

**The Siege of Sidney Street by Phil
Ruff | 100th Anniversary
Commemoration**

Phil Ruff

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Following a failed attempt to break into Harris' Jeweller's shop in Houndsditch – by a group of Anarchists – on the 16th December 1910. Five City of London Police officers were shot, three fatally and two disabled.

A Siege began as two of the gang were traced to 100 Sidney Street, Stepney, on 3rd January 1911. This is one account of the events leading up to the siege and the people involved.

100 years ago today, two revolutionaries died in 100 Sidney Street, just up the road.

Not much is known about one of them, William Sokoloff. But quite a lot is known about at the Latvian Fritz Svaars.

His spouse is burning the Baltic Porter Gluer prior. In 1885, at the age of 19, he joined the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party, the DSP.

Less than a year later, when in 1905 revolution broke out, he became an urban guerrilla.

Someone who knew Svaars then, as a worker in the Leopold Jupe factory, a member of the party who later became an anarchist, says; "I remember my first meeting with farmers in the summer of 1905. Some gendarmes had arrested Suarez and an assistant at the district chief came up to them threaten them, asking whether he knew that he was facing death, spirals jumped up like he'd been stunned and shouted back at this hell hand in a terrible voice 'I am not afraid of death. It's only a question of who stands closer to it you or me?'

As far as obviously survived the encounter, because in October 1905 he was arrested again and accused of taking part in a series of sabotage operations and expropriations during which a policeman had been killed.

He was in custody for only a few days before a group of fighters broke into the prison and freed him.

He moved to Riga and continued to operate as an urban guerrilla under the direction of Yarne Sharpness 'Peter the painter'

But was arrested again in January 1906 and taken to the notorious headquarters of the weaker secret police, where he was badly tortured.

Six days later, according to an official report to Tsar Nicholas himself. "I am humbly informing Your Excellency the Emperor of all Russia. It's a diary. On the 17th of January, at 8:15 AM, four armed criminals entered the legal Police Department went through to the intelligence attack. The guards of the police and intelligence departments fruit 6 prisoners and disappeared with them. The matter is under investigation."

As far as was one of these six prisoners freed in the attack, Peter the Painter was one of the four armed criminals who freed them.

Afterwards, Svaars and the man known in London is George guard Stein Poike Harness joined Peter the painter in breaking away from the LSDSP to form the first anarchist organization in Latvia.

‘Tas pats vārdos un darbos’, ‘the same in words and deeds’.

They published their anarchist Communist journal, courted asthma with flame, the same mainly used in London, publishing mostly Latvian translations of articles by Peter Kropotkin.

At the end of 1906, holding a series of armed sieges, between anarchists and police, those anarchists who survived were forced to emigrate to regroup and reorganize the armed resistance in the Baltic from abroad.

Svaars, Sokolow & Peter the Painter went to America where they carried out expropriations which funded the Latvian Anarchist Journal ‘Brave Eva’ or ‘Freedom’.

Other Latvians associated the group were responsible for the Mother World bank robbery in Scotland in April 1908, and the more notorious Tottenham outrage in London in January 1909.

Svaars & Sokolow arrived in London from America not long after the Tottenham outrage.

A friend who had met them in Latvia recalls meeting them again in London where he had to politely decline their offer of mayors of pistols as a means of suffering and industrial dispute.

“I remember meeting scars and harmonies Who already at The end of 1909 offered their armed assistance to the strike committee at some London East End factory in their fight with the factory administration and the strikebreakers. I happened then to turn that offer down.”

The person will apply have been conditioned by the workers struggle in Latvia to see the class war is literally just that war.

The inability or refusal to accept that different social conditions require different methods of struggle contributed in no small measure to the tragic outcome of the events that lay ahead of them.

When Svaars & Sokolow carried the mortally wounded Hartmanis back to 59 Grove St and the 16th of December 1910, after the shooting at hand Stitch, in which five city, London policeman had been hit and three killed, the die was cast.

For two weeks Svaars & Sokolow found refuge here up the road at 100 Sidney St, Stepney.

Fully aware that they would hang if captured they had no intention of being taken alive and the police, who were bent on revenge for the deaths of their colleagues, made it plain by their actions that no quarter would be offered.

When the police were informed of their whereabouts, they tried first to near them into the street where two horse drawn furniture vans full of armed police were waiting.

When that didn’t work, they surrounded the area with 750 police, 50 of them armed, and the company of Scots Guards in the Tower of London.

But 7:30 in the morning, seemingly at a loss as to what else to do, the police sent Detective Sergeant Benjamin Leeson up to the front of the house to throw pebbles at the windows.

But this elicited no response from inside, he lobbed a brick through one of the second floor windows.

This time he got an answer; a hail of bullets from Browning and Bowser pistols burst from behind the curtains, scattering the policeman opposite, and ruled in leasing in the chest. The siege had begun.

The Siege of Sydney St lasted for over 7 hours. The charred remains of stars and Sokoloff were recovered from the smoking rooms of the house.

An inquest held on the 6th of January concluded that Joseph - William Sokoloff had been shot through the head by a soldier while still An upper floor And had fallen through to the ground floor when the building collapsed.

Svars died where he had been found on the ground floor next to the front door. A mowser lay beneath his body and another at a foot away. The remains of both men were buried on the 23rd of January 1911 in unconsecrated ground at the Corporation of London Cemetery in Manor Park. Their plane coffins of unpolished down board breastplates which would simply and inaccurately, Frid stars, aged 27. He was 25, in Joseph, age 25. William Sokol office, 30.

The man who betrayed them, Charles Pullman, was paid a 166 pounds, 13 shillings and four pence for Svars.

To the general Purposes Committee of Alderman, who calculatedly mounted in the world, will learn Sokoloff was worth nothing.

Think what you may about the tragic events that led to the Siege of Sydney St here 100 years ago today, but in gathering here to commemorate the last heroic resistance of two men against impossible odds, I ask you to avoid transforming their fight into a fetish commodity, by respecting the self sacrifice of men who died fighting for what they believe to be just.

‘Tas pats vārdos un darbos’, ‘the same in words and deeds’.

And in the words of the Latvian poets at the 1905 revolution Jānis Pliekšāns; Par to, ka jūs mūs šķirat, un jūs varat mūs salauzt. Bet mēs uzvarēsīm nākotni, kurā gaiši spīd rītausma! For split us you may and break us you might. But we'll win the future where dawn blazes bright!

The Ted K Archive

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YouTube

The automatic transcript errors have been cleaned up a little, but could do with
more corrections.

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