

FINAL REFLECTIONS: THE VICISSITUDES OF ANARCHIST
AND SYNDICALIST TRAJECTORIES, 1940 TO THE PRESENT

Steven J. Hirsch
University of Pittsburgh-Greensburg

Lucien van der Walt
University of the Witwatersrand

Since the early 1990s the world has witnessed a remarkable resurgence of anarchist and syndicalist ideology, organisation, and methods of struggle. This resurgence is generally explained as a response to the imposition of neoliberal economic policies, the impact of increasingly globalized capital, the restructuring of state-society relations, the advent of new forms of authoritarianism and social control, and the collapse of world communism.¹

Rather than signal “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution,” the post-Soviet period has been characterised by experimentation, reinvention and rediscovery on the part of progressive movements.² Anarchism and syndicalism have been part of this process of renewal. New movements have emerged in areas with little in the way of a revolutionary, libertarian socialist tradition; existing movements in areas of historic influence have revived, and a more diffuse anarchistic influence permeates a number of important social movements.

The last two decades have seen new anarchist groups emerge in countries as diverse as Indonesia, Nigeria and Syria. In 1997, for example, several hundred gold miners registered a branch of the Industrial

¹ See, *inter alia*, Barbara Epstein, “Anarchism and the Anti-Globalisation Movement,” *Monthly Review*, 53: 4, 2001, 1–14; David Graeber, “The New Anarchists,” *New Left Review* (second series), 13, 2002, 61–73; Uri Gordon, “Anarchism Reloaded,” *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12:1, 2007, 29–48; Gerald Meyer, “Anarchism, Marxism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union,” *Science and Society*, 67: 2, 2003, 218–221; Laibman, David. “Anarchism, Marxism, and the Cunning of Capitalism,” *Science and Society*, 66: 4, 2001–2002, 421–27; Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*, San Francisco, Edinburgh: AK Press, 2009, 5–30.

² Frances Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest* Summer 1989, pp. 3, 4, 12.

Workers of the World (the IWW) with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Labour—the first syndicalist movement in the country.³ Older movements in Europe and the former Soviet bloc have experienced revitalization. In Spain, the anarcho-syndicalist General Confederation of Workers (*Confederación General de Trabajadores*, or CGT) currently represents nearly two million workers in the industrial relations system.⁴ It is affiliated with the European Federation of Alternative Syndicalism (FESAL), formed in 2003, which includes a section of the Italian union movement (the COBAS, from *Comitati di Base*, or “committees of the base”), representing hundreds of thousands of workers. A revolutionary syndicalist union summit organized in Paris, France, 2007, drew 250 delegates worldwide, with the African unions constituting the largest single continental presence.⁵ The summit of the syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA, f. 1922) in Manchester, England, the same year was attended by most of the international’s 16 affiliates, as well as other groups. The IWA includes the Siberian Confederation of Labour (SKT), which has a substantial presence amongst factory workers, miners and teachers.

The influence of anarchism on the international counter-globalization movement is well-established. Self-identified anarchists played a key role in the disruption of a series of major economic summits associated with neo-liberal globalisation, most notably the 1999 World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Seattle in the United States. In the postcolonial world, anarchist influences are discernable in movements like the Zapatista movement in Chiapas, Mexico, the indigenous rights and anti-privatization movements in Bolivia, and the Indian Karnataka farmers’ movement.

The Zapatistas, composed mainly of ethnic Maya in Chiapas, rebelled against the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the Mexican state in 1994. Rather than pursuing state power, the Zapatistas have sought to secure village autonomy, control over communal lands and resources, and to defend their cultural tradi-

³ Michael Hargis, “IWW Chronology (1996–1997)”, online at <http://www.iww.org/culture/chronology/chronology11.shtml>, accessed 15 November 2008.

⁴ In terms of the 2004 union election process in the public and private sector, the CGT was Spain’s third largest union federation: *Alternative Libertaire*, “Spain: CGT Is Now the Third Biggest Union,” *Alternative Libertaire*, November 2004.

⁵ “i07: Consolidate international solidarity,” <http://www.cnt-f.org/spip.php?article345>, accessed 15 November 2008; “Conférences Internationales Syndicales—i07,” <http://www.anarkismo.net/article/5434>, accessed 15 November 2008.

tions.⁶ In Cochabamba and El Alto, Bolivia, indigenous and working-class movements organized mass protests in 2000 and 2003 against the privatization of water and gas. They also engaged in grassroots mobilizations to obtain access to land and community autonomy.⁷ The Indian Karnataka farmers' movement (KRRS) similarly stresses independent, democratic village communities and opposition to neoliberalism and capitalism, and forms part of *La Via Campesina* (The Peasant Way), which coordinates peasant and indigenous activism in Asia, Latin America, Africa, the U.S., and Europe.⁸

A "new anarchism"?

