support of the WFM and its 27,000 members, a national effort was launched by a new organization, the Industrial Workers of the World, which set out to represent all workers in North America, organized industrially and eventually into one big union; the IWW would have a significant impact on both the labor and anarchist movements. Combining unionism with revolution, redolent of the Chicago anarchists, the IWW organized all workers, skilled or unskilled, native-born and foreign, to create a strong, united front when squaring off against employers and ultimately in the larger effort to overthrow the capitalist state. The Wobblies preached and practiced direct action, which usually took shape in the form of worker strikes for improved conditions, and called for a revolutionary general strike culminating in the workers' taking possession of all industries.

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<sup>116</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 2, 105-110, 107. Foner wrote that the anarchist leaders were singled out for their "militant spirit and organizing genius." They were pardoned, five of them posthumously, by Governor John Altgeld in 1893.

<sup>117</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 142.

<sup>118</sup> Not only were the German-American anarchists repressed after Haymarket, but in 1890 Germany repealed its Anti-Socialist Law, allowing German leftists to return home. See Zimmer on how Haymarket benefited the anarchist movement. For instance, anarchism became the leading radical tendency among Jewish immigrants. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 3-4.

The IWW resisted efforts by the Socialist Party and Socialist Labor Party to place the radical union under party control, arguing that direct action was the superior method of struggle over “political action.” “Direct action” as a tool of class struggle was popular among workers, because it was effective in pushing back against the encroachments of employers.

### **URW’s Founding and Immediate Roots**

For Russian anarchist émigrés, like the German, Italian, and Jewish anarchists and socialists before them, labor conditions in North America would produce a healthy body of recruits among the mass of emigrants. Kenyon Zimmer’s recent study on Italian and Jewish anarchists shows how the emergence of anarchism as a working-class movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America was largely the product of this pattern. In his research on Italian and Yiddish anarchism, Zimmer has persuasively argued that the “convergence of...itinerant revolutionaries and immigrant workers propagated anarchism on U.S. soil.”<sup>119</sup> Those who were active in the 1905 Russian Revolution formed radical groups in North America to rally these Russians behind their ideas. Anarchist leaders of the URW such as Rode-Chervinsky, Shatov, Aaron Baron, Maksim Raevsky, and Alexander Senkevich aimed to construct a North American base for the broader transnational Russian anarchist movement. Research on emigrants from the Russian Empire, organized in the Union of Russian Workers, reinforces Zimmer’s argument—the very existence of a Russian anarchist movement in North America was a consequence of migration patterns, material conditions in North America, and of specific circumstances that gave rise to the development of industrial unionism and an insurgent labor movement.

The influence of the Jewish anarchists on the URW was palpable. The URW’s newspaper *Golos Truda* would praise their “brothers” of the Yiddish language newspaper *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* for championing “the idea of socialism without government [*bezgosudarstvennogo*],” suggesting a strong ideological compatibility, while adding that the Jewish anarchist newspaper had “enormous educational value” for the Jewish

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<sup>119</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 2.

masses, rallying support behind the idea of “freeing humanity from all prejudice—social, political, and religious.”<sup>120</sup> As editor, Saul Yanovsky had advocated a program of “constructive” anarchism, stemming from his repudiation of propaganda by the deed, which reinforced the Russian movement’s own turn away from anarcho-terrorism after the 1905 revolution. L. Lipotkin even credited Yanovsky as having the most influence on the *Russian* anarchist movement in America, alongside Shatov and Mikhail Raiva.<sup>121</sup> After almost three decades of organizing, the Yiddish anarchists had attracted thousands of followers surrounded by a vibrant radical subculture. By 1914 the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* would reach a peak circulation of 30,000 copies, which was “more than double the size of the membership of all American Zionist organizations combined.”<sup>122</sup>

Yiddish anarchists had been active for years in labor unions and organizations such as the *Arbayter Ring* (Workmen’s Circle), and the Russians aimed to follow their lead. *Golos Truda* writers would cite the Workmen’s Circle as a model of how mutual aid societies should be organized. The Workmen’s Circle, founded in 1892, taught classes to members and established cooperatives but primarily provided aid and insurance to those in need, and focused on the physical health of the community, setting up for example a sanitarium for consumptives in 1910.<sup>123</sup> On the Workmen’s Circle, Zimmer writes that it “provided anarchists with both an organizational structure and access to a large working-class constituency.”<sup>124</sup> The URW would help start a Russian division of the Workmen’s Circle and create its own mutual aid societies, in addition to providing substantial support for the Anarchist Red Cross, a joint Russian-Yiddish project that provided aid to political prisoners in Russia—these organizations are discussed in Chapter 5.

In terms of possible recruits among the proletariat in North America, Russians would have a smaller pool to draw from in comparison to Yiddish anarchists, but the URW

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<sup>120</sup> *GT*, September 25, 1914, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 321. Lipotkin wrote “N. Yanovsky,” but the “N.” must have been a mistake. There were no other Yanovskys in the URW orbit who could have had such an influence.

<sup>122</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 40, 16, 35.

<sup>123</sup> Alter F. Landesman, *Brownsville: The Birth, Development and Passing of a Jewish Community in New York* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1969) 139-141.

<sup>124</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 37.

aimed high, hoping to unite all Russian-speaking labor and socialist groups into “one compact mass.”<sup>125</sup> For instance, an early issue of *Golos Truda* informed readers of the new Russian division of the Socialist Party of America, which had formed on December 25, 1910 and counted 43 members. In the same issue, the editors trumpeted an upcoming conference of Russian workers’ groups to plan May Day events in New York.<sup>126</sup> The conference would include the URW, the Group of Russian Social Democrats who published *Novyi Mir* (New World), the Russian divisions of the Machinists’ and the Cloakmakers’ unions, and the Russian branch of the Workmen’s Circle.<sup>127</sup> *Golos Truda* called for unity to counter the regrettable state of Russian labor organizations in America in 1911, which were characterized largely by “dispersion and utter helplessness.”<sup>128</sup>

This helps explain why *Golos Truda* positioned itself as “independent” or “unaffiliated” [*bezpartiinyi*] while advocating “workers’ socialism” rather than anarchism explicitly, a term that would be introduced gradually.<sup>129</sup> They emphasized the group’s commitment to labor and spreading class consciousness among the Russian masses—both in North America and more generally—without advancing any particular doctrine,

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<sup>125</sup> *GT*, May 1911, 7. Jewish immigrants—who had emigrated primarily from Germany and Russia—constituted a substantially larger fraction of the American workforce than the combined eastern Slavic groups. The Jewish population in the United States went from 250,000 in 1877 to four million by 1927; among all immigrant laborers, Jews were the second most populous next to Italians by 1911; Poles were third, while Russians/Belarusans/Ukrainians were much further behind. See Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*, 50, 51, 57.

<sup>126</sup> *GT*, April 1911, 7.

<sup>127</sup> The Russian Social Democrats and anarchists started US-based organizations at almost the exact same time; *Novyi Mir* also began publishing in 1911. This appears to have been a natural development stemming from the founding of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, the 1905 revolution, and subsequent migration patterns. *Golos Truda*’s attempt to join forces with Social Democrats did not go according to plan; instead, contentious relations quickly developed.

<sup>128</sup> *GT*, May 1911, 7. Other sources have noted the URW’s effort to “unite and educate” the mass of Russian workers and peasants in North America. See Ivan K. Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya v Severnoi i Iuzhnoi Amerike* [Russian Immigration in North and South America] (Buenos Aires: Seyatel, 1967), 260.

<sup>129</sup> *Golos Truda* was described as a “Bezpartiinyi organ russkikh rabochikh v Amerike,” which translates inexactly as “Independent organ of Russian workers in America”—inexactly because *bezpartiinyi* translates literally as non-party or nonpartisan, neither of which quite captures the meaning of the word in English. What is most important to know is that they rejected all Russian political parties.

aside from “workers’ socialism,” which would be repeated and defined early and often.<sup>130</sup> While the reasoning behind this decision was not explicitly given, it is possible to discern a few rationales. The first goal was to simply recruit Russian workers into the fold, then focus on teaching anarchism. It was understood that most Russian migrants were unfamiliar with the term anarchism while socialism was more well known; recall how anarchist groups in Russia did not appear until the turn of the century while printed anarchist materials were hard to come by.<sup>131</sup> Even many socialists, as Zimmer notes, were unfamiliar with anarchism: for example, Joseph Cohen had been active in the Minsk socialist movement for ten years, but he had never encountered the term anarchism until he arrived in the United States in 1903.<sup>132</sup>

Further, the URW’s approach reflected an older tradition of *bezpartiinyi* organizing on the Russian left and in émigré communities. Russified Jewish intellectuals had formed independent or non-partisan educational and mutual aid societies. One of the first attempts to organize workers in the US started with the Russian Progressive Union—“progressive” signaling its embrace and inclusion of both socialists and anarchists but also reflecting its non-partisan character—founded in the 1880s.<sup>133</sup> This progressive circle hosted lectures, including at least one by the German anarchist firebrand Johann Most, disseminated socialist and anarchist ideas, and made libraries and reading rooms available to Russians and Jews.<sup>134</sup> Splinter groups would form over political disagreements, but generally speaking there was an attempt among progressive elements

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<sup>130</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 1.

<sup>131</sup> In 1913, a URW member would note that one seldom encountered anarchist publications in Russia, unlike in America. *GT*, June 1913, 7-8.

<sup>132</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> The Chicago movement in the 1880s was also a mixture of anarchists and socialist revolutionaries rather than exclusively the former.

<sup>134</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 112-113; Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 99; Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 19; Karlowich, *We Fall and Rise*, 10-11. Russian radicals did not use the term “progressive” in the same sense as one thinks of progressive-era politics. For anarchists, it was a reference to left-wing, radical populist, and socialist movements whereas in the United States the term referred primarily to liberal reformers. Nevertheless, the rise of socialist and anarchist movements reflected the broader trend of progressive era backlash against robber baron capitalism.

in the Russian community to organize collectively.<sup>135</sup> Zimmer notes how the *Fraye Arbayter Shtime* began in 1890 by “pursuing a bipartisan [anarchist and socialist] vision,” because it was unclear if there was a sufficiently large enough audience of Yiddish-speaking radicals for an exclusively anarchist publication.<sup>136</sup> While many Russian Jews had joined the Yiddish anarchist movement in America, newer Russian-speaking immigrants of different socialist tendencies maintained small and independent clubs into the 1900s and in the immediate years leading up to the formation of the URW in New York.<sup>137</sup>

Mixed anarchist-socialist Russian-speaking clubs—with anarchist majorities—first appeared in 1908. Groups in Newark and Rochester formed in 1908, Baltimore in 1909, along with several in Massachusetts by 1910. The existence of such progressive clubs led to the formation of the URW, and Okuntsov described these earlier clubs as “unions of Russian workers.”<sup>138</sup> What had distinguished the URW was its ability to rally most of these groups behind *Golos Truda* and eventually into a federation under its leadership.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> See Ivan Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 202, 269; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 110-114; see also Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 19. Information on these early groups is sketchy, but all accounts give a similar, general impression of nonpartisan organizing.

<sup>136</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 23-24. Bracketed explanation added. It turned out the FAS had nothing to fear, as anarchism became the leading current within the Jewish labor movement in the 1890s.

<sup>137</sup> One such group was the independent *Klub Russkikh Studentov* (Club of Russian Students), which formed in 1895 and helped organize lectures for Peter Kropotkin when he visited North America in 1897 and again in 1901. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 114.

<sup>138</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 410, 425, 364-365, 375; Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 204, 260-261.

<sup>139</sup> Lipotkin wrote that other Russian anarchist newspapers or pamphlets had preceded *Golos Truda* but were of low quality and had failed to rally workers. He also credited *Golos Truda* for taking a clear position and separating anarchists from socialists, which is curious given that *Golos Truda* took a *bezpartiinyi* stance, at least in the first couple of years. Lipotkin also wrote that the Russian Labor Group originally grew out of a New York group called Petrel [*Burevestnik*] in 1908, which he claimed was the first Russian anarchist organization in America. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 121-122. However, there is no information on Petrel in *Golos Truda*, and no other source mentions it.

In October 1910, a small group of “anarchist-minded workers” formed the kernel of an organization that became the Union of Russian Workers.<sup>140</sup> Under the name the Russian Labor Group in New York, these anarchist-minded workers outlined a plan for a more expansive organization extending beyond New York and supported by a newspaper.<sup>141</sup> In the fall of 1910, the Russian Labor Group began building the organization by teaching free courses in New York on Russian history while hosting public discussions and lectures.<sup>142</sup> Fundraising parties were held to support the new initiatives, and donations were received from among other places a Ukrainian society, which reflected the mixed national background of the founding members. Indeed, at a New Year’s Eve fundraiser that winter, the revelers and organizers of the Russian Labor Group celebrated the 50-year anniversary of Taras Shevchenko’s death, the poet now known as the father of Ukraine. The Russian Labor Group’s newspaper would first appear in March 1911, a monthly publication printed on A3 size paper ranging from 8 to 16 pages in length.

The Russian Labor Group was led by A. Rode-Chervinsky and Bill Shatov. Rode-Chervinsky was the editor of *Golos Truda* from 1911 to 1914 and has been described as the URW’s “most outstanding member...the oldest and most experienced.” He was a “devoted anarcho-syndicalist...[who] had participated in the big railroad strike before the 1905 Revolution and was wounded in the ear.”<sup>143</sup> He was also described as “a quiet, pleasant, intelligent man.”<sup>144</sup> Vladimir Sergeevich Shatov was “big, jovial, and friendly, dependable in every emergency” and worked at various times as a “hod-carrier in Boston, shoemaker in Lynn, printer in New York, longshoreman in Philadelphia, window-cleaner

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<sup>140</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 125, 320; *GT*, March 1911, 4. This account of the founding of *Golos Truda* is based primarily on the editors’ own description of how the newspaper came into existence, supplemented by Lipotkin’s re-telling.

<sup>141</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 4. Their efforts received support among the community: a reported 300 Russians interested in the project attended a meeting on November 20, 1910. Among them, a commission was elected to draw up a charter and budget for the Russian Labor Group’s proposal.

<sup>142</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 4; Lipotkin added that night courses were taught twice a week in Russian history and language, both upper and lower levels. *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 320.

<sup>143</sup> Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 351-352. Quotations by Abraham Blecher, a *Golos Truda* contributor and IWW secretary who later wrote for Yiddish and American anarchist newspapers including the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and *The Road to Freedom*.

<sup>144</sup> Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 378. Quote by Morris Greenshner, who was active in the Anarchist Red Cross and the Union of Russian Workers.

in Pittsburgh, steelworker in Gary, housepainter in Detroit, and iron peddler in San Francisco, to mention only some of his numerous jobs.” British Consul General in Moscow and secret agent R. H. Bruce Lockhart described Shatov as a “cheerful scoundrel with a sense of humor.” Shatov also “loved women and wine,” though he was serious and capable: Victor Serge described Shatov as a “lively and decisive organizer,” who became an officer during the Russian Civil War and was “the real leader of the Tenth Red Army” who played an important part in the defense of Petrograd against the advances of General Nikolai Yudenich.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 120; R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (London and New York: Putnam, 1932), 245; Victor Serge, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941*, trans. Peter Sedgewick (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 84-85; Paul Avrich, “Russian Anarchists and the Civil War,” *Russian Review* 27, no. 3 (July 1968): 296-306. Shatov later became the Minister of Transport for the Far Eastern Republic.

## Chapter 3. The URW's "Workers' Socialism"

The first phase of URW activity—from 1911 to 1914—was marked by building the federation, opening branches across the continent, articulating its theories, commenting on US society, and experimenting with labor organizing. In July 1914, the URW held its first major conference in Detroit where the federation's principles were formally outlined, and in September Maksim Raevsky took over as editor of *Golos Truda*, which transitioned from a monthly to a weekly at the same time and signaled the group's ambition to become the leader of the Russian-American labor movement. Research shows that during this first period, the URW deployed a pragmatic organizing strategy—emphasizing its “workers’s socialism” and *bezpartiinyi* character—to recruit workers, and that the federation began playing a minor but intriguing and largely unknown role in the North American labor movement. As an extension of its own political project and ideology, the URW developed a close working relationship with the Industrial Workers of the World, which is examined here and throughout the thesis.

From the outset, the URW placed the issue of class front and center. The opening editorial in *Golos Truda* stated that the newspaper would focus on education and “clarifying class consciousness” among Russians in America. Arguing that if “workers become conscious” of “their class interests,” they would understand their task and seek to liberate themselves from oppression through an “economic revolution to benefit the working class.”<sup>146</sup> Further, *Golos Truda* itself aspired to “serve as a connecting link uniting” the mass of Russian workers scattered throughout North America while enlightening them on urgent questions facing their lives and helping them become acquainted with the American proletariat. “*Golos Truda* is, as it were, the cornerstone laid down in the foundation of a comradely [*tovarishcheskogo*] association,” and the newspaper would “serve as the forerunner of a large workers’ newspaper in the future,” hinting at their ambitions. To help reach such goals, the editors invited readers to play an active role by contributing content, helping to decide the editorial direction of the newspaper, and sharing it with “less conscious” Russians. *Golos Truda* was to be edited and written by workers

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<sup>146</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 1.

and for workers; the editors invoked the slogan from the International: “the liberation of workers was the task of workers themselves”—a statement also featured on the newspaper’s banner.<sup>147</sup> Elsewhere in the first issue and subsequently, *Golos Truda* would describe its ideology as “workers’ [or labor] socialism” [*rabochii sotsializm*].<sup>148</sup>

With an eye toward educating Russians, *Golos Truda* covered developments in the labor movement, particularly news that was relevant to Russian workers. For instance, the first issue brought readers up to date on labor organizing activity in the Russian community. A Union of Russian Metalworkers had been organized in September 1910 as an autonomous division of the Brotherhood of Machinists, and by March 1911 the Russian division of this union had more than 50 members, strike and unemployment funds, and provided legal services and technical training for its members and Russians at large.<sup>149</sup> Further, readers were notified of the first Russian division of the Workmen’s Circle (Arbayter Ring)—a secular benevolent or mutual aid society run largely by Jewish radicals—which had opened seven months previously and counted around 35 Russian members by March 1911.<sup>150</sup> These were not exclusively anarchist but rather open labor organizations the editors urged Russian migrants to become familiar with if not join. In this sense, *Golos Truda* served as a labor newspaper that served basic, practical purposes, not despite but because of the newspaper’s anarchist tendency.

In spring 1911, the newly-pressed *Golos Truda* was distributed from coast to coast, and in short order several *bezpartiinyi* and “progressive” workers’ clubs rallied around the Russian Labor Group. Russian workers in Detroit announced in the June 1911 issue of *Golos Truda* that they had formed a club with the specific purpose of supporting the newspaper “morally and materially.” These workers in Detroit supported the call to unite Russian progressives, regardless of tendency, and its members had each agreed to pay

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<sup>147</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 1.

<sup>148</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 3.

<sup>149</sup> *GT*, April 1911, 7.

<sup>150</sup> *GT*, April 1911, 7. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the URW’s mutual aid societies.

10 cents per week to support the publication of *Golos Truda*.<sup>151</sup> A “Union of Russian Workers” in Seattle followed suit calling for all Russian groups in North America emphasizing worker class consciousness to organize on a *bezpartiinyi* basis around *Golos Truda*.<sup>152</sup> Shortly thereafter, another Union of Russian Workers in Portland, Oregon stated its general agreement with URW Seattle and argued that joining Industrial Workers of the World union locals would be the most effective way to unite Russian worker groups.<sup>153</sup> Other Russian groups in America rallied around *Golos Truda* in 1911 including the Russian Progressive Circle in Brownsville—a predominately Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn with a growing number of Russians—the Russian Progressive Workers’ Group in Lynn, Massachusetts, the Russian Progressive Society in Philadelphia, and a group of Russian workers in Cleveland who also announced their affiliation with the Anarchist Red Cross and the IWW.<sup>154</sup> Most of these clubs would eventually become federated into the URW under *Golos Truda*’s leadership. The “unions” in the URW were the various clubs, circles, and groups in North America who joined the federation.<sup>155</sup> After a few months of publishing, it seemed *Golos Truda*’s idea of *bezpartiinyi* workers’ socialism had some appeal.

This approach was reinforced by the IWW’s example. If the URW’s workers’ socialism was *bezpartiinyi*, the IWW was even less doctrinaire. Despite anarchist, syndicalist, and Marxist influences, the IWW was a labor union first and foremost, focused on organizing workers and confronting employers. The IWW did not endorse any particular ideology beyond revolutionary industrial unionism, and its practices appealed to ordinary

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<sup>151</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 7. Contributions had been received from Detroit workers Sapozhnikov, Makarov, Smolyarov, Martsinkovskii, Aleksandrov, Rudnik, Mitya, Korotkin, Ivanov, Svirskii. See also Lipotkin on the formation of the Detroit group: L. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie v Severnoi Amerike: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Russian anarchist movement in North America: Historical essay] (undated manuscript written at some point in the 1950s, hereafter cited as Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 340.

<sup>152</sup> *GT*, July 1911, 7.

<sup>153</sup> *GT*, September 1911, 7.

<sup>154</sup> *GT*, October 1911, 8; November 1911, 7; December 1911, 7; November 1911, 7.

<sup>155</sup> The URW was not a trade union; rather, it was a federation of various clubs or associations of Russians across the continent. *Golos Truda* editors themselves had been pressed to define and clarify the character and intent of the federation, and their explanations are cited and interpreted throughout this chapter.

workers, anarchists, and socialists alike.<sup>156</sup> The IWW had inspired Russian and other immigrant workers and made them feel more connected to a culture and society that otherwise excluded them. The IWW was also an important source of information on labor organizing strategies and the industrial economy in North America. Individuals in several URW branches quickly identified the IWW as an ally, with some divisions proposing to formally join the IWW on the grounds that it understood labor conditions in North America and could therefore more effectively organize Russian workers.<sup>157</sup>

From early on, the IWW's influence on the Russian anarchists could be seen in the pages of *Golos Truda*. For example, in a November 1911 article arguing against union contracts with employers, author P. Volosh quoted and drew on a Russian translation of the preamble to the IWW constitution, which reads:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever

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<sup>156</sup> Salvatore Salerno has written, "In the period before the outbreak of World War I, the IWW drew its identity from its struggle to contain opposing tendencies within the anarchist and socialist movements and workers disenfranchised from craft unionism," *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 36.

<sup>157</sup> The URW as an organization never became an official branch of the IWW, for reasons explained in Chapter 4. However, the URW was significantly larger than the official Russian-language branches of the IWW, which formed later on and in any case worked closely with the URW.

a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.<sup>158</sup>

Volosh emphasized the preamble's stress on class struggle and its argument against the prevailing form of AFL trade unionism in North America, which, he added, makes it "impossible to organize strikes across professions [industries/trades]." He explained how labor contracts promoted by the AFL perpetuate the division of workers—because agreements are made separately among workers of different trades—and inhibit strikes, particularly general strikes, which were essential to gaining leverage against and eventually overthrowing the ownership class. He commented on how the AFL designed it this way, because they opposed general strikes on ideological grounds, maintaining "that industry should not be disrupted, as the ruin of employers carries with it the poverty of the proletariat."<sup>159</sup> Volosh did not agree with this line of thought. Contracts "cannot solve class contradictions," he argued, and only serve the employers' interests, because AFL union leaders "demand compliance from its members" rather than allowing them to organize across craft lines. The real motivation behind mandatory labor contracts, wrote Volosh, was to strip workers of their right to strike, "the recognition of which the workers have achieved at an unprecedented cost" through decades of struggle.<sup>160</sup> Volosh's position on contracts also happened to be the same as that of the IWW's.

Alongside local organizing efforts, *Golos Truda* featured articles analyzing broader economic issues as well as specific labor disputes in North America. In this early period, the anarchist theorist A. A. Karelin contributed dozens of articles to *Golos Truda*, helping

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<sup>158</sup> *GT*, November 1911, 2-4. A complete translation appears in the article.

<sup>159</sup> Volosh quoted one O. Donatti here, presumably an AFL representative. *GT*, November 1911, 3.

<sup>160</sup> *GT*, November 1911, 2-4. Indeed, labor contracts would handicap the strike movement over the course of the decade, and Chapter 4 shows some specific examples.

to set the ideological tone of the newspaper. In one article, Karelin criticized the imbalance of power between capital and labor and the injustices of the capitalist system, urging workers to rebel against it. He argued that economic disparities in the United States formed the basis of its society. Under the pretense that inequality was the natural order of things, the government and capitalists used taxes, rents, and fees to take back everything workers had earned on the job. With a sense of optimism, however, Karelin wrote that since workers possessed the capacity to take control of production, it would not be difficult for them to do so—should the masses become class conscious and recognize their power. Workers should not fear this prospect, Karelin argued, because “once they [workers] sweep away the economic and political oppression of the exploiters and rulers,” history had shown the “inherent” self-organizing character of human societies, though this natural inclination would need to be nurtured and guided by conscious persons, or by what David Montgomery called a “militant minority.” Yet Karelin also maintained that it was “only through their own personal efforts can they [workers] free themselves,” and “only they themselves can construct [a new society] on the basis of workers’ socialism.” Karelin’s article was accompanied by a brief excerpt from an inspirational Walt Whitman poem titled, “Beginning,” which appealed to “brave and young hearts” to “sing your song now” as “we are the messengers of the new times! The young spring is following us.”<sup>161</sup> If the choice of Whitman was animated by the Russian anarchist movement’s new home, Karelin himself lived in Paris, and his presence in *Golos Truda* would wane over time as other capable writers based in the US came to the fore, but he was a constant presence on its pages in this period.

Contrary to Karelin’s optimism, however, observations and experiences early on pushed North American-based *Golos Truda* writers to conclude that American workers needed more education and organization before ambitions such as taking control of production could be carried out. For instance, *Golos Truda* blamed the failure of a large strike in New York in March on the lack of worker class consciousness, a prerequisite for meaningful change and revolution. Workers at the courier company Adams Express had wanted to turn an ongoing strike into a general strike across the city, believing they were

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<sup>161</sup> *GT*, March 1911, 2. Karelin wrote under his own name but was also given several pseudonyms in order to camouflage the fact, apparently, that *Golos Truda* had relied on him to write so many articles, especially in the first couple years. Karelin discussed his role with *Golos Truda* in a letter to Kropotkin. See V. P. Sapon, *Apollon Andreevich Karelin: Ocherk Zhizni* [Sketch of a Life] (Yu.A.Nikoleav: Nizhni Novgorod, 2009), 31-32.

in a position to shut down much of the city in coordination with other wagon driver companies such as United Express. But union officials from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters rejected this idea and instead sought an early end to the strike. The workers backed down, which *Golos Truda* depicted as a woeful capitulation stemming from their “ignorance and slavish obedience” to the “corrupt” Teamsters’ leadership.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, the notorious Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in Greenwich Village, occurring the same month *Golos Truda* launched, had shown how American capitalists could operate with impunity in a society that seemed indifferent to the plight of migrant workers. To avoid incineration and suffocation, dozens of Jewish and Italian women workers chose to jump out of the building’s windows to a certain death; there were 146 fatalities. Capitalism and its control of the state, argued *Golos Truda*, were to blame for the tragedy.<sup>163</sup> One contributor was struck by how Americans only seemed to care about the loss of the factory rather than the victims, and that the factory owner Max Blanck was only fined 20 dollars while workers elsewhere received seven year prison sentences for engaging in acts of sabotage on the job.<sup>164</sup>

Reports on industrial conflict across North America were accompanied by expository essays on topics including syndicalism, sabotage, and the general strike—issues that were simultaneously at the heart of the Wobbly movement. Such articles appeared as part of the effort to educate Russian workers and introduce them to anarchist ideas. For instance, one article in 1911 outlined a history and interpretation of sabotage, a type of direct action.<sup>165</sup> An unidentified author, likely Karelin, explained that sabotage did not refer primarily to violence or the destruction of machines, as the concept had been popularly interpreted. Rather, sabotage was a tactic that aimed to “strike owners in the pocket,” and force capitalists to lessen the exploitation of workers. The essence of sabotage had been “poor work for poor pay” and this could take various forms, chiefly involving the deliberate slowdown of production or, for example “shop workers warning buyers about falsification” of products or workers deliberately manufacturing poor-quality

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<sup>162</sup> *GT*, April 1911, 7; *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 18, 1911, 1; March 19, 1911, 5; *New York Times*, March 22, 1911, 30.

<sup>163</sup> *GT*, April 1911, 7.

<sup>164</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 5.

<sup>165</sup> *GT*, September 1911, 4-5.

goods. The idea was to work as poorly and slowly as possible without being fired for incompetence. It might also involve simply preventing strikebreakers from interfering with a strike. The writer's main argument was that revolutionary syndicalists had embraced sabotage but only to the extent it was applied in a way that was advantageous to the labor movement; if a particular tactic, such as the indiscriminate destruction of machines, was not advantageous to labor, then it could not be justified. Finally, the author asserted that sabotage was justified overall, because "the instruments of labor...are the property of the working class."<sup>166</sup>

By 1912 socialism and revolutionary industrial unionism had grown from marginal to increasingly substantial and active movements attracting attention from the broader public. For example, with mass support from labor unions, socialist newspapers, and many public intellectuals, the Socialist Party candidate for president Eugene Debs received almost a million votes and six percent of the vote in the general election of 1912, which was significant progress for the party. Earlier in the year, public attention had been drawn to a massive, IWW-led strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, one of the leading producers of cotton and wool in North America, a city dominated by the textile mill industry.

In January, more than 20,000 mill workers walked off the job at Lawrence's largest employer, the American Woolen Company; they were protesting a wage reduction, the company's failure to pay for overtime hours, and its introduction of speed-up measures.<sup>167</sup> To give a clearer sense of the enormity of this event, the strikers and their families comprised 60 percent of Lawrence's total population.<sup>168</sup> Backed by the IWW, the workers' strike committee responded with its own demands, which included a 15 percent wage hike. To counter the company's attempt to bring in scabs, the IWW deployed mass, mobile, round-the-clock, picket squads outside the mill's gates; the Wobblies also led musical

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<sup>166</sup> GT, September 1911, 4-5.

<sup>167</sup> According to Melvyn Dubofsky, the average wage for a male textile worker in Massachusetts was around \$6 per week, which did not provide for basic needs. Wives and children had to work in the mills in order for families to survive, so the proposed wage reductions across Lawrence made the workers ready recipients of the IWW's message. Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 230. For a detailed history of the strike, see Dubofsky, 227-262, and Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement, Volume 4: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 306-328.

<sup>168</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 321.

parades in town to build solidarity for the strike, and through such tactics workers and the union were able to keep strikebreakers away from the mills.<sup>169</sup> As the strike committees ran low on food and other resources, the IWW appealed to supporters in New York and other cities to take the workers' children into their homes. Children were dispatched via trains, and this innovative move carried out by the IWW alleviated many of the workers' concerns and allowed the strike to continue.

Enthusiastic reports appeared in *Golos Truda* during the showdown in Lawrence, and URW members contributed to the workers' strike fund. S. Stepanov wrote that strikers spoke 52 different languages but had stuck together, showing "astonishing unity," holding out for weeks despite a violent backlash from American Woolen, police, city officials, and vigilante groups who "adopted all measures to crush the strike." Stepanov cited among other things the attempted assassination of IWW strike leader James P. Thompson, and the framing of IWW leaders Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovanitti for the murder of a woman on the picket lines.<sup>170</sup> Stepanov compared it to Russia: the vigilantes firing weapons at strikers reminded him of Russian "petty tyrants" [*samodura*], referencing a popular nineteenth century term borrowed from the plays of Alexander Ostrovsky. *Samodur* referred to an uneducated person who acts under their own whims and impulses at the expense of others.<sup>171</sup> Stepanov's example was of a Russian official who orders underlings "to not spare any ammunition" in their attacks on political dissidents. But the Lawrence workers, noted Stepanov, would not budge: police had beaten women with clubs and tried to starve children, but none of it could intimidate the determined strikers whose demands had been "consciously resolved."<sup>172</sup> Stepanov called on readers to contribute material support for the Lawrence strike fund while proudly noting that 400 Russian workers in Lawrence had been actively taking part in the campaign.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> See Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 242.

<sup>170</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 12-13. S. Stepanov may be Stepan Stepanov who appears in Paul Avrich, ed. *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 36-37. I was unable to find any additional information about him.

<sup>171</sup> "Samodur," Akademik, accessed October 25, 1917, <https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/ushakov/1014858>

<sup>172</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 12-13.

<sup>173</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 12-13.

The significance of the strike extended well beyond Lawrence. The strikers in Lawrence, wrote Stepanov, were “teaching us how and by what means we should fight against capitalists,” setting daily examples for workers everywhere to emulate—through their picket squads, parades, and other tactics—while exposing as hollow the government’s claim to be a neutral party in disputes between labor and capital.<sup>174</sup> Aggressive picketing had successfully dissuaded strikebreakers from entering the mills, and after the police countered with the use of fire hoses to break up the pickets, some strikers had “adopted more active measures” such as “throwing rocks at tram cars” used to import scabs, which Stepanov seemed to interpret as a form of direct action that was advantageous to the cause of labor, under the circumstances. He also praised the housing of children with sympathizers in other cities, which he contended was the first time anything like that had been done in the American labor movement.

Material exchanges between the URW and IWW complemented the anarchists’ praise for the radical industrial union and the Lawrence strike. The Russian Labor Group collected donations from URW branches and contributed \$33.45 to the Lawrence strike fund plus \$34.21 for the defense of Wobbly leaders Ettor and Giovanitti—respectable sums coming from small groups of indigent migrants struggling to get their own organization off the ground.<sup>175</sup> Further, IWW locals had been aiding the URW directly: the IWW in San Francisco, IWW Minneapolis Local 383 (a Polish division), and IWW Mixed Local 179 in Brooklyn each made modest financial donations to *Golos Truda* in 1912.<sup>176</sup>

The eventual success of the Lawrence strike prompted other *Golos Truda* contributors to extol the virtues of worker direct action. A. Ivanov, who covered labor strikes in North America, wrote that after Lawrence, 25,000 additional textile workers in New England registered as IWW members while the IWW had also been busy in other parts of the continent, especially out west. Ivanov noted how the IWW had recently led other significant and often successful battles against capital and state. During the so-

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<sup>174</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 12-13. For a more detailed description of the various tactics used by strikers, see Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 321-328.

<sup>175</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 15. Added together, the contributions equal close to \$1,700 in 2018 dollars. Contributor names were sometimes given, and in the case of Lawrence, individual donors included Adolf Schnabel and Stepan Dybets, two anarchists who would play more visible roles in the anarchist movement in subsequent years. *GT*, April 1912, 7.

<sup>176</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 15.

called free speech fights, Wobblies in Spokane and Fresno had won the right to recruit workers by soapboxing or speaking directly to workers on street corners and in parks—away from the job. Ostensibly about standing up for freedom of speech, the real goal of these campaigns was to fill the IWW's ranks. Ivanov also wrote of the 7,000 to 8,000 railway construction workers in British Columbia who went out on strike with the aid of IWW leadership. Working in dingy camps while building the Northern Rail line, workers there had demanded higher pay, a reduction of hours, and improved sanitary conditions. "Despite strikers belonging to different nationalities," wrote Ivanov, "their solidarity amazes even the capitalist press, who call the camp of strikers a 'small socialist state'."<sup>177</sup> One anonymous writer noted how the Lawrence strike's success had inspired textile workers in other parts of the country to rebel and argued this enthusiasm for direct action was bound to catch on in numerous industries. He also suggested the Lawrence strike had given revolutionary syndicalists momentum and an edge in intra-left debates, arguing the strike had "bewildered" [*rasteryavshis*] the Socialist Party. The SP prioritized electing socialists, downplayed the benefits of direct action, and according to the *Golos Truda* contributor, had denounced the influence of anarcho-syndicalists on the IWW as "harmful and destructive."<sup>178</sup> Thus *Golos Truda* covered the strike movement as an extension of its own anarchist project.

The URW also supported smaller strikes in 1912 involving Russian workers and the IWW. 700 Russians, Poles, and Lithuanians waged a successful strike at a sugar refinery plant in Edgewater, New Jersey while in Little Falls, New York, textile workers led by Ukrainian-born IWW organizer Matilda Rabinowitz waged another successful strike, following up on the victory in Lawrence.<sup>179</sup> 70 percent of the 684 workers in Little Falls were women, many of them emigrants from Russia, and the URW donated a relatively

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<sup>177</sup> *GT*, May 1912, 7. *Golos Truda* writers likely drew on IWW sources for information on strikes, through for example IWW English language newspapers, such as *Industrial Worker*, which happened to be advertised on the same page Ivanov's article appeared. For details on the strike in BC, see Mark Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1990), 47-53.

<sup>178</sup> *GT*, April 1912, 7. Most Socialist leaders had broken with the IWW after the latter refused to support "political action," i.e. affiliating with the Socialist Party and supporting its candidates in elections, alongside direct action.

<sup>179</sup> *GT*, June 1912, 6-7. On the strike in Edgewater, little detail was reported in *Golos Truda* including even the name of the sugar company. Edgewater on the Hudson River is only three miles long, and the largest sugar refinery located there in 1912 was owned by the Jack Frost Sugar Company.

considerable sum of \$29.20 to this strike, which won concessions from the Phoenix and Gilbert Knitting Mills on, among other things, wage increases.<sup>180</sup> Not every or even most IWW campaigns in 1912 were successful—for example, brutal state-sanctioned violence and suppression defeated their “free speech” fight in San Diego—but for *Golos Truda* these campaigns were worthwhile even in defeat. The vitality of IWW-led strikes and the sensation they caused indicated to the Russian anarchists that the Wobblies were using correct methods of struggle and creating all the right enemies. For *Golos Truda*, the IWW represented the future of labor and socialist organizing in North America, as the Socialist Party was too dependent on, and therefore compromised by, the “reactionary” American Federation of Labor for its support.<sup>181</sup> One of the founding members of the Russian Labor Group, Stepan Dybets, stated in 1935 that everyone working on *Golos Truda* in this early period became IWW members and that he received his membership card and little red songbook directly “from the hands of Bill Haywood.”<sup>182</sup>

In addition to studying the intensification of industrial conflict in North America, the URW continued to grow. As mentioned, groups in North America formed with a specific goal of supporting *Golos Truda* and becoming a part of the larger project to build a united movement; some called themselves unions of Russian workers from the beginning while others initially adopted other names, such as the “Group assisting Golos Truda in Brownsville” or a “Group of Comrades in Victoria [B.C.]” first reported in April—branches that would formally become federated in the URW by 1914.<sup>183</sup> By September 1912, the comrades in Victoria had already changed their name to the Union of Russian Workers in Victoria, as had the group in Elizabethport, New Jersey. “Groups assisting Golos Truda” also formed in San Francisco, Baltimore, and Vancouver.<sup>184</sup> By November, Vancouver too had changed its name to a Union of Russian Workers and had also purchased \$63 dollars’

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<sup>180</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 14; Robert E. Snyder, “Women, Wobblies, and Workers’ Rights: The 1912 Textile Strike in Little Falls, New York,” *New York History* 60, no. 1 (January 1979): 29-57.

<sup>181</sup> *GT*, May 1912, 7.

<sup>182</sup> Aleksander Bek, *Sobranie sochinenii v 4 tomakh* [Collected works in 4 volumes] (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaya literatura, 1976), 173, volume 4.

<sup>183</sup> *GT*, June 1912, 7; April 1912, 7.

<sup>184</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 7.

worth of literature from the Russian Labor Group in New York, a substantial sum to spend just on reading material, especially given how low wages were for migrant workers.<sup>185</sup>

A proliferation of activity in Massachusetts and elsewhere suggests the Lawrence strike had helped radicalize Russians, which benefited the URW. In addition to an existing group in Lynn, Russians in nearby Chelsea organized a new Russian Workers' Group to "develop class-consciousness and fight against capital and state" while affiliating with *Golos Truda*. Other groups backing *Golos Truda* in 1912 were a Russian-Polish Workers' Group in Port Huron, Michigan—consisting of 10 members—and a newly formed Russian-Polish division of the IWW Local No. 383, in Minneapolis.<sup>186</sup> In December, readers were informed that the Russian Workers' Group in Chicago "joined the federation around *Golos Truda*."<sup>187</sup> Finally, an explicitly anarchist group formed in Philadelphia, holding its meetings at the Radical Library run by anarchist Joseph Cohen, a Russian-Jewish anarchist leader who was also involved with the Ferrer Center and later became editor of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*.<sup>188</sup> By the end of the year, there were 14 North American based divisions in the URW.<sup>189</sup>

Questions over how to organize, and for what purposes, were routinely discussed. In late summer 1912, the URW branches in Victoria and Seattle submitted a joint proposal to *Golos Truda* focused on uniting and federating the organization and "taking advantage of the favorable conditions [in North America]" to prepare for active participation in the

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<sup>185</sup> *GT*, November 1912, 7. The Russian Labor Group published and sold numerous political pamphlets and works of fiction published in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, and Polish, discussed more below; The daily wage for the striking BC railway migrant workers on the Northern line, for instance, was \$2.25 to \$2.50. Cited in Leier, *Where the Fraser River Flows*, 47.

<sup>186</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 7; August 1912, 7.

<sup>187</sup> *GT*, January 1913, 7. The association of groups backing *Golos Truda* was already being described as a federation, before they formally federated in 1914.

<sup>188</sup> Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality*, 8, 28; Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 118.

<sup>189</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 1.

“upcoming” or “looming” [*nadvigaiushcheisya*] Russian revolution.<sup>190</sup> According to the proposal, the federation’s main goal would be to prepare for the social revolution internationally and specifically to train comrades in North America for the next revolution in Russia, an event these Russian radicals believed to be inevitable ever since the 1905 revolt. But the first step would be to more efficiently coordinate their efforts; noting how comrades were scattered across the continent, the proposal argued it would be necessary to form a united organization to conduct effective work. The federation would focus on spreading propaganda among workers, supporting existing branches while creating new ones, and aiding both “the revolutionary actions of American workers” and “the Russian liberation movement.” Further, individual “unions [branches] in their internal administration” would be given “full autonomy”; all members would receive membership books, and all would have equal rights. Finally, each union was to “give information about work and all events concerning the labor movement” to members in their respective localities. The authors made clear this would be a serious organization: those who join should do so “not for entertainment” but to prepare for “the struggle for bread and freedom.”<sup>191</sup> Many of these points, or variations on the themes, ended up as resolutions passed at the URW’s 1914 convention, discussed below.

From 1911 into 1912, *Golos Truda* continued to identify as an “organ of workers’ socialism” and in September Rode-Chervinsky sought to further clarify the meaning of the term.<sup>192</sup> *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word)—another émigré newspaper—had questioned *Golos Truda*’s claimed *bezpartiinyi* socialist character, and Rode-Chervinsky defended his newspaper by outlining its orientation. First, he noted that since “we are workers ourselves,” the editors and contributors focused on workers and their interests, believing

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<sup>190</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 7. The notion of training comrades and raising money or “taking advantage of favorable conditions” in America to prepare for the impending social revolution in Russia became a recurring theme and an organizing strategy. *Golos Truda* would appeal to the Russian masses in North America by tying the social and labor struggles there to what was happening back home in Russia. “Favorable conditions” refers to the relative freedom they had in North America to organize, to disseminate propaganda, to raise money, and to recruit Russian-speaking workers. The anarchists’ confidence in an upcoming revolution stemmed from the experience of the 1905 revolution; as the anarchists saw it, the Tsar’s unwillingness to adequately respond to the demands of the Russian people was an unsustainable position—unrest would only grow before finally exploding again.

