

IWA CONGRESS & CENTENARY

SOLIDARITY FEDERATION REPORT



Asociación Internacional de las y los Trabajadores
International Workers' Association
Desde - Since 1922

The [International Workers' Association](#) (IWA) unites anarcho-syndicalist organisations from around the world, improving communication and building solidarity across borders, against capitalism and the state. The Solidarity Federation is the British section of the IWA. In December 2022 the IWA held its 28th Congress in Alcoy, Spain, bringing together delegates from thirteen countries.

The convergence also celebrated the centenary of the [IWA's foundation](#) in December 1922, at a congress in Berlin punctuated by police raids. This was the culmination of many years of international organising between revolutionary unions, during which anarcho-syndicalism emerged as a distinct, coherent movement of the revolutionary working class. In the following decades, many IWA sections were destroyed by fascism and Stalinism, or eclipsed by reformism as the post-WWI revolutionary wave came to an end. But the movement has survived and re-emerged, consistently opposing authoritarianism, reformism, and class collaboration, while holding high the flag of direct action, workers' solidarity, and revolutionary unionism.

This year's congress was hosted by the [CNT-AIT of Spain](#) in the Mediterranean city of Alcoy, which has its own fascinating history as the seat of the Spanish section of the First International, as well as a workers' revolt in 1873 known as the [Petroleum Revolution](#). Over the week, 5th—11th December, many [events](#) were held in the historic union hall including talks, book presentations, a documentary, and radical theatre, in addition to a historical tour of the city. The CNT-AIT were wonderful hosts, smoothly organising the week while welcoming and generously supporting the many delegates and visitors.

The Congress itself took place over the final three days of the week, with productive discussions and various matters agreed. We welcomed *Organise!* as a Friend of the IWA in Ireland. *Organise!* are an anarcho-syndicalist propaganda group and union initiative which organises across Ireland – north and south, originally formed by the Ballymena and Antrim Anarchist Groups in 1985. You can learn more about the organisation and their activities on their [website](#).

We had a detailed discussion about how we can respond to the climate crisis in the present, framed by the comprehensive contribution from [Priama Akcia](#), which focused on the practical activity we can pursue as anarcho-syndicalists in the workplace and critical engagement with existing environmentalist movements. The conversation expanded to discuss the differing situations in the global south, for example the [Workers Solidarity Federation](#)'s mutual aid organising in response to the catastrophic floods in Pakistan, the ecological, cooperative farming initiative of PPAS in Indonesia, and the context of often fatal violence against environmentalists in Colombia.

We continued to develop a strategy for small IWA sections to organise and win disputes in the workplace. This strategy offers practical guidelines based on our past experiences. Sections of the IWA – such as the [Polish Union of Syndicalists](#), [Vienna Workers' Syndicate](#), [Priama Akcia](#), and the Solidarity Federation – have successfully fought workplace struggles despite our relatively small size, through self-organisation and direct action, demonstrating a revolutionary alternative to the bureaucratic and reformist trade unions.

We made some important changes to the [Statutes of the IWA](#). References to *revolutionary syndicalism* were replaced by the term *anarcho-syndicalism* to affirm the theory and practice we have developed over the past century of struggle. We decided to add points to the Statutes about the libertarian use of technology in our organisations and unions. Several technical matters were discussed and resolved which should improve the functioning of the IWA, in the absence of bureaucratic or hierarchical structures.

We discussed the continuing attacks that sections of the IWA face from the International Confederation of Labour (ICL). Eighteen unions of the CNT-AIT in Spain are facing lawsuits in the National Court from the Spanish section of the ICL, claiming €50,000 in compensation from each. This is on top of attempts to seize union buildings and their resources, and the possible imprisonment of CNT-AIT members as a result of lawsuits. You can read the details of these legal cases [here](#). Our International is based upon solidarity, and so for us, an injury to one is an injury to all. We will defend each other from all such hostility.

Across the world we are experiencing the disastrous consequences of capitalism and state power, from brutal wars and authoritarian nationalism to climate change and all its effects. At home, in Britain, even the basic human needs of food and warmth are falling out of

reach for millions, while the government cracks down on dissent and ramps up its persecution of the most vulnerable. In such a world of oppression and exploitation, the need for a revolutionary, international, working class movement is once again imperative. The IWA may be relatively small, but anarcho-syndicalism offers an alternative to the reformism and state-socialism proven utterly bankrupt. Anarcho-syndicalism is rejuvenating in Latin America, and spreading across Asia, offering hope that a genuinely global struggle may arise. Social revolution for libertarian communism is our objective, but we know this begins with the daily struggle to improve our conditions, fight for greater freedom, and build our strength where we work and live.