The resurgent anarchist and syndicalist movement is a diverse, fractured and contested one. It ranges from classical, mass syndicalist unions like the CGT and SKT, with clear programs and permanent structures, to an experiential wing, centered on small groups that tend to eschew theory and strategy in favour of a focus on democratic practice, direct action and lifestyle experimentation.

Contemporary analysts, considering the relationship between the contemporary global anarchist and syndicalist movement, and its predecessor, examined in this volume, have acknowledged the continuities between the two. It is generally conceded that late 19th century and early 20th century anarchism still serves to inspire, and to provide the basic principles—anti-statism, anti-capitalism, pro-direct action and pro-direct democracy—for contemporary anarchists.

⁶ The literature on the Zapatista movement is voluminous. For a discussion of its anarchist inspired features, See, Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic, *Wobblies and Zapatistas: conversations on Anarchism, Marxism, and Radical History*, Oakland: PM Press, 2008, 3–15.

⁷ For a list of studies that characterize recent indigenous and working-class movements' struggles for local self-government, communal lands, and the abrogation of neoliberal economic policies, see, Forrest Hylton and Sinclair Thomson, *Revolutionary Horizons: Past and Present in Bolivian Politics*, New York: Verso Press, 2007, 25, fn. 9.

⁸ Karen Goaman, "The Anarchist Travelling Circus: Reflections on Contemporary Anarchism, Anti-Capitalism and the International Scene" in Jonathan Purkis and James Bowen (eds.), *Changing anarchism: Anarchist Theory and Practice in a Global Age*, Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004, 173–174. On the trope of a "New Anarchism" versus the classical anarchist and syndicalist movement, besides Graeber, 61–73, see Ruth Kinna, *Anarchism: A Beginner's Guide*, Oxford, UK: One-worldpublications, 2005.

However, a number of writers have gone further, to suggest the current period is characterised by a “New Anarchism” that differs significantly from the historic movement. Jonathan Purkis, James Bowen, and Dave Morland claim the “new” anarchism is associated with new “critiques of power” along the lines, *inter alia*, of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ecology, and technology.⁹ They also stress “lifestyle anarchism” and the “politics of consumption” as essentially new concerns. In short, the new global anarchism is distinguished by its “complexity.”¹⁰ Barbara Epstein speaks of contemporary anarchism as “as an anarchist sensibility than as anarchism *per se*”, “a politics decidedly in the moment” marked by “intellectual fuzziness” and a broad anti-authoritarianism.¹¹ “Unlike the Marxist radicals of the sixties, who devoured the writings of Lenin and Mao, today’s anarchist activists are unlikely to pore over the works of Bakunin”.¹²

*Recuperation: the richness of classical anarchism
and syndicalism*

The contrast established in these works seems overdrawn. At one level, arguments for the emergence of a “New Anarchism” tend to rest on generalisations derived from a focus on the experiential wing of the contemporary movement—only one part of a complicated and contradictory movement and one, moreover, largely evident in the West. The argument that, for instance, “today’s anarchist activists” largely ignore anarchist theory and history certainly does not hold for the movement as a whole; it reflects only one of many trends and by no means the predominant one.

At another level, it is difficult to agree that contemporary anarchist “critiques of power” are either “new” or a sign of a growing “complexity” in anarchist sensibilities. Granted late 20th century and early 21st century global capitalism, state apparatuses, and social and cultural formations are decidedly more complex, imbricated, and more mutable than in the early 20th century.

⁹ For Purkis and Bowen the cumulative effect of these critiques amounts to a “paradigm shift” in the anarchist model. See Purkis and Bowen, 5 and 7.

¹⁰ Purkis and Bowen, 15.

¹¹ Epstein, 1, 11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

Yet the historic anarchist and syndicalist movements in the colonial and postcolonial world examined in this volume, self-consciously and systematically addressed both matters of production and social reproduction. In addition, they also took up issues pertaining to consumption, including access to, and the costs of, basic necessities and environmental issues, manifest in celebrations of nature and struggles against pollution. They also contested the dominant culture through the elaboration of a multifaceted counter-cultural project. Race, ethnic, and gender equality were central to their emancipatory project, as clearly reflected in the South African, Peruvian, Brazilian, Egyptian, and Cuban cases.