<sup>191</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 7.

<sup>192</sup> *GT*, April 1912, 1.

that the interests of the working class were irreconcilable with the interests of the bourgeoisie. He argued that supporting a “social class,” i.e. the working class as a whole, was not the same as backing a political party. *Golos Truda* was *bezpartiiniyi* in the sense that “workers’ socialism” was “in essence, antagonistic toward the party worldview”; instead, they favored “working-class organizations” without any party hierarchy. Further, Rode-Chervinsky explained that while *Golos Truda* cited authors of various schools—including, he noted, Peter Kropotkin and Peter Lavrov—the passages were chosen with care to avoid “sectarianism and cliquishness” [*sektanstvo i kruzhekovshchina*]: an author would only be cited when his or her words could be understood by ordinary workers and “did not diverge from the teachings of workers’ socialism.”<sup>193</sup> Rode-Chervinsky contrasted workers’ socialism with the “eclectic” socialism of other Russian newspapers; moreover, the only real labor newspaper in the Russian community in America, insisted Rode-Chervinsky, was *Golos Truda*. Defending *Golos Truda* against *Russkoe Slovo*’s charge of being too narrowly focused on workers, he answered, “There is nothing broader, more comprehensive than the doctrine we profess.” They were committed to engaging and enlisting worker-peasants from Russia.<sup>194</sup>

Apart from *Golos Truda*, the Russian Labor Group also published, separately, books and essays that reveal a preference for anti-authoritarian socialism and demonstrate an awareness of a larger historical movement.<sup>195</sup> In addition to anarchist writers including Bakunin, Kropotkin, Rogdaev, and Malatesta, one could also purchase texts by William Morris, such as his celebrated utopian socialist novel *News from Nowhere*, Maxim Gorky’s *In America*, and Leo Tolstoy. A typical *Golos Truda* issue listed two or three dozen items for sale including Tolstoy’s story *Zelenaya Palochka*, Hubert Lagardelle’s “Revolutionary Syndicalism.”<sup>196</sup> There were lesser known authors featured such as Socialist-Revolutionary Maximalist G. Nestroev, which makes sense insofar as Maximalists had also embraced revolutionary syndicalism while some radical SRs in North

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<sup>193</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 5. There is no exact translation for *kruzhkovshchina*, which refers to insular political cultures in radical ‘circles’: *kruzhok* means circle.

<sup>194</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 5.

<sup>195</sup> The literature on sale was also, presumably, consistent with the teachings of workers’ socialism.

<sup>196</sup> *GT*, May 1912, 8. Nikolai Rogdaev’s reports to the 1907 anarchist conference in Amsterdam, and “Anarchy” by Errico Malatesta printed in Polish were also for sale that month.

America affiliated with the Russian Labor Group.<sup>197</sup> *Golos Truda* also featured pithy quotations from a range of figures such as Walt Whitman, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernest Lesigne, Emile Henry, and many others. Notably absent from its pages were Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, and Lenin.

At the same time, *Golos Truda*'s ties, specifically, to both the anarchist movement in the United States and the transnational Russian anarchist movement were becoming increasingly apparent. In the same issue that Rode-Chervinsky defended *Golos Truda*'s workers' socialism, the letters section underlined the group's essentially anarchist character. A joint letter from Emma Goldman's publication *Mother Earth* and the Yiddish anarchist *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* appealed for contributions to help publish the collected works of the recently deceased anarchist writer Voltarine de Cleyre. Signatories on the letter included well-known anarchists Leonard Abbott, Harry Kelly, Saul Yanovsky, and Hippolyte Havel. A letter from Alexander Schapiro in London appealed for donations to the Publishing Group list "Khlieb i Volya" affiliated with Peter Kropotkin.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, the December 1912 issue of *Golos Truda* was devoted largely to honoring Kropotkin's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, and a celebration was held in Brownsville with Russian, Polish, and Yiddish speakers.<sup>199</sup> Kropotkin later wrote a letter to *Golos Truda* editors thanking them for their praise and wishing the newspaper success while noting how nice it was to "feel that we, despite being scattered all around the world, consider ourselves to be one family."<sup>200</sup> Earlier in 1912, Kropotkin in a letter to Maria Goldsmith [Korn] had written that *Golos Truda* was "not bad [*ochen' nedurno vedetsia*]....I have great respect for this newspaper, which I have read from the first issue, always with satisfaction."<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> *GT*, October 1912, 8.

<sup>198</sup> *GT*, September 1912, 7.

<sup>199</sup> *GT*, December 1912, 1, 7. The first page typically featured the opening editorial(s), but for this issue, it was covered entirely by a photograph of Kropotkin.

<sup>200</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 1.

<sup>201</sup> Dmitry Rublev, "Golos Truda," in *Revoliutsionnaya mysl' v Rossii XIX-nachala XX veka: Entsiklopediya* [Revolutionary thought in Russia 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Encyclopedia] ed. V. V. Zhuravlev (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2013), 105-109, 106 (quote). Kropotkin had taken an interest in the US labor movement after witnessing a violent assault on workers in Pennsylvania during his tour through the US and Canada in 1890s. Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 87.

Eugene Debs once said that the IWW was “an anarchist organization in all except name.”<sup>202</sup> Many would push back against this claim; it could however be applied, with greater accuracy, to the Russian Labor Group in 1911 and 1912. The group was not trying to conceal its anarchist orientation, though; rather, “workers’ socialism,” as their own explanations reveal, was a way to package anarchist and syndicalist ideas into language that was more familiar to Russian immigrants. As the months wore on, URW editors and writers began openly advocating anarchism, syndicalism, anarchist syndicalism, and anarchist communism in addition to similar if not interchangeable terms including workers’ socialism, stateless socialism, stateless communism, and free communism. “Workers’ socialism” or at least “stateless workers’ socialism” arguably meant anarchism or anarcho-syndicalism stated another way.<sup>203</sup> These substitute terms, which function as more descriptive expressions of the meaning of anarchism or syndicalism, were used to help explain these ideas to workers. Given the widespread confusion and misunderstanding over the meaning of the term anarchism—which persists to this day—the Russian Labor Group’s pragmatic approach for appealing to peasants and workers—stressing progressive, *bezpartiiniyi* organizing and a commitment to workers’ socialism rather than anarchist doctrine—made tactical sense. It is hard to know how essential it was to building the federation, but it was another demonstration of the anarchists’ willingness and ability to adapt to their environments and adopt practical measures to meet their goals.

If 1912 and the success of the Lawrence strike had encouraged the URW and the working class in America, 1913 would be marked by a backlash as capitalists redoubled their efforts to suppress and defeat labor uprisings. In the first half of 1913, silk manufacturers in Paterson, New Jersey used severe measures to defeat a strike of 25,000 weavers and dye house workers, led in part by the IWW, while a violent, protracted copper miners’ strike in Michigan led by the Western Federation of Miners was also beaten back. In West Virginia, state authorities declared martial law during the violent suppression of a coal miners’ rebellion, though the results of this strike were more mixed. Setbacks however did not curb *Golos Truda*’s enthusiasm for the IWW or worker-led uprisings breaking out across the continent, and Russian anarchist-workers contributed money to

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<sup>202</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 78.

<sup>203</sup> This is not to suggest there were no differences between for example anarchist communism and anarcho-syndicalism, but the distinction had not been an overriding concern among URW editors.

and participated in several strikes in 1913, including at the Ford Motor Company in Detroit. *Golos Truda* also commented on the broader strike movement in relation to its own anarchist objectives.

Silk workers in Paterson had hoped for a repeat of the success in Lawrence. Historians have noted the similarities: comparably low wages together with a claustrophobic, unsanitary atmosphere in the mills where men and women, mostly immigrants, worked grueling hours, alongside adolescents—often their own children—before returning home where most of them lived in slums.<sup>204</sup> Aside from the grim conditions, the introduction of new demands on workers for increasing productivity was a specific cause of the strike: weavers' loom assignments had been raised from two to four, and weavers observed how the four loom system increased production while their wages stayed flat or had been reduced; the new loom system also put skilled workers out of work while making unprecedented physical demands on weavers.<sup>205</sup> Thus in February 1913, the workers in the Paterson silk industry struck: their demands included an eight-hour day, overtime pay, and minimum wages for the unskilled dye house workers.<sup>206</sup>

Workers in Paterson adopted syndicalist tactics similar to those used in Lawrence. Rank and file workers took leadership roles on the philosophical grounds that strikes had to be organized by the workers themselves in order to produce the desired results; picket squads repulsed strikebreakers; worker committees managed the distribution of food, clothes, and medicine to families; and IWW leaders including Bill Haywood, Carlo Tresca, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn organized marches, rallies, and picnics to keep spirits up.<sup>207</sup> Based on the victory in Lawrence, the solidarity and resistance of the strikers, and strong IWW leadership, *Golos Truda* had expressed confidence the Paterson strike would

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<sup>204</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 264-265. Dubofsky added: "Paterson, like Lawrence, contained within itself the social dynamite which, given the spark, could explode into industrial warfare." For a detailed account of the Paterson strike, see pages 263-290.

<sup>205</sup> "We welcome improved machinery...but as a rule we never see receive any benefit...improved machinery only antagonizes the workers the more, because they can see themselves that they can produce more under the improved machinery; still get less wages." Quoted in Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 267. See also Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 353; and Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 83.

<sup>206</sup> Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 270, 273.

<sup>207</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 319-320, 357; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 273-274; Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 84.

succeed.<sup>208</sup> But the silk manufacturers had learned lessons from Lawrence and with a new determination deployed calculated, repressive measures to weaken the strike.

In Lawrence, the initiative to re-locate children to New York had created much public sympathy for the strike, which generated a significant cash flow. But the Paterson strikers were unable to attract as much support, despite a pageant held in Madison Square Garden where Paterson strikers put on a dramatic performance re-enacting their struggle—an idea thought of by a young socialist writer named John Reed and backed by numerous socialists and public intellectuals. While the pageant was well received by the audience of 15,000 at the Garden, it did not generate the funds needed to sustain the strike in Paterson. Recognizing the urgency of the situation in the aftermath of the pageant's failure, Rode-Chervinsky pleaded with readers on the cover of the July issue of *Golos Truda* to support the Paterson strikers: a loss there would be a “hard to repair blow” to this “young, still fragile organization [IWW],” as it would give “all reactionary elements of the country” the opportunity to celebrate a victory over their hated enemies, the Wobblies. Funds were drying up and families were going hungry, he added; not only was money needed to feed people in a desperate situation but an IWW loss, Rode-Chervinsky feared, would have a significant and detrimental impact on an insurgent labor movement.<sup>209</sup>

Few Russians were among the Paterson strikers, but Italian anarchists had been on the forefront of the struggle. Italians were the most populous immigrant group in the US, and by 1910 they made up approximately half of the Paterson silk industry's workforce. In the years leading up to the strike, Italian anarchist silk workers had been involved in Paterson's Local No. 152 of the IWW, producing seasoned organizers to help lead the 1913 strike.<sup>210</sup> Kenyon Zimmer has shown how the Italian anarchist movement in Paterson resulted from industrial conflict: immigrant workers had been radicalized *en masse* by the practices of the local silk industry, and among these workers, large numbers moved into the anarchist camp through the agitation of a “small cadre of radical

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<sup>208</sup> *GT*, April 1913, 5. In the early stages of the strike, many including K. Ivanov in *Golos Truda* believed the IWW's effort to turn Paterson into a general strike in the industry in New Jersey and surrounding states would prove successful.

<sup>209</sup> *GT*, July 1913, 1-2; June 1913, 7.

<sup>210</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 84.

émigrés.”<sup>211</sup> In other words, in trying to build a Russian anarchist movement by recruiting among immigrant workers aggrieved by conditions in America, URW leaders were operating in a tradition already established by Italian and Jewish immigrant anarchists. Anarchist and syndicalist ideas and tactics were popular among workers because they met the needs of the time and proved to be, in many cases, effective tools of resistance against the encroachments of employers.

While the Paterson strike was lost—the workers were back on the job by July 28—the damage to the IWW was not irreparable, nor was the strike a total failure. As Zimmer notes, Local 152 retained most of its membership and continued to organize, with some success, in Paterson through 1916; many of the silk mills, furthermore, decided to return to the two loom assignments.<sup>212</sup> Even lost strikes trained and prepared workers for future battles, and it was some moral consolation that owners were only able to win through repressive measures that violated workers’ rights. More Russians would join the ranks of the workers in Paterson in the years to come.

The Wobblies were also still gaining strength overall, and there was no shortage of exploited workers in North America hoping to improve their lives. Thousands of Russians and other migrant workers had been moving to Detroit for its thriving automobile industry, and workers in the local URW took part in strikes at the Ford Motor Company.<sup>213</sup> In 1905, Ford workers’ 10-hour shifts had been reduced to nine, but in 1913 Henry Ford re-introduced the 10-hour day; he also implemented new, rigid speed-up measures on assembly lines.<sup>214</sup> Resentment over these impositions and the additional toll they placed on already frustrated workers had activated IWW Automobile Workers’ Union No. 16 in the spring. After leading the successful campaign in Little Falls, IWW leader Matilda Rabinowitz helped organize Ford factories in 1913. At Ford’s Highland Park plant Rabinowitz and other Wobblies had attempted to address a crowd of at least 3,000 workers on May 2 before police arrested the leaders and many strikers; among the

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<sup>211</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 50-84, 50 (quote).

<sup>212</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 87.

<sup>213</sup> Lipotkin estimated there were twenty-thousand Russians in Detroit in the 1910s. Next to New York and Pittsburgh area, Detroit would become the largest source of support for the URW. *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 340.

<sup>214</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 383-385.

arrested were V. Vladimirov of the Detroit URW and four of his comrades—Liberman, Marchuk, Sapozhnikov, and Golembievsky.<sup>215</sup> The Highland Park uprising was quelled, but IWW leaders moved on to other plants at Ford where they soon organized a successful strike of 6,000 workers in mid-June. The June action was in the words of Philip Foner “the first important strike in the history of the Detroit automobile industry,” because of the unprecedented organizing efforts of the IWW, who in a short period surpassed previous attempts by the American Federation of Labor and other craft unions to organize the industry. Historians credit the IWW for laying the groundwork for the rise of industrial unionism in the automobile industry in the 1920s and 30s, and the URW, as shown in this example, played a part in that development.<sup>216</sup>

After their arrest at Highland Park, the Detroit URW members spent a night or two in jail, and Vladimirov commented on the arbitrary violence deployed by police alongside the dismal conditions of jails in a free country, using derisive quotation marks around “free.” He wrote that methods of “inquisitorial torture” were “not alien” to the Detroit prison guards and asserted there was a contradiction between reality and America’s reputation as a free country, partly by suggesting the US was no better than tsarist Russia, at least on the treatment of prisoners.<sup>217</sup> This was a common theme among URW writers: heaping ridicule and contempt on the conventional notion of America as the land of freedom and democracy. Vladimirov and his comrades were beaten up and for no reason as far as they could tell: he wrote that Liberman asked the prison guards why they had hit him, and one answered, “you attacked us,” which Vladimirov quoted without comment to indicate it was an absurd lie that spoke for itself.<sup>218</sup> The prisoners were then placed in small cells and

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<sup>215</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 385; *GT*, June 1913, 7-8.

<sup>216</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 386-390. On this 1913 IWW campaign in Detroit, Foner quoted Allan Nevins: “It had indicated the existence of considerable underlying unrest, and done something in preparing a psychology favorable to the eventual rise of industrial unionism among the unskilled workers in the new mass industries.”

<sup>217</sup> *GT*, June 1913, 7-8.

<sup>218</sup> This disconnect between promises/claims and reality—including the deception involved—contributed to migrants’ radicalization. Gratuitous, arbitrary violence was another factor.

systematically woken up every half hour throughout the night in what Vladimirov described as an exercise in torture.<sup>219</sup>

A few months later, Rode-Chervinsky would characterize Henry Ford's celebrated five dollars per worker, per day program as a scam. To chill the simmering unrest among workers and Wobbly agitators, Ford raised wages at his plants. The raise to a then remarkably high figure of \$5 per day was universally praised, and the IWW even took the credit for it.<sup>220</sup> However, describing Ford as a "dexterous capitalist," Rode-Chervinsky argued the pay hike would not be good for workers. He explained how free advertising accompanying the promotion had driven demand for Ford's automobiles, while claiming that the new, high wage only increased pressure on workers, already doing intense labor, to both meet the demand and express gratitude to Ford for the pay raise—by working harder. Even with the new wage rate, workers were still producing "five times more than what they receive," wrote Rode-Chervinsky and were still "slaves" to their now "benefactor" Ford.<sup>221</sup> New assembly line technology introduced in 1913 had drastically reduced the amount of time it took to build a car but also made the work unbearable, requiring workers to perform only monotonous tasks at even faster speeds. Lastly, Rode-Chervinsky argued that Ford's \$5 per day plan would neuter unions, including the local IWW. Therefore "by sharing profits with workers [Ford] killed two if not three birds with one stone."<sup>222</sup>

The *Golos Truda* editor was on to something. Labor historian Erik Loomis writes that while Ford's five dollars per day is remembered as an altruistic initiative to pay workers enough money so that they could afford the cars they produced, the decision was in fact made in order to prevent workers from quitting over the intolerable working conditions.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Vladimirov's detailed, sardonic account titled, "Long live the Republic!" described, among other things, the width of his cell: 1.5 arshin or three feet, and length: 2.5 arshin or less than six feet. Inside the cell there was a bench but no mattress, sheets, or pillows. Tactics used to wake up prisoners included unleashing dogs and cats to brawl in the prison yard. *GT*, June 1913, 7-8.

<sup>220</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 389.

<sup>221</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 12. By writing "five times more than what they receive" he meant the workers still were not compensated nearly enough, because the value of the product of their labor was considerably higher than what they received in wages, if not precisely five times higher.

<sup>222</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 12.

<sup>223</sup> Erik Loomis, "This Day in Labor History: January 5, 1914" *Lawyers, Guns, & Money*, <http://www.lawyersgunsmoneyblog.com/2015/01/day-labor-history-january-5-1914> (Accessed October 25, 2017)

After the 10-hour day was re-introduced, the worker turnover rate went up to 370 percent in 1913, prompting Ford to address the problem. In exchange for the new wage, writes Loomis, “Ford expected plenty in return from those employees, far more than any employee should have to accept,” in terms of working his “employees to the bone,” while additionally subjecting them to invasive and unprecedented home searches to ensure they were living up to the puritanical moral standards Ford placed on them. Loomis adds that Ford’s five dollars a day program was an early example of how companies use profit-sharing to co-opt the allegiance of workers, much like Rode-Chervinsky had argued at the time.<sup>224</sup>

Beyond Detroit, a strike in Akron, Ohio in 1913 further illustrated the deleterious effects of assembly lines and speed-up measures on workers. Though the URW did not participate in this strike, *Golos Truda* covered it as a part of its mission to connect Russians with the broader class struggle in America. Assembly lines in the automobile industry had significantly increased the capacity for production, which in turn increased demand in complementary industries such as tire production. The rubber companies had also, as *Golos Truda* put it, introduced “new wage rates, dooming the workers to the most disastrous existence.”<sup>225</sup> The IWW led yet another strike in early 1913, this one of 15,000 rubber workers at Goodyear and Firestone and other tire companies in the “rubber capital” of Akron, a city that would become a URW stronghold in 1916, as shown below.<sup>226</sup> The tire companies had implemented an “inhuman Taylor speed-up system” in their factories, ostensibly to meet the growing demand for tires.<sup>227</sup> One employer commented on the success of speed-up measures: “We got 40 percent more production with the same number of men.”<sup>228</sup> “Taylor” is Frederick Winslow Taylor, the father of scientific management whose proposals for improving efficiency in the workplace had been adopted

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<sup>224</sup> Loomis, “This Day in Labor History: January 5, 1914.”

<sup>225</sup> *GT*, April 1913, 5.

<sup>226</sup> The Russian Progressive Circle of Akron would form in 1914, distributing *Golos Truda* as its newspaper. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 389-390.

<sup>227</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 382. On Taylorism, see David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The workplace, the state, and American labor activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 216-256.

<sup>228</sup> Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 382.

by many companies. Along with modern hardware, speed-up systems prescribed by Taylor, such as using timers to control the work process, were implemented to increase production but at the expense of workers, which led to this mass strike in Akron. However, the power of the companies—and the outright violence they used to repress the strike—had outmatched the resources and ingenuity of the Akron workers and the IWW.<sup>229</sup>

As largely *chernorabochii* or unskilled/general laborers, and newer immigrants, Russians typically had to find work where the labor conditions were even worse than in tire plants or silk mills. In a study of Russian immigrants in America published in 1922, Jerome Davis noted how “Russians take the job at the bottom of the ladder; they have the roughest and hardest tasks.”<sup>230</sup> Most Russians accepted work wherever they could find it, and the industry that attracted the most Russian workers was coal mining.

It is no surprise then that in 1913 *Golos Truda*’s attention was drawn to a series of violent miners’ rebellions in northern Michigan, West Virginia, and parts of Canada, battles that resulted in hundreds of casualties. *Golos Truda*’s coverage of these strikes highlighted the awakening of workers in the face of brutal company repression. Aided by the United Mine Workers of America, the protracted coal miners’ strike in West Virginia has been described by historian Eliot J. Gorn as “one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts in American history.”<sup>231</sup> After being evicted from company homes, strikers built tent colonies in the hills of West Virginia to continue their struggle, as *Golos Truda* put it, “against a whole army of hired killers, defending the coal barons”—including men from the notorious Baldwin-Felts agency, which staffed its ranks with thugs and criminals.<sup>232</sup> Through the winter of 1912-1913, workers and their families lived in tents set up along the Paint and Cabin creeks in Kanawha County and, armed with rifles, they fought off attacks on their camps from company guards and detectives. When the state’s National Guard intervened and called for a ceasefire, the miners disarmed, but the company gunmen continued their assault “under the auspices of the state militia,” as *Golos Truda* put it—

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<sup>229</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 373-383.

<sup>230</sup> Jerome Davis, *The Russian Immigrant* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1922), 17-18. After coal mining, the top industries for Russian workers were iron and steel, meat packing, and clothing.

<sup>231</sup> Elliot J. Gorn, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 172.

<sup>232</sup> *GT*, April 1913, 5; Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 186-191.

forcing the miners to re-arm. More gun battles ensued, leaving many dead on both sides, and the National Guard and West Virginian authorities arrested dozens of strikers and union organizers including the septuagenarian labor agitator Mary “Mother” Jones.<sup>233</sup> The arrested individuals were brought up on conspiracy charges in connection with the killing of company guards, and since martial law had been declared, the arrested workers and organizers faced capital punishment if convicted. Tellingly, no company guards or Baldwin-Felts men faced charges for their role in the violence. It was also an unprecedented use of martial law, effectively eliminating civil liberties in the entire state, including free speech and the right of habeas corpus.<sup>234</sup> Rode-Chervinsky decried how the “vaunted [*khvalennaya*] American Constitution” had been “stomped on in mud” by the “local satraps” and noted how officials had used extreme violence with martial law authority, deploying for example “armored trains and automobiles with machine guns against defenseless workers.”<sup>235</sup> West Virginia eventually released Mother Jones and the other prisoners, while the governor imposed a settlement to end the strike. Because their top demands were not met, the terms initially enraged the miners. However, after company abuses were publicly exposed, subsequent concessions by mine owners resulted in *de facto* union recognition, and soon a large fraction of miners in the state were organized in the United Mine Workers of America.<sup>236</sup>

Meanwhile the Western Federation of Miners had been leading a strike of copper miners in northern Michigan. The WFM had split from the IWW in 1907 over factional disputes, but the miners’ union remained a formidable industrial union in this period.<sup>237</sup> In addition to grievances over low pay and long hours, copper miners were angered by the introduction of one-man drills. This innovation in the mines increased productivity: by enabling one man to perform work that had previously required at least two men, the one-

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<sup>233</sup> *GT*, April 1913, 5.

<sup>234</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 187, 191.

<sup>235</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 12.

<sup>236</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 193; Another UMW led coal miners’ strike on Vancouver Island in 1913 was being violently suppressed—as *Golos Truda* put it: “Mounted police crashed into crowds of peacefully marching strikers, beating innocent people left and right.” This strike lasted into 1914 but resulted in a total loss for the workers and the union. *GT*, December 1913, 5.

<sup>237</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 120-121.

man drill displaced workers. For miners who remained on the job, instead of working 10 to 12-hour shifts in two-man teams, they now had to work without a companion—on top of the traditional hardships associated with working in mines—which was isolating and dangerous. Thus, among the strikers' demands: a return to two-man drills.<sup>238</sup> The strike lasted for months, and throughout it the copper mine workers were harassed by a vigilante group known as the Citizens' Alliance. Rode-Chervinsky described the Citizens' Alliance, not without merit, as an American version of the Black Hundreds in Russia—the extreme nationalist supporters of the tsarist state who carried out pogroms against Jews and radicals.<sup>239</sup> Citizens' Alliance's attacks on workers culminated in what came to be known as the Italian Hall tragedy: one of the vigilantes shouted "Fire!" in the crowded Italian Hall where strikers and their families had been celebrating at a Christmas party. In the resulting chaos to flee the building, dozens of people, mostly children, died. Then in January, WFM president Charles Moyer was shot in the back, an attack that has been attributed to the Citizens' Alliance. In the words of Larry Lankton, an expert on the history of copper mines in Michigan, "The mine managers and their lawyers almost certainly created the Citizens' Alliance themselves, and they definitely organized and financed many of its activities."<sup>240</sup> Moreover, after nine months the strike was largely defeated, except for the adoption of the eight-hour day and improvements to grievance procedures, while the WFM was driven out of Michigan.

Across Lake Superior the same year, a Russian reported to *Golos Truda* that he and "many other Russian workers" had joined 1,200 workers in another miners' strike at the Porcupine Goldfields Camp in Timmins, Ontario—a strike also led by the Western

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<sup>238</sup> Larry Lankton, *Cradle to Grave: Life, Work, and Death at the Lake Superior Copper Mines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 221, 225, 241; Workers described the one-man drill as a "man killer" and "widow maker." Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 5: The AFL in the Progressive Era, 1910-1915* (New York: International Publishers, 1980), 215.

<sup>239</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 12.

<sup>240</sup> Lankton, *Cradle to Grave*, 233, 236-241; See also Gary Kaunonen and Aaron Goings, *Community in Conflict: A Working-Class History of the 1913-14 Michigan Copper Strike and the Italian Hall Tragedy* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2004).

Federation of Miners, Local 145.<sup>241</sup> In response to threatened wage reductions, mine workers at the Porcupine camp demanded the union scale on wages plus an eight-hour day. Like many other strikes, the workers and the union were outmatched by the power of employers, who were aided by national, state, and provincial governments. Following a familiar script, strikers at the Porcupine camp were harassed and beaten by private Thiel detectives, arrested, and sentenced to prison terms. Russian V. Mel'nichuk received a six-month sentence for fighting with strikebreakers or as the *Golos Truda* correspondent wrote, attempting to "disarm drunken scabs."<sup>242</sup> The strike was defeated and the employer's initial offer was accepted.<sup>243</sup>

Despite such defeats, *Golos Truda* was not discouraged, because the spate of worker uprisings at least showed a way to fight against the ruling class while exposing the brutal realities of power in America. "From childhood," wrote S. Stepanov, American workers were told stories about how the United States was "the only country with freedom and equality in the world"; the bourgeoisie pushed these ideas "to defend its class interests," but recent strikes suggested that workers were gradually starting to "open their eyes to the real position of things."<sup>244</sup> Referring for example to the invocation of martial law, Stepanov argued the "American owning and ruling class" only observed the laws it created when it was "profitable" for them to do so. When the "oppressed try to improve their situation" through direct struggle and become a threat, the ruling classes and the entire apparatus of the state did not hesitate to break and override laws in order to protect their interests.<sup>245</sup> But for K. Ivanov, the ongoing strike wave had "forced workers, finally, to become conscious of the fact that only direct struggle, cohesion, and general solidarity"

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<sup>241</sup> *GT*, May 1913, 7. The correspondent was V. Sosnovskii; J.D. Barry, "The Porcupine Miners of Ontario," *International Socialist Review*, 13 (1912-1913): 605-606; Karen Bachmann, "Labour movement sparked holiday," *Timmins Press*, September 2, 2011. <http://www.timminspress.com/2011/09/02/labour-movement-sparked-holiday> (accessed online October 25, 2017)

<sup>242</sup> *GT*, May 1913, 7.

<sup>243</sup> Bachmann, "Labour movement sparked holiday."

<sup>244</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 6-7.

<sup>245</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 6-7.

could enable them to liberate themselves.<sup>246</sup> And it gave them the opportunity to fight directly against their enemies, which was preferable to waiting for political reforms from above.

To build cohesion and solidarity in the midst of ongoing labor struggles, in 1913 the Russian Labor Group dispatched Bill Shatov across the country on an organizing tour. Over the course of a few months he spoke at existing clubs and helped set up new URW and IWW divisions in various towns and cities.<sup>247</sup> After first visiting workers' groups in Providence, Hartford, and South Bethlehem, Shatov went to Philadelphia where he helped set up a new URW and gave four lectures across the city, at least one of which attracted 100 listeners.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, in June, Shatov was called on to help organize an IWW-led strike of 800 Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian workers at the Spreckels Sugar refinery in Philadelphia. The success of this campaign triggered the formation of the IWW's Local No. 8 of Marine Transport Workers on the nearby Philadelphia docks, which remained a powerful, interracial IWW union for the next 20 years.<sup>249</sup>

Shatov then traveled to Baltimore and spoke at eight meetings, including two at IWW locals, and one that attracted a crowd of 150.<sup>250</sup> In one of his reports, Shatov noted the strength of the URW in Baltimore, which had "also contributed greatly to the formation" of Russian-Polish, Lithuanian, and Jewish sections of the IWW there.<sup>251</sup> These URW-inspired IWW sections further suggest very close relations between the two organizations.

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<sup>246</sup> *GT*, April 1913, 5.

<sup>247</sup> *GT*, June 1913, 7. He had set out to travel all the way to Los Angeles and Victoria, BC, with scheduled stops at more than a dozen towns and cities, including Montreal, Edmonton, Toronto, Chicago, Denver, Omaha, and Kansas City.

<sup>248</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7; July 1913, 7.

<sup>249</sup> *GT*, July 1913, 7; August 1913, 7; The Spreckels sugar strike led directly to the subsequent Philadelphia dockers' strike of 4,000 workers, which precipitated the formation of the IWW's Local 8. See Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2007), 40. Local 8 became one of the most successful IWW unions and the most ethnically diverse union in the country, consisting largely of African-Americans and Eastern European immigrants. See also Dan Radnika, "100 Years Ago: The Philadelphia dockers strike and Local 8 of the IWW": <https://libcom.org/library/100-years-ago-philadelphia-dockers-strike-local-8-iww-mouvement-communiste-kolektivn%C4%9B-pr> (Accessed online October 25, 2017)

<sup>250</sup> *GT*, July 1913, 7.

<sup>251</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7.

In Detroit, Shatov joined a free speech fight and spoke at several street meetings. The trip took him as far as Nebraska where he helped set up a new URW division in Omaha, passing through Port Huron, Chicago and Pullman, Illinois, and elsewhere along the way. Shatov's speech in Nebraska inspired the Omaha circle to promote the "human ideals of universal equality and brotherhood."<sup>252</sup> In Pullman on January 22nd, 1914, Shatov spoke at an event to commemorate the deaths of those shot down in Russia on Bloody Sunday in 1905, alongside Lithuanian and Polish speakers. The Polish speaker who addressed the crowd was identified as Zelinsky, possibly Polish anarcho-syndicalist Jozef Zielinski.<sup>253</sup>

In Pittsburgh, Shatov saw potential in this "city of iron and smoke." He drew one packed hall and wrote of a large number of Russians—some 10,000 by his estimate—who were being "robbed" due in part to their lack of organization. The field was ripe for the URW's message, wrote Shatov, but there were an insufficient number of "conscious" comrades to start and maintain an organization on their own, and he suggested the URW quickly send more organizers to Pittsburgh to carry on extensive work.<sup>254</sup>

Organizing in the face of the powerful steel companies would also prove challenging. In 1909, immigrant workers in Pittsburgh had carried out major strikes in the steel industry, followed by company crackdowns on all workers and union organizing. Led by the IWW, unskilled and immigrant workers, including Russians, struck successfully against the Pressed Steel Car Company in McKees Rocks.<sup>255</sup> Further, a similar strike at the American Sheet and Tin Plate Company in New Castle was defeated, but these two major strikes had suggested industrial unionism was gaining momentum in the region. Philip Foner has noted how after outmaneuvering AFL unions, "The IWW was the only functioning labor organization in the steel industry" by 1910 while the lesson of the 1909 strikes was clear: "working class solidarity and militancy and effective organization could

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<sup>252</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 7; August 1913, 7; September 1913, 7; March 1914, 14.

<sup>253</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 14. A report from the Pullman group described how Shatov's speech brought the audience to tears.

<sup>254</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7.

<sup>255</sup> Philip Foner has described this strike at the Pressed Steel Car Company as "the first important demonstration of the fallacy of the widespread dual theory that immigrant workers were too downtrodden to resist oppression and too lacking in ability, experience, and unity to organize effectively along industrial lines." Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 281.

triumph over a powerful corporation.”<sup>256</sup> The subsequent IWW organizing drive, however, failed due to lack of resources and unyielding resistance from companies and local officials.<sup>257</sup> Still, the region’s immigrant workers had shown a then unprecedented ability to organize and rebel in 1909, and in the 1910s a growing number of Russians moving to the region would become radicalized, largely due to the organizing efforts of the Union of Russian Workers.

In 1913, relations between the URW and IWW continued to develop. In addition to Shatov’s IWW organizing, the Wobblies for instance began recruiting Russian workers through *Golos Truda*. One letter from the District Council of the IWW in New York, written in Russian, explained to readers that the labor movement had enormous opportunities for growth, noting for example how 75 percent of shops in the New York area remained unorganized. The letter also advised Russians to avoid political parties as well as labor unions that “obscure class consciousness,” in an apparent reference to the Socialist Party and the AFL.<sup>258</sup> A separate IWW letter similarly noted how of the 150,000 marine transport workers in New York City, only 10,000 were organized.<sup>259</sup> Furthermore, suggesting a deepening of fraternal ties between the two organizations, a Russian-language branch of the IWW in San Francisco published its financial reports in *Golos Truda*.<sup>260</sup> It makes sense that the Wobblies would choose the URW as a venue through which to make an appeal to Russians. The IWW did not have the support of the Russian Social Democrat newspaper *Novyi Mir*, due to the two organizations’ contrasting views on the question of political parties, the usefulness of direct action, and the role of the state in revolution.<sup>261</sup> Unlike Russian Marxists, the Wobblies did not believe the state was needed to take control

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<sup>256</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 303, 297,

<sup>257</sup> See Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 281-305; Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All*, 209.

<sup>258</sup> See for example *Golos Truda*, August 1913, 7 and December 1913, 4-5.

<sup>259</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 7.

<sup>260</sup> See for example *Golos Truda*, April 1, 1913, 7. From March 1, 1912 to January 1, 1913, this Russian IWW division in San Francisco raised \$378.13 from member contributions, literature sales, library donations, and parties. The first IWW-Russian language newspaper, *Rabochaya Rech*, would appear in 1915.

<sup>261</sup> *Novyi Mir* editor Gregory Weinstein said: “There is no connection between our party and the I.W.W. Some of our aims may be similar, but we do not work together.” quoted in Davis, *Russian Immigrant*, 125-126.

of production; rather, the workers could do this themselves directly. In terms of the day-to-day struggle, the IWW threw all its energy into organizing and supporting workers and strikes while Marxists had more critical views on the benefits of strikes and especially the IWW idea for a general strike.

Shatov's tour encouraged the URW to dispatch labor agitators on an ongoing basis. Alexander Senkevich in Baltimore wrote that due to lack of time and money, Shatov had been largely unable to reach Russians beyond the existing URW and IWW groups in the city, and Senkevich stressed the urgency to rectify this situation since there were thousands of Russians who had not yet heard the URW's message.<sup>262</sup> Indeed, Shatov had intended to travel both further west and into Canada, but the tour was cut short, probably due to lack of funding.

Opportunities to organize in Canada were circumscribed by lack of resources and a smaller pool of workers to draw from in comparison to the numbers of Russians living in the US, while workers' lives were just as difficult.<sup>263</sup> A Russian in Edmonton wrote *Golos Truda* to inform readers of "the most horrible" conditions in western Canada. Because of misleading advertisements promising jobs to unskilled workers for a relatively decent wage of \$2.50 per day, wrote I. Vebster, "hundreds of Russian workers and peasants" moved to Edmonton. But the city's cost of living was unusually high—dominated as it was by the railroad industry and company stores—so that the wages did not come close to covering needs. "For example," Vebster explained, "a pair of boots costs 15-16 dol., 'overalls' — 2 dol., grub [*kharch*] (without an apartment) — a dollar per day," etc.<sup>264</sup> In short, "The work is heavy, but there are no benefits" and on top of that, the community was racked by the spread of infectious illnesses such as typhus. Vebster's parting words

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<sup>262</sup> *GT*, July, 1913, 7.

<sup>263</sup> Kukushin writes: "In contrast to Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States, Canada never became a major destination for political emigration from tsarist Russia." An economic recession beginning in 1913 would further inhibit Russian political organizers in Canada. Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusan Immigration from the Russian Empire to Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 164 (quote), 174.

<sup>264</sup> *Golos Truda* writers often wrote phonetic renderings in Russian of colloquial North American terms, and placed them in quotation marks, rather than try to translate the words. "Overalls" is for example written as "overolls" in cyrillic.

to readers of *Golos Truda* summed up his argument: “do not come here.”<sup>265</sup> This correspondent did not think it worth mentioning the type of job he had in Edmonton; his priority had been making money, and to an unskilled migrant laborer, all grunt work must have seemed more or less the same. There was no pride to be had in any of this kind of work.

URW organizer Alexander Senkevich diagnosed the underlying impediments to organizing Russians in North America. While *Golos Truda* and the URW had been seeking to “unite and educate” Russian workers and peasants in North America, so far they had found the task daunting. Senkevich reported on how difficult it was to organize: driven to America “by need and tsarist irregularities” [*gonimyya nyzhdoi da tsarskimi neporyadkami*] the majority of Russian migrants were illiterate peasants “without any means for independent action and initiative.”<sup>266</sup> Senkevich wrote that many Russians were isolated from local labor movements and knew nothing about their host country or neighborhoods. He described Russians who had been living in America for three or four years but could not even identify the address or street where they lived. They huddled among themselves in ghettos with 20 to 30 people in one home amidst “shocking levels of drunkenness and dirtiness.” Senkevich blamed “cursed tsarism” for creating such “dehumanized” and “distorted” human beings. Rather than fertile ground for organization, this mass of Russians represented “perfect material for exploitation,” with many willing to accept vodka as payment from employers instead of cash wages. Senkevich suggested that conscious members of the Russian community seeking to bring these Russians into the labor movement faced long odds.<sup>267</sup> He added that in Baltimore, the 4,000 to 5,000 Russians, most from Grodno, Minsk, and Volyn provinces, were spread out over three or four different parts of the city, unlike Poles and Jews who lived together in their own clusters.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> *GT*, May 1913, 7. Letter from I. Vebster. No other information on Vebster or working conditions for Russian workers in Edmonton appears in *Golos Truda*. Unfortunately, comparatively little information on URW activity in Canada exists.

<sup>266</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7. “Irregularities” or “disorders” referring to tsarist policies and practices, such as depriving Belarusian peasants of land, which created a surplus of agricultural labor and drove emigration.

<sup>267</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7.

<sup>268</sup> Poles and Lithuanians, like Jews from Russia, had been moving to North America in large numbers starting in the 1880s. Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers*, 32.

Russians in Baltimore lived “in a type of artel” cooperative housing crowded with people. From the outside, wrote Senkevich, the impoverished conditions of the artels stood out, in a painful contrast to the clean American homes nearby.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, such factors complicate the argument that social and labor conditions in North America made anarchists out of immigrants—since those conditions could also make immigrants passive—to the extent it can be applied to peasant-laborers from Russia.

Along with Shatov and Rode-Chervinsky, Senkevich was another leading figure in the URW milieu.<sup>270</sup> Senkevich was born in a Belarusian village and graduated from the Teachers’ College in Nyasvizh in 1902. After some involvement in the Belarusian National Movement through 1906, Senkevich moved to the United States, and at some point thereafter earned a degree in medicine from the University of Maryland, becoming a popular physician. Senkevich was simultaneously a prominent anarchist organizer based in Baltimore.<sup>271</sup> Indeed, Senkevich had helped organize one of the first clubs—founded in 1909—to become a URW branch.<sup>272</sup> Furthermore, according to historian of Russian anarchism Anatoly Dubovik, the character Dr. Stashinsky in Alexander Fadeyev’s famous novel *Razgrom* (The Rout) was based on Dr. Alexander Senkevich.<sup>273</sup> Senkevich wrote regularly for *Golos Truda*.

Senkevich’s concerns over the isolation and exploitation of Russian workers in North America were echoed by other URW writers and supported by general information

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<sup>269</sup> *GT*, September 4, 1914, 4.

<sup>270</sup> In existing accounts of the URW in anarchist and labor literature, there is no mention of Senkevich, unlike Shatov and Rode-Chervinsky who were comparably well known. Like many others associated with the URW, Senkevich’s role has remained almost entirely unknown.

<sup>271</sup> Vitaut Kipel, *Belarusans in the United States* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1999), 137, 142. Senkevich “became very actively involved in the political, socialist-anarchist movement. He formed numerous circles of his compatriots and taught them the rudiments of political ideologies, revolutionary activities, not neglecting work on their English, and to give them background information on Belarus.”

<sup>272</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 365. Senkevich was a founder of the Russian Workers’ Club in Baltimore, along with Gorskava and Lyakhova.

<sup>273</sup> Dubovik adds that in Yakub Kolas’s novel-trilogy *Na Rostanyakh* (At a Crossroads), Sadovich’s teacher was also based on Senkevich. Dr. Senkevich moved to Vladivostok in 1917 and became a part of the trade union movement, before returning to Soviet Belarus where he served as a leading health authority. He was shot in 1939. Dubovik, “Aleksandr Antonovich Senkevich (1880-1939),” <http://www.makhno.ru/forum/showthread.php?t=1464&page=21> (Accessed October 25, 2017); Kipel, *Belarusans in the United States*, 137.

on where Russians worked. In a separate article, Senkevich claimed that the “huge army” of an estimated 200,000 Russian workers in the United States were one of the “most exploited” groups in the country.<sup>274</sup> Indeed, in addition to coal mining and steel industry jobs located especially in the Pittsburgh area into West Virginia, Russians also worked in slaughterhouses, sugar refineries, automobile plants, and the clothing industry.<sup>275</sup> Aaron Baron, an IWW and URW organizer, described Russians’ working life in America: the long hours, low pay, no breaks, no right to complain, constant fear of losing one’s job—and only if one was fortunate enough to find a job. They had little money to provide their children with decent clothes, food or education. Baron even compared the plight of the American worker to serfdom: “workers are assigned [*pripisany*] now to the manufacturers as once the peasants were assigned to the nobility.”<sup>276</sup>

In 1913, URW correspondent Peter Savitsky attempted to organize Russian dock workers in Buffalo, of which there were many, but he had no success. He wrote that after being “worked like mules,” many Russians in Buffalo drank alcohol instead of trying to educate themselves. Savitsky noted further that Russians were easily exploited because they did not typically understand English and were “bullied in the most inhumane ways”; Savitsky recalled how he used his English skills to intervene on behalf of a fellow Russian worker but was dismissed from his own position for doing so.<sup>277</sup> Savitsky had reluctantly concluded that Russian workers on the Buffalo waterfront simply did not seem interested in organizing, though it might be noted that due to the seasonal and irregular nature of the work, dock workers were even more difficult to organize than others.<sup>278</sup>

At the same time, exploitative labor conditions did in many cases radicalize Russian workers and motivate them to organize. For one thing, the jobs in North America

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<sup>274</sup> Presumably he meant two-hundred thousand workers who spoke Russian as a native language, though the figure seems low for 1913. *GT*, March 1913, 13.

<sup>275</sup> See Davis, *Russian Immigrant*, 17; and Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 56-58. By contrast, two-thirds of Jewish immigrants were skilled workers with most working in the garment trades; 70 percent of all workers in New York City’s clothing industry were Jews.

<sup>276</sup> *GT*, May 1914, 5. Baron’s pen name was “Polevoi” or in this case “B. Polevoi.” His claim has the ring of truth. From invasive home searches at Ford to coal and copper barons forcing miners to use only company stores, corporate feudalism was alive and well in the Progressive era.

<sup>277</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 7.

<sup>278</sup> Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront*, 12-13.

were often more difficult and exhausting than work in Russia; Russians had not experienced such long hours and oppressive conditions in their native land.<sup>279</sup> In addition to longer hours, backbreaking labor, and misleading job advertisements, Russian peasants accustomed to working outside in fields found the work in America “hazardous, unhealthful, and unpleasant” with the effect of arousing “resentment” among the Russians.<sup>280</sup> Russian workers might not have been fully conscious of the history of corporate capitalism or Taylorism’s effort to squeeze as much labor out of them as possible at the lowest cost, but a sense of unfairness had suggested something was deeply amiss. An encounter with capitalism in North America opened many minds to socialist and anarchist ideas; the trick for the URW was to turn this resentment into a positive organizing force.

Senkevich and other URW organizers would return to the theme of organizing Russians in the United States with a specific objective of building a “revolutionary army” of workers in America to return home and help overthrow the Tsar—and appealed to Russians partly on those grounds. Reinforcing the URW’s transnationalism, Senkevich tried to persuade Russians to organize by arguing that the labor struggle in North America was connected to the struggle in Russia: “If you make a worker a soldier of the revolutionary army here in America, he will remain that way wherever his fate takes him.” By joining their local labor movements and rising up against capitalism in America, he argued, Russian workers were also in effect preparing for the fight back home.<sup>281</sup> As Senkevich and others in the URW saw it, on one hand they were beset by a number of challenges but on the other the situation in North America presented a unique opportunity to train revolutionaries and build up the movement.

To deal with challenges but also take advantage of favorable conditions, Senkevich stressed education and joining the labor movement. He wrote that Russians needed education with a focus on “developing self-activity and class consciousness in the masses,” which would also help them adapt to life in North America.<sup>282</sup> Because of the low

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<sup>279</sup> *GT*, May 1914, 5.

<sup>280</sup> Jerome Davis, *Russian Immigrant*, 16-20.

<sup>281</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 13.

<sup>282</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7.

level of understanding of socialism among the masses, one Philadelphia member envisioned the URW as a preparation school teaching both socialism and anarchism while welcoming students regardless of their political beliefs.<sup>283</sup> But Senkevich and others wanted the URW to focus its energy on labor organizing; they needed to become more successful in “familiarizing Russian workers with local labor movements.”<sup>284</sup>

*Golos Truda* was crucial to this work, as it continued to help facilitate the organization of Russian workers into trade unions. In early 1913, a letter from Russian division no. 21 of the Brotherhood of Machinists stated its goal of finding work for the unemployed. The union recruited by offering education and support for the unemployed, recognizing that most Russians in the US were in need of assistance, and that Russians needed to stick together.<sup>285</sup> The letter included a questionnaire soliciting information from workers both employed and unemployed: readers were asked about their skills, where they had worked, whether they were paid salaries or by piece rate, and whether they were forced to work overtime. Later in 1913, a Union of Russian Sailors formed and *Golos Truda* published the union's charter. These were not strict trade unions: non-sailors were encouraged to join to receive the benefits of the union, as long as they remained current with dues and faced no opposition from the sailors in the union, which was open to all Russians regardless of political beliefs. It cost one dollar to join and 50 cents a month for dues.<sup>286</sup> Anarchists also remained active in the Russian division of the cloakmakers' union.<sup>287</sup>

Despite the challenges, in early 1914 Rode-Chervinsky looked back on three years of organizing and publishing and was “deeply satisfied” with the progress of their work. Russians in North America had been “increasingly starting to assimilate” the ideas and teachings of *Golos Truda* on a “free society of people without God, without Tsar, and

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<sup>283</sup> The URW in Philadelphia described itself as “progressive-nonparty”: its members were “workers, regardless of their beliefs or nationalities.” *GT*, August 1913, 7-8.

<sup>284</sup> *GT*, August 1913, 7.

<sup>285</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 14.

<sup>286</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 7; December 1913, 7.

<sup>287</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 7.

without Masters.”<sup>288</sup> The emergence of numerous groups around the continent committed to *Golos Truda* and the “Federation of Russian Workers’ Organizations” showed that there was a “wide interest in the ideas of anarchism-communism”—illustrating the point, incidentally, on how the URW or at least the editor of *Golos Truda* considered terms such as workers’ socialism, anarchism, and anarchist-communism practically interchangeable.<sup>289</sup> The editorial reviewed the federation’s history: after a small group of Russians started *Golos Truda* in 1911, emphasizing the idea first articulated at the International that the “liberation of workers is the task of workers themselves,” many others workers’ groups had joined in recognition of the need for an “independent revolutionary organ” to proselytize among the increasing number of Russian workers and peasants in North America.<sup>290</sup> Further, Rode-Chervinsky argued that the ongoing formation of the URW was “merely a reflection of all the sentiments and views of like-minded people” in the Russian community, asserting its grassroots bonafides. However, he noted that there was still significant work to be done, and much that still needed to be “fixed and added,” including first and foremost converting the newspaper from a monthly to a weekly. The paper had become a resource for Russians in North America and beyond, which highlighted the urgency of publishing more frequently, especially with the “rise of the revolutionary movement” around the world, an allusion to labor uprisings and social movements in Europe, South America, and in Russia where a “palpable revolutionary mood” had been “surging higher and higher.”<sup>291</sup> The anarchists realized their success depended on appealing to this working-class insurgency.

The URW was still a modest outfit in 1914 with 500 or 600 paying members by August of that year. Since Russian anarchists did not begin organizing until 1911, they would not have a significant amount of time to develop their movement in North America

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<sup>288</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 1; The URW had also added several new branches in 1913. In Baltimore, the URW formed a second division while new branches opened in Pittsburgh, Kansas City, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Vancouver. *GT*, March 1914, 1; December 1913, 7; January 1914, 7; April 1913, 6; March 1913, 15.

<sup>289</sup> This editorial however did not imply that “workers’ socialism” had been jettisoned, as convention resolutions would demonstrate, but only that it would now be accompanied by open advocacy for anarchism. The gradual introduction of the term anarchism, and its variations, appears to have been a conscious decision.

<sup>290</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 1.

<sup>291</sup> *GT*, March 1914, 1.

before the Russian Revolution broke out and captured their attention. Some important developments in 1914, however, laid the foundation for the eventual growth of the URW both toward the end of the year and in subsequent years in terms of membership numbers and influence. In July, the URW held its first continent-wide convention, laying out the principles of the organization and formally establishing the Federation of the Unions of the Russian Workers in the United States and Canada; and in September, *Golos Truda* became a weekly newspaper while the highly respected Russian anarchist writer Maksim Raevsky (L. Fisheliev), who had been living in France, took over as editor.<sup>292</sup>

At the start of 1914, an article by Peter Kropotkin in *Golos Truda* titled, “Some Thoughts On the Essence of Anarchism” helped set the tone for the year. The article outlined a history of the rise of monopoly capitalism in the late nineteenth century and the responses to it; an assessment of the struggle between two opposing historical tendencies—authoritarian vs. popular; an anarchist conception of freedom and socialism; and a call to “precisely formulate our goals” in order to make the anarchist message compelling to the masses.<sup>293</sup>

Kropotkin first considered the impact of monopoly capitalism on socialist movements. Members of the “bourgeoisie,” Kropotkin wrote, specifically “those with sufficient wit to understand the sense of events,” and fearing their “privileged position,” had formed into partnerships becoming a “fourth estate [*soslovie*] of monopolists,” with the aim of curbing rebellion from below and protecting the rights of the few against the rights of the many. As monopolists deprived workers of their rights, parliaments proved to be incapable of defending the proletariat against this capitalist onslaught. As a result, “the exploited working classes” had lost faith, Kropotkin argued, in the state socialist promise to change society through parliaments, or the “forty years of beautiful words about ‘the seizure of power’ [*zavoevanii vlasti*],”—a reference to Marx and other “state socialists” since the International—thus providing anarchists with an opportunity to formulate a program that would appeal to this “new awakening among workers.”<sup>294</sup> This was the explanation for the rise of syndicalism and anarchism.

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<sup>292</sup> The new weekly newspaper would be published on A2 size paper and typically ran four to six pages in length.

<sup>293</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 3.

<sup>294</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 3. “Forty years...” refers back to the International.

In addressing the question of what was to be done now, Kropotkin first summarized one of his broader theories of history. He argued there were two observable “tendencies” or currents [*techeniya*] in the history of human society, which were at war with each other: an “authoritarian tendency,” and an opposing “people’s” or popular [*narodnoe*] tendency, which organizes society from the bottom up on the basis of equality and freedom; this “people’s tendency” appears organically in for example tribes, villages, and labor unions. In such groups, association is “voluntary,” people use various means to reach agreements, and “without authority” [*bez vlasti*]. Moreover, the people’s tendency represents the constructive spirit of the masses and counteracts the worshipping of power, hierarchy, and obedience to authority. Indeed, Kropotkin told readers that “the history of humanity is the history of this struggle.”<sup>295</sup> Therefore, in order to thwart the authoritarian current, anarchists must go to the people and help foster the egalitarian and freedom-loving characteristics of the popular tendency.

Kropotkin furthermore argued that the anarchist vision for society understood that real freedom, unlike the bourgeois notion of freedom, could not “be achieved by robbery, monopolization of natural resources, or the exploitation of other people.” Unlike the bourgeoisie, anarchists understood that “liberation was impossible on an individual level,” because humans were social creatures. Therefore, freedom “must be achieved through cooperation with others,” in a society based on an “equal right” [*ravnye prava*] to knowledge and material goods. In an anarchist society, an individual would not be “compelled to sell his labor to an exploiter,” as this was the antithesis of freedom. In the words of Kropotkin, “Anarchism began from socialist thought,” because anarchists understood that freedom could only be obtained through cooperation and the “collective ownership of all land, the means of production, wealth” to be used for the common good of all. “Anarchism must be communist,” he wrote, but anarchists also understood that any person who “resorts to any kind of power placed over society” to control access to land and the means of production becomes an instrument of that power.<sup>296</sup> Given the fresh opportunity to articulate their ideas and appeal to the masses, Kropotkin concluded: “We

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<sup>295</sup> Or as he put it in *Mutual Aid*: “The struggles between these forces make, in fact, the substance of history.” Kropotkin makes the case more comprehensively elsewhere, including in *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1976), 295 (quote).

<sup>296</sup> The implication here is that those who resort to taking power join the authoritarian current and fall on the wrong side of the historical struggle. In the late nineteenth century, some anarchists began describing themselves as libertarian socialists in contrast to authoritarian socialists.

must, therefore, find a way to precisely formulate our goals and indicate the directions in which we will work for the creation of the future and destruction of the past.”<sup>297</sup>

In the spirit of formulating a socialist alternative to offer workers, the URW had been busy in the first part of the year preparing for its first convention. From July 1 through July 7, the URW held a continent-wide convention in Detroit, where delegates passed resolutions outlining a labor-oriented, revolutionary anarchist program. At the convention, the URW adopted the full title Federation of the Unions of Russian Workers, drafted its principles, and formally added several branches with informal ties to *Golos Truda*. 14 delegates representing 23 Russian labor groups from Victoria, BC to Lynn, Massachusetts attended the convention; the delegates included Shatov, Rode-Chervinsky, Adolf Schnabel, Peter Rybin, and Gregory Vishnevsky.<sup>298</sup> Many delegates traveled 2,500 miles in boxcars, without money, and “often risking their freedom and even their lives” just to be there.<sup>299</sup> Reports at the convention were also read from several supporting groups including the Anarchist Red Cross, the Group of Free Communists in Paris, the Francisco Ferrer School in New York—discussed in Chapter 5—and the International Federation of Anarchist Communists in Brooklyn.<sup>300</sup>

In Detroit, the URW drafted the “main principles of the federation”—a radical statement that would later be cited by the US government to justify its repression of the URW during the red scare. The text is relevant to this chapter’s argument on the relationship between the URW and the IWW, and on this study’s overall argument with regard to class. Here is it in full:

Modern society is divided into two opposing classes: on one side the dispossessed [*obezdolennye*] workers and peasants, who have created the world’s wealth through their labor; on the other side, the rich, who have seized this wealth into their hands.

The class of the dispossessed have risen up many times against the parasitic rich and their faithful servant and defender—government—in

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<sup>297</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 3.

<sup>298</sup> *GT*, October 23, 1914, 4; one report from August states that more than 600 members were represented at the convention. *GT*, August 1914, 5-6.

<sup>299</sup> *GT*, August 1914, 5-6.

<sup>300</sup> *GT*, October 23, 1914, 4. The anarchist-communist group in Brooklyn was led by Max Chernyak.

order to achieve its liberation from the yoke of capital and state; but each time it has suffered defeat, not being fully conscious of its own final goal and the means through which victory could be accomplished, thus remaining only an instrument in the hands of its enemies.

The struggle between these classes continues at the present time and will only end when the laboring masses, organized as a class, understand their true interests and take possession of all the wealth of the world through a forceful social revolution.

Having accomplished such a change and having destroyed at the same time all the institutions of government and state, the dispossessed class must proclaim a society of free producers, aspiring to satisfy the needs of every individual, who in return will give to society his labor and his knowledge.

To achieve these goals, we emphasize the need to create a wide class of revolutionary workers' organizations [*shirokoi klassovoi revoliutsionnoi organizatsii trudyashchikh*] which, by conducting a direct struggle with all institutions of capital and state, will train the working class to take the initiative themselves to protest, developing in it a sense of the necessity and inevitability of a general strike—of the social revolution.

Therefore, organizing in the Unions of Russian Workers, we, as part of the workers of the world, will strive in all future work to ensure that the principles and positions of the Federation will always be the guiding thread in organizing the broad mass of Russian immigrants to hasten the liberation of Russia and all of humanity.<sup>301</sup>

In comparison to Kropotkin's article, two aspects stand out. One is a shared diagnosis on the need for workers and anarchists to more clearly articulate the means through which they hoped to attain their goals. The other is a contrast between Kropotkin's stress on the struggle between an authoritarian versus a popular tendency, and the URW's stress instead on class struggle, which may have reflected a desire to appeal more broadly to the working class before addressing the more complex debate outlined by Kropotkin. However, the Main Principles' text also has a clear anti-authoritarian character, e.g. on how "a society of free producers" would immediately replace capitalist states.

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<sup>301</sup> *GT*, October 23, 1914, 3.

Indeed, with a stress on class struggle and forming revolutionary labor organizations, the text calls to mind the IWW preamble, previously cited.<sup>302</sup> Influences between Wobblies and anarchists had always run in both directions. The IWW preamble was itself written by anarcho-syndicalist Thomas Hagerty and, as Salvatore Salerno has argued, was based on the ideas of the 1880s anarchists associated with Chicago's Central Labor Union and the International Working People's Association.<sup>303</sup> Anarchism, revolutionary syndicalism, revolutionary industrial unionism, Russian anarchist communism (*a la* Kropotkin and Bakunin)—all of these closely related “isms,” developed within the same 40-year period, fed off of one another.

URW convention resolutions that dealt with specific issues reveal more about the federation and its ambitious goals within the labor movement. Delegates recommended “paying the most serious attention to widening the URW's sphere of influence on American trade unions, as one of the foundations of the federation, and in the future leading all activity of Russian divisions within these unions.”<sup>304</sup> This resolution also affirmed that the IWW had similar ideals and tactics, thus all URW members were encouraged “to join their ranks and influence the further development of this organization [IWW] in the spirit of the principles underlying the foundation of the federation of the URW.” On the American Federation of Labor, delegates wrote that while the AFL was a “reactionary organization” that tried to reconcile the irreconcilable interests of capital and labor, if comrades were

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<sup>302</sup> The text may leave the impression the URW was chiefly concerned with Russia. While this was in a sense true, the unspecific character of the language used to write the “main principles” tends to obscure the URW's own participation and ambitions within the North American labor movement, including IWW ties.

<sup>303</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 79. On the IWW preamble Salerno writes, “More than merely resembling the ‘Chicago idea’, the IWW's principles of industrial unionism resulted from the conscious effort of anarchists like Hagerty...The strength of Hagerty's contribution to the industrial union movement lies in the endurance of the original intent of the *Preamble* he authored and the courage of the IWW's rank and file to affirm its revolutionary principle.” However, this is not to say that Marxists and other socialists did not also influence the writing of the preamble or the direction of the movement.

<sup>304</sup> GT, October 23, 1914, 3.

“forced by circumstances” to join an AFL union, they should “do everything possible” to spread the ideas and tactics of the URW among other workers.<sup>305</sup>

To recruit Russians and spread their ideas, members at the URW convention laid out an organizing strategy based on creating inclusive, non-sectarian, educational environments. One resolution stated: “Conscious comrades should form circles, invite open discussion, and study all sides on principles and tactics of the main tendencies in the workers’ movement: social democracy, anarchism, and revolutionary syndicalism.”<sup>306</sup> Another called for establishing practical schools to prepare comrades for “work among the masses.” *Golos Truda* editors also promised to “popularize” their articles in order to more effectively convey their ideas to a wider audience.<sup>307</sup> They committed to raising more money to dispatch organizers and speakers where they were needed, which was crucial for reaching those not inclined to read *Golos Truda* or other anarchist literature, as subsequent developments would show. A basic, fundamental goal of the URW was to educate Russians on the ideas of “stateless workers’ socialism” and to prepare willing cadres for revolution in both Russia and North America.<sup>308</sup> Citing the growing number of strikes across the continent, delegates called on Russians to seize the moment by becoming involved in local labor movements while supporting larger causes.<sup>309</sup>

This call at the convention to support the broader American labor movement was in keeping with URW practice. For example, the federation had been making financial contributions to an ongoing miners’ strike in Colorado. Thousands of miners at the Rockefeller family-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron company went out on a strike organized

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<sup>305</sup> *GT*, October 23, 1914, 3. The willingness to join AFL unions would be converted into open advocacy of doing so after Raevsky took over as *Golos Truda*, which marked a distinction between the URW and the IWW, discussed at length in the next chapter.

<sup>306</sup> *GT*, November 6, 1914, 3.

<sup>307</sup> *GT*, November 6, 1914, 3. The latter resolution appears to have been a response to calls from some members who had asked that articles be more accessible to workers with a lower education. See for example *Golos Truda*, May 1914, 7.

<sup>308</sup> See for example *Golos Truda*, August 1914, 5-6. It is difficult to see a distinction between anarchist-communism and the “stateless workers socialism” advocated by the URW. Moreover, in May, *Golos Truda* translated and published an article from the English anarchist publication *Freedom* titled “Syndicalism, True Workers’ Socialism,” which suggests the URW considered workers’ socialism synonymous with syndicalism. May 1914, 3.

<sup>309</sup> *GT*, November 6, 1914, 3.

by the United Mine Workers. Similar to the strike in West Virginia, workers had been evicted from company homes, prompting them to set up tent colonies for their families while continuing the strike; West Virginia miners even sent to Colorado the tents they had used alongside the Paint and Cabin creeks. The struggle in West Virginia had emboldened Colorado's miners, most of whom were migrants from Greece, Italy, Serbia, and Mexico.<sup>310</sup> Owner John D. Rockefeller Jr. was determined, however, to defy the miners and purge the UMW from the state, hiring Baldwin-Felts detectives to raid the tent colonies and attack strikers. Moreover, Rockefeller was assisted by Colorado's governor who activated the state's National Guard, ordering troops to forcibly end the strike—in the company's favor—by escorting in strikebreakers and training their weapons on the tent colonies; National Guardsmen's salaries were even paid by Rockefeller, in an example of brazen collusion between state and capital. On April 20, 1914 company detectives and the National Guard sprayed machine gun bullets on, raided and pillaged the tent colony in Ludlow, killing numerous miners—and some of their wives and daughters, whose bodies were recovered from pits dug out underneath the tents, intended as trenches to safeguard women and children.<sup>311</sup> Furor over the Ludlow Massacre extended beyond the labor movement and into the mainstream of North American society. It was not enough, however, to overcome Rockefeller's power in Colorado—the company simply rejected President's Woodrow Wilson's proposal to settle the strike—and the miners there suffered a bitter defeat while Rockefeller achieved his aim of smashing the UMW in the state.<sup>312</sup>

*Golos Truda* offered analysis as well as money.<sup>313</sup> Osip Levitsky explained that Rockefeller had rejected Wilson's proposal by citing a “sacred right to personal freedom”

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<sup>310</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 203-204.

<sup>311</sup> The two women and eleven children whose bodies were recovered from a pit had died from asphyxiation, after the tents caught on fire. According to numerous accounts, company guards had deliberately set the entire tent colony on fire. See Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, Vol. 5, 205-206 and also Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 1-6.

<sup>312</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 212-225.

<sup>313</sup> In the immediate wake of the Ludlow massacre, the URW branch in Brownsville raised \$12.50 for the miners, June 1914, 8. July 1914, 8: The Russian Labor Group donated at least \$18.50 to Colorado miners. See July 1914, 8; October 16, 1914, 4; June 1914, 8; August 1914, 7. From Feb 21, 1913 to Feb 21, 1914, the Russian Labor Group had donated \$84.47 to various strike funds across the continent. March 1914, 15. To put these numbers into some perspective, printing costs for *Golos Truda*'s weekly in 1914 were \$15 per issue. See ledger in *Golos Truda*, January 15, 1915, 4: “owed to the printing house” \$105 for seven issues.

and “sacred property rights”—with Levitsky weaponizing the use of quotation marks to illustrate what he considered to be the profane act of citing freedoms and rights in order to rationalize greed at the expensive of people’s lives.<sup>314</sup> For *Golos Truda*’s new editor Maksim Raevsky, who had taken over in September, all such worker uprisings were worth supporting, regardless of their success in the immediate term, because they reflected the “growth of a revolutionary atmosphere in the American proletariat” and indicated workers had concluded “the only possible path to liberation is the path of direct [*neposredsctvennoi*] revolutionary struggle.”<sup>315</sup> Further, Ludlow had revealed the fact that Rockefeller and other capitalists held the real power in America, while the government could only make weak attempts at limiting the “rapacious appetites of the capitalist trusts,” and only did so in order to win popular support.<sup>316</sup>

For Raevsky, the unparalleled power of American capital also explained why parliamentary socialism was so weak in the US compared to Europe. “For American workers,” argued Raevsky, “it is easier than for European workers to become convinced of the hopelessness of parliamentary methods of struggle.”<sup>317</sup> While some American Socialist politicians had been elected to office at both the local and federal level, their influence on society had not been apparent to many migrant workers, almost all of whom were excluded from voting. In any case, this was why workers were embracing direct action in larger numbers. Senkevich had previously argued that workers were too distracted by debates in Socialist circles that typically revolved around whether parliamentary struggle was beneficial or harmful to labor; he suggested it was an idle question for Russian workers since only “two percent” of them in the US were registered to vote. “Russian workers! If you have already decided to give away your energy and strength, then do not waste it on...[political] parties.”<sup>318</sup> This argument had appeal among disenfranchised migrant workers especially since there were compelling alternatives to

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<sup>314</sup> *GT*, December 11, 1914, 1. The bourgeois understanding of freedom, as Kropotkin explained, had little in common with the anarchist conception of freedom.

<sup>315</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 1. An aging Rode-Chervinsky had maintained a leadership role in the URW and continued to write for *Golos Truda* while occupying secretarial positions.

<sup>316</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 1.

<sup>317</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 1.

<sup>318</sup> *GT*, March 1913, 13.

socialist political parties in the form of the IWW and an insurgent syndicalist movement, supported by migrant political associations such as the URW, the Italian anarchist collectives, and Jewish anarchist trade unions.<sup>319</sup> Moreover, when the government did intervene, it appeared to do so overwhelmingly on the side of capital, an observation that reinforced the URW's anarchism and lack of faith in the possibility of transforming the state into a friend of the worker.

That said, a special US Congressional Commission on Industrial Relations had been convened to investigate the rise of contentious relations between labor and employers. Chaired by Frank Walsh, a former labor organizer with left-leaning tendencies, the commission had a progressive bent and issued several reports exposing employer abuses of workers' civil liberties. After Ludlow, Walsh even grilled John Rockefeller and revealed correspondence proving the coal baron had micromanaged the violent repression of Colorado miners, despite Rockefeller's claims to having no role in the repression whatsoever.<sup>320</sup> Was not Walsh's intervention an indication of the US government's willingness to counter capitalism's abuses?

The Commission on Industrial Relations issued a report in December 1914 and *Golos Truda* read it skeptically. Raevsky argued the report revealed nothing that was not already known to workers or "even to the representatives of capitalist government." Titled "Social Columbuses and the Working Class," Raevsky's editorial commented ironically on the report's "findings," which struck him as self-evident: the commission had concluded that worker unrest was caused by poor sanitary conditions, low wages, long working days, rapid rise in prices of necessary goods disproportionate to rise in wages, and the unfair distribution of goods.<sup>321</sup> From time to time the US government, in the words of Raevsky, "discovers social America" to affect concern in order to maintain legitimacy, suggesting the commission was a public relations stunt. Raevsky claimed that Washington was simply not interested in any serious reform, and he argued the commission gave false hope to

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<sup>319</sup> Zimmer writes that by 1914, Italian anarchist collectives in New York City represented approximately 5,000 members and supporters. *Immigrants Against the State*, 40.

<sup>320</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 219.

<sup>321</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 1.

the working class—hope that their problems would be resolved in the wake of its report.<sup>322</sup> There is some truth to this, at least in the case of Colorado. The commission had no impact on Rockefeller’s power there: the United Mine Workers had been removed from the scene “and only the demand for coal created by World War I eventually revived it,” rather than any government action.<sup>323</sup>

Raevsky’s background sheds light on the URW’s specific anarchist orientation and the reason he was chosen as the new editor of *Golos Truda*. Before moving to New York to take over as editor of *Golos Truda*, Raevsky had been active in anarchist circles in Ukraine and Western Europe. Raevsky was born in Nezhin, Ukraine and as a young man joined the Iskra circle of Russian Social Democrats in 1902, before embracing anarchism in 1903. In 1904 he was placed under surveillance for political activity and prevented from travelling to Odessa where he had hoped to complete his graduate studies. After fleeing Ukraine to Geneva and then Paris, Raevsky edited the anarchist newspaper *Burevestnik* (Petrel) from 1906 to 1911 with Nikolai Rogdaev. Raevsky was an anarcho-syndicalist and an outspoken opponent of anarchist “motiveless” terror, as noted in Chapter 2. Raevsky was also an appropriate choice for *Golos Truda*, because he had been a strong advocate of organizing within labor unions and argued that anarchism’s success hinged on its ability to integrate into the labor movement. At a 1913 conference of anarchist communists in London, for instance, Raevsky had called on delegates to urge anarchist emigrants in North America and Western Europe to fully participate in labor movements. Raevsky’s proposal, however, was rejected as “liquidationist,” reflecting a split between anarcho-syndicalists and a faction of anarchist communists.<sup>324</sup> Many anarchist communists argued that if anarchists identified too closely with the labor movement, they would surrender their principles and identity, hence the description and rejection of Raevsky’s idea. However, Raevsky’s firm syndicalism was perfectly compatible with the “workers’ socialism”

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<sup>322</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 1. Raevsky added: “Will Congress be able to stop the growth of the revolutionary atmosphere in the American proletariat with these promises of reforms, or even by passing several of them?...We are sure that it will not happen.”

<sup>323</sup> Gorn, *Mother Jones*, 223.

<sup>324</sup> Dmitry Rublev, “Raevskii, Maksim,” in *Revoliutsionnaya mysl’ v Rossii XIX-nachala XX veka: Entsiklopediya* [Revolutionary thought in Russia 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century: Encyclopedia] ed. V. V. Zhuravlev (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2013), 452-455.

established by the URW and *Golos Truda* under Rode-Chervinsky's and Shatov's leadership.<sup>325</sup>

There were still questions, from readers and members, about the specific character and goals of the URW, which Raevsky addressed after taking over as editor. For example, if the URW was not a trade union, then what exactly was it? Raevsky described the federation as a "union of revolutionary-minded societies of Russian workers of different cities in the US and Canada."<sup>326</sup> The "unions" that made up the federation itself were neither trade unions nor "revolutionary cells" but "schools of revolutionary knowledge [which] unite worker-revolutionaries regardless of profession or trade...We try to familiarize Russian-American workers with forms of organization and tactical methods developed by the proletariat of several Western European countries."<sup>327</sup> Indeed, in doing so the URW reinforced transnational connections between syndicalist movements in Europe and North America. Again, *Golos Truda's* anarchist orientation had not been a secret, especially by 1914, but Raevsky and the URW were focused on reaching out to Russian workers in a non-sectarian manner. Earlier, in response to one anti-syndicalist group in Brownsville that had called on the URW to become an exclusively anarchist organization, Rode-Chervinsky explained why this would defeat the purpose of the federation, which was to build a mass organization, beyond anarchist circles: "If we followed the path suggested by the Brownsville circle, we would close our doors to all unconscious workers and to the laboring masses at large," namely, "those who are inspired by the same ideas as us—the overthrow of all oppression and tyranny."<sup>328</sup>

Further, Raevsky wrote that because the URW was still a young and relatively small organization, it had not been "assuming the task of direct social-revolutionary

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<sup>325</sup> According to Gregory Maksimov, Rode-Chervinsky invited the popular anarcho-syndicalist writer Raevsky to take over as *GT* editor. *Delo Truda*, May-December, 1931, 22-23. In 1915, Raevsky would write, "Only the organized proletariat is able to carry out the huge and in the highest degree complex task of effecting social revolution." Anarchists must enter unions, argued Raevsky, not merely to recruit followers and spread anarchist ideas, but because a social revolution simply could not take place without the unions. *GT*, July 23, 1915, 2. Raevsky's ideas are discussed at greater length below and in Chapter 4.

<sup>326</sup> *GT*, January 15, 1915, 1. His descriptions were consistent with, though not exactly the same as, previous explanations of the group by Rode-Chervinsky and others.

<sup>327</sup> *GT*, October 9, 1914, 2.

<sup>328</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 5-6.

struggle.” Only groups with a wider social base such as the French syndicalist union the CGT or the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies in 1905-1906, could take on this task. He stated that the federation was nevertheless a “class organization of the proletariat” with a goal that had two related parts. The URW should “prepare those Russian immigrants who are returning to the motherland in the near future to participate in the revolutionary movement of the Russian proletariat,” therefore re-affirming an ambition stated previously by Senkevich and Rode-Chervinsky.<sup>329</sup> This was achieved by committing to the economic struggle in North America and “improving the position of workers in the framework of the capitalist system” through labor unions, thus combining bread and butter concerns with broader revolutionary aims.<sup>330</sup> Raevsky pointed out how North American unions were often able to push back against employer attempts to reduce wages while noting how capitalists feared unionization in general, and for sound reason.<sup>331</sup> Anarchists needed to be in unions, because this was where they could have an impact. Such practices disprove the notion that Russian anarchists were against gradual progress and unwilling to adapt to different circumstances.

Raevsky further clarified the URW’s position on unions in response to an article in “one of the leading democratic newspapers” that opposed attempts by New York City’s municipal employees, such as teachers, firefighters, and police to organize themselves into unions.<sup>332</sup> This unnamed anti-union newspaper had, according to Raevsky, argued that such unionization would make municipal employees too powerful, because teachers could, for instance, shorten their working day or even shut down all schools in the city. The anti-union newspaper therefore argued that unionization was dangerous, because it would end rule by taxpayers and transfer power into the hands of city employees and workers. Raevsky agreed with the analysis, but instead of facing the prospect of workers’ control with “pious horror” like the anti-union reporter, he welcomed it—with the exception of transferring power to the police who would, he noted, become “superfluous” after the

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<sup>329</sup> *GT*, October 9, 1914, 2.

<sup>330</sup> *GT*, October 9, 1914, 2.

<sup>331</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>332</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

social revolution had forced them to “throw down their clubs and take on more productive work.”<sup>333</sup>

An unemployment crisis in 1914 inhibited the anarchists’ own labor organizing drive—as it primarily affected more vulnerable, unskilled workers—and the URW turned its attention to addressing the unemployment problem, again suggesting its concerns went beyond “all or nothing.” In 1913, large industries across North America began laying off workers by the thousands, and state and local governments took little to no action to meet the resulting problem of unemployment. The official jobless rate in the US doubled from 1913 to 1914, and unemployment in New York and many other cities reached as high as 18 percent by early 1915. Private charities were overburdened as hunger and homeless rates soared while governments lacked the infrastructure and interest to deal with the problem.<sup>334</sup> One IWW publication blamed the 1914 unemployment crisis on “overproduction and improved machinery under the capitalist order of society.”<sup>335</sup> Similarly, *Golos Truda*’s Osip Levitsky commented on “warehouses overfilled with inventory” due to insufficient consumer demand for products while capitalist society had refused “to give a portion of [this inventory] to those who created it, in spite of the hunger” felt by millions of unemployed workers in America. Answering a perennial right-wing claim that the unemployed were just “bums who don’t want to work,” Levitsky countered that half the unemployed in Chicago belonged to unions, which indicated they had wanted to work.<sup>336</sup>

Levitsky had a front page column for *Golos Truda* in 1914 titled “Echoes” [*otgoloski*] covering the American labor scene and the unemployment crisis, the latter of which tended to overshadow other issues for much of the year. In one column, Levitsky reported his own observations of the unemployment situation in New York City. He could not understand why society figures had been delivering “beautiful speeches” decrying the problem of unemployment while apparently doing nothing about it, as thousands were still

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<sup>333</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>334</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 435-436, 451-452.

<sup>335</sup> Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 447.

<sup>336</sup> *GT*, November 20, 1914, 1.

dying from hunger and waiting in long lines for handouts.<sup>337</sup> “Despite the slush and cold,” the unemployed started lining up around midnight and, “shifting from foot to foot,” waited “like dogs” for scraps from the tables of the rich. Levitsky witnessed thousands of people lining up for a mere piece of bread or cup of coffee while only blocks away others enjoyed “refined dishes” at expensive restaurants. Unemployed workers had been suffering “only because they are unable to buy that which they produce and that which by right belongs to them.” The wealthy “spill expensive wines on themselves” and “take pleasure in all the benefits of life produced [*dobyty*mi] for them by,” perversely, the very workers who were now standing in line and waiting for handouts. How could this level of stark inequality not outrage Americans, he wondered, and what was to be done about it? Frustrated by the pathetic position workers had found themselves in, Levitsky asked, “Do the workers really not have the means to do more than beg for handouts?” He was confident the unemployed could be organized: “I saw that the revolutionary spirit was alive in them, that they were only waiting for a push, that they were striving to formalize the feelings that worried them.” He cited an example of how unemployed workers arrested for taking food had acted out by refusing to go quietly to prison, making as much mayhem as possible. This show of rebellion suggested to Levitsky that proper guidance could turn the angry and the unemployed into political radicals. “We need to go to the unemployed and organize their outbursts [*vspyshki*] to give them ideological coloring.” The angry unemployed needed to realize, he wrote, that they were part of a larger class of revolutionary workers.<sup>338</sup>

The recession hit immigrants particularly hard. By the end of 1914, according to a report in *Golos Truda*, more than three-quarters of Russians in Baltimore were unemployed; some had been arrested for stealing food.<sup>339</sup> In New York, many Russians spent their days that winter desperately searching for work before returning to their unheated apartments, while others had to sleep in parks or on the street. Those who had jobs worked long, exhausting days, and still could not adequately provide for their families.<sup>340</sup> While noting the dire financial condition of the URW itself in 1914, triggered by

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<sup>337</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1.

<sup>338</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1. Many unemployed workers had even sought out jail sentences to guard against hunger and the cold. See *GT*, January 1, 1915, 3.

<sup>339</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 3.

<sup>340</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1.

the economic downturn, Rode-Chervinsky estimated that no less than two-thirds of URW members had been suffering from a lack of food.<sup>341</sup> A pseudonymous *Golos Truda* correspondent, “Eri,” described a scene in New York where men and women “huddled” together, living in “holes” on the Lower East Side.<sup>342</sup> “Narrow, dirty streets of these parts of the city are reminiscent of hallways in a flophouse.” Migrants lived in “dirty, suffocating” slums as children cried in vain for food and families had to rely on free soup from charities and schools. Daughters were forced into prostitution, and many families were thrown out on the street unable to pay rent.<sup>343</sup>

Such examples, and the overall tone of these accounts and others in *Golos Truda* in 1914, suggest the unemployment crisis had a radicalizing effect on many Russian workers. While it did not immediately assist the URW’s goal to organize Russian workers in unions—since most Russian workers were unemployed and just trying to survive—it sharpened perspectives on inequality and injustice in the United States. To take another example, the same pseudonymous writer quoted above compared the migrant slums to the living conditions of the rich. Indifferent to the unemployment crisis that had been devastating much of the city’s population, not far away on Fifth Avenue and Riverside Drive, the wealthy were still living it up in their “fashionable homes, in these luxurious palaces” where “at the expense of the grief of the people, at the expense of mothers and fathers sending their daughters on the streets to sell themselves, since they have nothing to eat—there [in the fashionable neighborhoods]...they dance and enjoy themselves. There—they feast in a time of plague.” And, “like leeches, they suck the people’s blood.”<sup>344</sup> Such vivid accounts suggest these impressions of inequality in American life had a profound impact on *Golos Truda* contributors. Rather than mourn, however, the URW organized.

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<sup>341</sup> *GT*, November 27, 1914, 3. Even before the unemployment crisis set in, Rode-Chervinsky had commented on the “huge intellectual undertaking” required to sustain the URW, especially for workers whose struggle for existence drained their capacity for intellectual labor. *GT*, March 1913, 1.

<sup>342</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1.

<sup>343</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1.

<sup>344</sup> *GT*, January 8, 1915, 1. East Side was written out phonetically as “Ist-Saide,” rather than a translation of the phrase—same with other terms such as “Daun-Taun” (Downtown) and “River-Said Draiv” (Riverside Drive). Phonetic renderings were also used for other colloquial terms such as ice cream, sandwich, and hot dog.

Russian anarchists joined forces with the IWW to counter the unemployment problem, as the Wobblies led a series of unemployment demonstrations across the country. Levitsky, for example, treated URW and IWW efforts and goals as one and the same, and he often wrote and lectured on the topic of industrial unionism and the IWW.<sup>345</sup> In an enthusiastic report on the 1914 IWW annual convention in Chicago, Levitsky praised the IWW's decentralized structure, its successful deployment of direct action including sabotage, and attempts to organize the unemployed. Levitsky argued that only the IWW, a "strong workers' organization striving for economic equality" could "rid the ulcer" of unemployment, because it sought to "rid of its cause"—that is, the capitalist system.<sup>346</sup> In terms of organizing the unemployed, IWW member Frank Tannenbaum led hundreds of unemployed New York workers in a campaign to seek food and shelter from the city's churches by appealing to the Christian spirit of giving. In Edmonton, the IWW's Unemployed League drew up a series of demands, some of which were granted by the city. In San Francisco, a march of the unemployed had been organized: 1,500 to 2,000 people, including URW members, set out for Washington, DC, re-capturing the spirit of Coxey's Army, when groups of workers across the country had marched on Washington in 1894 to protest what had been the worst unemployment crisis in US history. The 1914 march was organized in part by a former leader of Coxey's Army, Charles T. Kelly, who had led the western wing of the 1894 march known as Kelly's Army.<sup>347</sup>

URW members in San Francisco marched in Kelly's new unemployed army. In addition to a URW in San Francisco, there was also a Russian-language branch of the IWW, Mixed Local 173, which had contributed funds to *Golos Truda*.<sup>348</sup> Kelly and the unemployed workers, however, were violently stopped in their tracks in Sacramento by

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<sup>345</sup> For instance, in December Levitsky lectured to a group in Brownsville. *GT*, December 25, 1914, 4

<sup>346</sup> *GT*, October 30, 1914, 1. By 1917, Levitsky had returned to Ukraine where he joined the anarchist movement there. Despite his strong presence in *Golos Truda* in 1914-1915, little information about Levitsky is available. Recent scholarship on anarchists in Ukraine, however, mentions an O. Levitsky as one of the many Russian anarchists in America who had returned to the motherland in 1917 to join the anarchist movement. They were even called "The Americans." V. A. Savchenko, *Deyatel'nost' anarkhistskikh organizatsii v Ukraine v 1903-1929: istoricheskii aspekt i politicheskaya praktika* [The Activity of Anarchist Organizations in Ukraine in 1903-1929: Historical Aspect and Political Practice] (Kiev, 2017), 158.

<sup>347</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 444-447, 440-441, 438.

<sup>348</sup> Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 107, 109; *GT*, April 1913, 7.

authorities and vigilantes. Dozens of marchers were arrested, with many hospitalized from beatings; among the arrested in Sacramento were *Golos Truda* correspondent M. Ivanchenok and his Russian comrades Titko, Lange, and Kotysh'.<sup>349</sup>

The concrete results of the various unemployed movements were mixed, but their dramatic character attracted significant attention. Tannenbaum and the unemployed in New York had a good deal of success before they were repressed: he led 1,000 unemployed workers into a church one night and 600 into a different one the next, and the workers had peacefully received food and shelter as requested. However, the press and the police considered this a violation of sacred property rights and, despite the lack of opposition from the churches' themselves, shut down Tannenbaum and company. In Edmonton, the IWW had an advantage insofar as thousands of workers from the United States had been recruited to work railroad construction there.<sup>350</sup> Laid off workers often had no means to return to the US and were therefore stuck in the city. Edmonton's mayor approved worker demands: to issue 25 cent meal tickets to everyone unemployed (to be redeemed at local restaurants), to convert an empty building into a shelter, and to put hundreds of men to work on public projects created by the mayor—at 30 cents per hour, which is what the IWW had demanded.<sup>351</sup>

Among politicians and the press there was however little sympathy for the unemployed and the IWW's direct action tactics. American commercial newspapers had, as a rule, sided against the unemployed. The *New York World* described Tannenbaum's group as a "criminal menace," and if not defeated "we may expect gangs of professional gunmen and thugs to join the professional unemployed in terrorizing public assemblies from the Battery to Harlem."<sup>352</sup> *Golos Truda* had also noticed these hostile sentiments; a Russian correspondent in Detroit wrote that the local press seemed "satisfied with feeding the unemployed strychnine rather than bread."<sup>353</sup> From the Russian anarchists' perspective, mainstream society's austere response to the unemployment crisis seemed

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<sup>349</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 438-439; *GT*, April 1914, 5, 7.