Another apparent point of divergence, according to those who suggest a break between historical and “New” anarchism, is the method of struggle adopted by the new anarchist movements and global networks. Direct action at the point of production linked to the “old” anarchism and syndicalism is said to have given way to symbolic opposition, civil disobedience and non-violent protests aimed at ridiculing “the conventions of bureaucracy and repressive society,” disrupting the routine of capital, and temporarily reclaiming space.¹³ Such “carnivals” of struggle are, such analysts suggest, expressions of a new approach to solidarity work, resting upon the activation of loose global networks that enable the circulation of ideas and models across borders.

Were these tactics absent from repertoire of struggles of early global anarchism? Here again, evidence from the colonial and post-colonial world would suggest otherwise. Symbolically contesting and mocking the legitimacy and moral authority of state officials, the bourgeoisie, the Church, and established social conventions were not uncommon. Ritual celebrations and festive events with international and local content such as May Day, and tributes to local martyrs, unions, and popular culture were standard fare. These grassroots level practices and performances often entailed the appropriation of public and urban spaces. This was particularly true in the case of non-violent street demonstrations and mass protests in the main squares and central plazas of national capitals and urban centers. The underserved reputation of late 19th and early 20th century anarchism and syndicalism for violence has obscured the largely pacific (if forceful) character of the direct action it propounded.

¹³ Goaman, 169, 171, 179.

David Graeber, in a seminal article on “The New Anarchists,” claims that organisational models and resistance techniques developed in the postcolonial world are profoundly shaping contemporary western movements, in marked contrast to the converse flow of influence during the initial era of anarchist internationalism.¹⁴

This is not a fair historical judgment of the classical anarchist and syndicalist movements in the colonial and postcolonial world. Although more research is needed, studies point to a more complex, multidirectional and multivocal explanation for the early development of anarchism in the global North.¹⁵ Similarly, the papers in this volume effectively refute the notion of a simple adoption of a western anarchist blueprint. Indeed, they demonstrate the ingenuity of anarchists and syndicalists in fashioning distinctive, polymorphist organisations and repertoires of struggle to fit the colonial and post-colonial contexts.

Foundations: the past in the present

In several key respects, classical anarchism and syndicalism provides the foundation for current global anarchist and syndicalist activism. First and foremost, as the studies in this volume demonstrate, anarchists and syndicalists in the colonial and post-colonial world self-consciously established transnational and cross-continental networks. These networks were based on formal and informal connections involving labour unions, study groups, newspapers, migrant communities, and personal relationships. Second, by formulating and promoting a universal discourse that was anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-statist, pro-human dignity and liberty, these anarchists and syndicalists consciously and effectively fostered an internationalist sensibility and outlook.

A third contribution to the contemporary movement was the classical movement’s universalism. Opposed not only to economic exploitation but to all forms of oppression, classical anarchism and syndicalism did not focus exclusively on the industrial proletariat. The revolutionary libertarian socialists envisaged the working class in the broadest terms,

¹⁴ Graeber, 65–66; See also Goaman, 173.

¹⁵ Besides the chapters in this study, which demonstrate this trend, see particularly Davide Turcato, “Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement 1885–1915”, *International Review of Social History*, 52:3, 2007, 407–444.

and in the colonial and postcolonial world as elsewhere, reached out to peasants, indigenous groups, sub-proletarians, artisans, and radical intellectuals. They recognized the social and political weight of these diverse groups and the potential for forging revolutionary alliances.

Among the most important legacies of classical anarchism and syndicalism was its commitment to holistic individual and collective emancipation. Both Mikhail Bakunin and Piotr Kropotkin stressed the importance, for instance, of “integral education” as essential for human self-realization and dignity. By “integral education” they meant not only instruction in manual and intellectual work, but a process of socialization based on “respect for labour, reason, equality, and freedom.”¹⁶ For this education and socialization process to be effective it required an egalitarian and democratic environment, preferably in an autonomous, decentralized, cooperative community.¹⁷

This prescription for human fulfillment and vision of a libertarian society resonated with anarchists and syndicalists in the colonial and post-colonial world. In societies where access to education and culture were the preserves of elites and strict divisions existed between manual workers and intellectuals, the concept of integral education had popular appeal. To break the elite monopoly on education and culture and to foster self-emancipation and human dignity, anarchists and syndicalists created a dense web of educational and cultural associations. Study circles, popular libraries and universities, independent presses, theatre and art groups, and recreational organisations were founded. Typically these associations were established in or near the neighbourhoods and communities of the popular classes. As a result, they transformed the living environments of the socially and politically excluded into liberated counter-communities.