<sup>350</sup> Recall I. Vebster's complaint in 1913 regarding misleading ads in Edmonton, though his letter did not tell us if he worked in railroad construction.

<sup>351</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, Volume 4, 440-441.

<sup>352</sup> Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 444.

<sup>353</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 3.

unusually and even surprisingly cruel, but it bolstered their critique of the inadequacy of bourgeois politics.

But the URW also argued that these IWW-led campaigns had been useful and partially successful. Raevsky wrote that “mass actions of the unemployed” carried out with IWW leadership in several cities had compelled the propertied classes “to think over” [*zadumyvatsya nad*] the unemployment situation, and in some cases take measures to alleviate the problem, such as with the creation of public works projects.<sup>354</sup> Foner has noted that even society leaders gave credit to the IWW for “stinging us...into recognition of our duty,” which suggested the effectiveness of direct action, at least in comparison to waiting for the political socialists to take over legislatures and address the problem.<sup>355</sup> For the URW, these movements demanded support as a matter of principle, and successful actions were interpreted as an indication of the correctness of anarchist theory. *Golos Truda* backed government proposals to create work for the unemployed, in order to ease the pain of those suffering; if government works’ projects were “the result of organized struggle of the unemployed,” argued Raevsky, then this would encourage workers and the unemployed to continue to stand up for themselves.<sup>356</sup> In other words, the Russian anarchists were pragmatic and did not believe that support for such government-implemented reforms was a contradiction of anarchism, since those reforms were brought about by direct action.

The anarchist analysis of Raevsky went further, as he keenly pointed out that to the extent capitalists and government officials cared about the unemployment crisis, it had been for the wrong reasons. Unemployment had been undermining “the sacred inviolability of private property” and what American officials had described as the “normal” state of affairs, when capitalists could rely on making profits without interruption. Raevsky explained how the unemployed had been turning up at restaurants “and, after eating, leaving without paying for their lunch!..”; this was one social problem, from the standpoint of the restaurateur, that required an urgent fix.<sup>357</sup> “No wonder the government and city administration and even capitalists,” wrote Raevsky, “are strongly concerned about the

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<sup>354</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>355</sup> Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 460.

<sup>356</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>357</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 454.

question of unemployment.” The threat of prison no longer deterred many people from taking what they needed, or from walking out on restaurant bills. Mass unemployment and homelessness had caused an increase in crime, which is what disturbed capitalists and the government, prompting them to consider taking action. Unemployment and homelessness were not seen in and of themselves as problems worth addressing. Moreover, Raevsky argued, the “question of unemployment is unsolvable within the existing system,” since it was ruled by “individual capitalists or capitalist trusts.” Only the syndicalist vision of a society run by a “union of producers regulating production,” in order to more equitably distribute goods and resources could tackle the unemployment problem.<sup>358</sup>

Despite challenges to labor organizing posed by the unemployment crisis, the federation’s membership continued to grow, if only steadily and depending on the region. While some branches reported less activity in 1914 because of unemployment, in the Pittsburgh area, the Russian workers’ movement experienced an “unprecedented revival (*ozhivlenie*)”.<sup>359</sup> The Pittsburgh URW had been meeting two to three times a week, hosting “jam-packed” [*bitkom nabito*] meetings of up to 200 Russians where workers convened to discuss and debate politics, religion, and labor conditions; leaders of the branch included M. Derkach, A. Zhuk, and I. Lapitsky.<sup>360</sup> A year earlier, Bill Shatov had expressed pessimism over the lack of “consciousness” and talent in the region, but an increasing level of activism and engagement in the summer and fall of 1914 had persuaded Lapitsky that it was “now possible to hope Pittsburgh will become a major center of the Russian workers’ movement in the near future.”<sup>361</sup> A new branch in nearby McKees Rocks had 45 members by late August, and in September another branch had opened in Homestead with 22 members.<sup>362</sup> By December, URW lecturer Peter Rybin attracted a crowd of 80 in

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<sup>358</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>359</sup> *GT*, September 18, 1914, 3. Report from I. Lapitsky, whose activities were monitored by USG investigators, by no later than 1915.

<sup>360</sup> *GT*, September 18, 1914, 3; September 25, 1914, 3.

<sup>361</sup> *GT*, September 18, 1914, 3.

<sup>362</sup> *GT*, September 4, 1914, 4; September 25, 1914, 4; October 9, 1914, 4.

Pittsburgh while another comrade drew 150, and in his report of the events K. Gerasimenko claimed that Russians who had previously attended Russian churches were now turning up at URW meetings instead.<sup>363</sup>

In addition to URW organizing, what were the causes of this new activity? There were an increasing number of Russians living there—10,000 in Pittsburgh according to Lapitsky—typically working for steel corporations, such as the Pressed Steel Car Company where Lapitsky worked.<sup>364</sup> According to census data, next to New York, Pennsylvania had the highest concentration of Russians during the 1910s.<sup>365</sup> And many of the newer migrants brought an enthusiasm for revolution and labor organizing that “old-timers in the colony” could not remember having seen before among Russians.<sup>366</sup> The URW divisions in Pittsburgh had been making headway on their own, without help from New York-based URW organizers or IWW assistance. Growth in the Pittsburgh region would continue in the years to come.

The URW continued to organize new branches elsewhere and to provide practical information for Russian workers, often together with the IWW. Correspondence from Baltimore appeared in *Golos Truda* on progress in the city, the fruit of “six years of painstaking [*kropotlivaya*] work.”<sup>367</sup> The local URW had organized a rally downtown of more than 300 people on the corner of Hanover and Hill streets, which was reportedly “the first Russian street meeting in the history of Baltimore.” Many Baltimore URW members also formally joined the IWW as a Union of Russian Unskilled Workers [*Iunion Russkikh Chernorabochikh*], which counted 100 members in early 1914.<sup>368</sup> “Russian workers in Baltimore,” concluded the correspondent, “understand the necessity of direct struggle

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<sup>363</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 3. See Chapter 5 on competition between the URW and the Russian Orthodox Church.

<sup>364</sup> *GT*, September 18, 1914, 3; Additional information on Lapitsky appears in: report by John R. Dillon, May 22, 1915, Record Group 165, 10110—38, Military Intelligence Division, U.S. Army, National Archives and Records Administration, reprinted in *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-1941*, ed. Randolph Boehm (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984), microform reel I:190-206.

<sup>365</sup> Cited in Davis, *Russian Immigrant*, 11.

<sup>366</sup> *GT*, September 18, 1914, 3.

<sup>367</sup> *GT*, April 1914, 7.

<sup>368</sup> *GT*, April 1914, 7. The report was signed by “Belarus.”

against owners and call on the workers of other cities to follow their example.” This active URW in Baltimore also contributed reports on the local labor situation, for example informing readers how the state of Maryland had recently passed a worker compensation law that would affect those working dangerous jobs. Russian workers, this report stressed, needed to be aware of labor laws in order to stand up for their rights.<sup>369</sup> Meanwhile the URW’s branch in Chicago, the Brotherhood of Russian Working People, had been collaborating with IWW Local 341, a Union of Railroad Construction Workers.<sup>370</sup> Representing the Brotherhood and the IWW local, G. Vishnevsky recruited Russian workers through *Golos Truda*.<sup>371</sup> Further, the URW in Kansas City together with an IWW local of 500 members had been organizing Slavs in the meatpacking industry, where 75 percent of the workforce was foreign-born.<sup>372</sup>

URW members also joined labor unions outside of the IWW, particularly other left-leaning unions. For example, many Russians joined the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, a Chicago-based union led by socialist Sidney Hillman, which had split off that year from the more conservative United Garment Workers. Grigory Raiva reported that Russian workers had joined the Amalgamated’s local division in Brownsville, where around 8,000 to 10,000 Russians lived by September 1914, working in all kinds of trades.<sup>373</sup> Trade unions such as the Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Tailors’ Union recruited Russian workers in *Golos Truda*, inviting Russians for example to participate in an upcoming meeting at Casino Hall.<sup>374</sup> In line with objectives and rationales laid out at

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<sup>369</sup> See for example *Golos Truda*, December 25, 1914, 3.

<sup>370</sup> *GT*, December 1913, 7; May 1914, 7.

<sup>371</sup> *GT*, May 1914, 7. Lipotkin noted that in Chicago, Russians also worked in lumber mills, and in furniture and “machine-building” factories. *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 332; IWW Local 341 was active from 1913 to 1915. See IWW local union database: <http://depts.washington.edu/iww/locals.shtml> (Accessed June 23, 2018)

<sup>372</sup> *GT*, July 1914, 8; Sept 11, 1914, 3. URW members in the meatpacking district in nearby Omaha, Nebraska would help lead a strike there in 1916—see Chapter 4.

<sup>373</sup> *GT*, October 2, 1914, 2-3. Raiva wrote that Brownsville had been established as a township mainly by Russian Jews 27 years previously and was nicknamed American Jerusalem.

<sup>374</sup> *GT*, January 15, 1915, 4.

the convention, Russians also entered more conservative unions.<sup>375</sup> Raiva joined the Children's and Sailors' Uniform Makers' union in Brownsville but was frustrated when the majority of pressers in the union broke away to form their own craft union, which split the combined forces of machine operators and pressers. "Why form a union exclusively for pressers?" he asked, "it makes no sense, in one workshop."<sup>376</sup> Raiva would move on and become active in the IWW, consistent with his belief in organizing on industrial lines.

URW members also continued to build on relationships within the broader anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist movements. The IWW helped facilitate numerous meetings, bringing together various nationalities to support labor and other causes, as reported in *Golos Truda*. At the 1914 Chicago commemoration of the Haymarket martyrs in November, Aaron Baron spoke to a crowd of 2,000 after an introduction by Wobbly leader Bill Haywood and a final address by Emma Goldman. Baron noted how after Haymarket there had been a period of reaction and quiescence, but that he now witnessed "a new, growing revolutionary spirit among the American proletariat," as seen in the uprisings in for example Ludlow and West Virginia, and in the increasing police presence to repress these uprisings from below"<sup>377</sup> On the same day in Pittsburgh, IWW members joined Alexander Berkman at a Haymarket commemoration organized by the URW. And in Detroit, the Haymarket martyrs were remembered at a joint meeting of the URW, IWW, and Italian American syndicalists.<sup>378</sup>

## Conclusion

The arrival of anarchist émigrés and peasant-laborers from Russia coincided with the emergence of the IWW, which helped foster the formation and development of the URW, and which became part of the broader syndicalist and anarchist movements in the US. But convergences between these phenomena were not merely coincidental. The 1905 Russian Revolution accelerated migration trends, radicalized many Russians, created

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<sup>375</sup> *GT*, December 25, 1914, 1.

<sup>376</sup> *GT*, October 16, 1914, 3.

<sup>377</sup> *GT*, November 20, 1914, 3.

<sup>378</sup> *GT*, November 20, 1914, 3.

anarchist groups, and also inspired IWW leaders. At the IWW's founding convention, Thomas J. Hagerty cited the Russian Revolution as evidence of the superiority of direct action, arguing that it showed how the working class needed only economic organization to liberate itself, rather than a political party. Speakers at the IWW's founding convention also discussed Mikhail Bakunin and the Russian anarchists.<sup>379</sup> Moreover, anarchists had played a role in the formation of both syndicalism in Europe and the industrial union movement in the United States. The history of the Haymarket Affair helps explain the relationships that subsequently developed between anarchists and Wobblies into the twentieth century. The Chicago anarchists who had promoted and led revolutionary labor unions in the 1880s influenced the founding ideas of the IWW. In fact, Salvatore Salerno has argued persuasively that the IWW's revolutionary industrial unionism resulted from the conscious application of the anarchists' so-called Chicago idea—laying the groundwork for the construction of a new society through militant unions—which Hagerty had insisted on planting into the foundation of the IWW movement.<sup>380</sup> Salerno in other words credits anarchists for introducing revolutionary industrial unionism into the American labor movement and, moreover, has also faulted historians for not “locating anarchism within the context of the trade union movement” and for downplaying or denying anarchists' role in the formation of the IWW.<sup>381</sup>

The URW became connected with this older anarchist tradition in America through figures such as Aaron Baron (“Polevoi” in *Golos Truda*), who in 1915 began co-editing with Lucy Parsons the English-language anarchist newspaper, the *Alarm*. The *Alarm* was founded in 1884 by Lucy's husband Albert, one of the leaders of the 1880s anarchist movement in the United States. Lucy Parsons herself had been heavily involved in the Chicago anarchist movement and remained active in radical labor circles until her death in 1942. She was a featured speaker at the IWW founding convention and a key supporter of Hagerty's implementation of the Chicago idea into the IWW preamble.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 77, 88; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, Volume 4, 36.

<sup>380</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 79, 72. Anarchists had also formed their own industrial unions before 1905 and had worked with the Western Federation of Miners.

<sup>381</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 71-73, 71 (quote).

<sup>382</sup> Salerno, *Red November Black November*, 80.

Paul Avrich described the Union of Russian Workers as the “Slavic counterpart” to the IWW while Paul Buhle has written similarly of the URW as the “Russian-language affiliate” of the IWW and elsewhere as “one of the most important IWW-affiliated immigrant proletarian groupings.”<sup>383</sup> Yet these claims had not been tested against empirical research.<sup>384</sup> Just looking at their activity through 1914, it seems judicious to describe the URW as an unofficial Russian branch of the IWW, and relations between the two organizations expanded further from 1915-1917.

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<sup>383</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 120; Paul Buhle, “Themes in American Jewish Radicalism,” in *The Immigrant Left in the United States*, ed. Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas (Albany: State University of New York Press), 112; Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left* (London: Verso, 2013), 118.

<sup>384</sup> For example, Dmitry Rublev’s analysis of Russian anarchist views of the First World War is informed by URW newspapers, but scholars have not examined URW’s activity in North America.

## Chapter 4. Anarcho-Syndicalism and the Rise of Industrial Unionism

Conditions for anarchists and unions changed drastically after World War I broke out in 1914. Though the US stayed out of the war until 1917, it disrupted the American economy, which created new problems and opportunities for labor and the left. Initially, the European war hurt the US economy, and by early 1915, unemployment in New York and many other cities reached as high as 18 percent. Compounding the unemployment problem, US manufacturers had been raising prices, including on essential items such as food and clothing, in response to new demands from Europe for consumer goods. Yet President Woodrow Wilson continued to ignore these issues while state and local governments were equally slow to act.<sup>385</sup>

The URW continued to take part in unemployment demonstrations, and on January 17, Lucy Parsons and URW organizer Aaron Baron led a hunger march in Chicago. 2,000 workers gathered in an auditorium to hear Parsons, Baron, and other speakers. Demonstrators held up placards that read, “Work, Not Charity,” “We Don’t Want to Die in the Midst of Wealth,” and “Hunger.”<sup>386</sup> One Chicago newspaper reported that Baron spoke in English, Russian, and Yiddish under the black flag of anarchy.<sup>387</sup> In addition to the speeches, Baron’s anarchist partner and wife Fanya led a Russian choir in the singing of

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<sup>385</sup> Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 6: On the Eve of America’s Entrance into World War I, 1915-1916* (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 189-190; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement, Volume 7: Labor and World War I, 1914-1918* (New York: International Publishers, 1982), 6-7; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement, Volume 4: The Industrial Workers of the World, 1905-1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1965), 435-436, 450-460.

<sup>386</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3.

<sup>387</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, February 1, 1915, 1 and 3. Baron was quoted as saying, “Are you animals, or bums, or men? If you are men, act!” For taking part in the 1905 revolution, Aaron Davidovich Baron had been exiled to Siberia before he escaped to the United States. A leading URW figure who often used the pseudonym “Polevoi,” the talented Baron worked with numerous anarchist and IWW groups. He would have an interesting role in the Russian Revolution as well—see the dissertation’s conclusion.

revolutionary songs.<sup>388</sup> Several URW Chicago members attended the demonstration along with IWW activist and writer Ralph Chaplin. Both Chaplin and *Golos Truda's* unidentified correspondent observed undercover detectives lurking in the crowd, easy to spot despite their workers' costumes. Chaplin wrote lyrically of "the red, beefy faces of the 'gum-shoe' thugs, watching the jobless crowd with cat-like care, and waiting uneasily for the signal to spring the plot that was to cover them with glory."<sup>389</sup> Galvanized by the speeches, the unemployed shouted "Hurrah!" and "Let's go!" or in Russian "Ura! Idem!" as they exited the hall and took to the streets.<sup>390</sup>

As everyone went outside to march, the detectives made their move. Joined by 30 mounted police, they struck people with billy clubs and brass knuckles, then chased down protesters who tried to flee the scene; shots were fired into the crowd.<sup>391</sup> The police claimed the meeting was illegal, describing it as an "antigovernment riot," even though they alone behaved in a violent manner. Dozens were wounded including Fanya Baron who was knocked unconscious.<sup>392</sup> More than 20 demonstrators were arrested, including Parsons and the Barons. URW members and Wobblies met to discuss how to free the arrested; on the scene was "Tobinson," better known as Aleksander Krasnoshchekov, a lawyer and comrade who would represent the anarchists.<sup>393</sup> The Russians were assisted by well-known American activist Jane Addams, proprietor of Hull House, where the speeches were given. *Golos Truda's* reporter described Addams as a "liberal-socialist," though historians characterize Addams more precisely as a social reformer who provided

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<sup>388</sup> Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical* (Basic Books: New York, 2017), 295.

<sup>389</sup> Quoted in Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 294-295.

<sup>390</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3.

<sup>391</sup> Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 295-296; *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3.

<sup>392</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3; for more details on this event, see <https://libcom.org/history/baron-fanya-nee-anisimovna-aka-fanny-baron-188-192>; at least one Chicago newspaper claimed the IWW started the riot and that anarchists smashed windows and "mauled cops," which also seems unlikely. Quoted in Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 296.

<sup>393</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3. Krasnoshchekov became head of the government of the Far Eastern Republic, which was absorbed into the USSR in 1922. "Tobinson" was his pseudonym.

for immigrants and the poor while seeking to ease class conflict in Chicago.<sup>394</sup> Led by Addams, the groups of Wobblies, Russian anarchists, and others went from police station to station that night arguing over the terms of release. At around 1 a.m., the jailed were freed after Addams raised money to pay their bonds.<sup>395</sup> Millions of people were jobless and hungry, and the government's primary instinct was to suppress the outrage and rebellion against this suffering rather than do anything to alleviate it.

For Russian workers, the day-to-day struggle of finding work continued. In early 1915, URW Baltimore organizer and doctor, the Belarusan Alexander Senkevich, provided a detailed picture of the dismal job market scene in Baltimore. With so many applicants and so few openings for unskilled positions, foremen auctioned off jobs to the highest bidders. One needed \$25 up front just to be considered for work, explained Senkevich, that paid as little as \$1.40 per day. Workers often paid bribes without receiving the anticipated jobs. Similarly, because there was no job protection and employed workers could easily be replaced, workers often had to pay a portion of their salaries to foremen "in addition to vodka and beer" in order to retain their positions. This had been standard practice, for example, on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, explained Senkevich.<sup>396</sup> He argued that workers could use the bribe money instead to form labor unions, where for no more than 50 cents a month they could protect themselves. "With a strong labor union, not one foreman will dare fire a worker unless all workers agree," but that was easier said than done.<sup>397</sup>

Many URW branches found it difficult to organize Russians in these conditions. Ivan Atrakhimovich in Erie, Pennsylvania was discouraged to find that most Russian

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<sup>394</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3; Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 224-225. Hull House was a spacious complex, resembling a section of a college campus, that provided social and educational programs for immigrants and workers; Addams hosted Peter Kropotkin when he visited Chicago in 1901. See Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 256.

<sup>395</sup> Eventually, all of the charges were dismissed, thanks largely to the efforts of Addams. Jacqueline Jones writes that \$1,000 for each individual was paid to secure their release. Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy*, 296; *GT*, January 29, 1915, 3; The *Chicago Tribune's* account of the anarchists' interactions with Jane Addams was wildly different than *Golos Truda's*. The *Tribune* claimed that when Addams tried to speak at the rally, she was "howled down" by Baron and his malevolent comrades, but that seems unlikely. Hull House, after all, hosted the performances of the aforementioned drama society. *GT*, March 5, 1915, 4.

<sup>396</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 3.

<sup>397</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 3.

immigrants in the US seemed resigned to their fate. Russians believed the division between rich and poor was “arranged by God,” wrote Atrakhimovich, and they were hostile to social and labor organizing.<sup>398</sup> He characterized the views of a friend who berated him for joining the URW; his friend asserted that anarchists were “bad people,” and that “Russians should defend government and landowners [*pomeshchikov*], because without them, workers could not earn a cent anywhere and would die from hunger.” Their antipathy to labor organizers was curious given that Russians felt disillusioned, Atrakhimovich continued, with their experience in the United States. Russians left the motherland believing “free America” would provide much better opportunities “but here I see everywhere crowds of hungry and ragged people who suffer no less than those in despotic Russia.” As a result, despair instead of activism reigned in Erie where “the one solace [*uteshenie*] in life for unconscious people is the ‘saloon’ in which they drown their sorrows [*zalivaiut svoe gore*].” Nevertheless, Atrakhimovich expressed hope, confident that his friend and the others had simply been repeating propaganda they hear from local Orthodox priests instead of “living with the use of their own minds.” Conscious Russians, he concluded, must stay strong and enlighten their countrymen with the values of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.<sup>399</sup>

Where Russian branches of unions had already been established, the URW continued to organize within them. For instance, they were active in New York City’s clothing trades unions, mentioned in the previous chapter, where the city’s cloakmakers had become increasingly unhappy with a “no strike” clause in their contracts. In 1910, a general strike of 60,000 cloakmakers led to the establishment of the so-called “Protocol of Peace.” The Protocol was the first collective bargaining agreement in the clothing trades industry, granting workers increased benefits and reduced hours while in principle recognizing their unions; it became a standard agreement across the industry.<sup>400</sup> However, the Protocol also prohibited strikes and failed to sufficiently regulate workplaces, as the

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<sup>398</sup> *GT*, April 16, 1915, 4.

<sup>399</sup> *GT*, April 16, 1915, 4. On the role of the Orthodox Church in suppressing labor, see Chapter 5.

<sup>400</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 184.

1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, for example, demonstrated.<sup>401</sup> Many garment workers therefore described the type of unions created by the Protocol as “scab shops with honey.”<sup>402</sup> “Sasha,” of the URW, a member of the Russian-Polish division of the Cloakmakers’ Union in NYC, described the Protocol as a “diplomatic and deceitful tactic.”<sup>403</sup> Sasha wrote about how the Protocol recognized their union in theory but allowed employers to push out undesirable union leaders. For example, Isaac Hourwich—a friend of the URW—was forced out as Chief Clerk of the Cloak and Skirt Makers’ Union in 1914.<sup>404</sup> Popular among the rank and file, Hourwich tried to give workers more control over the Protocol’s grievance resolution procedure. In addition to Hourwich, Sasha wrote that “every honest and sensible representative of the workers” was “eliminated” including, notably, socialist Abraham Bisno.<sup>405</sup> In early 1915, Sasha and other cloakmakers took up the cause of Bisno and Hourwich by organizing a propaganda league in the union; they passed resolutions demanding roll call elections to replace the leadership and a reorganization of the union with a new collective agreement that allowed for strikes, which were “the most powerful weapon in the struggle of workers against owners.”<sup>406</sup> In 1916, an uprising among New York’s cloakmakers that turned into a general strike, discussed below, would challenge the Protocol and seek to re-establish the workers’ right to strike. Other URW members fought to gain more recognition and power within the Russian

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<sup>401</sup> Paul Le Blanc, “Garment Worker Strikes,” in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Day, Immanuel Ness, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (M.E. Sharpe: Armonk, New York, 2009), 344-346. 342-350.

<sup>402</sup> Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States, Volume 5: The AFL in the Progressive Era, 1910-1915* (New York: International Publishers, 1980), 244-258. Louis D. Brandeis, future Supreme Court Justice, authored the Protocol as a representative of the Manufacturers’ Association.

<sup>403</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 3. Cloakmaking was one of the major occupational divisions in the garment industry.

<sup>404</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 3; papers of Isaac A. Hourwich, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research: <http://digifindingaids.cjh.org/?pID=1358888> (accessed February 26, 2018). A letter from Hourwich to *Golos Truda* is addressed to “your esteemed [*uvazhaemoi* or held in high regard] newspaper.” *GT*, June 16, 1916, 3.

<sup>405</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 3. However, it was not only the employers who opposed Hourwich and Bisno. Ultimately, the more radical labor organizers were forced out by John Dyche, then president of the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), to which the cloakmakers were affiliated. Le Blanc, “Garment Worker Strikes,” 345-346.

<sup>406</sup> *GT*, March 26, 1915, 1.

division of a tailors' union, also in NYC. The URW's jack-of-all-trades Bill Shatov drafted a resolution for the division requesting a seat on the Joint Board of the Men's and Children's Jacket Makers' Union. Specifically, the Russians wanted the right to vote at the Joint Board meetings and in general more support from the union in order to attract members. This Russian tailors' union also organized a series of lectures for workers on various topics, together with the Russian-Polish division of Cloakmakers.<sup>407</sup>

Socialist factions within cloakmakers' and tailors' unions, in particular, made these unions appealing to Russian workers. In late 1914, the left-wing majority of the United Garment Workers split off and joined the Tailors' Industrial Union which became the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW) and soon gained a mass following.<sup>408</sup> In *Golos Truda*, G. Vishnevsky praised this new union for adopting principles he regarded as similar to those of the IWW, quoting one of ACW's resolutions as follows: "The goal of this union is industrial democracy, which means the organization of workers by industry," rather than by craft, "and through general strikes."<sup>409</sup> Vishnevsky added that the formation of the ACW together with other recent developments in the labor movement, such as an ongoing general strike in the building trades in Chicago, showed workers and American unions "moving increasingly closer to direct-revolutionary action."<sup>410</sup> Indeed, the ACW's first resolution stated a goal of putting the "working class in actual control of the system of production," which is harmonious with anarcho-syndicalist objectives.<sup>411</sup>

While the European war had initially disrupted US industries, large orders for ammunition and other supplies from the Allied countries arrived in the spring and revived the economy. Bridgeport, Connecticut became the center of the nation's munitions industry, and by the middle of the year the city was producing two-thirds of all ammunition

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<sup>407</sup> *GT*, November 19, 1915, 3.

<sup>408</sup> David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1989), 185-186.

<sup>409</sup> *GT*, May 14, 1915, 4.

<sup>410</sup> *GT*, May 14, 1915, 4. After the outbreak of a general strike of tailors and other workers in July, led by the Amalgamated, a *Golos Truda* author described the ACW as one of the "more radical" unions in the US. *GT*, July 16, 1915, 1. On the construction strike in Chicago cited by Vishnevsky, see *The Day Book*, April 16, 1915, 3; April 3, 1915, 30.

<sup>411</sup> Quoted in Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 186.

sent to the Allies.<sup>412</sup> With weapons manufacturers earning large profits off the war, workers in the metal trades responded by making more demands. In July, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), then an AFL union, called for a general strike of all metalworkers in Bridgeport to secure the eight-hour day. Recognizing that this would shut down production in the city, Bridgeport's largest employer, the Remington Arms Company, capitulated to the demand just moments before the machinists were scheduled to walk out on July 20.<sup>413</sup>

Workers had an additional advantage insofar as the war caused a substantial decline in immigration to the US, which meant employers had a smaller reserve of workers from which to choose. The two factors—increased demand for workers plus reduced immigration—created tighter labor markets in certain parts of the country, giving workers, both skilled and unskilled, leverage against employers.<sup>414</sup>

That spring and summer, many women entered the labor force for the first time, and together with the IAM and machinists, they helped win the eight-hour day and wage increases for workers across Bridgeport. One hundred unorganized women employed at Remington's sister plant, Union Metallic Cartridge, walked out at the scheduled time of IAM's general strike and demanded wage increases in addition to the eight-hour day. They were not machinists, but all 5,000 unskilled women workers at Remington-UMC were granted the eight-hour day plus 65 cents more per day. In August, women at the Bryant Electric Company in Bridgeport, a division of Westinghouse Electric, led their own strike, securing the eight-hour day there. The threat of a strike wave that summer swayed most Bridgeport employers to adopt the eight-hour day for both skilled and unskilled workers.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Cecelia Bucki, *Bridgeport's Socialist New Deal, 1915-36* (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 2001), 21-22.

<sup>413</sup> Carrie Brown, *Rosie's Mom: Forgotten Women Workers of the First World War* (Northeastern University Press: Boston, 2002), 50-52.

<sup>414</sup> The revival of the economy was uneven, and many regions still experienced high unemployment into 1916. See David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Workers' Consciousness in America, 1909-1922," *Journal of Social History* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1974): 514.

<sup>415</sup> Brown, *Rosie's Mom*, 53-54.

The worker uprisings in Bridgeport also triggered strikes elsewhere, leading to the spread of the eight-hour day to numerous plants throughout New England and New York.<sup>416</sup>

Because the strikes had been breaking out at weapons production facilities, many influential Americans claimed, falsely, that German machinations were the cause of the labor unrest in Bridgeport and beyond.<sup>417</sup> Though the United States was officially neutral in 1915, a German torpedo sunk the passenger ship *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland on May 7, killing 1,198 people on board, over 100 of whom were Americans. Political, financial, and commercial interests immediately called for a military build-up, claiming the Germans were bound to attack the United States itself—this became known as the “Preparedness” campaign. These same, powerful interests soon began to blame Germany for the worker uprisings in Bridgeport, which seemed to occur out of nowhere and therefore, so ran the argument, had to be the handiwork of German spies, despite the lack of evidence to support these claims.<sup>418</sup>

*Golos Truda*’s editor Raevsky protested this attempt to attribute the strikes to the German government. On July 23, he wrote about the labor struggle in Bridgeport, focusing on the immediate response to it by newspapers, businessmen, and AFL President Samuel Gompers. The capitalist class had been acting “as if America is currently at war with Germany and the Bridgeport workers on strike are committing an act of ‘treason’.” However, Raevsky reasoned that this made sense from capitalists’ perspective, because they were “worried about a general strike in the exceptionally profitable” weapons business that would threaten their bottom lines. In order to protect profits, capitalists hoped to delegitimize labor unrest, Raevsky argued, by falsely attributing the strikes to Germans.<sup>419</sup> More difficult to understand was the AFL’s Gompers, the most powerful labor leader in the country, who also characterized the Bridgeport strikers as tools of Germany. Gompers had been “repeating in the bourgeois press a fable about German money” and “in every possible way undermining the start of a strike—in the interests of weapons

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<sup>416</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, vol. 6, 196; Brown, *Rosie’s Mom*, 53.

<sup>417</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 55-57.

<sup>418</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 55-57.

<sup>419</sup> *GT*, July 23, 1915, 1.

manufacturers.”<sup>420</sup> Indeed, Gompers was widely criticized within the labor movement for endorsing the German theory. One labor leader told Gompers to back up his assertions, specifically to “put up or shut up,” but Gompers did not produce any evidence to support his claim.<sup>421</sup>

In 1915, the mainstream labor movement strongly opposed Preparedness and any attempt by the US government to intervene in the war. This included most federations and city labor councils in the AFL, in defiance of Gompers, who backed the Preparedness drive. In June 1915, labor officials organized the National Peace Council, which called for government ownership of munitions factories and the prohibition of arms sales to the warring countries in Europe.<sup>422</sup> But a Justice Department investigation of the National Peace Council thwarted the organization’s efforts by tying certain individuals associated with it to unsavory German interests. However, the estimated one million workers who joined the National Peace Council did so for sincere, principled reasons—they were not tools of Germany—and adamant opposition to the war within the labor movement persisted.<sup>423</sup>

*Golos Truda* and the URW took an “internationalist,” antiwar position. Similar to left-wing socialists such as Eugene Debs and Charles Ruthenberg, URW members called on the workers to fight only in the class war, and many in both the anarchist and socialist camps called for general strikes to shut down the imperialist war.<sup>424</sup> Writers in *Golos Truda* hoped for the defeat of the Russian army, arguing it would clear the way for the development of a social revolution in Russia, and Bill Shatov was among the 37 anarchists who signed the antiwar International Anarchist Manifesto in February 1915.<sup>425</sup> A minority faction of anarchists led by Peter Kropotkin and Maria Korn took a “defensist” line, arguing that democratic gains in England and France needed to be protected against the greater imperialist evil of German militarism. The internationalists vehemently rejected this

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<sup>420</sup> *GT*, July 23, 1915, 1.

<sup>421</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 55-57.

<sup>422</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 46-54.

<sup>423</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 57-63.

<sup>424</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 10-11.

<sup>425</sup> *GT*, April 3, 1915, 2.

argument as a betrayal of anarchist principles—for advocating collaboration with the ruling class in a war that slaughters millions of workers—which produced a bitter dispute in the anarchist movement, though the defensists did not appear to win over many followers. Reflecting the URW's broad tent approach to ideological disagreement, *Golos Truda* was the only Russian anarchist newspaper to publish articles by the defensists'—who were all based in Europe. In response to criticism of this editorial decision, Raevsky insisted that "truth emerges from the collision of opinion."<sup>426</sup> But North American-based *Golos Truda* writers, and the URW at large, were firmly in the internationalist camp.

Spurious accusations of German involvement again surfaced toward the end of July, in a strike in New York that involved URW and IWW longshoremen. In contrast to 1913, when *Golos Truda* correspondent Peter Savitsky expressed skepticism over the capacity of Russian dock workers in Buffalo to organize, by late July, Savitsky reported that he and over 2,000 workers, most of whom were from the Minsk, Grodno, and Volyn provinces, had been on a strike at the Clyde and Mallory Steamship companies in lower Manhattan on the Hudson River piers. Savitsky and his comrades joined the IWW's marine transport union, which had been competing with the International Longshoremen's Union, an AFL affiliate, for the workers' allegiance.<sup>427</sup> The strikers demanded substantial pay increases: from 30 to 50 cents per hour for overtime during the week and from 35 to 60 cents per hour on Sundays and holidays.<sup>428</sup> The IWW drive was led by Jack Walsh who predicted the strike would spread to other lines and tie up the entire New York City port if workers' demands were not met.<sup>429</sup> The *New York Tribune* also warned that the strikes at

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<sup>426</sup> *GT*, August 27, 1915, 4. For a thorough account of Russian anarchist views on the war, see Dmitry Rublev, "The Russian Anarchist Movement During the First World War" available at Kate Sharpley Library: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/qrfksw> and "No anarchist should take ... part in this wretched and insane war" A Letter by Saul Yanovsky to Marie Goldsmit in 1915" <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/cfxqzs> (accessed April 15, 2018).

<sup>427</sup> *GT*, July 30, 1915, 1.

<sup>428</sup> *Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 23, 1915, 4; *New York Tribune*, July 27, 1915, 14.

<sup>429</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 23, 1915, 2. John J. "Jack" Walsh had also been involved in the 1913 strikes at Ford in Detroit, and in 1914 he began organizing with Local 8 in Philadelphia. Jack Walsh is perhaps best known for leading the "Overalls Brigade"—a traveling, revolutionary choir of workers—at the IWW's 1908 against Daniel De Leon and his backers. See Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 385; Peter Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press: 2007), 63-64; Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 136-138.

Clyde and Mallory could disrupt transatlantic shipping, particularly if it spread to other lines. The *Tribune*, furthermore, reported that “rumors” of German financing for the strikers had triggered a federal government investigation. The workers vehemently denied these accusations: “The men who have walked out...know what they are doing. They are looking out for themselves and their women and children. It doesn’t take ‘German propaganda’ to tell them where their interests lie. They have struck before.”<sup>430</sup> Initially, Clyde and Mallory refused to negotiate and brought in strikebreakers; however, after a few days and with pressure from city officials who worried the strike would spread, the company made an offer and most of the workers agreed to the terms—they would be paid 40 cents per hour for regular overtime and 45 cents per hour on Sundays and holidays.<sup>431</sup> *Golos Truda* described the settlement as a “partial victory.”<sup>432</sup>

The German card could not quell rising social and labor unrest, the real causes of which were being exposed by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations. The commission had been set up in 1913 to investigate the causes of industrial violence, and its work had taken on newfound importance after the escalation of violence in 1914—in Ludlow, northern Michigan, West Virginia, and beyond. The commission was led by Frank Walsh, the former labor organizer who exhibited signs of possessing socialist sympathies, and it consisted of representatives from both sides of the conflict, labor and capital.<sup>433</sup> Maksim Raevsky had criticized the commission’s December 1914 report for highlighting the obvious, but he and others in *Golos Truda* now conceded the value of making the information known to the public, and they reported regularly on the commission’s hearings and findings. For example, Raevsky translated some of the findings of a report released by the commission in August 1915: 20 percent of American school-age children suffered illnesses from chronic undernourishment; one-third of workers in the US lived in conditions of half-starvation; 50 percent of workers or “the class of producers” in “the richest country

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<sup>430</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 22, 1915, 1 and 9. I am unable to locate the findings of this government investigation of the situation at Clyde and Mallory, but since the company granted pay raises—together with the fact that there does not appear to be a record of any damning government findings against the workers—leads me to conclude that there was nothing to the “rumors.”

<sup>431</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 27, 1915, 14.

<sup>432</sup> *GT*, July 30, 1915, 1. Their acceptance of even modest gains showed how far from absolutist they were.

<sup>433</sup> Frank Walsh should not be confused with Jack Walsh, mentioned in the previous paragraph.

on earth” earned no more than \$500 per year; the top two percent owned 60 percent of the country’s wealth.<sup>434</sup> It was therefore “no surprise that the representatives of capital on the commission put all their efforts into preventing the publication of these statistics,” wrote Raevsky.<sup>435</sup> But under the leadership of the “the courageous [*muzhestvennyi*] chairman” Walsh, added Raevsky, the commission deserved respect for insisting on presenting its findings in detail to Congress.<sup>436</sup> It “did not stop at half-measures” in sharply criticizing capital and especially the Rockefellers whom the commission charged, in Raevsky’s words, with committing “the most grave offenses against the working class.”<sup>437</sup> Raevsky also noted how capitalists and the bourgeois press responded to the report by attacking Walsh while paying scant attention to the commission’s findings.<sup>438</sup> Owners in major industries tried to discredit Walsh by noting he had spoken at IWW and Socialist Party meetings and had also criticized the “conciliatory politics” of the AFL. “All this shows how badly threatened industrialists feel by the information in this historic report,” concluded Raevsky, “especially since it is written in language that most people can understand.”<sup>439</sup>

While *Golos Truda* writers praised the work of the Commission on Industrial Relations, as anarcho-syndicalists they maintained that it would not lead to significant reforms. Raevsky wrote of the United States as “a country of surprises and contrasts. Two things are unique: nowhere is federal and municipal power so dependent on capitalists, [and] nowhere is public opinion so broadly expressed in the press and in the public arena.” No other country would produce a self-critical report like the commission’s, he added, but

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<sup>434</sup> *GT*, August 20, 1915, 1. \$500 Raevsky translated numerous other statistics and findings. Today, the top one-percent own 40 percent of the country’s wealth.

<sup>435</sup> *GT*, August 20, 1915, 1.

<sup>436</sup> *GT*, September 3, 1915, 1.

<sup>437</sup> *GT*, August 20, 1915, 1. Walsh recommended that Congress subpoena John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and his lieutenants Mackenzie King and Ivy Lee to demand information that they had refused to hand over to the commission. Previously, Walsh exposed Rockefeller’s attempt to cover up his own direct role in micromanaging the Ludlow Massacre. Elliot J. Gorn, *Mother Jones: The Most Dangerous Woman in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 219. William Lyon Mackenzie King had served as the Minister of Labour under Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, from 1909 to 1911, and he would become Prime Minister in 1921.

<sup>438</sup> *GT*, September 3, 1915, 1.

<sup>439</sup> *GT*, September 3, 1915, 1.

due to the “dictatorship of capital” over the country, the commission could not save workers: “As long as the workers do not recognize their collective strength and act together, no governmental or civic reforms will bring any real aid.”<sup>440</sup> Only through direct action and the general strike, according to the principles of anarcho-syndicalism, could workers obtain what they deserved. Vladimir Losev added that the Walsh commission may have helped the labor movement “but it cannot get rid of the causes of social inequality and class struggle” because, for instance, even a relatively liberal president such as Wilson had been a “devoted protector of the contemporary order” who also joined the press and the ownership class in pushing back on the commission for doing “too good a job of uncovering the problems of the capitalist order.”<sup>441</sup>

Little is known about URW activity in Canada in 1915. Comparing émigré Russian left and labor groups in Canada to the United States in this period, Vadim Kukushkin writes, “Russian workers in Canada simply lacked the numbers to create their own ethnic unions that would match the strength of their American counterparts, such as the Russo-Polish Union of Cloakmakers in New York.”<sup>442</sup> And Canada entered the war in 1914, which made organizing more difficult. One letter in *Golos Truda* at the end of August 1915 provided an explanation of the situation in Edmonton. E. Bruver reported that construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway had created job opportunities in Edmonton, and as a result the IWW had at one point more than 1,000 members there while holding “menacing” [*grozny*] street demonstrations.<sup>443</sup> But the onset of the war unleashed reactionary forces and presently “drunken bandits in military uniforms” were roaming the streets attacking

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<sup>440</sup> *GT*, September 3, 1915, 1. This line was emphasized in boldface print.

<sup>441</sup> *GT*, May 14, 1915, 1-2. For instance, Wilson refused to give the commission correspondence between himself and the governor of Colorado during the Ludlow affair.

<sup>442</sup> Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers*, 173. Kukushkin nevertheless provides a detailed and valuable account of Socialist Revolutionary and Social Democratic groups in Canada in the 1910s. On the URW, he writes: “Some of the first Russian socialist organizations to emerge in North America were the anarcho-syndicalist ‘unions of Russian workers’, which combined the rich tradition of Russian anarchism with the militant industrial unionism of the kind espoused by the IWW and later Canada’s One Big Union. The anarcho-syndicalist doctrine with its emphasis on direct action held much appeal for unskilled Ukrainian and Belarusan migrant workers...There is some evidence that by 1912, such a union existed in British Columbia...but little information about it has survived.” Indeed, URW Victoria and Vancouver were active from 1912-1914, and both were represented at the URW convention in 1914—see previous chapter.