*Retreats and Rearticulations:
Anarchism and Syndicalism, 1939–1989*

It is also important to note that there is, in many instances, a direct connection—by ideas, by organizations, and even by individual

¹⁶ Mikhail Bakunin, “Integral Education”, in Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, vol. one, Montréal, Canada: Black Rose Books, [1869] 2005, 220–223; Piotr Kropotkin, “Fields, Factories and Workshops”, in Graham (ed.), [1898] 2005, 117–119.

¹⁷ Bakunin, 223–24.

militants—between classical and contemporary anarchism and syndicalism. Although declining in influence from the late 1920s onwards, anarchism and syndicalism remained a potent force in the 1930s and well beyond. Most obviously, the National Confederation of Labor in Spain (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, or CNT, f. 1910) peaked in that era but there are other examples. In Poland, for instance, the anarchists and syndicalists came to play the leading role in Union of Trade Unions (ZZZ, f. 1931), which had 170,000 members at its height.¹⁸

George Woodcock famously claimed that the defeat of the Spanish Revolution in 1939 “marks the real death . . . of the anarchist movement which Bakunin founded”.¹⁹ It had, that is, died out as a mass peasant and proletarian movement, although an adulterated, eclectic, and counter-cultural “neo-anarchism” persisted, “essentially” a movement of privileged, middle class, youth. For Joll, the events in Spain were the last of anarchism’s “repeated failures” as a movement of “poor people”; its future, if any, lay outside the modern world, or on its margins, amongst bohemians and rebellious “students, largely middle class ones at that”.²⁰

This generalization—partly because of its narrow, yet incomplete, Western European focus—is simply incorrect. Anarchism and syndicalism remained important working class and peasant currents in many contexts after 1939—not least in Spain itself, where a large underground persisted throughout the Francoist era. Polish syndicalists played a central role in the anti-Nazi resistance, and operated distinct units in 1944 Warsaw Uprising.²¹ The Women Workers’ Federation of the syndicalist Local Workers’ Federation in Bolivia (f. 1927) and the Culinary Workers’ Union in La Paz, hewed to an anarcho-syndicalist line until 1953 and 1958 respectively.²² Chu Cha-

¹⁸ Rafał Chwedoruk, “Polish Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism in the 20th Century”, Paper presented at the 1st Anarchist Studies Network (ASN, Political Studies Association UK) conference, 4–6 September 2008, Loughborough University, 5–12.

¹⁹ George Woodcock, *Anarchism: a history of libertarian ideas and movements*, new edition with postscript: Penguin, 1975, 443, 456–463.

²⁰ James Joll, *The Anarchists*, London: Methuen and Co., 1964, 275–280; James Joll, “Anarchism: a living tradition”, in David Apter and James Joll (eds.), *Anarchism Today*, London and Basingtoke: Macmillan, 1971.

²¹ Chwedoruk, 12–14.

²² Robert J. Alexander and Eldon M. Parker, *History of Organised Labor in Bolivia*, Westford: Greenwood Press, 2005, 5–75; Ana Cecilia Wadsworth and Ineke Dibbits, *Agitadores de Buen Gusto: Historia del Sindicato de Culinarias (1935–1958)*, La Paz: tahipamu-hisbol, 1989.

pei led anarchist guerrillas in southern Yunan, China, in the 1950s.²³ Ukrainian anarchists, including Makhnovists, were prominent in the Karaganda *gulag* uprising in Kazakhstan in 1953.²⁴

In Bulgaria, anarchism survived the dictatorships of the 1930s and undertook clandestine work and guerrilla operations during the Second World War, followed by a brief, dramatic postwar upsurge, only to be savagely repressed.²⁵ In Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Cuba, anarchists and syndicalists played an important role in a number of unions into the 1960s.²⁶ Anarchism remained an important influence on peasant, worker, and student movements and guerrilla organizations in Mexico from the 1930s to the 1970s.²⁷ In Korea, a section of the anarchists formed the (electoral) Independent Workers' and Farmers' Party (IWFP) in 1946, and played a central role in the New Democratic Party in the 1960s, and the Democratic Unification Party in the 1970s.²⁸ The global protests of the late 1960s spurred an important revival, as Woodcock belatedly admitted.²⁹ While the Spanish CNT grew to 300,000 members in 1978, the Uruguayan Anarchist Federation (FAU, f. 1956) waged armed struggle via the Revolutionary Popular Organisation-33 (*Organización Popular Revolucionaria 33 Orientales*, OPR-33), also working within the unions and student movements.³⁰

²³ Interview with H.L. Wei in Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, 214 *et seq.*

²⁴ Philip Ruff, "Introduction", in Philip Ruff (ed.), *Anarchy in the USSR: a New Beginning*, London: ASP, 1991, 8–10.