<sup>443</sup> *GT*, August 27, 1915, 4. “Menacing,” “fearsome” or “awe-inspiring” depending on how one translates *grozny*.

protesters and conducting a systematic purge of all radical activity; Wobblies were forced to leave town. In short, Edmonton had been turned into “autocratic Russia”—the perennial gold standard of darkness and oppression.<sup>444</sup> Wartime anti-alien measures targeting Ukrainian socialist organizations that opposed the war, together with conditions of economic recession, made it extremely difficult for Russian and Ukrainian leftists to organize workers in Canada in 1915.<sup>445</sup> A URW group would however form in Montreal toward the end of the year while reports of new groups in Winnipeg and Edmonton would surface in early 1916.<sup>446</sup>

In early September, the URW held its second convention in Baltimore, where they discussed leadership roles within the federation and planned a new organizing drive for the fall and winter. There is no record of the proceedings, because the September 10 through October 28 issues of *Golos Truda*—with the exception of the October 8, 1915 issue—are missing from the existing collections; however, we can draw inferences about what occurred based on discussions before the convention and actions taken afterward. There had been some infighting leading up to the congress in Baltimore, with several individuals calling for more input from members and divisions outside of the New York-

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<sup>444</sup> *GT*, August 27, 1915, 4; Crossing the border was also a precarious endeavor in 1915. F. Zhura, I. Kolbasiuk, and D. Babkov declared a hunger strike at a jail in Hallock, Minnesota where they had been detained without trial for four weeks after crossing over from Winnipeg. Previously, the trio were forced out of Washington state and moved to Canada, where they found no work and had been unemployed for 10 months. *GT*, August 27, 1915, 4.

<sup>445</sup> Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusian Immigration from the Russian Empire to Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 374; Donald Avery, “*Dangerous Foreigners*”: *European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 70-71.

<sup>446</sup> The Russian Society of Enlightenment in Winnipeg, a progressive and *bezpartiinyi* group, reported on its effort to construct a Russian People's House. From Edmonton, B. Stepanov announced a new Russian Workers' Club focused on self-education, mutual aid, and material-economic improvements. *GT*, March 24, 1916, 4.

based *Golos Truda* group.<sup>447</sup> After the convention, the URW decided to give Peter Rybin a more prominent role as an organizer or “roving agitator” [*raz’ezdnom agitatore*] for the federation.<sup>448</sup> Rybin was effective at appealing to the “dark masses,” explained URW Baltimore Secretary Ivan-Kabas Tarasiuk, and should be sent to places where there were no existing unions.<sup>449</sup>

Rybin spearheaded a more aggressive organizing campaign following the URW convention. The anarchists sought to take advantage of the growing labor unrest as many Russians returned to work. Rybin organized in the Pittsburgh area, then in South Bethlehem, which was the company town of Bethlehem Steel, and after that, he went Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>450</sup> Another popular URW agitator, Morris Bell, visited New Haven, Connecticut where a new division opened on October 31; Bell then lectured to 300 workers on November 7 in nearby Waterbury, reflecting the industrial growth in those cities as a result of the war.<sup>451</sup> Yaroshevsky was dispatched to Brockton, Massachusetts, not far from

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<sup>447</sup> See for example *GT*, August 27, 1915, 4 and September 3, 1914, 4. Stepan Dybets called for the ownership of *Golos Truda* to be transferred from the Publishing Group (formerly the Russian Labor Group in New York) to the federation and even suggested the federation stop supporting *GT* financially if this did not come to pass. The underlying explanation for heightened tensions may have been the economic depression, which caused significant financial strain on the URW for most of 1915. After the convention, in a move to empower more individuals within the federation, two candidates were nominated to replace A. Rode-Chervinsky as Secretary of the URW: Stepan Dybets and Peter Rybin. Each URW division weighed in on their preferred candidate in *Golos Truda*, and Rode-Chervinsky prevailed in a closely contested process. See *GT*, October 8, 1915, 4; December 10, 1915, 4.

<sup>448</sup> *GT*, December 10, 1915, 4. Local divisions had to cover the expenses of visiting lecturers, but they could draw on a separate “agitation fund” maintained by the federation in order to organize in towns or areas just outside of their existing divisions. Rybin’s “agitational trip” [*agitatsionnuu poezdku*] in December drew heavily from this fund. See *GT*, November 12, 1915, 4.

<sup>449</sup> *GT*, January 7, 1916, 3; November 26, 1915, 4. Rybin, who often took the pseudonym “Zonov” in his URW days, had an impressive role in the Russian Revolution—see the dissertation Conclusion.

<sup>450</sup> *GT*, November 5, 1915, 4, November 12, 1915, 4, December 10, 1915, 4; January 28, 1916, 3; June 30, 1916, 4.

<sup>451</sup> *GT*, November 12, 1915, 4; November 19, 1915, 4. By the end of June 1915, the URW in Bridgeport had 93 members, and along with Waterbury and New Haven would become a center of URW activity in 1916—due to the strong labor movement there. *GT*, June 25, 1915, 4.

Boston where a new URW division opened in July.<sup>452</sup> Gordeev and Nikolai Mukhin also went to South Bethlehem, where they spoke to 65 people at the Russian Society of Self-Development; they expressed confidence that the Society would join the URW.<sup>453</sup> Lastly, some good news from Canada was reported in November 1915 as a URW branch in Montreal opened with a goal to “develop class consciousness and mutual aid among worker-immigrants from Russia. Given that the Union is progressive-bezpartiiny, every Russian immigrant, worker, regardless of nationality, can become a member” insofar as their participation was consistent with the goals of the organization.<sup>454</sup>

*Golos Truda* also launched a new drive to raise money for the federation through a “Day of the Labor Press”—an idea first carried out in Russia in 1914.<sup>455</sup> Events were held on November 14 in several cities, for instance in Peabody and Boston, Massachusetts, and in Detroit where workers were asked to contribute a day’s salary to support labor newspapers.<sup>456</sup> The URW received donations from 881 people in 52 cities and towns including Alaska and Hawaii, for a total of \$650.<sup>457</sup> At this stage, *Golos Truda* could be purchased at newsstands in several cities, including at least 30 in Manhattan and three in Harlem.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> *GT*, November 12, 1915, 4; *GT*, July 23, 1915, 4. The same month URW Boston opened, Raevsky appears to have traveled to Peabody, Massachusetts—as “M. Nelson,” the name listed as editor in *Golos Truda*’s masthead—to debate Social Democrat Levin.

<sup>453</sup> *GT*, November 19, 1915, 4. Mukhin also lectured to 300 in McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania on December 5. *GT*, December 17, 1915, 3.

<sup>454</sup> *GT*, November 5, 1915, 4. URW Montreal’s announcement came with a request for moral and material help from the rest of the federation.

<sup>455</sup> *GT*, February 11, 1916, 3. The author of the summary report on this event, V—in, wrote that *Pravda*, the St. Petersburg-based Bolshevik newspaper with its 40,000 readers, collected 70,000 rubles through its 1914 “Day of the Labor Press” campaign.

<sup>456</sup> *GT*, November 12, 1915, 4. For URW’s social organizing and fundraising projects in this period, see Chapter 5.

<sup>457</sup> *GT*, February 11, 1916, 3. All donor names were listed in *Golos Truda* over the course of a few weeks. Some donations also arrived from Australia and Europe.

<sup>458</sup> *GT*, December 17, 1915, 4. By 1916, *Golos Truda* was available at newsstands in Brooklyn, Newark, Boston, Cleveland, and Chicago. *GT*, September 1, 1916, 4. It was also sold in the UK and Argentina where small Russian anarchist groups in the latter relied on *Golos Truda* as their newspaper. *GT*, January 14, 1916, 4; *GT*, December 8, 1916, 3.

Renewed organizing efforts helped lay the groundwork for more active URW participation and integration into the US labor movement, as record numbers of workers in the United States went on strike in 1916 and 1917. In 1916, 1.6 million workers took part in nearly 3,800 strikes, which was higher than any previous year of the first two decades of the twentieth century. That record was eclipsed in 1917 when 1.2 million workers joined close to 4,500 strikes.<sup>459</sup> The URW's infrastructure helped to facilitate an engagement with this insurgent "new union" movement for thousands of Russian workers. Maintaining the organization through difficult times started to pay dividends, though some strikes were more successful than others, with lessons learned along the way. Most strikes involving URW members were led by unorganized workers, but many occurred in collaboration with the IWW and other unions such as the IAM and the clothing trades unions.

For example, on February 16, 1916, Russians took part in a seemingly spontaneous strike of unorganized workers in Ansonia, Connecticut, a small town not far from Bridgeport. Around 800 workers at the American Brass Company, one of the largest brass manufacturers in the country, walked out and held meetings that day and night to discuss their demands.<sup>460</sup> URW Ansonia Secretary S. Bruskin and his comrade Semenov spoke at the meetings while other Russian anarchists participated in the general discussion and organization of the strike including Tkach, Kurochkin, and URW organizer Morris Bell. The strikers' demands included an eight-hour day, 25 cents per hour minimum wage for unskilled workers, and an additional five cents per hour for those already making 25 cents. After issuing their demands, the next day workers at other factories in Ansonia joined the strike—around 6,000, with significant numbers of Italians and Russians—shutting down production in the town. The workers shocked the elite with this unforeseen rebellion. *The New York Times* ran several articles on the strike, complete with alarming headlines such as, "STRIKERS IN RUSH CLOSE BRASS MILLS: Men at Ansonia, Conn., Though Speaking 15 Languages, Secretly Organize. HURL SNOWBALLS AT MAYOR

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<sup>459</sup> In 1914, there were 1,100 strikes nationwide, and in 1915 there were 1,400 strikes involving about 500,000 workers. Cecelia Bucki, "World War I Era Strikes," in Brenner, Day, Ness, eds. *Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2009), 192; Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 200.

<sup>460</sup> *GT*, February 25, 1916, 3; *The New York Times*, February 18, 1916, 3. This Connecticut town called "Ansonia" was named after Anson Green Phelps, founder of the Phelps Dodge Corporation, which mined copper in Arizona, New Mexico, and South America and sent it to east coast refineries and factories like American Brass.

Manager Is Attacked -- Employers Taken by Surprise as 4,500 Quit.” *The Times* depicted the strikers as a malevolent mob of faceless foreigners threatening to block the production of supplies needed in Europe.<sup>461</sup>

On February 17, employers and state officials pushed back. The governor sent state police to the scene, and when rumors circulated that famed IWW organizers Joseph Ettor and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn had been on their way to help organize the workers, guards were posted at the train station and warrants filed for the Wobblies’ arrest.<sup>462</sup> After the company offered “the most insignificant concessions” to the workers, Morris Bell and others spoke out against the proposal, and the workers rejected it. For several days afterward, company officials refused to meet with the workers saying that they had “no time.” “This is how the owners of Ansonia oppress the workers,” wrote a URW striker, “reinforcing [*ukreplyaya*] slavery, darkness, and ignorance.”<sup>463</sup> However, the workers in Ansonia persevered and remained out on strike until they won pay increases. The American Brass Company agreed to a 15 percent wage increase plus time and a half for overtime, Sundays, and holidays, but no change to the length of the working day.<sup>464</sup>

The URW helped initiate the strike in Ansonia, and Morris Bell’s presence from the beginning was not coincidental. For weeks leading up to the strike, the URW had been organizing in Ansonia, sensing opportunity. Bell spoke there in December 1915.<sup>465</sup> Mikhail Raiva also spoke to a workers’ group in Ansonia on January 9, discussing the need to organize unions, while outlining the URW’s program. The chairman of the meeting, S. Bruskin, reported that Raiva won over the audience, and at some point in December or January a URW division had been set up with Bruskin as secretary.<sup>466</sup> On February 3, Bell returned to lecture to over 200 members, demonstrating how quickly they were able to

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<sup>461</sup> *NYT*, February 18, 1916, 12. See also *NYT*, February 23, 1916, 22 and February 19, 1916, 18,

<sup>462</sup> Brown, *Rosie’s Mom*, 67; *GT*, February 25, 1916, 1.

<sup>463</sup> *GT*, February 16, 1916, 3.

<sup>464</sup> *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, February 26, 1916, 1.

<sup>465</sup> *GT*, December 3, 1915, 5.

<sup>466</sup> *GT*, January 28, 1916, 4.

establish a substantial URW club.<sup>467</sup> On February 12, moreover, the URW in Ansonia held a concert and ball in German Hall with Russian musicians and other talent on loan from nearby cities Waterbury, New Haven, and Bridgeport providing the entertainment.<sup>468</sup> Then the strike broke out at American Brass Company on the 16th, with several URW agitators and workers actively involved.

Despite, or perhaps because of, their presence on the frontlines of the strike, the anarchists were sidelined during the negotiations. F. Sheffer reported that starting on February 21, URW members were excluded from strike meetings, regarded as “troublemakers,” and told they could not attend because they were members of the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>469</sup> If they had helped initiate the strike, clearly they never had control of it. When Bell tried to enter a meeting, he was arrested for disturbance of the peace and forced to leave town, or otherwise spend 10 days in jail.<sup>470</sup> Like the Wobblies Ettor and Flynn, the URW cadre in Ansonia had been pushed out of the strike.

The URW in Ansonia was also dissatisfied with the settlement of the strike, since it did not include, for example, a shorter working day. In an article titled, “Lessons from Ansonia,” author “P. V.” explained:

Because the majority of strikers were Russian and Polish workers, the owners sent agents who are immigrants from Galicia, who own several shops and other properties here [in Ansonia], and declared themselves friends of the workers. Taking advantage of the dark and unconscious among the latter, the agents persuaded and intimidated them to accept the company handouts and return to work.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> *GT*, February 11, 1916, 4.

<sup>468</sup> *GT*, February 11, 1916, 4.

<sup>469</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1916, 3.

<sup>470</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1916, 3.

<sup>471</sup> *GT*, July 14, 1916, 3.

If Ansonia was a battleground for the struggle between radicals and conservatives in the Russian immigrant community, it seemed the latter held the upper hand at this time.<sup>472</sup> Subsequent attempts by URW members and other workers that spring to resurrect the spirit of the original strike were violently crushed, and among the workers there remained no unity or solidarity. For P. V., the events in Ansonia “revealed that the large mass of workers are still in the dark...they need to be taught and need to be organized in labor unions to fight in concert against their sworn enemies, capital and state.”<sup>473</sup>

URW groups had more influence in Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury, three of the most populous cities in Connecticut. Because of the new jobs in southeastern Connecticut, at companies such as Remington Arms, Bridgeport in particular became “one of the major Russian centers in America” by early 1916; *Golos Truda* estimated there were 5,000 to 6,000 Russians in Bridgeport at this time.<sup>474</sup> A lecture by Bill Shatov attracted an audience of 400 at the URW in Bridgeport on February 27, and I. Kochevoi lectured to 300 there the following week. On January 21, the URW in New Haven announced that they were hosting a lecture by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn on January 30.<sup>475</sup> Flynn had been scheduled to give two more lectures at URW New Haven on February 20—one on violence and the labor movement—but local authorities barred her from speaking in the city.<sup>476</sup> The

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<sup>472</sup> In an earlier report, the URW had blamed a meat merchant named Garkholik—described as a member of the “Brotherhood of the Black Hundreds”—for shutting down one of Bell’s speeches and physically assaulting the anarchists. It is unclear if use of the term Black Hundreds, in this case, was an accurate description of individuals with ties to the Black Hundreds’ movement in Russia or simply an insult. *GT*, February 25, 1916, 3. All of the newspaper coverage of the strike’s first few days, from *Golos Truda* to *The New York Times*, portrayed a chaotic and somewhat violent scene.

<sup>473</sup> *GT*, July 14, 1916, 3. Because the workers had established such a strong position in the first few days of the strike, URW Ansonia’s expectations were that the workers would hold out for the full satisfaction of their demands.

<sup>474</sup> *GT*, February 4, 1916, 3; *GT*, March 17, 1916, 4. According to the U.S. Census, in 1910 there were 4,116 Russians in Bridgeport and 5,395 in 1920. There were also over 3,000 Poles living in Bridgeport in 1920. See Cecelia Bucki, *Bridgeport’s Socialist New Deal*, 20.

<sup>475</sup> *GT*, January 21, 1916, 4. It is unclear if Flynn gave this lecture, since there was no follow-up report. Flynn had been on a speaking tour throughout New England. In any case, it is interesting timing given that two weeks later, Flynn would reportedly make an attempt to assist the Russian and Polish workers in Ansonia.

<sup>476</sup> *GT*, February 18, 1916, 4 and March 3, 1916, 3. The police stated that they did not want Flynn to disturb the citizens of such a peaceful city like New Haven, wrote F. Sheffer, sardonically. See also the *Norwich Bulletin*, February 23, 1916, 9.

anarchists in New Haven also drew on local intellectual life, welcoming the popular Yale professor Alexander Petrunkevich, who lectured to a crowd of 400 at the URW hall on Charles Darwin's theories. Petrunkevich privately told URW members that a local Orthodox priest had been "imploing his parishioners not to go" to the URW because of the "Yids and Germans" in its ranks. Grigory Raiva, author of the report on Petrunkevich's speech to the URW, wrote that the professor held "radical beliefs" and was familiar with the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin.<sup>477</sup> Lastly, the URW in Waterbury held a January event to commemorate Bloody Sunday, together with Jewish and Lithuanian leftists, and soon the anarchists there would draw nearly as many supporters and interested observers as Bridgeport and New Haven.<sup>478</sup>

URW stalwart Morris Bell made it into Connecticut newspapers after another arrest on March 5, in connection with a strike in Waterbury. The charge against Bell, which he denied, was that during a URW-organized meeting with striking workers of the Scovill Brass Company, he urged them to break machines should their demands not be satisfied.<sup>479</sup> Scovill's story was that they discovered broken equipment at the factory a few days after Bell's speech, and they therefore blamed him. After the initial charges were brought, Scovill then claimed to have found dynamite at the factory and again blamed Bell. *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer* reported that Bell was prosecuted under the "breach of peace statute" and sentenced to six months in prison.<sup>480</sup>

However, Bell's lawyer successfully appealed the case, a decision that may have been influenced by the popularity of the strike and the power of the labor movement in Bridgeport. *Golos Truda* reported that Bell enjoyed the support of Scovill's workers: "Machinists went to the city head to express protest against the arrest of the comrade. Such a manifestation of solidarity from the side of comrade workers serves, undoubtedly,

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<sup>477</sup> *GT*, January 28, 1916, 3. Petrunkevich was a well-known expert on spiders and other arachnids, and he remained at Yale until he retired in 1944. He was also a philosopher and poet who was politically active throughout his career. He gave another lecture to the URW in April. See *GT*, April 7, 1916, 4.

<sup>478</sup> *GT*, January 21, 1916, 4; *GT*, April 21, 1916, 4.

<sup>479</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 3; *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, March 8, 1916, 2.

<sup>480</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 3; *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, March 8, 1916, 2.

as large moral support for Comrade Bell.”<sup>481</sup> Moreover, the strike at Scovill, which employed 20 percent of all workers in Waterbury, ended in a victory as the company increased wages.<sup>482</sup> *Golos Truda’s* correspondent in Bridgeport asserted that the “arrest of Comrade Bell intensified the interest of local workers in revolutionary propaganda,” and, indeed, not long after the strike, N. Mukhin, who had taken over as secretary of the federation at large, drew more than 350 people at a lecture in Waterbury.<sup>483</sup>

URW organizing continued elsewhere in New England, and while traveling through the region early in the year, Mikhail Raiva reported on meetings with workers. At a mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, Russian, Polish, and Italian weavers had been practicing a subtler—and more typical—form of sabotage, in contrast to breaking equipment. Raiva described how the weavers rigged their piece rate meters to inflate production figures on paper, in many cases doubling their wages. When such tricks were uncovered, the workers often found new ways to fool their employers, because “necessity is the mother of invention.”<sup>484</sup> The workers were less successful, however, in a recent strike against the company. Raiva wrote that 1,200 weavers at the mill went on strike, but that shortly after it began, the majority of strikers left to go work at a different mill, rather than picket; the scene turned into a laughable “strike without strikers,” wrote Raiva. “The owners perfectly understood the position of things” and refused to negotiate with the divided group of workers. Despite their reasonable demands, and “a decent amount of savings” to conduct a strike at a mill with urgent production orders, the workers had neither discipline nor a plan. They refused the assistance of labor organizers, from the IWW and the URW, due to their lack of consciousness, Raiva argued.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 3. For more on Bell’s arrest in Waterbury, and the reasons behind it, see Chapter 5.

<sup>482</sup> Like other factories in the region, Scovill had been earning huge profits. In March, Scovill received 1,600 tons of copper, a metal then worth between 27 and 30 cents per pound. *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, March 31, 1916, 1.

<sup>483</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 3; *GT*, April 21, 1916, 4. Mukhin became the URW’s new secretary after A. Rode-Chervinsky announced he would take a sick leave.

<sup>484</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 3.

<sup>485</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 3. Raiva did not identify the name of the mill, or when the strike had taken place, but in March, a reported 500 weavers at the Hope Webbing Company in Pawtucket struck for a 10 percent advance. *The Washington Herald*, March 14, 1916, 1.

To address organizational challenges in New England, Mikhail Raiva and others gathered for a regional URW conference. URW New England groups came together with other progressive organizations on April 29-30 in New Haven. Representatives from Boston and Fitchburg, Massachusetts, together with Bridgeport, Waterbury, and New Haven convened to discuss how to recruit and organize more effectively in the increasingly advantageous conditions for the labor movement.<sup>486</sup> The fruits of this endeavor would be seen over the course of the year, with growing numbers of Russian workers in New England joining the URW's ranks.

Meanwhile, the strike wave that started at munitions and metalworking plants in Connecticut spread to Pittsburgh.<sup>487</sup> After organizing successful strikes for the eight-hour day in Bridgeport at Remington Arms and elsewhere in New England, the IAM together with the American Industrial Union (AIU) organized strikes for the eight-hour day in Pittsburgh, including one at Westinghouse Electric and Machine plants in the Turtle Creek Valley. Westinghouse was a major company that produced "a cornucopia of generators, flatirons, streetcars, and shells for the voracious appetite of Europe's cannon."<sup>488</sup> The walkout began on April 21, and within a few days, it became a general strike of over 30,000 after the Westinghouse strikers were joined by workers at other metalworking shops throughout the Turtle Creek Valley, which stretched from East Pittsburgh into Braddock.<sup>489</sup> However, 1,000 National Guardsmen were called in, and along with almost 2,000 company detectives and police, the armed men broke the strike. Thirty strike leaders were arrested, at least 60 workers were injured in street clashes, and after guards fired shots into the crowd, three workers were killed. The next day, May 5, the workers began returning to the plants, and the strike was called off on May 15. Even though it was violently

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<sup>486</sup> *GT*, May 12, 1916, 3.

<sup>487</sup> David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The workplace, the state, and American labor activism, 1865-1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 320-321.

<sup>488</sup> Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 323.

<sup>489</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 201-202; Bucki, "World War I Era Strikes," 193-194; Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 321-322.

suppressed, the Westinghouse strike revealed the existence of a new, insurgent industrial union movement and the potential power of general strikes.<sup>490</sup>

The events in the Turtle Creek Valley also fueled other strikes in the Pittsburgh area. The URW was not involved in the Westinghouse strike, but Russian workers in Pittsburgh responded to the joint IAM-AIU call for a region-wide, general strike for the eight-hour day.<sup>491</sup> Pittsburgh had continued to be a major area of URW activity into 1916; in the months leading up to the strike at Westinghouse, Mukhin gave 25 lectures over a two month period in and around the city, while Aaron Baron spent three weeks there, attracting a crowd of 300 at one event in McKees Rocks in April.<sup>492</sup> On May 2, around 9,000 foreign workers at the Pressed Steel Car Company, including URW members, walked off the job, asking for the eight-hour day, a five percent salary increase, and a daily wage rather than piece rate pay.<sup>493</sup> Pressed Steel workers on the north side of Pittsburgh also joined the strike, sending delegates to McKees Rocks to coordinate their efforts.<sup>494</sup> Owned by Rockefeller's US Steel Corporation, in 1916 Pressed Steel ran the largest railroad car factory in the United States, producing a new rail car every five minutes.<sup>495</sup> A. Kremis in *Golos Truda* reported that a URW comrade named Vasily, during a meeting with

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<sup>490</sup> Bucki, "World War I Era Strikes," 193-194; Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 327-329. Historians have noted the correlation between scientific management and the rise of industrial unionism. Westinghouse, for example, was "one of the largest fully Taylorized corporations" in the country. Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 202.

<sup>491</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 202; According to a US Military Intelligence report dated May 25, 1917, Peter Rybin and three other leading URW members had at some point worked at Westinghouse, but there is no record in *Golos Truda* of their involvement in the 1916 general strike. Report by John R. Dillon, May 22, 1915, Record Group 165, 10110—38, Military Intelligence Division, U.S. Army, National Archives and Records Administration, reprinted in *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-1941*, ed. Randolph Boehm (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984), microform reel I:190-206.

<sup>492</sup> *GT*, February 25, 1916, 4; April 21, 1916, 3; June 2, 1916, 4.

<sup>493</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, May 4, 1916, 1 and 13; May 10, 1916, 11; *Evening Public Ledger*, May 3, 1916, 6; *GT*, May 12, 1916, 3. The strikers were Austrian, Italian, Polish, and Russian. Recall from the previous chapter how foreign workers, led by the IWW, waged a successful strike at Pressed Steel in 1910. See also *GT*, May 19, 1916, 4.

<sup>494</sup> *GT*, May 19, 1916, 4.

<sup>495</sup> John H. White Jr., "Railroad Car Builders of the United States," *Railroad History* no. 138 (Spring 1978): 10.

the company on the third day of the strike, argued with Pressed Steel managers after they claimed slow business made it impossible for them to raise wages. Vasily was subsequently roughed up by security and arrested for questioning the company. Referring to both Vasily's arrest and the Westinghouse strike, Kremis wrote, "Capitalists can beat unarmed workers with impunity and workers do not have the right to defend their interests even by peaceful means. In the last week, in Braddock, the steel trust's militia shot into a crowd of unarmed workers."<sup>496</sup> When word spread of the arrest, however, a crowd of about 300 workers marched to the police station to demand Vasily's freedom. "If he is not freed before us right now, we will free him ourselves," stated the protesters, and they succeeded at securing his release, as the local police gave in to the threat.<sup>497</sup>

Despite this display of solidarity in defense of another worker, the strikers at Pressed Steel lacked organization. Kremis noticed a troubling but revealing sign early on: native-born, English-speaking American workers refused to join the strike. "American workers, accustomed to looking upon foreigners as a backward [*otstalyi*] element, very quietly continued to work. Here is another example," wrote Kremis, "of the lie of those who claim that foreigners scab and interfere with American workers fighting for a better share." In his experience, it had been the other way around, for "When foreigners try to fight for better economic conditions, American 'citizens' become scabs" while hypocritically blaming foreigners for scabbing.<sup>498</sup> In addition to the divide between foreign and American workers, other factors had doomed the strike at Pressed Steel. Most strikers lived in company housing and, fearing eviction, did not picket; therefore, Pressed Steel's strikebreakers faced limited resistance.<sup>499</sup> Kremis commented on the difficulty of striking successfully against companies such as Pressed Steel, who have all the advantages. If Pressed Steel had been unable to locate strikebreakers, noted Kremis, they could have used guards to violently crush the strike, just as they had at Westinghouse. Therefore, in addition to stronger organization, Kremis called for more aggressive tactics. "Workers need to learn from their masters the necessity to arm themselves not only with knowledge

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<sup>496</sup> *GT*, May 26, 1916, 3.

<sup>497</sup> *GT*, May 26, 1916, 3.

<sup>498</sup> *GT*, May 19, 1916, 4.

<sup>499</sup> *GT*, May 26, 1916, 1.

and cunning, but also with a willingness to use force [*silo*] in response to violence [*nasilie*].”<sup>500</sup>

This was a common and significant theme in *Golos Truda*. Frustrated by what they had been witnessing both as spectators and participants, many URW members concluded that workers had to use force in self-defense. Earlier in the year, for example, an anonymous writer in *Golos Truda*, condemning the steel industry’s war profiteering and use of espionage and terrorism against labor, argued that workers needed to arm themselves to avoid being “shot down like partridges.”<sup>501</sup> After gunmen killed workers at a chemical plant in Roosevelt, New Jersey in 1915, Vladimir Losev asked, “How long will workers only threaten to arm themselves?”<sup>502</sup> What more could it possibly take? he wondered. After Wobbly songwriter Joe Hill was executed by the state of Utah toward the end of 1915, Aaron Baron wrote an article titled, “Mere Barking Won’t Do,” part of which read, “And what are you going to do? Again protest? O, yes, in this ‘free’ democratic country you have freedom of speech: talk! Talk your head off – who cares? A lot you care when you hear a hungry dog barking? That’s just the attitude of the masters towards us: Bark! a lot they care!...Mere barking won’t do! We must learn to bite, and bite effectively!”<sup>503</sup> Despite Russian anarchist movement’s turn away from terrorism and even violence after 1907, URW members were not pacifists and, according to US government spy reports, at least some were in fact armed.<sup>504</sup> As conflict between capital and labor intensified, these calls for more active measures of self-defense seemed to grow in response.

Earlier in the year, Russian coal miners in the Pittsburgh area were made to feel powerless against armed guards in an unorganized strike that began with much revolutionary enthusiasm. On February 7 at the Ford Colliers coal mine in Curtisville, 20 miles northeast of Pittsburgh, Russian and Polish miners struck for the eight-hour day and

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<sup>500</sup> *GT*, May 26, 1916, 1.

<sup>501</sup> *GT*, February 11, 1916, 1.

<sup>502</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 1.

<sup>503</sup> “Mere Barking Won’t Do,” *Alarm*, December 3, 1915. Available at Kate Sharpley Library: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/7pvnf2> (accessed April 1, 2018).

<sup>504</sup> Report of John R. Dillon, *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports*, microform reel 1:190-206.

increased pay.<sup>505</sup> Robert Ermand reported in *Golos Truda* that 2,000 miners, including a strong contingent of URW anarchists, struck and in a “menacing [*grozny*] demonstration” marched on the property carrying a flag that read “Bread and Freedom” while urging the rest of the miners at Ford Colliers to join the strike.<sup>506</sup> Further, one URW comrade who addressed the strikers made a “deep impression, and they [workers] understood,” wrote Ermand, “very clearly the gap that separates their interests from the owners. Despite the fact that these workers are not organized, they demonstrate a fighting enthusiasm and feeling of solidarity. They are starting to become conscious of their class interests” in recognizing that they themselves needed to direct this struggle.<sup>507</sup> However, the energy behind the strike soon dissipated. The workers’ efforts to bring other miners at Ford Colliers to join the strike were abandoned after 60 police officers were called in to guard the mines.<sup>508</sup> Then on February 14, United Mine Workers of America (UMW) organizers arrived and urged the strikers to accept a company offer and return to work. By February 18, the workers accepted a seven percent raise but with no changes to the length of the working day.<sup>509</sup> Moreover, one of the miners, N. Rubes, wrote that they had been deceived by the UMW officials who negotiated the settlement. Nothing changed when they went back to work and the union kept pushing back the date when the pay increase would take effect. Whether there was a betrayal by the UMW or just miscommunication between the Russians and the UMW organizers, Rubes concluded: “This case reveals to the Curtisville miners that they cannot rely on others and it is necessary for them to fight directly for their

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<sup>505</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1916, 3.

<sup>506</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1916, 3. Interestingly, a movie about Russian anarchist miners was released in US cities on February 20. “The Black List” featuring independent and silent film star Blanche Sweet was described by the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* as “a drama of social conditions and a daring indictment of the working conditions of big corporations. Miss Sweet enacts the role of Vera, the daughter of a mine worker who is the head of the Russian anarchists contemplating the overthrow of the corporation.” This suggests that many Americans, at the time, had been well aware of the existence of Russian anarchists in the labor movement and that the impression, at least among intellectuals and artists, had been favorable. The mere fact itself that anarchists, even in popular culture, were associated with working-class uprisings rather than terrorism or anything else seems significant. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, February 19, 1916, 19.

<sup>507</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1916, 3.

<sup>508</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>509</sup> *Evening Public Ledger*, February 18, 1; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, February 18, 1916, 12. Both papers reported that 900 miners received a seven percent increase; *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

interests.”<sup>510</sup>

Well-organized strikes, however, could succeed, as Russians at the Carbon Steel Company in Pittsburgh demonstrated in April. In the first week of the month, and with support from individual URW and IWW members, 250 Russian and Polish workers struck at Carbon Steel for higher wages, reduced hours, and improved conditions. *Golos Truda's* correspondent E. Nieman detailed the situation at the factory. Russians and Poles worked 12-13 hour days processing large iron ingots sent from the company's foundry, working in a dangerous and unhealthy environment. Some workers contracted tuberculosis on the job, and others became sick from the contaminated drinking water provided by the company. The “drinking water is held in barrels for weeks,” wrote Nieman, “with pieces of dirty ice” thrown into the barrels.<sup>511</sup> Due to a lack of safety gear, some workers went deaf from the noise, others blind from shards of iron spraying into their eyes when they cut the ingot. Moreover, workers were forced to bribe foremen to receive and retain their positions, while earning no more than 22 cents per hour. In sum, “The treatment of workers [at Carbon Steel] is absolutely unbearable,” wrote Nieman, and the “workers could no longer stand such extortion and exhaustion.” Their demands included a raise to 25 cents an hour, a workweek reduced to 55 hours, distilled drinking water, and the dismissal of all foremen who took money from workers.<sup>512</sup> Carbon Steel initially refused to negotiate, threatened to bring in strikebreakers, and tried to prevent the workers from holding strike meetings. In coordination with IWW and URW organizers, the strikers printed 7,000 copies of a strike proclamation [*vozzvani*] and handed them out to workers of different divisions in Carbon Steel. With more workers joining the strike, the company settled on April 8. Nieman wrote: “The company decided to satisfy all of their [workers'] demands, seeing the solidarity of the strikers and feeling unable to break it.”<sup>513</sup>

A day after the company capitulated, the URW organized a celebration on Penn Avenue in a Russian-Polish neighborhood of Pittsburgh. URW speakers took the opportunity to familiarize the crowd of 300 workers with the federation's principles and

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<sup>510</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3. Rubes added that in exchange for the 50 cents it cost the workers to join the UMW, all they received in return was a button with the union's name on it.

<sup>511</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>512</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>513</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

methods of struggle “on the necessity,” for example, “of organizing labor unions to conduct revolutionary class struggle,” wrote Nieman.<sup>514</sup> Upon hearing support from the crowd, the URW announced the start of a new URW branch in this neighborhood, and the meeting was concluded with the singing of revolutionary songs.<sup>515</sup> URW Pittsburgh #2 on Penn Avenue opened on April 30 with 22 founding members, and with Aaron Baron’s assistance, it grew to 38 members by mid to late May.<sup>516</sup>

Shifting further west, URW members also became increasingly active in Detroit, organizing alongside Wobblies and Italian syndicalists, and with a significant degree of success. In February, N. Mukhin lectured to a “literally overflowing” crowd of 300 at the URW hall.<sup>517</sup> In March and April, the URW, IWW, and Italian syndicalists organized a Shoemakers’ Industrial Union in Detroit starting with 200 members—Local 177 of the IWW.<sup>518</sup> On the Russian shoemakers in Detroit, a correspondent in *Golos Truda* wrote that while peasants in Russia sang songs about being lost in the vast space of the Russian plains, as shoemakers in Detroit they sang about the wretched, “backbreaking” working conditions in so-called workshops, which were just “broken down walls in damp basements” where they labored for 15 hours a day.<sup>519</sup> But after several weeks of organizing, Wobblies and anarchists helped the workers create dozens of new union shops. *Golos Truda* reported that shoe workers in 49 newly organized shops struck and won their demands, which included a 10-hour day, time and a half pay for overtime, and

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<sup>514</sup> *GT*, April 28, 1916, 4.

<sup>515</sup> *GT*, April 28, 1916, 4.

<sup>516</sup> *GT*, May 27, 1916, 3; June 2, 1916, 4.

<sup>517</sup> *GT*, February 25, 1916, 4. URW Detroit shared its hall space with Italian anarchists and IWW members, where they also served a buffet lunch. See *GT*, January 22, 1915, 4.

<sup>518</sup> *GT*, April 14, 1916, 3; *Rabochaya Rech*, April 14, 1916, 4.

<sup>519</sup> *GT*, April 14, 1916, 3; May 5, 1916, 3. The author added that these songs were, as [Russian poet Nikolay] Nekrasov had written, “too similar to groans [*ston*].”

improved conditions in the workshops.<sup>520</sup> In this particular campaign, the correspondent in Detroit saw a model that could be used in Russia:

In this struggle of the Detroit shoemakers for a better share, the local Union of Russian Workers played a large role, and the more you think about Russia...the more you become convinced that similar types of Unions will guide the Russian working people in their struggle for bread, freedom, and happiness.<sup>521</sup>

Again, through labor organizing in the US, URW members consciously saw themselves preparing for revolution in Russia.<sup>522</sup> The URW and IWW also helped organize a strike led by 300 workers at the Solvay Processing plant in Detroit, in April.<sup>523</sup> According to one of the strikers, a “frightened” [*napugannaya*] management quickly folded to the workers’ demand for a five cent per day raise, after all 8,000 workers at Solvay threatened to join the strike.<sup>524</sup> This Detroit correspondent emphasized the radical character of the strike at Solvay, with some workers telling the plant administrator they intended in the future to take possession of the factory or “take all that belongs to” the workers.<sup>525</sup>

Still further west, into the heartland of Sioux City, Iowa, which borders both Nebraska and South Dakota, the URW took part in a strike at meatpacking plants. On February 23, newspapers reported on a spontaneous general strike of nearly 2,500 unorganized butchers and general laborers at the Cudahy and Armour packing companies, while only 200 men remained on the job.<sup>526</sup> The general laborers wanted a

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<sup>520</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 3. Similarly, IWW’s newspaper *Solidarity* reported on April 8, 1916 that out of 42 workshops where Local 177’s members worked, 36 had been turned into union shops through strike action. See <http://depts.washington.edu/iww/iwwyearbook1916.shtml> (accessed March 14, 2018).

<sup>521</sup> *GT*, April 14, 1916, 3. Organizing shoemakers in Detroit was part of a national IWW campaign.

<sup>522</sup> The previous summer, for example, Detroit URW had proposed a discussion at the 1915 convention on the topic of the federation’s relations to the “looming [*nadvigaiushcheisya*] Russian Revolution.” *GT*, August 13, 1915, 4. Likewise, URW Brooklyn had also proposed a convention discussion on the federation’s relations to the “upcoming [*gryadushchei*] Russian Revolution.” *GT*, July 30, 1915, 4.

<sup>523</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3. Solvay Processing became Allied Chemical & Dye in 1920.

<sup>524</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>525</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>526</sup> *Evening Times-Republican*, February 23, 1916, 4; *GT*, March 17, 1916, 4.

raise from 19 to 22½ cents per hour, the butchers 27½ to 30 cents per hour; management refused and hired strikebreakers.<sup>527</sup> The workers then threatened to extend the strike to the companies' plants in Kansas City and Omaha.<sup>528</sup> Further, Grigory Raiva reported in *Golos Truda* that "provisions intended for the strikebreakers were expropriated by the strikers, [and] the tram wagon was destroyed."<sup>529</sup> In this way, together with aggressive picketing at the Cudahy and Armour plants, the strikers had "shown not a small dose of revolutionism in their struggle against the strikebreakers."<sup>530</sup> Raiva indicated that there was a "very large percentage of Russians" among the strikers, though this was not reported in American newspapers. Moreover, strike committee meetings had been held, according to *Golos Truda*, in the premises of the URW in Sioux City.<sup>531</sup> By February 29, one newspaper reported that the "absence of men in the cooling plants has imperiled great stores of meat," which helped prompt the General Manager who oversaw the plants, M.R. Murphy, to issue a statement saying the companies would immediately raise wages eight percent.<sup>532</sup> The workers rejected this offer before eventually voting to accept a two cent per hour raise, after a ten-day strike.<sup>533</sup>

Back in New York in the first days of May, *Golos Truda* commented on the ongoing strike wave in the US. The strikes had been demonstrating, wrote Raevsky, that only with the use of "force" could workers claim their fair share of the large profits reaped by corporations. The conclusion to the unfolding struggle between capital and labor, furthermore, would depend on the degree of organization and militancy of both sides. "Only the threat of converting these disparate strikes into general strikes, of a revolutionary

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<sup>527</sup> *Evening Times-Republican*, February 24, 1916, 2.

<sup>528</sup> *Ottuma Tri-Weekly Courier*, February 26, 1916, 1.

<sup>529</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 1.

<sup>530</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 1; *Evening Times-Republican*, February 23, 1916, 4.

<sup>531</sup> *GT*, March 17, 1916, 1. This does not mean the URW had a leading role in the strike. Most likely, Russian workers organized among themselves while collaborating with other workers, including Americans. English-language newspapers identified the strike leader as Frank Fisher, but neither *Golos Truda* nor the American press provided detailed information about the composition of the strikers. See *Evening Times-Republican*, March 4, 1916, 5.

<sup>532</sup> *Ottuma Tri-Weekly Courier*, February 29, 1916, 3.

<sup>533</sup> *Evening Times-Republican*, March 1, 1916, 4; *The Daily Gate City*, March 2, 1916, 1.

character, can force the powerful capitalist trusts to make really serious concessions.”<sup>534</sup>

On May 3, a major strike began in New York that bore some resemblance to *Golos Truda*’s radical vision. The Cloakmakers’ Union, including its Russian-Polish division, declared a general strike.<sup>535</sup> The aforementioned “Protocol of Peace” between employers and workers failed to live up to its name, and 50,000 workers struck for an eight-hour day and the right to regulate workshop conditions. G. Raiva argued the Protocol had been doomed from the outset because it sought to end “the class struggle” and achieve “peaceful co-existence of masters and slaves.” Citing a Russian proverb, Raiva wrote that if you “chase nature out the door, it will fly back in through the window,” arguing that regular worker uprisings and finally the collapse of the Protocol proved the folly of imagining a peaceful co-existence could be achieved.<sup>536</sup> The Cloakmakers’ strike of 1916 lasted several weeks before the owners capitulated, the Protocol was scrapped, and the union regained the right to strike with greater union and workers’ control. The new agreement also gave the workers a wage increase and a reduction of hours, though not the eight-hour day.<sup>537</sup> The victory was a vindication of the stance taken by Isaac Hourwich and Abe Bisno along with their supporters in radical sections of the union and labor press, including the URW.

There was now a strike wave sweeping across the country, and this fact together with the USG seemingly preparing to enter the war in Europe, led to a crackdown on labor agitators and radical publications, which had been underway at least since the beginning of the year. In February, for example, the Mexican anarchist Magon brothers, Enrique and Ricardo Flores, were arrested in Los Angeles and beaten up by the police while their newspaper *Regeneración* was shut down.<sup>538</sup> In April, *Golos Truda* published a letter from Alexander Berkman who explained that the most recent issue of his newspaper, *The Blast*,

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<sup>534</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 1.

<sup>535</sup> Foner, v. 6, 117-118; *GT*, May 12, 1916, 3. During the strike, the Organizational Committee for the Russian-Polish branch of the Cloakmakers union office was located at 40 East 23rd street, 3rd floor. *GT*, June 2, 1916, 4.

<sup>536</sup> *GT*, May 12, 1916, 3.

<sup>537</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 117-118.

<sup>538</sup> *GT*, February 25, 1916, 1; *The Blast*, February 26, 1916, 5-6.

had been banned from the mail.<sup>539</sup> United States Government censorship via the post office was not limited to *The Blast*: on June 2, *Golos Truda* reported that *The Alarm*, edited by Lucy Parsons and Aaron Baron, had also been deemed “unmailable.”<sup>540</sup> It hit home for the URW in July. Raevsky apologized to subscribers for not being able to deliver issue no. 95, published on July 21, 1916, due to a postal ban. They had been wondering who the “postal dictators” would target next, and it turned out to be them.<sup>541</sup> In addition to pulling issue no. 95 from the mail, the New York Postmaster sent a letter to *Golos Truda*’s office insisting that they submit certified translations of specific articles.<sup>542</sup> Raevsky also noted that the postmaster’s letter did not even say anything about the banned issue, which he found curious; he only realized what happened after nobody received the issue in the mail. Berkman also commented, at much greater length, on the infuriating unwillingness of the post office to explain its actions.<sup>543</sup> The URW had had its first taste of censorship in late 1915 when the Post Office refused to deliver URW mail that featured Jack London’s anti-war short story “The Good Soldier” printed on the back side of envelopes.<sup>544</sup>

On May Day in New York, reported G. Raiva, police were out in full force, with armed units guarding all streets and parks. Raiva met up with Italian anarchists on Mulberry Street in the Italian quarter, and their plan was to march to Union Square. “Down with the bourgeoisie!” and “To hell with the police” the crowd shouted, as anarchist Pietro Allegro began a passionate address “fanning the smoldering indignation” of his audience.<sup>545</sup> Detectives and police suddenly encircled the anarchists and, hands fitted with brass knuckles, started punching and handcuffing them, and “with what frenzy, with what pleasure these fat scoundrels ‘smashed heads’!” Raiva noted that only two hours after the

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<sup>539</sup> *GT*, April 21, 1916, 3.

<sup>540</sup> *GT*, June 2, 1916, 1; June 9, 1916, 4.

<sup>541</sup> *GT*, July 28, 1916, 1.

<sup>542</sup> One translation requested was a Tolstoy essay on “Patriotism and Fatherland.” *GT*, July 28, 1916, 1.

<sup>543</sup> *The Blast*, May 1, 1916, 2.

<sup>544</sup> *GT*, November 26, 1915.

<sup>545</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 1.

attack, the “yellow” press reported on the affair as an “anarchist riot” even though it had been a one-sided fight started by the police.<sup>546</sup>

In June, Morris Bell was arrested again and seems to have been a police target across state lines. After the two previous arrests in Connecticut, Bell was picked up south of Philadelphia in Chester, Pennsylvania on June 4.<sup>547</sup> Detectives pulled Bell off a speakers’ platform, just after he lectured on the gap between the rich and the poor in the United States. He was accused of calling for an “armed uprising” even though, according to a report from Chester in *Golos Truda*, he did not call for an armed uprising, and the meeting had been conducted peacefully. After Bell protested the “armed uprising” charge, the detectives said that he was in any case a “dangerous character,” so he was put in a local jail. URW Philadelphia set up a committee to raise money for Bell’s defense, interpreting the detention as an attempt to destroy the Russian-American anarchist movement by targeting one of its leading organizers.<sup>548</sup>

After his stint in jail, Bell explained what happened in an article titled, “American Derzhimords”—a reference to the cruel and dimwitted police officer in Nikolai Gogol’s comedy *Revizor* (Inspector General).<sup>549</sup> Commenting on the cozy relationship between a powerful, local corporation and the police, Bell wrote that representatives of the Remington Arms Company had accompanied the police during his arrest, even providing them with the vehicle which drove him to the police station. Remington had a rifle factory in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, which borders Chester. At the station, the police interrogated Bell with questions such as “who are your friends?” and “which organizations do you belong to?” He refused to answer anything, protesting that his arrest “contradicted the main position of the American Declaration of Independence guaranteeing the right of each

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<sup>546</sup> *GT*, May 5, 1916, 1.

<sup>547</sup> *GT*, June 16, 1916, 2.

<sup>548</sup> *GT*, June 16, 1916, 2.

<sup>549</sup> *GT*, June 30, 1916, 3.

person to express his opinion.”<sup>550</sup> This appeal to the country’s founding document did not convince the sheriff, who shouted back that as a non-citizen Bell had no rights. He then compared Bell to malaria, infecting the local air with disease. The police threatened to deport Bell for not answering questions, and sent a detective from Ellis Island to show that they meant business. After his trial, Bell signed a statement agreeing not to appear in Delaware County for the rest of the year. On a brighter note, he wrote that the county was fertile ground for the URW with large numbers of Russians living in that part of Pennsylvania still unaware of anarchist ideas. They must continue to organize in the region and show “Remington Co. and its faithful servants” that arrests and interrogation would only inspire workers to join the radical movement. With capital ramping up its offensive against the working class, “It is necessary for us to conduct counter-attacks!” urged Bell. “Go to the masses, comrades!”<sup>551</sup>

An intensification of class conflict in the US could be seen in Thomaston, Connecticut where in late June the URW helped lead an unorganized strike at the Plume and Atwood Manufacturing Company, a producer of oil heaters and lamps. Fed up with working 12-hour days for only two dollars per day, the workers, most of whom were Russian, walked out on June 19 demanding eight-hours work for three dollars per day, and they set up a picket at the entrance to the plant.<sup>552</sup> On the third day of the strike, reported E. Gitin in *Golos Truda*, the workers were attacked on their picket line by the police and a group of local shop owners. “Like carnivorous animals released from their cages,” wrote Gitin, “the hired killers fell on the strikers, subjecting them to a ruthless beating. A horrible panic set in among the strikers,” because some of their wives and children had joined them on the picket line. Several people were seriously injured and 25 workers were arrested, including URW members Gitin, Yaroshevsky, and Yarsky. The “‘enlightened’ Americans” laughed as they either watched or took part in beating up and

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<sup>550</sup> *GT*, June 30, 1916, 3. It was not unusual for revolutionary anarchists to appeal to the founding documents of the United States. Goyens has noted, for instance, how the Pittsburgh Manifesto cited the Declaration of Independence and credited the American revolution for establishing a precedent on how people should protect their freedoms against oppression, and thus the anarchists “grafted their movement onto the American tradition of rebellion against privilege and despotism.” Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 107-108.

<sup>551</sup> *GT*, June 30, 1916, 3.

<sup>552</sup> *GT*, June 30, 1916, 3; Gitin noted that few Americans worked at Plume and Atwood, because of the arduous working conditions.

arresting the Russians, “rejoicing in this vile scene. This bloodthirsty crowd was reminiscent of the Black Hundreds, which shed the blood of humanity in our motherland.”<sup>553</sup>

The URW deplored this violence against workers and extended aid to other strikers. One of the longest and most violent labor battles of the year started in June when the IWW led a strike of iron ore miners on the Mesabi Range in Minnesota. Foreign workers—including Finns, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, and Italians—had initiated the strike of around 10,000 miners before the Wobblies assumed its leadership.<sup>554</sup> The Range was dominated by Rockefeller’s US Steel corporation, but in this fight, the miners had some advantages insofar as reduced immigration made it difficult to recruit strikebreakers to the Range while some local merchants and politicians had been in an ongoing feud with the mining companies whom they accused of not paying a fair share of taxes. US Steel used typical, repressive measures including deputizing criminals and, similar to what happened at Lawrence in 1912, filing trumped up murder charges against the IWW union organizers on the Range, including Carlo Tresca and Sam Scarlett.<sup>555</sup> But the strike would continue until October. Wobblies and anarchists rushed to the aid of the miners and the arrested strike leaders. On July 29 in New York’s Union Square, Bill Shatov spoke alongside Bill Haywood, Joseph Ettor, Arturo Giovanitti and others at a mass meeting to protest the arrests and raise funds for the defense committee. Despite no involvement in the Mesabi strike, the URW raised a considerable amount of money for the miners and the arrested Wobblies. The URW had been holding open street meetings on Saturdays at Tompkins Square Park in the East Village, where they engaged people in discussions on politics and anarchism and raised cash for the cause on the Mesabi Range.<sup>556</sup> On July 29 and August 5, they collected \$15 for the Mesabi miners while also selling *Golos Truda* and other literature.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> *GT*, June 30, 1916, 3. Several of the arrested spent two days in the Thomaston jail and were fined 12 to 40 dollars. Six including Yaroshevsky were sent to prison in other cities.

<sup>554</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 493-494.

<sup>555</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 497-504.

<sup>556</sup> *GT*, July 21, 1916, 4.

<sup>557</sup> *GT*, August 11, 1916, 4.

At its sixth annual ball in New York on September 16, 1916, *Golos Truda* donated most of the ticket sales to the Mesabi miners. 1,000 people attended the party at the Manhattan Lyceum, which the URW considered an “outstanding success” especially because an ongoing strike of underground and aboveground transit workers prevented many comrades from attending.<sup>558</sup> Because the event was held in lower Manhattan, even those living in the Bronx were unable to make it. However, about 100 comrades from other states made the trip to New York, and the party raised more than \$80 for the strikers in Minnesota.<sup>559</sup>

The failure of the NYC transit workers’ strike that affected *Golos Truda*’s party demonstrated the inability of craft unions to protect workers in America and the corresponding need for industrial unions, as advocated by the URW. The strike of subway, streetcar, and elevated train workers in NYC was declared on September 7. 12,000 employees of the Interborough Rapid Transit Company went on strike, and leading up to and during the early stages of it, there had been a strong feeling of solidarity for the strikers among transit workers in New York and beyond.<sup>560</sup> “Zvonar” reported in *Golos Truda*, for example, that after Interborough received \$100,000 from Wall Street backers aiming to fortify the company’s position, tram workers and unions in Massachusetts matched that amount in a gift to the workers in New York.<sup>561</sup> Moreover, the city’s Central Federated Union adopted a resolution calling for a general strike to begin on September 22, which would bring as many as 800,000 workers into the strike. Despite these promising circumstances, however, the strike unraveled. The workers had been difficult to replace, but Interborough hired the notorious Bergoff agency, an organization that used mercenary gangsters and thugs to run the trains.<sup>562</sup> Zvonar reported that on the fourth day of the strike, anarchists Anna Linsky and Dora Triger, along with 12 others, were arrested for fighting with the Bergoff strikebreakers while trying to remove them from streetcars on

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<sup>558</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 4.

<sup>559</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 4.

<sup>560</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 94-96; *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>561</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>562</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 87.

Madison Avenue.<sup>563</sup> The Bergoff agency alone could not have broken the strike, but in response to pressure from Wall Street, city officials provided police protection for the scab-manned cars, which reassured a sufficient number of customers of the cars' safety, thereby protecting Interborough's bottom line. Then, leaders within the Central Federated Union vacillated in their commitment to calling for sympathy strikes to support the transit workers, and the general strike was a bust.<sup>564</sup> The strike had been undermined by the engineers, powerhouse, and firemen who willingly supplied the electric power needed to run the scab cars. These workers were organized in AFL craft unions and only protected their own.<sup>565</sup> Writing shortly after the collapse of the general strike and echoing earlier criticisms of collective bargaining agreements in *Golos Truda*, "Zvonar" noted that some union leaders balked on joining the strike citing their contract obligations to employers.<sup>566</sup> Raevesky argued that New York workers had been prepared to support the transit workers, and that their enthusiasm could have been converted into a mass general strike but for the craven AFL leaders and their "narrow craft union worldview" that had suppressed the strike.<sup>567</sup>

Industrial unionism was, however, on the rise in 1916, and becoming more mainstream. In addition to the general strike at Westinghouse, for instance, or the scores of strikes by unorganized and unskilled workers demanding more control over schedules and workplace conditions, the major railroad labor unions, known as the "big four"

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<sup>563</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3. Linsky and Triger were affiliated with the anarchist Germinal group in New York. They were fined \$1,000 each and sentenced to serve 10 to 15 days in a work house.

<sup>564</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 87-98. Given this, Foner concluded that only an industrial union, which the NYC transit workers did not form until 1935, could have succeeded in this 1916 strike.

<sup>565</sup> Irish labor leader James Connolly commented that without the AFL union men who ran the trains in New York, "All the scabs combined could not have run a single trip." Quoted in Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 101.

<sup>566</sup> *GT*, October 20, 1916, 3.

<sup>567</sup> *GT*, September 29, 1916, 1, December 1, 1916, 2. Indeed, Gompers promised the workers his full support, even for a general strike, but privately opposed the general strike and "broke the back of the struggle" by failing to follow through on his promise to deliver AFL backing. See Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 99.

Brotherhoods, had federated and abandoned craft unionism in 1915.<sup>568</sup> Further, in August, the 400,000 railroad workers represented in the Brotherhoods threatened a general strike if their demand for an eight-hour day was not met, even refusing to submit the case to arbitration. A general strike of this size, warned President Wilson, would shut down the railroads, cut cities off from food, and cripple the economy, but the railroad corporations simply refused to give workers the eight-hour day.<sup>569</sup> Wilson then pressured Congress to pass emergency legislation—with the strike date looming—resulting in the Adamson Act, passed in the first week of September, which granted rail workers the eight-hour day.<sup>570</sup>

On September 8, Raeovsky wrote an assessment of the rail strike in a lead article in *Golos Truda* titled “Direct Action.”<sup>571</sup> He described it as a “brilliant victory” for the workers and a validation of syndicalism. The events were “confirmation of anarcho-syndicalist teachings about the singular [*iskliuchitel’nom*] significance of the tactic of direct action and its highest form—the general strike.” The ability of the workers to “force” and “pressure” Congress to act had “enormous propaganda significance.” However, Raeovsky also cautioned against any premature celebration of the Adamson legislation, which still faced determined opposition among the railroad corporations, the capitalist press, and potentially the courts. Therefore, he argued the strike’s “practical significance” was in doubt.<sup>572</sup> For example, he noted the law was not scheduled to take effect until January 1, 1917 and more importantly, rail corporations openly stated their intention to both disobey the law and seek to nullify it in court. He furthermore argued that the political process in the United States, as bitter experience taught, could not be trusted to secure the eight-hour day for workers, and again stressed that “real concessions” could only be “wrested” from the “capitalist class and the government” through “direct struggle.” In trying to curb

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<sup>568</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 187-188.

<sup>569</sup> The workers promised to strike on all 225 of the country’s railroads. *The Blast*, September 1, 1916, 6. See also Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 173-176.

<sup>570</sup> All but one Republican senator voted against the legislation and even a “progressive” Democratic senator voted against the bill because he objected to how labor was *imposing its will* on Congress—i.e. the rail workers had done what anarchists and syndicalists aspired to establish as a norm. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 181-183.

<sup>571</sup> *GT*, September 8, 1916, 1.

<sup>572</sup> *GT*, September 8, 1916, 1.

the enthusiasm for Adamson, Raevsky had a point. In January, the rail corporations disregarded the law and the workers again had to threaten a general strike; tensions mounted until the US Supreme Court narrowly upheld the constitutionality of the Adamson Act by a five to four vote in March. Even then, the law only applied to a fraction of rail workers, not extending beyond the 400,000 represented in the Brotherhoods.<sup>573</sup> Nevertheless, the case of the railroad workers' strike seemed to demonstrate that the most effective way to bring change in America was for workers to organize collectively and impose their will on capitalists and politicians. Alexander Berkman declared, "Never before in the history of this country has Labor so convincingly demonstrated its power."<sup>574</sup>

Alexander Senkevich analyzed the strike against the railroad corporations in the context of the broader rise of the labor movement in 1916. He wrote that the idea of the general strike, pioneered by revolutionary syndicalists, had now been "so beautifully demonstrated in front of the world with the solidaric actions of railroad workers," and was starting to penetrate the minds of workers in general.<sup>575</sup> He also noted that through direct economic struggle, more than three million people in the United States were now in labor unions, by far the highest ever recorded. Not only "workers in dirty overalls" but those in liberal professions such as teachers, writers, and actors were also beginning to unionize along with federal and municipal employees such as clerks, postal workers, firemen, street sweepers, and others joining the ranks of organized labor. Finally, Senkevich asserted that, "No other country has given us such an example of the comparatively huge success achieved through the direct struggle of the working class, as the United States." Just imagine how much more could be accomplished, wrote Senkevich, if the reactionary leadership of the AFL were to be replaced with more progressive or radical union leaders.

Indeed, Raevsky had reported on a recent AFL convention where the issue of industrial unionism was taken up but rejected by the leadership. At the 35<sup>th</sup> annual AFL convention in November 1915, delegates discussed growing complaints from workers who were unable to join any of the existing AFL unions, because the unions were craft-based and many workers did not possess the right trade to match a local union. Raevsky added that calls for the AFL to consider adopting industrial unions were rejected and that even a

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<sup>573</sup> Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 199.

<sup>574</sup> *The Blast*, September 1, 1916, 6.

<sup>575</sup> *GT*, September 29, 1916, 2.

resolution to study the question was killed. Raevsky also denounced the AFL's racist and exclusionary worldview as exhibited at the convention. While most Russians could not join because of craft restrictions, the AFL openly discriminated against all Japanese workers, who were barred from becoming members, a decision that was voted on unanimously and approved by the convention and even socialist trade unions. He noted how the majority of AFL members were immigrant workers—Italians, Slavs, Greek, etc.—but that they were forced to dance to the tune of AFL leaders.<sup>576</sup> Nevertheless, some local AFL unions embraced industrial unionism, in defiance of the leadership, discussed below.

URW members themselves, meanwhile, remained active in workplace organizing, contributing in their own way to the new industrial union movement, which could not be contained by resistance from the AFL leaders. S. Bruskin worked at the General Electric plant in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and reported on a strike there in September.<sup>577</sup> It began as a general strike, wrote Bruskin, “in the full meaning of the word” and the mood had been revolutionary among the Russian and Italian workers at GE “who make up a significant percentage in the factory.” Their demands were union recognition and a 10 percent raise—for workers who were paid mostly by piece rate.<sup>578</sup> The strike began on September 2, and after two weeks almost all of the 6,000 workers at GE in Pittsfield had joined the struggle.<sup>579</sup> At the scene during the strike, Bruskin wrote about how the Italian and Russian workers had become unhappy with the AFL strike leaders, whom he described as the “imaginary friends of the workers.” Bruskin argued the union officials were behaving in a far too deferential manner, engaging in a “repulsive solicitation of concessions from the owners.”<sup>580</sup> Indeed, the strike in Pittsfield did not end well for the

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<sup>576</sup> *GT*, November 26, 1915, 1.

<sup>577</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>578</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>579</sup> Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 442; *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3. “The battle over workplace organization in GE,” wrote Montgomery, which started at the Pittsfield plant and spread to other GE plants after the US entered the war, revealed “the shape that scientific management had given to workers’ aspirations and company practice in the most innovative sector in American industry.” Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 438. Montgomery has also written about how the introduction of scientific management in the workplace had fueled the rise of syndicalism. See Montgomery, “New Unionism,” 518-519, 524.

<sup>580</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3. Bruskin also wrote that the AFL leaders routinely lied to the workers regarding the negotiations and other matters such as dues payments.

workers, especially given how united they had been: they gained a five percent salary raise but no union recognition. Worst of all, they were forced to sign individual contracts pledging not to strike or join unions, which infuriated the GE workers who would return to the picket line with a vengeance in May 1918.<sup>581</sup>

Some local AFL unions had been taking a harder line against companies while embracing industrial unionism and militant labor organizers. In Connecticut and in other industrial centers such as Pittsburgh—at Westinghouse and elsewhere—the International Association of Machinists, and metal workers generally, led the way. The reorganization of production in metalworking, resulting from mechanization and changes in the division of labor, made semiskilled and unskilled jobs available to migrants.<sup>582</sup> As a result, many unions began recruiting unskilled and semiskilled workers, allowing industrial unionism to emerge within local AFL unions such as the IAM.<sup>583</sup> Moreover, the IAM in Bridgeport, in particular, fell “under the influence of radical industrial-unionists in 1916,” explains Cecelia Bucki, “some purportedly with training in IWW tactics,” and set about organizing all workers in the city’s munitions and machine shops, skilled and unskilled.<sup>584</sup> Along with the IWW generally, and socialist machinists at General Electric, the IAM cultivated “the impulse called ‘workers’ control’, which went beyond craft solidarity to embrace broad worker solidarity and a larger, potentially syndicalist goal of self-management of industry.”<sup>585</sup> Changes in the economy, radical agitation, and the direct action movements of workers had forced conservative unions to move left.

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<sup>581</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3; For more details on this strike, see Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 442-443. After the strike, the workers’ hostility toward management only intensified, leading to a major strike less than two years later at the plant. Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 443.

<sup>582</sup> Bucki, “World War I Era Strikes,” 199; Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 187.

<sup>583</sup> Bucki, “World War I Era Strikes,” 196. AFL unions in the steel industry had also been shifting to semi-industrial unions by starting to organize unskilled ethnic workers. See Roediger and Foner, *Our Own Time*, 187.

<sup>584</sup> Bucki, “World War I Era Strikes,” 196, 199. Bridgeport’s IAM also created two ethnic lodges: Scandinavian and Polish. Moreover, the campaign for industrial unionism and mass action in Bridgeport was led by IAM union official Sam Lavit, a Russian Jewish immigrant and ex-Wobbly. Bucki, *Bridgeport’s Socialist New Deal*, 26-27.

<sup>585</sup> Bucki, “World War I Era Strikes,” 196. Roediger and Foner have written similarly of the IAM’s Bridgeport leaders who pushed for union control and unity between all workers, skilled, unskilled, foreign-born, and American. *Our Own Time*, 201.

URW members and other migrant workers, therefore, had more agreeable union representation in southeastern Connecticut in 1916. Under IAM leadership in the fall, the URW took part in a walkout for the eight-hour day in September at the Automatic Machine Company in Bridgeport, which had been one of the last holdouts to grant the eight-hour day in the city. A *Golos Truda* report described how URW Bridgeport expelled one member for scabbing during the strike at Automatic Machine.<sup>586</sup> The URW also had numerous members working at Remington Arms and referred to them as “our *Remingtonovtsam*” (a tightly knit group of comrades at Remington), as well as at the American-British company, another munitions factory.<sup>587</sup> In New Haven the same month, URW members took part in an IAM-led strike at the Winchester Repeating Arms company. The IAM faced stiffer resistance in New Haven than in Bridgeport. P. Zimnitsky reported in *Golos Truda* that 2,500 workers had gone on strike under the leadership of Harry Gill of the IAM. However, Winchester pressured compliant city officials to ban picketing and labor meetings while armed guards attacked strikers. Zimnitsky wrote that Gill and the union had given a worthy effort until Gill was arrested as part of the violent suppression of the strike.<sup>588</sup>

In addition to striking and organizing at points of production, URW members in Bridgeport and in nearby New York City had also been organizing lectures and meetings with other immigrant anarchists. On September 10, URW Bridgeport and Italian anarchists held a meeting to protest recent arrests of comrades locally and across the country. A. Milevich spoke for the URW alongside Ludovico Caminita, one of the more active Italian members of the IWW, and the meeting raised \$18 for the Mesabi defense committee.<sup>589</sup> Russian anarchists in New York also collaborated with Italians: URW Brooklyn worked with the Bresci Circle in East Harlem, a large group of predominantly Italian and also Jewish anarchists, where for instance on October 20, URW Secretary N. Mukhin lectured

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<sup>586</sup> *GT*, September 22, 1916, 3; *Norwich Bulletin*, August 18, 1916, 1 and *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, September 19, 1916, 7.

<sup>587</sup> *GT*, September 15, 1916, 3. The American-British company billed the Russian government for millions of dollars in shrapnel shells provided to the Russian army. See Brown, *Rosie's Mom*, 48.

<sup>588</sup> *GT*, September 15, 1916, 3 and *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, August 31, 1916, 4.

<sup>589</sup> For more on the interesting career of Caminita, see Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 80-83.

on the General Strike.<sup>590</sup> On Saturday November 18, URW Harlem hosted a party in the Bresci group's building, which was located at 228 East 108th street.<sup>591</sup>

Thus, anarchists of different nationalities united in response to the US government's increasingly repressive measures taken against radicals and labor organizers. In September, close to 300 IWW coal miners in Scranton, Pennsylvania were arrested in connection with a strike.<sup>592</sup> On October 22, the URW in Philadelphia took part in an international mass meeting to protest the arrest of workers and labor leaders in Minnesota and the repression of radical newspapers. Mukhin spoke alongside representatives of the English, Italian, Polish, and Hungarian sections of the IWW and other radical groups including Spanish anarchists.<sup>593</sup> Many of the same divisions came together again in Philadelphia on November 19 when Shatov and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn spoke in memory of Joe Hill, a popular Wobbly agitator and songwriter executed by a Utah firing squad the previous year after a murder trial that was based entirely on circumstantial evidence and widely regarded as unjust.<sup>594</sup>

Finally, on November 4 at Union Square in New York, Morris Bell spoke alongside anarchists Emma Goldman, Pedro Esteve, and others to protest the months-long detention of the IWW comrades in Minnesota and a more recent case involving labor organizers in San Francisco who had been falsely charged with detonating a bomb at the city's Preparedness Day parade over the summer. Throughout 1916, American cities held "Preparedness Day" parades to support the national mobilization of military forces. At the parade in San Francisco on July 22, a bomb exploded killing 10 and wounding 40. Five labor organizers were quickly arrested, including Thomas J. Mooney and Warren K. Billings who were charged as the masterminds of the plot.<sup>595</sup> The majority of the labor

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<sup>590</sup> *GT*, October 20, 1916, 4; Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 40.

<sup>591</sup> *GT*, November 17, 1916, 4.

<sup>592</sup> *GT*, September 29, 1916, 1.

<sup>593</sup> *GT*, October 20, 1916, 4. *Golos Truda* made financial contributions to various causes including for the IWW defense in Mesabi and the defense of Enrique and Ricardo Flores Magon in Los Angeles. See for example *GT*, October 20, 1916, 4.

<sup>594</sup> *GT*, November 17, 1916, 4.

<sup>595</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 78-95. Mooney's wife Rena along with Israel Weinberg and Edward D. Nolan were also charged as accomplices.

movement opposed Preparedness and boycotted the parades, so Mooney, Billings, et. al. supposedly had a motive, the state's reasoning went, to carry out the attack.<sup>596</sup> But the truth was that the business community in San Francisco had long despised Mooney and Billings because they were highly effective, radical labor organizers and that a case was brought against them for this reason.<sup>597</sup> Commission on Industrial Relations chair Frank Walsh wrote, "The exploiters of Labor on the Pacific Coast, taking advantage of the abominable nature of the crime committed, have seized upon five of Labor's best and purest for sacrifice."<sup>598</sup> Mooney and Billings were sentenced to long prison terms after a corrupt San Francisco police department and district attorney concealed evidence that proved their innocence, though both men were eventually pardoned many years later.<sup>599</sup> In November, *Golos Truda* described the events being organized across the country to protest this frame-up, and URW divisions sent donations to the Mooney-Billings defense committee.<sup>600</sup> Russian anarchists would even take up the Mooney-Billings affair in

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<sup>596</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 64-76. Even the majority of AFL unions opposed Preparedness, despite Gompers' support for it. Led by large industrial concerns, labor saw Preparedness as a direct threat: the military build-up was bound to be used against the labor movement itself—just as National Guardsmen were used against workers in places like Ludlow. Labor leaders believed Preparedness was the product of US financial interests looking to protect their foreign investments, and that labor's greatest enemies were those financial interests, not a German invasion.

<sup>597</sup> Even a US federal commission in 1918 concluded that the city's prosecution of Mooney and Billings was an effort by San Francisco authorities to crush the local labor movement. Moreover, writes Beverly Gage, "This has been the conclusion of every major book on the Mooney-Billings case." Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in its First Age of Terror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 353.

<sup>598</sup> Walsh continued: "The fact that Tom and Rena Mooney, Billings, Weinberg, and Nolan are absolutely innocent may furnish them no protection." *The Blast*, December 15, 1916, 5.

<sup>599</sup> See also Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 483n.66. It is not known who was responsible for the bomb explosion. Some anarchists claimed it was an inside job carried out to frame the labor leaders. Alexander Berkman, for instance, suggested United Railway and the Chamber of Commerce were behind the attack. *The Blast*, September 1, 1916, 3. Though Berkman's argument was persuasively made, the more compelling explanation points to an Italian anarchist group. See Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 137-138.

<sup>600</sup> *Golos Truda*, November 24, 1916, 1; *The Blast*, September 15, 1916, 8; October 15, 1916, 7.

Moscow, when on April 22, 1917 in Kazan Square, not far from the US Embassy, they staged a protest against Mooney's imprisonment.<sup>601</sup>

In addition to the harassment of Bell and other URW members involved in labor agitation, two more additional issues of *Golos Truda* were blocked from mail circulation, and Raevsky had now been given an explanation. The issues were alleged to have violated then section 211 of the United States Criminal Code, which prohibited the distribution of printed material that "tends to incite arson, murders, or assassination."<sup>602</sup> Other organizations and radicals faced harsher repression, particularly English speakers who had greater visibility. For example, in November 1916 a mob of police and vigilantes killed at least five Wobblies and wounded dozens more in Everett, Washington as the IWW came under attack nationwide.<sup>603</sup> Several leading progressives and radicals including Emma Goldman were imprisoned for teaching about the benefits of birth control.<sup>604</sup>

Despite the repression of labor and radical organizations, the URW experienced unprecedented growth toward the end of 1916, receiving a boost from the anarchist Voline who arrived from France in October and began leading URW efforts. That same month, Zvonar commented on the "liveliness" [*ozhivlenie*] of the movement in New York, as the URW made inroads among the mass of workers.<sup>605</sup> Two new divisions opened on the east side of Manhattan, one in the heart of the Russian community in New York, in the East Village on 7th Street, where they hosted lectures that attracted a significantly larger

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<sup>601</sup> Harper Barnes, *Standing on a Volcano: The Life and Times of David Rowland Francis* (Missouri Historical Society: St. Louis, 2001), 240; Paul Avrich and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, 2012), 262-263. The Avriches suggest anarchist agitation in Russia prompted President Wilson to ask the California governor to commute Mooney's sentence, just six days before he was scheduled to hang.

<sup>602</sup> *Golos Truda* issues number 100 (August 25, 1916) and 103 (September 15, 1916) were pulled from the mail. See *GT*, September 15, 1916, 3; September 22, 1916, 1.

<sup>603</sup> *GT*, November 19, 1916, 1; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 4, 531-548.

<sup>604</sup> Many anarchists argued that capitalist opposition to birth control was rooted in a desire to keep the army of labor supplied with fresh recruits.

<sup>605</sup> *GT*, October 27, 1916, 1.

number of workers than seen previously.<sup>606</sup> On October 27, Voline gave a three-hour lecture on the European war to a full house where he lamented how workers had been overcome by an “orgy of chauvinistic passions.”<sup>607</sup> Bolshevik writer Nikolai Bukharin, already well-known on the left, also recently landed in New York; in addition to taking on duties as the new editor of *Novyi Mir*, Bukharin gave a lecture on November 26 at the URW in Bridgeport on the topic of the “Working Class and the Modern State.”<sup>608</sup> The following week, on December 3, URW Bridgeport hosted a lecture by Sergei Zorin on “The Truth about God,” which attracted a crowd of 400.<sup>609</sup> On December 10 in Bridgeport, Shatov lectured to 350 on the topic of “American Freedom and American Reality.”<sup>610</sup> According to URW Bridgeport Secretary A. Milevich, Shatov argued that “workers can only become free when they destroy the foundation of the modern state—government, capital, and church—and on the ruins of the latter create free communes.”<sup>611</sup> Elsewhere in New England, the URW opened new divisions in Lynn and Salem, Massachusetts, the latter of which stemmed from a previously *bezpartiinyi* mix of socialists and anarchists, and in December a new division opened in Worcester.<sup>612</sup> There were 34 active divisions just before the end of the year.<sup>613</sup>

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<sup>606</sup> *GT*, October 27, 1916, 1. The other division was just outside of the center of the Russian community, on Cherry Street on the Lower East Side, near the East River.

<sup>607</sup> *GT*, October 27, 1916, 1. A new division also opened in October on Long Island, in Maspeth, with 23 members. *GT*, October, 24, 1916, 4. By mid-November, URW Maspeth had 40 members and its own space with a library and room to host parties in the community. *GT*, November 17, 1916, 3.

<sup>608</sup> *GT*, November 24, 1916, 4.

<sup>609</sup> *GT*, December 1, 1916, 4; December 22, 1916, 3. Zorin would in 1920 host Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Petrograd, where Zorin served as a leading official in the administration of that city. He became affiliated with the Left Opposition.

<sup>610</sup> *GT*, December 10, 1916, 3.

<sup>611</sup> *GT*, December 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>612</sup> *GT*, August 4, 1916, 4. In September, Bell spoke in Salem, Lynn, and Peabody, MA and had yet another altercation with the police. *GT*, September 22, 1916, 4; October 27, 1916, 4; L. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie v Severnoi Amerike: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Russian anarchist movement in North America: Historical essay], 374; December 15, 1916, 4.

<sup>613</sup> *GT*, December 29, 1916.

Detroit remained a strong bastion of support for the URW. M. Raiva lectured at the URW groups in Detroit in September and October, raising over \$56 for the miners and arrested IWW leaders in Minnesota.<sup>614</sup> After visiting New York and Philadelphia, Voline traveled to Detroit, where he spent three weeks delivering lectures and writing curriculums for URW schools.<sup>615</sup> He also led a team of three URW members in a debate against three Russian SDs held at the Polish Hall on November 26, which attracted a crowd of 700 to 1,000. Voline and URW Detroit members L. Lipotkin and Bel'mas debated Russian socialists Timoshenko, Lisovsky, and Nabatov. In his memoir, Lipotkin wrote that Voline's persuasive argumentative style made an "indelible impression" on the audience whose sympathies had been "on the side of the anarchists."<sup>616</sup> Similarly, from the perspective of *Golos Truda's* correspondent in Detroit, Ivan Cherekas, Voline handily defeated his opponents, drawing a "stormy applause" from the audience.<sup>617</sup>

In addition to divisions throughout the northeast and into the Midwest, the URW maintained branches in San Francisco and Seattle. The distance seems to have inhibited communication between the anarchists on the west coast and *Golos Truda*, but San Francisco and Seattle had not been inactive. In October, URW Seattle wrote to say they would not be able to attend the upcoming (third) convention, given how costly the trip would be, but praised *Golos Truda* for its consistent promotion of anarcho-syndicalist principles, which reflected the beliefs and interests of the federation at large.<sup>618</sup> The URW in Seattle, for instance, hosted a party on August 27 for the benefit of the Mesabi miners and sold 238 tickets for 15 cents each.<sup>619</sup> The URW in San Francisco contributed to the writing of a pamphlet on the causes of violence published in *The Blast* and distributed throughout the city, co-signed by the URW, The Blast group, and Volonta (Will), an Italian

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<sup>614</sup> *GT*, October 6, 1916, 3; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 342. A music-dramatic circle in Detroit also joined the URW in October. *GT*, October 20, 1916, 4. The strike in Minnesota, however, was defeated in October.

<sup>615</sup> *GT*, December 1, 1916, 3; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 344-346.

<sup>616</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 344-345.

<sup>617</sup> *GT*, December 8, 1916, 3. Cherekas reported that there were 700 in attendance while Lipotkin, in his memoir, placed the figure at over 1,000.

<sup>618</sup> *GT*, October 6, 1916, 3.

<sup>619</sup> *GT*, October 13, 1916, 4.

anarchist circle.<sup>620</sup> *The Blast* also carried announcements of upcoming performances by the URW's theater group.<sup>621</sup>

More URW members also became involved in the union movement. Under the leadership of both anarchists and socialists, a new Russian-Polish division of the shirtmakers union, Local 249, formed on November 26. The shirtmakers adopted *Golos Truda* and *Novyi Mir* as their newspapers, and their secretary was S. Lukich, the long-time secretary of URW Brooklyn.<sup>622</sup> Throughout December, Local 249 organized meetings in different neighborhoods of Brooklyn to discuss a planned general strike in the garment industry, which would take place in both New York and Philadelphia beginning in the first month of 1917.<sup>623</sup> Bolshevik V. Volodarsky spoke to the shirtmakers' union on December 24, 1916.<sup>624</sup> By January 1917, URW members were also active in Local 25 of the International Ladies Garment Workers' Union in New York.<sup>625</sup>

Toward the end of 1916 and into 1917, Ohio became a new locus of URW activity, whereas previously the groups there had been small and relatively dormant. The new activism appeared mostly in the northeastern corner of the state in an industrial belt connecting Cleveland, Akron, Canton, and Youngstown to Pittsburgh, an area that attracted machinists and unskilled workers.<sup>626</sup> In December, Morris Bell drew close to 100

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<sup>620</sup> *The Blast*, August 15, 1916, 5-7.

<sup>621</sup> See *The Blast*, February 5, 1916, 8.

<sup>622</sup> *GT*, December 8, 1916, 4.

<sup>623</sup> *GT*, December 15, 1916, 4. Organizers addressed the crowd in Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian languages. *GT*, December 22, 1916, 4. Besides Lukich, other members of the shirtmakers' union included M. Romanchuk, M. Kiklevich, and I. Benkovsky. *GT*, February 23, 1917, 3.

<sup>624</sup> Voladarsky would become a leading Bolshevik speaker and agitator in Russia, before his assassination in June 1918 by a Socialist Revolutionary. See Anatoly Lunacharsky, *Revolutionary Silhouettes* (New York: The Penguin Press, 1967), 111-120.

<sup>625</sup> *GT*, February 16, 1917, 2. It was a Russian division of the Ladies' Shirtwaist and Dressmakers' Union. The cloakmakers' union was also part of the ILGWU.

<sup>626</sup> Montgomery, *House of Labor*, 320. An extraordinary, massive rebellion of Polish, Lithuanian, and Serbian workers at steel companies in Youngstown earlier in the year may have opened up space for organization and unionization in the state. The workers burned one million dollars of company property—giving fresh meaning to direct action—and a grand jury even blamed the companies rather than the workers for the uprising. *GT*, January 21, 1916, 1; Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 6, 25-40.

listeners at the URW in Youngstown and another 100 in Akron.<sup>627</sup> URW Cincinnati announced they would put on a performance of Ivan Turgenev's comedy "Bezdenesh'e" (Penniless) on January 6 at the Jewish People's House.<sup>628</sup> Lastly, together with the IWW and Italian and Jewish anarchists, the URW in Cleveland organized an industrial union of shoemakers.<sup>629</sup>

Due to this growth plus Ohio's proximity to both Detroit and Pittsburgh, the URW's third convention was held in Cleveland, from late December 1916 into the new year. They discussed a possible merger with the IWW, an issue that had been raised regularly since 1911, and Voline summarized the debate's conclusions.<sup>630</sup> The URW had its own distinct anarcho-syndicalist theory it wanted to uphold rather than be subsumed into the IWW; delegates therefore decided to remain separate from the IWW to maintain their own identity and practices, concluding that doing so did not interfere with joint work.<sup>631</sup> The key difference between the two organizations is discussed at length below. Instead, the URW would continue to promote shared membership with the IWW while advising members to push the IWW in a more specifically anarchist direction.<sup>632</sup> URW Secretary Mukhin later argued that the two organizations complemented each other more effectively by remaining separate. The URW, added Mukhin, aimed to deepen its presence in industrial settings with the IWW's help—among, for example, shoemakers and tanners in and around Boston; among metal workers in other eastern and midwestern cities—but could do so

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<sup>627</sup> *GT*, December 22, 1916, 3; December 29, 1916, 3. URW Youngstown also held a prisoners' ball on January 13.

<sup>628</sup> *GT*, December 22, 1916, 3.

<sup>629</sup> *GT*, November 24, 1916, 3; December 22, 1916, 4. The Cleveland Jewish anarchists' secretary was Yakov Maers, who raised money for *Golos Truda*. Maers, or Jack Myers as he was known in the US, became deputy head of the main administration of the motor tractor industry in the USSR before his arrest by the NKVD in 1937. See more on Maers here: <http://alexabell.livejournal.com/64208.html> (accessed March 20, 2018)

<sup>630</sup> For early discussion on the possibility of the URW formally joining the IWW see for example *Golos Truda*, September 1911, 7. Peter Rybin, then living in Portland, Oregon, recommended the URW join the IWW on the grounds that the Wobblies simply knew the labor situation in North America much better than Russians; see also *GT*, February 1913, 7 and March 1913, 7.

<sup>631</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 2.

<sup>632</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 2.

without formally merging with the Wobblies.<sup>633</sup> The URW and other immigrant anarchist groups in the US “used the IWW as a vehicle for anarchist ideology and forms of organization,” writes Kenyon Zimmer “and in doing so blurred the lines between Wobblies and anarchists.”<sup>634</sup>

Maksim Raevsky addressed these blurred lines directly after the URW’s third convention by clarifying the distinctions between the IWW and an anarcho-syndicalist federation.<sup>635</sup> What theories and practices, in other words, did the URW want to uphold rather than be subsumed into the IWW? Raevsky highlighted one contrast—the issue of “boring from within” labor unions.<sup>636</sup> The IWW argued that workers in North America must form their own, separate revolutionary labor unions—and join only these separate unions—because the existing unions, principally the AFL, were irredeemably corrupt and reactionary and could not be reformed from within. Raevsky conceded that the idea of replacing the conservative leaders of the AFL seemed impossible, and to this extent he agreed with the IWW. “Anarcho-syndicalists must willy-nilly come to the conclusion,” wrote Raevsky, “that there remains little hope for the reorganization of the AFL from within.” But in contrast to the IWW, Raevsky argued that “this does not mean any struggle inside the AFL is futile, as the ‘industrialists’ [IWW] seem to think.”<sup>637</sup> Raevsky explained how and why anarcho-syndicalists had a somewhat different interpretation, based on developments in Europe. Specifically, he recalled how anarcho-syndicalism had come to life within the context of the French labor movement. In the 1890s, French revolutionary syndicalists adopted a tactic of working within regular labor organizations and in doing so succeeded in pushing the Confederation of Labor (CGT), France’s most powerful, nationwide union, to adopt a revolutionary program. As a result, many European and American syndicalists believed the same tactic could be applied to the AFL in North America, with

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<sup>633</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1917, 2.

<sup>634</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, “‘A Cosmopolitan Crowd’: Transnational Anarchists, the IWW, and the American Radical Press,” in *Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* eds. Peter Cole, David Struthers, and Kenyon Zimmer (Pluto Press: London, 2017), 40, 29.

<sup>635</sup> He wrote a six-part series titled, “The IWW and Anarcho-Syndicalism”: in *GT*, January 5, 1917, 2; January 12, 1917, 2; January 19, 1917, 2; January 26, 1917, 2; February 2, 1917, 2; February 9, 1917, 2.

<sup>636</sup> See *GT*, February 9, 1917, 2.

<sup>637</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 2.

similar results. Raevsky sympathized with the IWW's skepticism, but he argued that "due to the recent heightening of class contradictions" there were now "deep rumblings inside the AFL or at least inside its constituent organizations," as the International Association of Machinists' transformation indicated. These rumblings, argued Raevsky, created the ground for revolutionary work within the AFL and the possibility of reforming it in the future as the union "enters a period of profound organizational and tactical crises." Raevsky concluded his argument by acknowledging that the Wobbly tactic of pushing the AFL to the left from the outside had been effective. "But it is impossible," he continued, "to deny that at a certain historical moment, new conditions can arise which will allow work inside these organizations to play its own, productive role."<sup>638</sup> Indeed, the emergence of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the 1930s—major industrial unions with socialist currents—stemmed from years of labor entryism or "boring from within" along the lines advocated by Raevsky and others such as Lucy Parsons and William Z. Foster.<sup>639</sup>

Regardless of who had the stronger theoretical argument, workers typically did not have the option to join revolutionary unions in 1916-1917, which is why Russians in the URW joined other unions as well. As reporting in *Golos Truda* make clear, URW members worked with unions beyond the IWW, and in doing so parted ways, in practice, with the organizational philosophy of the IWW. From a practical point of view, they chose to work with what was available to them, and in particular with unions that had a track record of winning material benefits for workers, such as the IAM or the clothing trades. Russian workers experimented with American labor unions and avoided certain conservative unions after unpleasant experiences, for example with the UMW in Curtisville or with the AFL union at GE in Pittsfield. In other words, Russian workers had been making choices in ways that were consistent with Raevsky's and the URW's argument on the potential value of joining more conventional unions. In his conclusion, Raevsky nevertheless reiterated his strong support for the IWW. He urged URW members and anarcho-

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<sup>638</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 2.

<sup>639</sup> Lucy Parsons broke with the IWW in 1912 to join the Syndicalist League of North America, which embraced a "bore from within" philosophy more akin to the French anarcho-syndicalist movement. See Zimmer, "A Cosmopolitan Crowd," 34.

syndicalists to join IWW unions with a hope that the Wobblies would eventually recognize the principles of anarcho-syndicalism as their own.<sup>640</sup>

Furthermore, Raevsky argued that anarcho-syndicalists had already been a significant but unacknowledged influence on the IWW. He wrote that the IWW had “assimilated” revolutionary syndicalist principles on the “social role of labor unions (cells of the future society); the general strike, as the main weapon of social revolution; and the method of direct action, in contrast to parliamentarism”—and that doing so had also enabled the IWW to “free itself” from certain Marxists who had wanted to put the radical union under the control of the Socialist Party.<sup>641</sup> Wobblies borrowed anarchist and syndicalist ideas, moreover, while insisting the IWW had developed “completely independently” without influence from any outside ideology or movement.<sup>642</sup> Therefore, Raevsky criticized IWW leaders for denying the relationship between European anarcho-syndicalism and the IWW movement in North America and also for not understanding anarchism:

They characterize communist anarchism as a philosophical doctrine that has nothing in common with the labor movement; however, they close their eyes to the fact that the theoreticians of communist anarchism (Bakunin, Kropotkin, & others) based their theories on the experience of the labor movement and considered their theories valuable only insofar as the masses...recognized in these theories the systemization of their own hopes and aspirations.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 2.

<sup>641</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 2; February 2, 1917, 2. Becoming “free from state socialism” is a reference to the rift within the IWW in its early years, when certain Socialists who had helped found the organization argued the IWW should be allied with one of the two socialist political parties. After the 1908 convention, where Jack Walsh’s “Overalls Brigade” had helped defeat Daniel De Leon’s attempt to place the IWW under the direction of the Socialist Labor Party, the IWW decided to explicitly reject any affiliation with political parties and advocate only direct action. Raevsky credited anarchism’s influence for this decision, not without reason.

<sup>642</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 2. Raevsky referred to articles in the IWW English-language newspaper *Solidarity*, which had attacked anarchism, though he only cited one specific article—by Carroll on “The Tactics of the IWW and the political question,” dated November 25, 1916. Nevertheless, it seems to be an accurate characterization of the views of many Wobbly leaders.

<sup>643</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 2. All parentheses in quotations are in the original. By conflating “communist anarchism” with anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, this passage exemplifies *Golos Truda*’s overall treatment of anarchist-communism and anarcho-syndicalism as overlapping rather than divergent tendencies.

In other words, anarchist theory was based on workers' experiences, and the strength if not legitimacy of the anarchist movement rested on support from the mass of workers.<sup>644</sup> One might conclude, though he did not explicitly state as much, that Raevsky "based his theories" on the IWW and American unions, at least in part, "on the experiences" of Russian workers in America.

On these points, Raevsky's critique had merit. Salvatore Salerno, for instance, has persuasively shown how "native [IWW] activists self-consciously drew on the experiences of European syndicalists" and that the IWW should be understood as the product of both the changing industrial conditions in America and foreign syndicalist and anarchist influences.<sup>645</sup> Salerno added that the IWW drew on the syndicalist ideology of its immigrant workers, and he cited the URW as an example.<sup>646</sup> More recently, Kenyon Zimmer has argued that, "Many transnational anarchists were...instrumental in shaping the IWW and its ideology."<sup>647</sup> Of course, the influences went both ways, as pointed out, for example, in the previous chapter in considering the IWW's influence on the development of the URW, including the wording of the federation's Main Principles.

To blur the lines even further, individuals associated with the URW led initiatives to form new Russian language sections of the IWW in 1915—in New York and Chicago, and these Russian IWW groups coordinated most of their activity with the URW.<sup>648</sup> IWW organizer Yakov Sanzhur and others have noted that the Russian IWW divisions had

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<sup>644</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 2.

<sup>645</sup> Salvatore Salerno, *Red November, Black November: Culture and Community in the Industrial Workers of the World* (Albany: State University of New York, 1989), 4; In his series on the IWW and anarcho-syndicalism, Raevsky also demonstrated an understanding of the changing industrial relations in North America that led to the emergence of the IWW, a topic that was addressed in the previous chapter.

<sup>646</sup> Salerno, *Red November, Black November*, 4, 89.

<sup>647</sup> Zimmer, "A Cosmopolitan Crowd", 29.

<sup>648</sup> See *GT*, June 11, 1915, 4; July 23, 1915, 4; September 3, 1915, 4.

overlapping memberships with the URW.<sup>649</sup> The “URW was regarded by the Industrialists [IWW] as a friendly organization,” wrote Sanzhur, “just as the IWW was recognized by the unions [URW] as the expression of the revolutionary aspirations of American workers.”<sup>650</sup> The Russian IWW division in Chicago issued the first Russian IWW newspaper, *Rabochaya Rech* (Voice of Labor), on November 12, 1915, and it covered and commented on labor issues à la *Golos Truda*.<sup>651</sup> One of the lead writers was Vladimir Losev, who had previously written a regular column for *Golos Truda*, and *Rabochaya Rech*’s editor, Anatoli Gorelik, who would later join Voline and Baron in the Nabat Confederation in Ukraine in 1918.<sup>652</sup> While helping to organize the Russian IWW branches, the URW financially supported the launch of *Rabochaya Rech*; the Russian Wobbly newspaper was more of an offshoot than competitor of *Golos Truda*.<sup>653</sup> URW groups in Detroit, Baltimore, and Chicago organized regularly with the IWW’s English, Russian, and other language

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<sup>649</sup> Yakov Starik, *Istoriya Industrial’nykh Rabochikh Mira* (Chicago: Executive Committee of the Russian division of the IWW, 1921), 184. Sanzhur’s complete recollection of the close association between the URW and Russian IWW sections appears on pages 182-189 of his history of the IWW. Further, in a study on the red scare in Chicago, Suzanne Elizabeth Orr also noted the overlapping memberships of URW and Russian IWW members in 1915. Orr, “Deporting the Red Menace: Russian Immigrants, Progressive Reformers, and the First Red Scare in Chicago, 1917-1920.” (PhD diss., Notre Dame University, 2010), 68.

<sup>650</sup> Starik, *Istoriya Industrial’nykh Rabochikh Mira*, 183-184. Sanzhur also noted that at URW’s Cleveland convention, a resolution was passed encouraging all Russian workers to join both organizations, and that it was supported by both URW members and Russian IWW members at the convention.

<sup>651</sup> *Rabochaya Rech*, November 12, 1915, 1. The opening editorial stated the division’s ambition to organize Russian workers and lamented the present state of affairs wherein, “Having become here purely proletarians, Russian peasants and workers, according to the old habit to slavery in the homeland, submissively and quietly gave the last of their strength to the local bourgeois-bloodsuckers, performing at factories and plants the dirtiest and most difficult work.”

<sup>652</sup> *Golos Truda* and *Rabochaya Rech* shared other correspondents including P. Zimnitsky. See *Rabochaya Rech*, April 14, 1916, 4.

<sup>653</sup> *GT*, July 23, 1915, 4. Alexander Senkevich wrote that the URW itself led the effort to create Russian divisions of the IWW, and that there had been discussions about increasing the size of *Golos Truda* to make a formal IWW section. Senkevich wrote: “For lack of space *Golos Truda* is not able to publish many agitational and popular articles, illuminating in greater detail economic struggles of workers while facilitating the organization of economic unions of the IWW type. But we can easily fill this gap by increasing the size of *Golos Truda*.” See *GT*, September 3, 1915, 4.

sections. Regardless of theoretical differences, in practice the IWW and URW worked together whenever possible.<sup>654</sup>

From January 1917 leading up to the March Revolution in Russia, the URW continued to expand. On January 9, Shatov lectured to a crowd of 500 in New Haven and on January 21 another 500 at URW in Bridgeport. Despite having been evicted from their hall the previous week for political reasons, URW Bridgeport quickly re-located.<sup>655</sup> In *Golos Truda*, Raevsky wrote that after a hiatus, the Post Office was back, banning from the mail issue no. 124 of *Golos Truda*, published on February 9, 1916. The postal officials again asked for a translation of a particular article; for Raevsky, it was not difficult to guess which part of the article had “embarrassed” [*smutilo*] them: namely, the article’s “irreconcilably revolutionary position in relation to the war.”<sup>656</sup> From Ohio, Zvonar reported that in Akron, 400 to 500 Russians had been attending meetings on a regular basis, most of whom were members, and all of whom seem possessed with a “thirst for knowledge” and an understanding of the role they must play.<sup>657</sup> That role was stated by Senkevich, also in early February, reiterating one of the URW’s core themes: Russian anarchists in America would be “called upon to play the role of pioneers of our movement in our motherland; the future of our movement there depends on the degree of our activity here.”<sup>658</sup>

As the URW grew, women also joined in larger numbers. Before February 1917, there did not appear to be many women in the URW. For much of 1915, Sarra Rokhlis

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<sup>654</sup> *Rabochaya Rech* was shut down in September 1916, in connection with the broader repression of the IWW, the main target of what would develop into a full blown red scare after the US entered the war. In addition to Russian IWW newspapers, the URW spawned other US-based Russian anarchist-syndicalist pamphlet-style publications around this time. The first issue of *Rabochaya Mysl'* [Workers' Thought] came out in August 1916, a monthly paper written primarily by Apollon Karelin, whose articles had been rejected by Raevsky. Several URW members in the Pittsburgh area left the URW in late 1916 to start a “New Federation” and published two issues of their newspaper *Vostochnaya Zarya* [Eastern Dawn]. See Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 137-138, 140-141.

<sup>655</sup> *GT*, February 2, 1917, 3. Lipotkin wrote that URW New Haven had 300 members by the end of 1916. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 408.

<sup>656</sup> *GT*, February 16, 1917, 3.

<sup>657</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 3. Zvonar also wrote of a mass exodus from the local Orthodox church to the URW.

<sup>658</sup> *GT*, February 16, 1917, 4.

was Secretary of URW New York #2, and she gave several lectures in the city including one on “Political Power and the Working Class” in March 1915 at Casino Hall in Manhattan.<sup>659</sup> Maria Senkevich, perhaps related to Alexander, had been Secretary of URW Baltimore in the early part of the year.<sup>660</sup> Maria Nikolaeva, based in Ontario, wrote a series of articles primarily criticizing the Russian Social Democrats in North America and their newspaper *Novyi Mir*.<sup>661</sup> Aaron Baron’s wife Fanya was active in the URW.<sup>662</sup> Evidence in *Golos Truda* of a significant contingent of female URW members, however, did not surface until early 1917.<sup>663</sup> Then, on the initiative of A. Nikitin in the Bronx, women in the URW formed their own, separate groups. Nikitin argued that they would be able to reach more women in factories or elsewhere on the job if they had their own organizational name. She had nothing against mixed gender groups but argued that women in the URW could more effectively address women’s issues separately.<sup>664</sup> Therefore a Union of Women Workers [*Soiuz Rabotnits*] in New York soon formed, and on March 17 they met at Nikitin’s apartment in the Bronx to discuss organizing strategies while a report was read on “the origin of the family” [*proiskhozdenie sem’i*].<sup>665</sup> On March 22, the women organized

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<sup>659</sup> *GT*, March 19, 1915, 4; February 26, 1915, 4.

<sup>660</sup> *GT*, January 29, 1915, 4.

<sup>661</sup> See for example, *GT*, July 30, 1915, 3; August 6, 1915, 3.

<sup>662</sup> Aaron Baron’s sister-in-law Luba lived in Erie with her husband Morris Fagan. Fagan, Luba, and her sister Fanya, Aaron’s wife, were all militant anarchists or Wobblies. See Jessica Benjamin, “Generations and Revolutions: A Family History Recalled by Jessica Benjamin,” *Discourse*, 19, no. 1 (Fall 1996), 32-33.

<sup>663</sup> Other female URW members in 1917 include Clara Larsen, and Rose and Ethel Bernstein. See Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 340-341. Many more women may have been involved with the URW than is apparent from reading *Golos Truda*, especially since article bylines were more often than not obscured by the use of initials or pseudonyms, but it is safe to say that the URW was an overwhelmingly male organization. This was not unusual given that the Russian population in North America overall had been predominantly male.

<sup>664</sup> *GT*, February 23, 1917, 3.

<sup>665</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 4. In December, a Society of Russian Women formed in Hamilton, Ontario. It was not directly affiliated with the URW but announced its events in *Golos Truda*. They raised money for those suffering from the war through parties and vaudevillian performances including one of Chekhov’s play “The Bear.” *GT*, December 15, 1916, 4. See Chapter 5 for more on the URW’s cultural/fundraising activity.

a rally at the Brooklyn Casino Hall in the Bronx concerning the question, “What should women do now?” with Jewish, English, and Russian speakers.<sup>666</sup>

The Union of Women Workers in New York also joined the general uprising of women in America protesting skyrocketing consumer prices. Though unemployment was down and wages increased for many workers, these gains were erased by rising prices for basic goods, especially food and clothing. Food prices went up 82 percent in the two and half years preceding the US entry into the war, and in response to unaffordable food prices, thousands of women from all boroughs took to the streets in desperation, fighting against hunger and often fighting with the police who tried to shut down their protests.<sup>667</sup> 100,000 women and children attended a demonstration at Madison Square on February 24, during which a *Golos Truda* correspondent became moved by scenes of hungry and exhausted women carrying children on their shoulders and crying out for food.<sup>668</sup> *Soiuz Rabotnits* joined the general uprising by organizing a meeting in Maspeth, Queens on March 18 to protest the rising costs of living, and more than 300 Slavic women joined their demonstration.<sup>669</sup> After delivering speeches in Russian and Polish to the women, they elected a committee of 12 to continue the struggle against a high cost of living.<sup>670</sup>

The URW also participated in the so-called “food riots” of early 1917 in Philadelphia, when 12,000 sugar workers, many of whom were Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian, went on strike in Philadelphia, Long Island, and Brooklyn.<sup>671</sup> Because Philadelphia accounted for one-sixth of the nation’s sugar production, sugar prices shot up, causing additional protests. The IWW’s Local 8 of longshoremen, whose formation in

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<sup>666</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 4. The Brooklyn Casino Hall in the Bronx was located on East 137th Street between St.-Ann’s and Brook avenues.

<sup>667</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 154-155. Real wages fell considerably for most workers, prompting the struggle on the streets. New York Socialist Congressman Meyer London tried in vain to introduce a bill in Congress to nationalize America’s food industry.

<sup>668</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1917, 1. It appears several URW members were at the demonstration, but as author E. Ya. wrote: the “voices of our revolutionary comrades” were drowned out by the sea of bodies occupying the entire square.

<sup>669</sup> *GT*, March 23, 1917, 4. The parallels here to Russia are interesting, given that the revolution, which began on March 8, was initiated partly by women taking to the streets protesting the price of bread.

<sup>670</sup> *GT*, March 23, 1917, 4.

<sup>671</sup> *GT*, February 23, 1917, 4. Sugar workers had 11-12 hour days for only \$2.75.

1913 had followed the Spreckels Sugar factory strike organized in part by URW leader Bill Shatov, took on a leading role organizing workers at sugar refineries, which were located along waterfronts. The strikers encountered extreme repression and violence, and one Lithuanian Wobbly, Martynas Petkus, was shot and killed by the police.<sup>672</sup>

In early March, the URW led its most impressive strike to date, at the Nichols Copper Company in Long Island City, Queens. In *Golos Truda*, a worker described the conditions at this copper refinery: 13-14 hour days, seven days a week with no holidays, and unbearable heat. "Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian workers, accustomed to endure all kinds of misery, suffered through this grueling work."<sup>673</sup> But anger boiled over after the company began laying off workers and implementing primitive speed-up measures: "Hurry up, Polack!" foremen screamed "with malice."<sup>674</sup> Representing a group of workers, a URW cadre—several members from the Brooklyn, Harlem, and Maspeth divisions worked at Nichols Copper—informed management that they could no longer work at the plant if these conditions were allowed to stand. But "instead of improving conditions," reported *Golos Truda's* correspondent, company officials, "attacked the 'rioters' and savagely beat them...armed with iron pipes and 'black-jacks.'" Tragically, Ivan Vagun was killed in the assault, and nine other comrades, including Nikolai Surko, were incapacitated with severe injuries. This "inhuman act" by the company roused all 1,800 workers to walk out the next day, on March 3. In addition to shorter hours and wage increases, the workers demanded the removal of everyone who took part in the assault, financial compensation to the victims and their families, and recognition of their union.<sup>675</sup>

The Nichols Copper Company granted the workers many of their demands, and the URW considered it a huge victory. Workers won the eight-hour day, a four cent per hour wage increase, time and a half for overtime, and union recognition.<sup>676</sup> The company,

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<sup>672</sup> *GT*, March 9, 1917, 1; Cole, *Wobblies on the Waterfront*, 77-79. When the strikes came to an end after eight weeks, the workers failed to gain union recognition, and many workers lost their jobs; however, wage increases were granted.

<sup>673</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3. The report was signed only with the initials, "Ya. B." During the winter, Nichols Copper workers wore just one piece of linen; in summer, they worked naked.

<sup>674</sup> Elsewhere in workplaces, Russians were called "Indians." *GT*, February 26, 1916, 3.

<sup>675</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3.

<sup>676</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3. Over a million workers won the eight-hour day between 1915 and 1917. Montgomery, "'New Unionism,'" 515.

however, refused to terminate everyone involved in the assault or compensate the families of the fallen workers. Nevertheless, for the *Golos Truda* correspondent, the strike demonstrated the “fighting mood” of Russian immigrants and the great potential this suggested for the future.<sup>677</sup> They showed their ability to “stand up for their trampled upon rights and for human dignity” against the “brazen” actions of “American fat cats [tolstosymam].” Slavic workers became “conscious of their power and organized into one labor organization.”<sup>678</sup>

Why did Nichols Copper capitulate? In addition to the fact that the workers shut the plant down, a local newspaper report provided additional insight on how these seemingly powerless Slavic workers managed to win the strike, and so quickly. On March 8, 1917 the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported:

The strike at the Nichols Copper Company’s big Long Island City plant, if continued for any considerable length of time, is apt to cause *serious diminishment to the copper output of the country*...The plant handles the Phelps-Dodge product, which constitutes the bulk of its business.<sup>679</sup>

Anarchists and syndicalists had long argued that workers could dictate or at least negotiate better terms for labor by disrupting key industries. Nichols Copper must have felt supremely confident initially, in order to respond to legitimate grievances by brutally attacking the workers, and must not have imagined that all 1,800 “Polacks” would strike in solidarity with the victims. Even if the US economy had not been quite as dependent on the Nichols Copper Company as the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* stated, it is difficult to see why management in this case would grant worker demands unless the urgency of re-opening the plant required it.<sup>680</sup>

There is an interesting connection between URW strikes at copper foundries and brass factories and IWW organizing out west, with revolutionary syndicalists organizing at

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<sup>677</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3.

<sup>678</sup> *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3.

<sup>679</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 8, 1917, 19. [emphasis mine] This newspaper reported that “100 Poles” had initiated the strike but otherwise made no mention of the workers in multiple articles covering the strike. American newspapers did not appear to draw a distinction between Poles and Russians. For more strike coverage, see *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 5, 1917, 10 and March 25, 1917, 40.

<sup>680</sup> It is unclear to what extent the URW strikers were aware of Nichols Copper’s apparent importance to the economy.

both ends of production in the copper industry. Consider Nichols Copper's close association with the Phelps Dodge Corporation, especially in light of Nichols Copper's extremely violent assault on its workers. While URW members struck at Nichols Copper, the IWW had been organizing scores of miners in Arizona employed by Phelps Dodge, one of the largest mining companies in the country, wherefrom Nichols Copper received 90 percent of its product.<sup>681</sup> Phelps Dodge was also a major supplier of copper to other east coast refineries and factories such as American Brass in Ansonia—where the URW had led a strike in February 1916—a town named after its founder. After miners in Bisbee, Arizona, led by the IWW, went on strike in June threatening to shut down mine production, Phelps Dodge notoriously deported 2,000 Bisbee men to Mexico on manure-lined cattle cars and with no drinking water.<sup>682</sup> Politicians and judges acting in bad faith let Phelps Dodge off the hook for this criminal act; only violent repression and the illegal actions of state officials—plus a complicit federal government—could undermine the power of revolutionary syndicalists in the copper industry.<sup>683</sup>

The URW exercised its clout within the Russian-American labor movement to organize antiwar demonstrations in February and March. After President Wilson severed diplomatic ties with Germany in early February, anarchists and radical socialists called for mass or general strikes to stop America's entry into the war. At an antiwar rally on February 8 at Beethoven Hall in NYC, URW Secretary N. Mukhin shared the platform with Bukharin, Leon Trotsky, and German revolutionary socialist Ludwig Lore.<sup>684</sup> URW New York branches calling for general strikes organized an antiwar conference and were joined by

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<sup>681</sup> The other 10 percent of Nichols Copper's product came from smaller copper mining companies in Arizona. This nearly exclusive arrangement culminated in 1930 when Phelps Dodge bought Nichols Copper outright. See the Queens Library archive: <http://www.queenslibrary.org/research/archives/manuscripts/Phelps%20dodge%20finding%20aid.xml> (accessed March 3, 2018).

<sup>682</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 267-280. Acting on the company's order, Bisbee's sheriff deputized a posse of 2,000 to round up the list of men who were merely suspected of being IWW or IWW sympathizers. After the men were deported, they were threatened with death or bodily harm should they ever return to Bisbee, even though over 500 of them owned property there.

<sup>683</sup> Foner, *History of the Labor Movement*, vol. 7, 278-279. The US Department of Justice brought charges against the president of Phelps Dodge, Walter S. Douglas, and other leading mining officials, but the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the defendants, claiming it was a state issue—and there, the matter died.

<sup>684</sup> *GT*, February 9, 1917, 4.

the Russian division of the *Arbayter Ring*, the Union of Russian Sailors Abroad, the Russian-Polish divisions of the shirtmakers' and tailors' unions, and a group of Russian workers in the ILGWU. "The war which the United States is being drawn into by its government," read the first sentence of the conference's platform, "is being conducted solely for the predatory interests of capitalists who want to warm their hands by setting the world on fire."<sup>685</sup> By March, this antiwar coalition included "15 Russian progressive, revolutionary, and economic organizations in New York," and they conducted a series of agitational meetings to protest the war among immigrants from Russia, printing 40,000 leaflets to distribute.<sup>686</sup> The URW in Hartford, Connecticut joined American and Italian groups in an international mass meeting to protest the war in that city, and in Cleveland on March 11, Hyman Perkus and other URW anarchists disrupted a socialist antiwar rally after speaker Meyer London denounced calls for general strikes, arguing for more "prudent" tactics to protest the war instead. The anarchists, reported Perkus, were attacked by the crowd for their untimely rejoinder.<sup>687</sup>

But after the March Revolution, URW leaders focused most of their attention on rallying Russians to help fuel the anarchist movement back home. URW divisions reported scores of new, enthusiastic Russians attending their meetings. Anarchists now had the chance, wrote Zvonar, to build a mass movement in Russia "thanks on one hand to free speech and action there, in Russia, and on the other hand, to the work of the federation in America" where anarchists now had a substantial following and could convert that experience and energy back home into the revolution.<sup>688</sup> To continue recruiting and building momentum, the URW dispatched organizers to cities with high concentrations of

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<sup>685</sup> *GT*, February 16, 1917, 2; See Lipotkin for full text of the platform. *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 133-134.

<sup>686</sup> *GT*, March 3, 1917, 4; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 133-136. Notably absent from the Russian antiwar coalition in NYC was the Anarchist Red Cross. The ARC argued that participants in the antiwar conference should not be occupied in the production of ammunition, but a majority of the conference rejected this proposal, causing the ARC to withdraw. The ARC reasoned that conscious workers should not only refuse to be involved in the production of ammunition but should also actively urge all Russian workers to refuse positions in these industries. Presumably the counterargument, though it was not given, would state that the necessity of having to find work trumped ethical misgivings over working at arms producers, but the URW opened itself up to charges of hypocrisy on this issue. *GT*, March 16, 1917, 4.

<sup>687</sup> *GT*, March 9, 1917, 4; March 30, 1917, 3.

<sup>688</sup> *GT*, April 13, 1917, 3.

Russian workers: Baron went to Erie, for example, while Voline visited Roebling, NJ, a steel company town near Trenton.<sup>689</sup> Mukhin lectured to 500 in Bridgeport while Bell visited Rockdale, Illinois outside of Chicago.<sup>690</sup> Shatov debated the rector of a Baptist institute in front of a crowd of 2,000 Russians in New York.<sup>691</sup> Alongside Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, Voline and Shatov addressed a mass meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup> at the Manhattan Lyceum.<sup>692</sup>

The URW also launched a fundraising drive that demonstrated the federation's popularity. On March 23, *Golos Truda* editors—Raevsky was now sharing editing duties with Voline—announced their intention to start an anarcho-syndicalist newspaper in Russia, and by April 24, they had raised over \$5,000 for this effort.<sup>693</sup> The entire list of individual donor names appeared in several consecutive issues of *Golos Truda*, with contributions from various cities and small towns across North America—from Haverhill, Massachusetts to Kansas to Sacramento to major Canadian cities such as Winnipeg, Hamilton, and smaller places, such as Crescent City, Beaver Crossing, and beyond.<sup>694</sup> In Lincoln, New York alone, a hamlet 30 miles from Syracuse with a total population around 900, from April 10 to April 17, the Russian Workers' Union for Self-Education in Lincoln collected donations from 84 people.<sup>695</sup> *Golos Truda's* circulation at one point in 1917 was

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<sup>689</sup> *GT*, April 20, 1917, 3. Voline gave 17 lectures in the Pittsburgh area during the months of February and March. M. Smirnov described Pittsburgh as "Little Russia" because Russians could be found everywhere working in foundries and factories. Voline drew 300-350 listeners in several smaller towns including McKees Rocks, Homestead, Duquesne, and Steubenville, and mostly before news of the March Revolution broke. *GT*, March 16, 1917, 3.

<sup>690</sup> *GT*, April 20, 1917, 3.

<sup>691</sup> *GT*, March 23, 1917, 7-8; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 146.

<sup>692</sup> *GT*, April 6, 1917, 1.

<sup>693</sup> See *GT*, March 23, 1917, 1; May 4, 1917, 3; May 11, 1917, 3. The exact sum raised through April 24 was \$5,078.60 USD, which is about \$100,000 in today's money. To contextualize these numbers further, Leon Trotsky was accused of bringing \$10,000 back to Russia with him from New York—funds allegedly given to him by German spies or Wall Street, depending on the conspiracy theory, which was considered to be a massive amount of cash. See Kenneth Ackerman, *Trotsky in New York 1917: A Radical on the Eve of Revolution* (Counterpoint: Berkeley, 2016), 316-321.

<sup>694</sup> *GT*, May 11, 1917, 3-4.

<sup>695</sup> *GT*, May 4, 1917, 3.

over 2,700 and subscribers, and this likely underrepresents the numbers, as individual workers may have been more inclined to buy the paper on a weekly basis rather than commit to a longer-term.<sup>696</sup> Subscribers included public libraries and anarchist organizations in addition to well-known radicals such as Guy Aldred, Alexandra Kollontai, and Nikolai Bukharin, though the vast majority of recipients were workers' groups in the midwestern and northeastern United States.<sup>697</sup> On May 25, Voline wrote that more than 2,000 comrades actively contributed to the rise of the Russian anarchist movement in America while "tens of thousands" were "affected" or touched by the movement.<sup>698</sup> Similarly, in a 1924 article, Lipotkin wrote that from 1911-1917 there were "about 3,000" Russian emigre anarchists in North America who "worked on dissemination of anarchistic and revolutionary ideas among their fellows in exile." Their goal, he added, had been to "train workers for social revolution in Russia and in the world."<sup>699</sup>

The URW's organizational clout determined how many anarchists from America would return to Russia. All political exiles were granted amnesty by the Provisional Government and, in the charitable spirit of the euphoric moment, consulates were even given money to assist returning émigrés.<sup>700</sup> According to Ivan Okuntsov, the new minister of foreign affairs Paul Miliukov ordered two million rubles sent to the Russian embassy in

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<sup>696</sup> David Berry, *A History of the French Anarchist Movement: 1917-1945* (Oakland: AK Press, 2009), 305.

<sup>697</sup> INS File 54235/36b, Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. 529 copies of *Golos Truda* were mailed to Michigan (mostly Detroit), 404 copies to Pennsylvania (mostly Pittsburgh), 240 to Ohio, 205 to Connecticut, 184 in New York, 119 sent to Canada, 253 sent elsewhere abroad (mostly to Europe), 148 to New Jersey, 110 to Massachusetts, 91 to California, etc.

<sup>698</sup> *GT*, May 25, 1917, 1. The URW did not have a mechanism in place to keep a precise tally of the number of members, relying primarily on reports from the field.

<sup>699</sup> L. Lipotkin, *Golos Truda: Organ Federatsii Rossiiskikh Rabochikh lu. Ameriki* [Golos Truda: Organ of the Federation of Russian Workers in South America], April 19, 1924, 1-2. In his memoir, Lipotkin claimed there were 12,000 members "at the time of the Russian Revolution," but it is not clear if he meant in March or November 1917, or perhaps later. It is also not clear what this estimate is based on while there is no way to verify it. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 147.

<sup>700</sup> *Golos Truda*, April 6, 1917, 1 and April 13, 1917, 1. See also Ackerman, *Trotsky in New York*, 213-219; Kenyon Zimmer, "Premature Anti-Communists? American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917-1939" *Labor* 6, no. 2 (May 2009): 48.

New York to spend on helping migrants from US and Canada return to Russia.<sup>701</sup> The Russian consulates in North America did not have lists of political migrants, so consulate staff liaised with political factions to organize a repatriation process.<sup>702</sup> Committees were formed in cities with consulates, made up of representatives from each political organization based on its size and influence in those cities and surrounding towns.<sup>703</sup> The two most powerful factions were the URW and the Social Democrats, and the former gained control over the two largest committees, in New York and Pittsburgh, with strong representation in the other cities: Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Seattle.<sup>704</sup> The URW therefore spent much of April and May sorting out who would return while making arrangements for their journeys.

In the immediate aftermath of the March overthrow, *Golos Truda* writers advanced anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist communist ideas to replace the tsarist system that were focused on substantially widening the scope of the revolution and placing workers and peasants in control of its direction. On March 16, Senkevich, for example, argued that since the Tsar had been overthrown by “direct action” the revolution should continue in the same vein. Calling for “All land to the peasants, all factories to the workers,” Senkevich wrote that the Russian people should directly take control of the empire’s assets.<sup>705</sup> Peasants should expropriate land themselves while the urban proletariat could take control over the means of production and distribution. Further, Senkevich advocated “free labor communes” [*obshchina* with *communa* in parentheses] to be independently organized by the people, egalitarian but voluntary and free from interference by the state or political parties. To protect these communes, he called on villages and towns to enter into agreements and form associations of “Free Towns and Villages” to preserve

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<sup>701</sup> See Ivan K. Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya v Severnoi i Iuzhnoi Amerike* [Russian Immigration in North and South America] (Buenos Aires: Seyatel, 1967), 393

<sup>702</sup> See consulate official Pierre Routsy’s entertaining recollection of a meeting he had with Trotsky, Bukharin, and Shatov to discuss the arrangements. Pierre Routsy, “A Page from the past,” *Russian Review* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1948): 69-75.

<sup>703</sup> See for instance *Golos Truda*, April 13, 1917, 1 and April 27, 1917, 1.

<sup>704</sup> Okuntsov lists various left-wing organizations that participated in the committees, and he wrote that Shatov was chair of the New York committee. Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 392-393; see also Zimmer, “Premature Anti-Communists?,” 48; *GT*, April 13, 1917, 1.

<sup>705</sup> *Golos Truda*, April 6, 1917, 2.

autonomy and guard against centralization, including Social Democrat calls for state control or nationalization. On March 23, Voline argued that the Russian masses should take control of the revolution and “everywhere proclaim free cities and free villages.” He declared: “The peasants need...all the land. The workers need...all the means of production...The people need bread, homes, clothing [and] freedom—the full freedom to act.”<sup>706</sup> Expanding on these statements, Voline emphasized the importance of decentralization and autonomy. A revolution must be constructed from “the bottom up” and in the “peripheries” of the country rather than directed and controlled from the centers in a “top-down” process. Moreover, he wrote, to win over the Russian people, anarchists must be able to articulate practical, workable ideas. What, for example, did expropriation of land and capital “by the people themselves” mean in practice, asked Voline? Anarchists would need to have clear answers. These ideas hark back to the demands of Russia’s revolutionary populist movement in the late 1870s. One *Zemlya i Volya* document, for example, called for “the transference of all land into the hands” of the *obshchinas* and “agricultural working class” plus “the disorganization of the state” and “the breaking up of the Russian empire according to local desires.”<sup>707</sup>

Anarchist ideas were unlike those advanced by Russian Social Democrats in the United States. On March 21 in *Novyi Mir*, Leon Trotsky called for the establishment of a “Revolutionary Workers’ Government,” which was needed to “lead [the proletariat] forward.”<sup>708</sup> Anarchists since Bakunin had rejected the Marxist idea that a temporary state was necessary to create socialism, whether it was called a revolutionary workers’ government, a workers’ state, or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Responding to articles in *Novyi Mir*, Senkevich criticized the SDs for writing articles that proposed to eliminate the “independent, active” role for the masses and replace it with a new state to nationalize assets and take on the task of dividing up land. Like the “bourgeois-landowner bloc,” the SDs wanted to “extinguish the fire of revolution, robbing it of its spirit.”<sup>709</sup> Anarchists must

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<sup>706</sup> This *Golos Truda* article was translated by Paul Avrich in *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, 30-33. Translated passages are Avrich’s.

<sup>707</sup> Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia*, trans. Francis Haskell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 573-574.

<sup>708</sup> *Novyi Mir*, March 21, 1917, 4.

<sup>709</sup> *GT*, April 6, 1917, 2.

therefore carry out a “merciless struggle against their [SD] aspirations to Blanquism, to making revolution from above.”<sup>710</sup>

Voline engaged in an extraordinary conversation with Trotsky in either March or April regarding the intentions of the Russian Social Democrats. In an unpublished section of Voline’s book *The Unknown Revolution*, he recalled the encounter. At the printers’ shop where they both awaited copies of their respective newspapers, Voline told Trotsky that he expected the “left marxists” to take power in Russia and persecute the anarchists: “You will begin to persecute us just as soon as your power has been consolidated. And you will end by having us shot down like partridges.”<sup>711</sup> Trotsky tried to alleviate his “comrade’s” concern by arguing that Marxists were “anarchists, in the final analysis. The only thing is that you want to introduce your anarchism straight away, without transition or preparation.” Trotsky dismissed this distinction as “a little question of methodology, quite secondary,” and added that it was “nonsense” to think Marxists would resolve their differences by “turning their guns on the anarchists! Come, come, what do you take us for?” Two and half years later when Voline was arrested for assisting Nestor Makhno, the captors notified Trotsky and asked him what should be done with the known anarchist. The reply came back quickly: “Shoot out of hand. —Trotsky.”<sup>712</sup>

In the final issue of *Golos Truda* on May 25, an unsigned editorial likely written by Voline summed up the URW’s tenure. “All of our work in America was in essence a test of the vitality and truth of our ideas” and after “six years of painstaking work” the “great and main conclusion” they had reached from their experience in America was an understanding of “the complete kinship, intimate, and deep bond between” the anarchist idea and the masses.<sup>713</sup> Moreover, “This bond ceased to be a vague theoretical position

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<sup>710</sup> *GT*, March 30, 1917, 3. Senkevich added that the SD influence on the proletariat in Russia was deeply rooted,” thus anarchists faced a two-front struggle in Russia: against the bourgeois-landowner bloc on one hand and the SDs on the other. L. Lipotkin contributed a valuable article, on the peasant question, that further distinguished the anarchist position from the Social Democrats. *GT*, May 18, 1917, 2.

<sup>711</sup> This anecdote appears in Daniel Guérin, *No Gods, No Masters: an Anthology of Anarchism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 476-477. It is Voline’s own account of the interactions, according to Guérin.

<sup>712</sup> Trotsky, Raevsky, and Mukhin returned to Russia on the same voyage in April 1917. All three, along with Bolsheviks Chudnovsky and Romanchenko, were removed from the ship at Halifax and temporarily placed in a German internment camp. Ackerman, *Trotsky in New York*, 246.

<sup>713</sup> *GT*, May 25, 1917, 1.

or ‘premonition.’ It became a reality.” As such, the URW and *Golos Truda* felt “enormous satisfaction” with the results of this test. The editorial reasoned that if they could make “contact with the masses” on foreign soil in America, the possibilities for success on native soil in Russia were boundless. Ivan Okuntsov, a Russian émigré in America and rival of both the URW and Social Democrats, wrote that the URW’s “activity and program...responded to the needs and desires” of Russians workers, enabling the federation to play a “huge, creative role in the Russian” community.<sup>714</sup> Lipotkin summed up the URW’s work as follows:

For the most part, the members of the Unions were workers and peasants, Russian immigrants, driven by economic and political conditions to America, professing different ideas, but all conscious of the sacred duty of fighting the common ancestral enemy—capital and state. All the work of the Unions consisted chiefly in the spiritual, conscious development of its members and in the training of good workers for the upcoming [*gryadushchei*] social revolution, both in Russia and throughout the world. And the best workers in spreading anarchist ideas among the Russian colony were: Shatov, Voline, Mukhin, Mikh. Raiva, Bell, and others.<sup>715</sup>

Voline wrote that in addition to the \$5,700 raised over the previous two and a half years, the URW raised an additional \$7,000—in two months—for the anarcho-syndicalist organ in Russia, which would become *Golos Truda* as the organ of the new Petrograd Union of Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda.<sup>716</sup> When they departed, *Golos Truda* editors brought their typesetting equipment with them to use in Russia—the project in Russia would be a continuation of *Golos Truda*-New York in a meaningful sense, materially and

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<sup>714</sup> Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 261, 201. Okuntsov wrote that the URW had a larger following in the US than the SDs, because of the anarchists’ responsiveness to the interests of workers.

<sup>715</sup> L. Lipotkin, *Golos Truda: Organ Federatsii Rossiiskikh Rabochikh lu. Ameriki* [Organ of the Federation of Russian Workers of South America] April 19, 1924, 1-2. The URW did not impose an anarcho-syndicalist line on its members, despite *Golos Truda*’s clear orientation. As Lipotkin hints at here, there was room for disagreement, and there were no strict ideological requirements for joining beyond not being a scab or a capitalist, since it was a specifically working-class organization.

<sup>716</sup> *GT*, May 25, 1917, 1. Voline emphasized that all of this money came from workers, not wealthy donors. See also Paul Avrich, ed., *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), 68; Ivan Okuntsov and L. Lipotkin reported a similar figure for the amount of money raising for *Golos Truda* in St. Petersburg. Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 262 and Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 147.

intellectually.<sup>717</sup> The editorial staff would include Raevsky, Voline, Shatov, and G. Raiva, who were joined by Gregory Maximov, Alexander Shapiro, and Olga Freydlin.<sup>718</sup>

The entire *Golos Truda* staff along with hundreds of other URW members returned to Russia with financial support from the Provisional Government. From Pittsburgh alone, the Russian consul paid for at least 160 URW members to return to Russia in the first three months after the revolution.<sup>719</sup> The secretaries of each division had priority and all returned courtesy of Miliukov.<sup>720</sup> Every member of URW Brooklyn moved back to Russia, as did the majorities in most URW divisions, which caused all URW divisions in Baltimore, for example, to close.<sup>721</sup> With *Golos Truda* out of circulation, together with the mass re-migration to Russia, the URW's activity slowed down in 1917, but the federation continued to operate and made a comeback in 1918 and 1919 under a new leadership—see Chapter 6.

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<sup>717</sup> Many URW divisions mailed their library collections in wooden crates to Russia. *GT*, May 11, 1917, 4 and Okuntsov, *Russkaya Emigratsiya*, 394.

<sup>718</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 137-139, 152-153.

<sup>719</sup> Dillon report, *Surveillance of Radicals*, microform reel 1:190-206

<sup>720</sup> *GT*, May 25, 1917, 4.

<sup>721</sup> *GT*, May 18, 1917, 4. URW Baltimore sent its library collection to Russia.

## Chapter 5. Religion, Mutual Aid, and Culture

Mutual aid societies were an important feature of the URW's workers' socialism. Anarchists offered a vision of the future that would replace existing bourgeois and religious institutions with educational and social organizations run on anarchist lines. The URW and other anarchists in the 1910s experimented with these types of organizations to support and complement their union organizing, and to function as working-class alternatives to initiatives run by the Russian Orthodox Church, which was the URW's leading competitor for adherents among Russian immigrants. A look at some of these organizations and related anarchist causes, together with the radical working-class culture that supported them, helps to further illuminate the anarchists' commitment to practical labor organizing, movement building, and revolutionary class struggle.

Anarchists defined themselves by their opposition to both state and capitalism, but also religion, and a decades long Russian conflict—between the Church and radicals—was played out on American soil. The URW held a strong animus toward religion based on anarchist ideology, political disputes relating to the war in Europe, and the predicament of the working class in both Russia and North America. In the 1910s, URW members across the US were involved in a countless number of feuds with members of the Russian Orthodox Church. Before we look at the URW's secular alternative institutions to religion, the chapter details anarchist quarrels with church personnel and Russian conservatives in the émigré communities, which reveal: how the latter disrupted the URW's labor organizing agenda by intervening on the side of American capitalists; how both the Church and conditions of American capitalism contributed to the radicalization of Russian immigrants; a sharply irreverent critique of religion that provides additional insight into the federation's anti-capitalist working-class ideology. We need only consider a few of these interactions to get a sense of their character.

P. Bresky in Pittsburgh described one such confrontation between the URW and the Orthodox Church stemming from the war. In April 1915, the Russian government called on “soldiers and militiamen [*soldaty i ratniki opolcheniya*] in America” to join the Russian army; the appeal stated that such men were needed in order “to defend Faith,

Tsar, and Fatherland from enemies.”<sup>722</sup> URW Pittsburgh passed a resolution to oppose this recruitment drive and began organizing a protest rally. The resolution stated:

We, Russian reserve soldiers and militiamen...came to the conclusion that the present war was launched not with the goal to defend freedom, try as the powerful, the capitalists, and the corrupt clergy brazenly try to convince us—the working people. They started the war out of vanity and for glory’s sake—for the sake of their personal gain and...for the acquisition of new markets.<sup>723</sup>

In response to the notion of fighting in a war to defend Faith, the resolution added that Jesus Christ “never demanded a defense of faith with fire and sword and moreover never demanded but was always opposed to murder...therefore, to defend this faith with weapons in hand, we refuse.” The resolution also argued that the Christian faith had been “disfigured” [*izurodovanno*] since the time of Jesus.<sup>724</sup>

Therefore, on Sunday April 18, 400 Russians attended URW Pittsburgh’s antiwar rally. A few of the comrades even persuaded church-goers to join them. Barabanov in Pittsburgh reported:

Before the meeting, workers Zonov [Peter Rybin] and Bruver...handed out leaflets near the church...Suddenly our comrades began to gather people from the church, leaving the priest almost without an audience. The surprised priest exited the church to see where the congregation [had gone]. Seeing the parishioners discussing the [URW] leaflets and buying *Golos Truda*, the ‘spiritual father’ used the telephone to notify the police that three anarchists came to his temple and violated the peace. After a few minutes the police arrived, and our comrades were arrested.<sup>725</sup>

The battles between anarchists and the Orthodox Church were especially pronounced in the Pittsburgh area because of the large population of Russians there seeking work.

As well in early 1915, T. Pepel wrote that Russians in Homestead, Pennsylvania—near Pittsburgh—had been turning away from the Orthodox Church and embracing the revolutionary movement. Many workers were killed on the job in this period, and Pepel

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<sup>722</sup> *GT*, April 30, 1915, 4.

<sup>723</sup> *GT*, April 30, 1915, 4.

<sup>724</sup> *GT*, April 30, 1915, 4.

<sup>725</sup> *GT*, April 30, 1915, 4. Rybin and Bruver were sentenced to 10 days in jail.

informed *Golos Truda* readers of a “comrade worker” who was “cut into pieces” by a runaway train, yet another “victim of the negligent attitude of capitalists toward human life.”<sup>726</sup> Deaths like these contributed to a rising level of consciousness among Russians, explained Pepel. Previously when someone died, Russians in Homestead would hire a priest to lead mass, carry out traditional customs, and generally speaking they had demonstrated a commitment to the Church. But Russians in Homestead, wrote Pepel, were presently exhibiting an “antagonistic attitude toward the order of the ‘long-maned’ [dolgogrivykh], as they call the priests.”<sup>727</sup> Moreover, at the funeral for the man killed by a runaway train, Pepel was “dumbfounded from astonishment and ecstasy” when one Russian suddenly “tightened his chest and in a loud baritone” began singing the words of a revolutionary anthem that dated back to the 1870s in Russia. Pepel recalled the opening lyrics: “You fell victims in the deadly struggle...A despot is feasting in his luxurious palace” and when the singer reached the line, “The time has come and the people are awake” his words were “filled with tender, plaintive tenor” while the final lines, “Farewell, comrades...” were sung “in a harsh booming bass, like threatening someone in the distance.”<sup>728</sup> This revolutionary song, “You Fell Victim,” often referred to as the “Funeral March,” was popular among Russian workers in the late 1870s, sung at funerals for comrades killed by tsarist police. Pepel’s uplifting story, however, ended on a slightly different note. “A religious undertaker thought that we were singing something divine,” Pepel recalled, “and he raised his eyes to the sky in prayer while trying to sing along with us. I could not stop myself from bursting out laughing. The mood was spoiled.”<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>726</sup> *GT*, April 23, 1915, 3. Deaths and injuries among workers near and on railways increased four-fold from 1889-1910. David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, *Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1989), 196. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that in 1913 alone, 23,000 American workers were killed on the job, which equaled 61 deaths per 100,000 workers compared to an average of 3.3 deaths per 100,000 workers in more recent years: <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2016/article/the-life-of-american-workers-in-1915.htm> (accessed March 15, 2018).

<sup>727</sup> *GT*, April 23, 1915, 3. It is an Orthodox Church custom for priests to let their hair and beards grow out.

<sup>728</sup> *GT*, April 23, 1915, 3. See “Vy zhertvoiu pali v bor’be rokovoi” in Academic: [https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dic\\_wingwords/547/%D0%92%D1%8B](https://dic.academic.ru/dic.nsf/dic_wingwords/547/%D0%92%D1%8B) (accessed April 15, 2018) and the complete song and lyrics here: <https://www.marxists.org/history/ussr/sounds/lyrics/vy-zhertvoiu.htm> (accessed February 16, 2018).

<sup>729</sup> *GT*, April 23, 1915, 3.

More seriously, Orthodox Church members also spied on the URW and often explicitly tried to undermine the anarchists' organizing efforts. In March 1916, URW organizer Morris Bell was arrested in Waterbury, Connecticut in connection with a strike at the Scovill Brass Company. Bell was alleged to have called on workers at Scovill to break machines at the factory should their demands not be met, as described in Chapter 4. But how did Bell's speech allegedly calling for sabotage become known to police and Scovill officials? "Barsuk" from the Waterbury URW explained that several "traitors and snitches" posing as URW-friendly had infiltrated their organization. Specifically, Barsuk singled out men associated with the Orthodox Church Brotherhood who listened to Bell's speech and told the police.<sup>730</sup>

URW Waterbury member Ya. Arensky later wrote that Russian priests in America carried out the duties of the tsarist government, acting as the "higher police and gendarmie authorities" in Russian communities.<sup>731</sup> According to Arensky, priests directed groups of Russian "brothers" [*bratchiki*], i.e. members of a particular society or order affiliated with the Church, to harass URW members and systematically try to repress its activity. In July 1916, for example, the *bratchiki* in Waterbury physically assaulted URW members who had been handing out leaflets on the street, and then claimed the anarchists had started the fight. At a trial, the "drunken" *bratchiki* read aloud URW literature as evidence against them, and Arensky suggested that the local court conspired with Russian priests to have the anarchists convicted and thrown in jail.<sup>732</sup> Arensky commented that even by moving to America, they could not escape Russia: "It was naïve to think that living in America, the country of democratic freedom and universal suffrage, we, Russian workers, would get a rest from...the violence of the Russian gendarmerie, from constant fear of arbitrary arrests and from tsarist reprisals for [our] political beliefs."<sup>733</sup> In addition to Russian anarchists and workers, Russian communities were riddled with pro-tsarist elements that actively

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<sup>730</sup> Barsuk identified the culprits: Anton Khomik, Adam Yashchenko, Miron Ratyshnyi, Ivan Motuz, and Savva Sidoruk. *GT*, March 31, 1916, 3.

<sup>731</sup> *GT*, July 28, 1916, 3.

<sup>732</sup> Arensky noted that the activities of *bratchiki* had been responsible for recent arrests of URW members in New London, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere. Conservative, religious Russians worked with local American capitalists to thwart the anarchists.

<sup>733</sup> *GT*, July 28, 1916, 3.

engaged with the URW. Anarchists wrote frequently of spies, priests, and “Black Hundreds” interfering with their labor organizing and other activity.<sup>734</sup>

Conflicts with Russian conservatives, as is suggested in parts of chapters 3 and 4, were a part of the anarchists’ everyday lives in the US. A more ordinary example occurred the same summer in New London, Connecticut where a *Golos Truda* correspondent wrote about one M. Kanenchik, a local Russian shop owner “who imagines himself as a protector of order similar to Chekhov’s Sergeant Prishibeyev.”<sup>735</sup> The title character of Anton Chekhov’s short story “Sergeant Prishibeyev” is a comic figure, described by professor of literature Simon Karlinsky as “the quintessential authoritarian...who is naturally convinced that people do not know what is good for them and need constant supervision...while he knows what is right and has a God-given mission to tell everyone else what to do.”<sup>736</sup> Kanenchik and his wife had been tearing down URW fliers around town, interrupting lectures, and spreading “the most ridiculous gossip about the URW and individual members hoping to undermine the influence of the Union in the local colony.” This “type” of person, the anarchist in New London noted wearily, appeared in every Russian community in the US.<sup>737</sup>

The URW’s animus toward religion extended beyond the Orthodox Church in Russian communities. As anarchists, they opposed religion on principle, and practically they saw how it could be weaponized to suppress the labor movement in the US. For example, URW members commented on the growth of Christian fundamentalism in the United States, which they interpreted as an elite-engineered campaign to smother working-class unrest. A charismatic evangelist who gave a lecture to workers at the silk mills in Paterson, New Jersey, was described by one Russian weaver as “the well-known religious clown Billy Sunday, whose task was to frighten the working people with the kingdom of heaven, so that they silently and without protest suffer their lives of hard labor

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<sup>734</sup> For another description of the phenomenon, see *GT*, February 4, 1916, 3.

<sup>735</sup> *GT*, June 16, 1916, 4.

<sup>736</sup> Simon Karlinsky, *Anton Chekhov’s Life and Thought* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 24.

<sup>737</sup> *GT*, June 16, 1916, 4.

[*katorzhnuiu zhizn'*] in the factories and plants of Paterson.”<sup>738</sup> In a separate but similar commentary, Alexander Senkevich added that while “Billy Sunday is the big fish, every county in the country has its little Sunday.” He argued that “the sudden rise” of religious groups across the country resulted from an intentional effort “to turn [*svernut*] workers away from the path of struggle for improving their position,” citing a *Wall Street Journal* editorial which argued openly that religion was good for business because it created an obedient workforce.<sup>739</sup> Senkevich also wrote of new efforts to instill religion in the Midwest, undertaken to counter the IWW’s surging Agricultural Industrial Union in 1915, which had been recruiting large numbers of migrant farm workers into its ranks.<sup>740</sup> For such reasons, the URW and anarchists considered opposition to religion an essential aspect of the broader struggle against capitalism and the state.

To counteract religious influences, to appeal to workers by offering alternatives, the URW established mutual aid societies supported by cultural events, performances, and social activities, and these projects were an integral part of the working-class movement fostered by the URW. Anarchist organizers understood that it was difficult to build a revolutionary labor army in North America if many Russians lacked basic necessities of life. Thus, in September 1913, for example, the URW together with Russian Social Democrats and others formed the “Society for the organization of a Russian Worker-Immigrant Home” (Society), which would offer workers’ services inadequately provided by the official, Orthodox Church-supported Russian Immigrant Home and other institutions.<sup>741</sup> Cut off from home and feeling lost in the “modern Babylon” of large, industrial, American cities, many Russians had felt the need not only for stronger labor but also social organizations to support the community and take care of one another. They

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<sup>738</sup> *GT*, July 30, 1915, 4. Billy Sunday, whose popularity soared in the 1910s, was an early twentieth century version of Billy Graham. This *Golos Truda* correspondent reassured his readers by stating that Billy Sunday’s message did not resonate with Paterson workers; instead, the URW now had many sympathizers in Paterson, and there had been talk of another major strike breaking out at the mills akin to the 1913 strike. *GT*, July 30, 1915, 4.

<sup>739</sup> *GT*, June 18, 1915, 2. To support his argument, Senkevich quoted a lengthy passage from the editorial. See “A ‘Business’ Revival,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 29, 1915, 1. The editorial also indicated that this view of religion as a useful tool to suppress working-class unrest had been a highly popular one among readers of the *Wall Street Journal* going back many years.

<sup>740</sup> *GT*, June 18, 1915, 3.

<sup>741</sup> *GT*, October 1913, 7; January 1914, 6. Similar organizations appeared in other cities.

had looked with envy upon other immigrant groups who had been in the US longer, were more properly settled, and in turn had higher standards of living. Not only Germans, Irish, and Italians but “even our fellow countrymen—Finnish, Latvian, and Polish—have well-established...immigration homes.”<sup>742</sup> Lack of such institutions, it was felt, significantly contributed to Russians’ misery and sense of helplessness in the United States. The main goal of this URW-led project was to raise funds for an immigration home to aid and protect Russians who had fallen through society’s cracks.<sup>743</sup> Further, as a progressive initiative, the Society aimed to spread class consciousness among new arrivals and warn them of the “religious obscurantism” of the Orthodox Church as well as scams targeting vulnerable Russians within the community.<sup>744</sup> The Society would also organize social events, including trips to City Island, a recreational spot adjacent to the Bronx in the Long Island Sound.<sup>745</sup> The organizers of one of these excursions—Adolf Schnabel, Kats, Petrovich, Gamza, Semenov—explained that City Island was a popular destination for Russians due to its spacious beaches and forests for swimming, boating, catching fish, and hiking. The purpose of the particular outing was to bring people together and build solidarity among the Russian working class; all Russians were invited at no charge.<sup>746</sup>

URW organizers of the Society met frequently and with support from some leading socialists including most prominently Lev Deich, a “well-known old Narodnik revolutionary,” and Isaac Hourwich, recent leader of the Cloak and Skirt Makers’ Union.<sup>747</sup> Deich was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party in Russia in the 1880s, later joining the Menshevik faction; he escaped arrest during the 1905 revolution and settled in

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<sup>742</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 6. Polish and Baltic emigrants had moved in large numbers to the US before Russians—in the 1880s. See Vadim Kukushkin, *From Peasants to Labourers: Ukrainian and Belarusan Immigration from the Russian Empire to Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 32.

<sup>743</sup> *GT*, January 1914, 6.

<sup>744</sup> *GT*, October 1913, 7.

<sup>745</sup> *GT*, May 28, 1915, 4.

<sup>746</sup> The organizers identified a meeting point, provided directions, and advised those attending to bring a copy of either *Golos Truda* or *Novyi Mir* with them, for identification purposes among the crowd. *GT*, May 28, 1915, 4.

<sup>747</sup> E. M. Zinoviev and M. M. Ravich were the other two SD leaders involved at this initial stage.

New York.<sup>748</sup> Isaac Hourwich was active in the revolutionary movement in Russia before fleeing to the United States in 1890 and becoming a statistician, labor organizer, and writer; Hourwich had also briefly edited the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* in the 1890s, when it was still of a mixed socialist and anarchist orientation.<sup>749</sup> URW member Adolf Schnabel chaired the Society while URW members Aaron Baron, Peter Bianki, Sarra Rokhliss, Sarra Kacher, Bill Shatov, and N. Petrenko worked on its committee.

The Society was especially needed after unemployment rates doubled and tripled across the continent. In the 1910s, scores of Russian immigrants in America, in the words of Yakov Sanzhur, led “half-starved lives of vagabonds” and the winter of 1914-1915 was the worst of the decade.<sup>750</sup> The Society rented space in Manhattan to shelter the homeless while setting up an information and employment reference bureau at the office of a friendly émigré publication. The Society’s information and reference bureau, located on East 6<sup>th</sup> Street at the office of another “*bezpartiinyi*” émigré newspaper *Zhizn i Smekh* (Life and Laughter), provided new immigrants with information on housing and jobs while offering legal and medical help along with other material and spiritual support. *Na Chuzbine* (In a Foreign Land) was the Society’s newsletter, covering its activities and compiling information for immigrants.<sup>751</sup> The Russian immigrant home’s first location was at 157 Attorney Street on the Lower East Side, which housed 30 people by the end of 1914, with a long line of others hoping to find refuge.<sup>752</sup> The Society soon obtained a New York City charter and by March 1915 had rented rooms accommodating 50 to 60 Russians per week. To be admitted, one could not be a “capitalist-exploiter” or a “scab”—because the Society was a specifically working-class organization—but otherwise the homes

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<sup>748</sup> L. Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie v Severnoi Amerike: Istoricheskii ocherk* [Russian anarchist movement in North America: Historical essay], 402.

<sup>749</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 24.

<sup>750</sup> Yakov Starik (Sanzhur), *Istoriya Industrial'nykh Rabochikh Mira* [History of the Industrial Workers of the World] (Chicago: Executive Committee of the Russian division of IWW), 183. Sanzhur edited *Golos Truzhenika*, organ of the Russian division of the IWW in 1918-1919, and he later lived in the anarchist Mohegan colony in New York. See Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 368.

<sup>751</sup> *GT*, December 11, 1914, 4, September 11, 1914, 4, September 18, 1914, 4, September 25, 1914, 4.

<sup>752</sup> *GT*, January 1, 1915, 3-4, June 8, 1915, 3-4.

welcomed anyone regardless of nationality or political beliefs, and in general reached out to the Russian community, as a trip to City Island showed, where everyone was invited.<sup>753</sup>

By the end of 1915, the Society had unified numerous political and labor organizations in the Russian community. One of the Society's conferences brought together representatives from Russian and Ukrainian sections of the IWW, *Golos Truda*, *Novyi Mir* [Social Democrats], a group of Socialist Revolutionaries, a "Section of Bolsheviks," the Brotherhood of Machinists, the Russian-Polish division of the Cloakmakers' union, Russian branch of the Men's and Children's Tailors union, and finally the Russian division of *Arbayter Ring* and the Anarchist Red Cross, the latter two of which are discussed below.<sup>754</sup> Projects like the Society help to further demonstrate the URW's commitment to connecting with the broader Russian community ultimately in the service of its own political objectives.

The URW funded the Society through member donations and by hosting events usually featuring artistic performances that exhibited a lively working-class culture. By early 1915, 300 URW members were making regular contributions of 10 cents per month, while the Society also drew on donations from sympathetic organizations.<sup>755</sup> In addition to contributing a portion of their salaries, many members donated linens, clothes, tea, and anything else that might prove useful to a shelter. In appealing for donations, Petrovich cited a Russian proverb: "If everyone gives a thread, then a naked person ends up with a shirt."<sup>756</sup> Concerts and performances were held to raise money for the endeavor. For instance, the vaudevillian show *Volshebnyaya Skrilpka* (Magic Fiddle)—popular on the stage in Russia in 1914—was performed at Clinton Hall in Manhattan, for the first time in the United States according to the advanced billing, followed by a balalaika orchestra and other entertainments; tickets sold for 25 cents.<sup>757</sup> Another concert and ball was held, and

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<sup>753</sup> *GT*, March 19, 1915, 3.

<sup>754</sup> *GT*, November 12, 1915, 4. *Novyi Mir* was at this time edited by Mensheviks, so the Bolshevik group represented a separate faction of Social Democrats in New York.

<sup>755</sup> *GT*, March 19, 1915, 3. For example, an "independent Millinery Workers Union" donated \$12.50 in March. March 12, 1915, 4.

<sup>756</sup> *GT*, January 1, 1915, 3.

<sup>757</sup> *GT*, May 1914, 8. The balalaika is a Russian stringed musical instrument used for playing folk music then popular among workers and peasants.

several artists performed pro bono including the playwright Osip Dymov as well as a quintet of mandolinists.<sup>758</sup>

The work of the Society was complemented by the Russian division of *Arbayter Ring* (Workmen's Circle), which had opened in 1910, as mentioned in Chapter 2. This division was chaired by URW Brooklyn Secretary S. Lukich and remained active throughout the period and with a focus on raising money to attend to the medical needs of Russians, for example raising funds to care for those sick with tuberculosis. This division no. 468 of *Arbayter Ring* held its regular meetings at the Rand School of Social Science, a well-known educational center affiliated with the clothing industry trade unions and the Socialist Party.<sup>759</sup>

Other URW-affiliated social organizations included Russian Dramatic Societies in Brooklyn, San Francisco, and Chicago. These were needed, explained one San Francisco-based participant, to fulfill the inner lives and spiritual needs of Russians, which were as important as material and intellectual needs, especially during the difficult 1914-1915 winter.<sup>760</sup> For example, the Brooklyn Drama Society donated 25 percent of its income to the Society for the organization of a Russian Worker-Immigrant Home.<sup>761</sup> The drama company in San Francisco donated all its proceeds to the revolutionary movement; they would stage monthly theatrical performances, their first on January 23, featuring a rendition of Maxim Gorky's "The Lower Depths."<sup>762</sup> Displaying a strong emotional connection with the nineteenth-century revolutionary populist movement, on March 14 the URW's Russian Dramatic Society in Chicago commemorated the death of Alexander II by performing a song about Sergey Stepniak-Kravchinsky, who in 1878 had assassinated the

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<sup>758</sup> *GT*, December 11, 1914, 4.

<sup>759</sup> *GT*, February 12, 1915, 4. This Russian division of *Arbayter Ring* was organized in autumn 1910. Another Russian division of *Arbayter Ring* opened in Brownsville, NY in summer 1915. *GT*, July 9, 1915, 4. They extended beyond New York, with branches in Baltimore, Chicago, and Philadelphia. *GT*, September 3, 1915, 4, October 6, 1916, 4, October 27, 1916, 3.

<sup>760</sup> *GT*, February 26, 1915, 3.

<sup>761</sup> *GT*, February 26, 1915, 4.

<sup>762</sup> *GT*, February 26, 1915, 3-4. Russians involved in this San Francisco-based theatrical club included P. Alekseev, V. Lebedev, A. Arkadios.

head of the secret police General Nikolai Mezentsov.<sup>763</sup> All of these different societies constituted a fraternal network of Russian anarchist organizations led and organized by the URW.

Regular social and cultural events organized by the URW were a primary means for funding its activity in general, and such events also appeared to provide important venues for bringing Russians together and enriching their lives.<sup>764</sup> In its first year, for instance, the Russian Labor Group had revenues of approximately \$580 from cultural events compared to \$230 from sales of *Golos Truda*, \$49 from sales of other published literature, \$150 in contributions from various Russian worker groups, and \$85 in entrance and membership fees; the cultural events produced \$110 in income.<sup>765</sup> As an example of one activity from 1911, *Golos Truda* hosted a picnic in north Queens at a popular beach and amusement park on Flushing Bay. A 15-cent ticket covered a restaurant meal plus dancing, boating, swimming, bowling, shooting, “and other amusements.”<sup>766</sup> Revelers met at Delancey Street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, where they took the Grand Street Car to Queens. This popular Queens spot called North Beach was closed during the Prohibition era and is now covered over by LaGuardia International Airport.<sup>767</sup> In Brownsville, to take another example from 1911, URW members hosted an entertainment featuring singing and a performance of the comedy, “A Revision,” written by Ukrainian playwright Marko Kropyvnytskyi.<sup>768</sup> Over the years, URW groups also hosted a variety of parties or “balls” featuring dancing, costume contests, raffles, and other amusements.<sup>769</sup> They also rented halls and auditoriums to host New Years’ Eve parties, which hints at the

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<sup>763</sup> *GT*, March 5, 1915, 4.

<sup>764</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 15-16.

<sup>765</sup> *GT*, March 1912, 15-16. Revenue was also generated by branches donating to *Golos Truda* beyond membership dues, from the the Russian workers’ groups in Detroit, Seattle, San Francisco, and elsewhere. Starting in 1911, *Golos Truda* was sold at Russian and Jewish bookstores in New York, such as the Wasserman International bookstore at 45 Clinton Street on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. See *GT*, March 1911, 4

<sup>766</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 8.

<sup>767</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 8.

<sup>768</sup> *GT*, October 1911, 8. “A Revision” [*Po Revyzi*]

<sup>769</sup> See, for example, *GT*, December 11, 1914, 4, January 29, 1915, 4, May 25, 1917, 4.

centrality of the URW to the lives of hundreds if not thousands of Russians across the country.<sup>770</sup>

Funds raised by the URW through such events were used to support not only its own projects in North America but also broader causes.<sup>771</sup> As described in chapters 3 and 4, the URW contributed a substantial amount of money, relative to its size, to the US labor movement via various strike campaigns. At the same time, the URW materially supported anarchist and revolutionary causes in North America and abroad. For instance, the URW helped organize a conference to aid the Mexican Revolution, held at the Ferrer Center.<sup>772</sup> Encouraged by the revolution south of the border where the Mexican people had been celebrating the overthrow that month of President Porfirio Diaz “after 30 years of tyranny,” *Golos Truda* and other anarchists backed those who had wanted to turn the overthrow of President Diaz into a social revolution.<sup>773</sup> The conference was held at the newly formed Ferrer Center, first located on St. Mark’s Place in New York, founded by American anarchists in honor of Spanish anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer, who had been executed by the state in 1909.<sup>774</sup> Ferrer had pioneered teaching techniques based on giving children freedom and autonomy: for example, attending class was not mandatory, and students decided for themselves what they wanted to study. Ferrer’s program also eliminated tests and grades because both promote harmful rivalries among students. Thus the Ferrer Center, also known as the Modern School, was an educational and cultural center that brought anarchists together from across nationalities while teaching courses using Ferrer’s methods and hosting numerous lecturers such as Clarence Darrow and

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<sup>770</sup> URW Chicago, for instance, held a New Years’ party at the West Side Auditorium together with the Anarchist Red Cross in the winter 1915. *GT*, December 18, 1914, 3.

<sup>771</sup> Funds by the URW were used primarily on business expenses, such as renting office space and publishing costs, and on supporting other social and labor organizations.

<sup>772</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 8.

<sup>773</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 7.

<sup>774</sup> *GT*, June 1911, 8.

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn.<sup>775</sup> It was the heart of the anarchist movement in New York and a vital venue for cross-national engagement. In 1914, the URW in Harlem held its meetings at the Ferrer Center, and *Golos Truda* promoted events there, such as a lecture by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in October on Women and Syndicalism.<sup>776</sup> URW leader Bill Shatov would become “one of the [Ferrer] Center’s most dynamic personalities” alongside the likes of Emma Goldman, and ads for Ferrer Center events would regularly appear in *Golos Truda*’s pages.<sup>777</sup>

At the top of the URW’s list of causes to support was the Anarchist Red Cross (ARC), run by Jewish and Russian anarchists in America and closely tied to the URW. Founded in London in 1906 by Peter Kropotkin, Alexander Schapiro, and Rudolph Rocker, the ARC raised money to aid anarchist political prisoners in Russia, most of who were rounded up during the 1905-1907 revolution. The ARC was needed because anarchist prisoners in Russia, unlike Social Democrat, Socialist Revolutionary, and other political prisoners, did not receive aid from the official Red Cross—anarchist prisoners were categorized as criminal rather than political offenders, depriving them of many rights and privileges afforded to the latter.<sup>778</sup> After several leading members moved to the United States, the center of ARC’s activity shifted to New York, Chicago, and ., with the New York and Chicago branches forming in 1909, and Philadelphia in 1911. Smaller divisions also existed in Detroit, St. Louis, Baltimore, Brownsville, and Rochester, while aid was directed through New York to Russia. Material aid was sent to prisoners’ relatives in the form of money, food, other essential goods, and moral aid in the form of books and

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<sup>775</sup> Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 191-193. In addition to Jewish and Italian anarchism, during this period in North America anarchism was also a strong political tendency among Spanish, Cuban, and Puerto Rican migrants.

<sup>776</sup> *GT*, December 18, 1914, 4; October 9, 1914, 4. From 1912 to 1915, the Ferrer Center was located on the Upper East Side near Harlem on 63 East 107th Street.

<sup>777</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 120.

<sup>778</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 152-153; Boris Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality: The Story of the Anarchist Red Cross* (Chicago: International Printing Company, 1958), 19-25.

correspondence.<sup>779</sup> The situation was dire for many anarchist prisoners. One letter from Siberia in early 1915 indicated that people were literally starving to death there, because the prisoners had been completely neglected since the war started. This letter received by the Anarchist Red Cross in Brooklyn indicated that only the ARC could save the suffering prisoners.<sup>780</sup>

A leading organizer of the ARC in America was Boris Yelensky, who in his manuscript on the movement noted that the United States became the primary source of material support for anarchist prisoners in Russia, both before and after the First World War.<sup>781</sup> The ARC's Yelensky was a strong supporter of the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and his close collaborator Morris Beresin was a URW member who moved to the United States in 1911 after escaping from the notorious Artvisky prison in Siberia.<sup>782</sup> The URW would raise a significant sum of money for the ARC, which in turn reported its financial and other activity in *Golos Truda*, underlining the close ties between the two organizations.<sup>783</sup> The three members of ARC's auditing committee were A. Rode-Chervinsky, Saul Yanovsky, and Alexander Berkman, an additional indication of the close ties between the URW, the Anarchist Red Cross, and the broader Russian and Yiddish anarchist movements.<sup>784</sup> The ARC published an annual newspaper *Di Shtime fun di Ruishe Gefangene* (The Voice of the Russian Prisoners), half in Yiddish and half in Russian.<sup>785</sup>

The Anarchist Red Cross organized "prisoners' balls" (*arestantskii bal*) to raise money, holding its first one in Philadelphia, in 1912. At these balls and social fundraisers,

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<sup>779</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 153-154; Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality*, 8.

<sup>780</sup> *GT*, March 19, 1915, 4.

<sup>781</sup> Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality*, 58.

<sup>782</sup> Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality*, 8, 11, 24, 28; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 153-154, 158. Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State*, 118.

<sup>783</sup> Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 222-223; Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 158. For example, the Detroit ARC raised \$1,172 from January 7, 1913 to March 1, 1915. *GT*, May 28, 1915, 4. Comparably, from January 7, 1913 to October 1915, the ARC in Chicago raised \$1,227. *GT*, November 19, 1915, 4.

<sup>784</sup> *GT*, January 1915, 4.

<sup>785</sup> Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices*, 374; Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 191.

members donned prisoner uniforms to attract attention to the cause of prisoners in Russia; they put on theatrical productions re-enacting prison life to capture the hardships endured.<sup>786</sup> The serious nature of these performances appeared to enliven rather than detract from the social atmosphere, as the show was accompanied by dancing—often “until dawn”—and other forms of entertainment. Boris Yelensky described the winter 1912 ball as a “great moral and financial success.” The ARC, similarly, staged “peasants’ balls” or *boyernbeler*, which playfully satirized peasant life in Russia. These events were a “moral success,” because of the strong sense of community they engendered among Yiddish and Russian speakers.<sup>787</sup> A well-attended ARC prisoners’ ball at the Harlem River Casino on January 15, 1916, for example, attracted a crowd of 5,000 people producing \$1,400 in revenue.<sup>788</sup> According to Lipotkin, in 1915 alone the ARC groups in the US raised over \$2,000 for anarchist prisoners in Russia.<sup>789</sup>

This is a sample, rather than exhaustive list of, causes and social organizing efforts URW members were involved in from 1911 to 1917. URW groups tried to provide what was needed among the Russian working class in America. Most branches also taught courses in various subjects, a staple of URW activity. To take just one example, a New York URW branch offered lessons every night from 7 to 10 pm in various subjects including English language, math, and history. Students at this branch were issued certificates upon completion of coursework.<sup>790</sup> Further, similar groups to the ones outlined above also took shape in other cities, not mentioned here; because it was based in New York, *Golos Truda*, tended to highlight local social activity, which is reflected in this chapter.

The URW became deeply involved in Russian communities by building institutions and offering ideas that appealed to and radicalized immigrants dissatisfied with or marginalized by church and state. The URW’s mutual aid organizations served as practical examples of anarchist prefigurative politics or of creating a new society “in the shell of the

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<sup>786</sup> The Paterson strikers, as described in Chapter 3, put on a similar dramatic performance at Madison Square Garden in 1913 when they re-enacted their struggle against silk mills.

<sup>787</sup> Yelensky, *In the Struggle for Equality*, 27-28, 30.

<sup>788</sup> *GT*, January 21, 1916.

<sup>789</sup> Lipotkin, *Russkoe anarkhicheskoe dvizhenie*, 156-157. \$2,000 in 1915 is about \$50,000 in 2018 dollars.

<sup>790</sup> *GT*, February 4, 1916, 4.

old,” to invoke an IWW slogan. Ironically, the anarchists’ commitment to education and social organizing—as an vital part of its political project—helped to create the view, advanced by historians of the red scare, that the URW was just a social rather than political or labor organization.<sup>791</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> Mark Grueter, “Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919,” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 66-76.

## Chapter 6. Conclusion

According to V. V. Krivenky, at the start of 1917 there were about 300 known anarchists across Russia. By early 1918 there were an estimated 10,000 active anarchists in 130 towns and cities—not counting Makhno's movement in Ukraine.<sup>792</sup> Kenyon Zimmer has written that the rapid expansion of the anarchist movement took place “largely under the guidance of returned anarchists from America.”<sup>793</sup> Paul Avrich wrote that *Golos Truda* was the “principal Syndicalist journal in Russia” and Victor Serge claimed that *Golos Truda* “at various moments rivalled Lenin's Pravda in influence” which if even close to true is a remarkable statement given how paltry the anarchist movement in Russia was compared to the Bolsheviks in the years before 1917.<sup>794</sup> The URW's groundwork played a significant role in the emergence and development of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Russia. It was a vital link to the anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin, articulating and adapting anarcho-syndicalism for a new generation.

As the *Golos Truda* editors set up shop in St. Petersburg over the summer of 1917 to lead the anarcho-syndicalists and assist with agitation among factory workers, former URW members and other anarchists were becoming active in trade unions and in the new factory committees. In August 1917, Bill Shatov was elected to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Petrograd Factory Committees and became one of its most active members. His new colleague on *Golos Truda*, Gregory Maksimov, had been elected

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<sup>792</sup> Krivenky's estimate is cited in Dmitry Rublev, “The Russian Anarchist Movement During the First World War,” trans. Malcolm Archibald. Originally a conference presentation, “From the history of anarchism – the 200th anniversary of the birth of Mikhail Bakunin” at the Institute of History and International Relations, University of Szczecin (Poland), in May 2014; See also Paul Avrich, ed., *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1973), 14.

<sup>793</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, “Premature Anti-Communists? American Anarchism, the Russian Revolution, and Left-Wing Libertarian Anti-Communism, 1917-1939” *Labor* 6, no. 2 (May 2009): 48-49.

<sup>794</sup> Avrich, *Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, 68; Victor Serge, *Year One of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Peter Sedgwick (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972), 213. Historians have recognized the anarcho-syndicalist influence on Petrograd workers in 1917, particularly in the factory committees. See for instance Rex A. Wade, *The Russian Revolution, 1917* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 211.

to the same committee in June.<sup>795</sup> Shatov and Maksimov were also delegates to the All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions, though at its first congress in January 1918, anarchists argued that the factory committees should replace trade unions; anarchists now considered the latter reactionary and obsolete by comparison, because they were centralized organizations in Russia under the control of political parties. Anarchist ideas—genuine workers’ control and putting the revolution in the hands of workers and peasants—had been popular in 1917 and continued to be popular in 1918, causing one Menshevik delegate at the January congress to complain about an “anarchist wave” that was “sweeping over” the labor movement. But it did not matter. By then, the Bolsheviks had seized state power, and they did the opposite of what the anarchists wanted: they placed the factory committees under trade union authority and both under Bolshevik control.<sup>796</sup>

Other URW members, such as Aaron Baron and Peter Rybin, returned to Ukraine. Baron and Rybin show how URW figures were influential not only on the specifically anarcho-syndicalist movement in the cities but also on the broader anarchist movement in the Russian Revolution and Civil War, including within the upper ranks of Nestor Makhno’s Revolutionary Insurgent Army, also known as the Black army. After his election to the Kiev city soviet in 1917, Baron fought in the civil war from 1918 to 1920, and alongside Voline helped found the Nabat (Alarm) Confederation, which united anarchist groups across Ukraine. Nabat formed an alliance with Makhno, and both Baron and Voline served as chairmen of Makhno’s Revolutionary Military Council. Baron and other Nabat and Makhnovist leaders were arrested by the Red Army in late 1920, and after serving several prison sentences and various terms of exile in cities such as Tashkent, Biysk, and Voronezh, Baron was shot in Stalin’s purges.<sup>797</sup> Among other imprisoned anarchists, Baron had been allowed to speak at Peter Kropotkin’s funeral in February 1921 where he

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<sup>795</sup> Paul Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 146.

<sup>796</sup> Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 166-170.

<sup>797</sup> Yaroslav Leont’ev and Sergei Bykovsky, *Iz istorii poslednikh stranits anarkho-dvizheniya v SSSR: delo A. Barona i S. Ruvinskogo (1934 g.)* [From the history of the last pages of the anarchist movement in the USSR: the case of A. Baron and S. Ruvinsky (1934)] <https://piter.anarhist.org/leon-byk.htm>

denounced the Bolshevik state.<sup>798</sup> While living in Chicago in the 1910s, Aaron met Fanya Anisimovna who returned with him to Russia, and Fanya also joined Nabat. She was executed by the Bolsheviks in 1921 for unknown reasons.<sup>799</sup>

Peter Rybin had a remarkable though brief career in Ukraine after he returned in 1917. A metalworker by trade, Rybin was elected to the Yekaterinoslav Soviet of Workers' Deputies in July, representing workers at the Briansk rolling mill, and in December 1917, he was a delegate to the All-Ukrainian Conference of Metalworkers held in Kharkov.<sup>800</sup> In 1918, he worked in top administration positions for the government of Soviet Ukraine, and in the summer of 1919, he organized and fought alongside 20,000 Kharkov workers against General Denikin's offensive. Rybin had abandoned the anarchist movement—due to its relative weakness in the context of the revolution—but not his anarchist convictions and contacts, including with URW alumnus Ivan Kabas-Tarasiuk from Baltimore, who had joined Voline and Baron in the leadership of the Nabat Confederation. Therefore, because of Rybin's credibility with both anarchists and Bolsheviks, in 1920 the latter commissioned him with the task of absorbing Makhno's forces into the Red Army—at a time when the two were temporarily allied in the fight against the Whites. However, Rybin was so impressed with the Makhnovists that he joined their ranks and was soon elected secretary of the army's Revolutionary Military Council. After the Reds turned on their allies and attacked Makhno's Black army, Rybin was arrested by the Cheka and shot in early 1921.<sup>801</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 205. Like other anarchists, Baron criticized the Bolsheviks for usurping power while suppressing workers and other leftists. For an English language account, see: <https://libcom.org/history/baron-aron-davidovich-aka-kantorovich-faktorovich-poleyevoy-1891-1937> and on Fanya Baron in Russian, see: <http://jewish.ru/ru/people/society/175887/> (accessed April 27, 2018)

<sup>799</sup> Avrich, *Russian Anarchists*, 205; Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 522 fn. 553.

<sup>800</sup> Peter Arshinov wrote: "The conference adopted the *Rybin Plan*, which called for the unification of industry and the reconstruction of transportation." Peter Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, 1918-1921* (Solidarity: Chicago, 1974), 231.

<sup>801</sup> For more on Rybin's fascinating role, see Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, 231 and especially Malcolm Archibald, "The Tumultuous Last Months of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Peter Rybin," which is based on archival research on Rybin recently unearthed by Ukrainian historian Mikola Borovik. Available at the Kate Sharpley Library: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/kwh8f8> (accessed April 15, 2018)

URW members left behind in North America re-constructed the federation while retaining its working-class character. The anarcho-syndicalist leadership had left, but a new cadre of experienced members took over—including L. Lipotkin, Peter Bianki, and Adolf Schnabel—and their ideas had not been forgotten among a substantial segment of Russian migrants who remained in North America. Indeed, after a lull in activity in 1917 due to the exodus plus the US government's general repression of left-wing organizing and publishing, by the fall of 1919, the URW had close to 10,000 members.<sup>802</sup> US government repression finally caught up with the URW, forcing its closure toward the end of 1919, but the federation's ideas and practices remained influential in the Russian-American milieu. In June 1922, the New York-based Russian anarchist newspaper *Volna* (Wave) noted, for instance, that URW inspired trade unions, i.e. the ones outlined in this study, continued to flourish in the URW's wake.<sup>803</sup> Former URW members also continued to publish newspapers, principally *Volna* and *Amerikanskie Izvestia* (American News) until 1924. That year, a US law restricted immigration from Russia and other countries, which cut off the anarchists' support base, though small groups of Russian anarchists, chiefly one led by Gregory Maksimov, after he fled Bolshevik Russia, continued publishing Russian anarchist newspapers in the United States.

An examination of *Golos Truda* and other sources presented throughout this dissertation shows the Russian anarchists active in the North American labor movement and firmly rooted in working-class organizing, which is contrary to the way anarchism is usually imagined. Labor unrest in the United States gave the Union of Russian Workers an opportunity to meaningfully participate in and impact the industrial union movement, despite the relatively brief period the federation existed. With substantial support in the Russian migrant community, the URW put anarcho-syndicalist theories into practice by educating Russians on capitalism in America and nurturing an environment that urged

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<sup>802</sup> Mark Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 53-81; Jerome Davis wrote that among "Russian socialistic, anarchistic, and radical clubs...probably the largest and most extensive...was the Union of Russian Workers, which has branches in every large industrial center and in many small mining and manufacturing communities. It unites all the Russian workers affiliated with it, regardless of their trades, into one revolutionary organization." Jerome Davis, *The Russian Immigrant* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1922), 114-115.

<sup>803</sup> *Volna* (Wave), June 1922, 14-19.

workers to form and join labor organizations and initiate strikes. As anarcho-syndicalists and a conscious “militant minority,” they embraced not only the IWW but also the broader union movement in order to recruit and radicalize the Russian immigrant masses, advance the bread and butter needs of workers, and move labor to the left. The URW practiced “boring from within,” mainstream unions, a form of labor entryism, with long-term plans of forming strong Russian sections in all American unions. By radicalizing other workers and pushing American labor unionism to the left, they helped create space for the rise of militant industrial unions in the future.

Further, through their participation in the American labor movement, as transnational radicals, the URW also helped to construct the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Russia. Sensing an upcoming revolution in Russia, the URW consciously used the terrain in North America to train a body of rebels for the fight back home. “The Americans,” as URW members were called after they returned to Russia in the revolution, made a substantial material impact on anarchism in Russia, and its theorists and activists also helped shape the anarchist critique of Bolshevism, which Kenyon Zimmer has described as “premature anti-Communism” or “the hidden tradition of left-wing libertarian anti-Communism.”<sup>804</sup>

Anarchism became popular again in the 1960s, as Zimmer notes, partly because its anti-Communist critique—from Bakunin through the anarchists in the Russian Revolution and beyond—appeared to have been proven correct. After the horrors of Stalinism came under greater exposure, the crushing of revolutions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s and 1960s finally swayed a majority of the international left to turn against the Soviet Union and give anarchism and other anti-authoritarian left-wing currents another chance. With traditional unionism on the decline, anarchist and syndicalist direct-action style unionism has resurfaced in recent years, globally, including the IWW in the UK and the US.<sup>805</sup> Since capital and state have effectively blunted the power of bureaucratic unions over the past 40 years, these “new” syndicalist movements once again offer alternative paths forward for labor.

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<sup>804</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, “Premature Anti-Communists?,” 45.

<sup>805</sup> Immanuel Ness, ed. *New Forms of Worker Organization: The Syndicalist and Autonomist Restoration of Class Struggle Unionism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2014); Marina Sitrin, *Horizontalism: Voices of Popular Power in Argentina* (Oakland, AK Press, 2006).

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