²⁵ Michael Schmidt with Jack Grancharoff, *The Anarchist-Communist Mass Line: Bulgarian Anarchism Armed*, Johannesburg: Zabalaza Books, 2008, 7–10.

²⁶ See, for example, Sam Dolgoff, *The Cuban Revolution: a Critical Perspective*, Montréal: Black Rose, 1976, 51–61. Geoffroy de Laforcade, "A Laboratory of Argentine Labour Movements: Dockworkers, Mariners, and the Contours of Class Identity in the Port of Buenos Aires, 1900–1950." Yale University, 2001, 12–17, 311–354; Augustin Souchy, *Beware! Anarchist! A Life for Freedom: the autobiography of Augustin Souchy*, translated by T. Waldinger, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1992, pp. 142–150, 154.

²⁷ Donald C. Hodges, *Mexican Anarchism after the Revolution*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

²⁸ John Crump, "Anarchism and Nationalism in East Asia", *Anarchist Studies*, 4: 1, (1996), 55–57.

²⁹ Woodcock, 456, 460–462.

³⁰ Lester Golden, "The Libertarian Movement in Contemporary Spanish Politics", *Antipode: a radical journal of geography*, 10:3 / 11: 1, (1979), 116 footnote 3; María Eugenia Jung and Universindo Rodríguez Díaz, *Juan Carlos Mechoso: anarquista*, Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce, 2006, 7, 30, 50, 64–67, 75–79, 89, 99, 110–115, 132.

This revolutionary continuity helped lay the basis for the big upsurge of the 1990s, and refutes the claim that 1939 marked a break in anarchist and syndicalist history, either in terms of its ideology or its class composition. This is not, however, to deny a more general pattern of anarchists and syndicalists being displaced from their previously leading roles in working class and peasant movements from the late 1920s onwards, accelerating from the 1940s.

Several factors help explain this relative decline, as well as the 1990s resurgence. The anarchist and syndicalist movements of the 1870s to the 1930s were, above all, mass, popular movements and, as such, profoundly shaped by evolving class relations and state systems. Massive and sustained repression by western, Soviet and nationalist regimes undeniably weakened anarchist and syndicalist movements. Examples include V.I. Lenin's crushing of the Makhnovists from the late 1910s, Gerardo Machado's actions against the Cuban movement in the 1920s, the Japanese regime in Korea in the 1920s and 1930s, Getúlio Vargas's Brazil in the 1930s, fascism and the Red Army in Eastern Europe in the 1940s, and Mao Zedong's regime in 1950s China. In Western Europe, only Adolph Hitler's Germany matched Francisco Franco's Spain as executioner of its own civilians.³¹ This repression, levelled far more heavily at the anarchists and the syndicalists than at their reformist counterparts, reflected the very real fear their progress, and deep popular roots, engendered amongst employers and the state.³²

However, repression was not the only factor in the fading of anarchism and syndicalism. Powerful anarchist and syndicalist movements operated in adverse conditions, including colonialism, dictatorships and civil wars, as papers in this volume, and examples cited in this chapter, have indicated. Nor can repression explain the failure of movements to retain or regain their central role in relatively open contexts: examples would be the movement's decline in the open (for Latin America in this period) presidential era of Chile (1925–1973), and the failure of the Spanish CNT to re-establish itself as a leading force in 1970s, post-Franco, Spain.

³¹ Julius Ruiz, "A Spanish Genocide? Reflections on the Francoist Repression after the Spanish Civil War", *Contemporary European History*, 14: 2 (2005), 171–172.

³² Ralph Darlington, *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism: an International Comparative Analysis*, Aldershot, Hampshire and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008, 166–167.

Addressing this issue with reference to western contexts, Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe have suggested that improving living conditions linked to consumerism and state welfare, and structured collective bargaining, helped “integrate” working classes. This generated the decline of western working class radicalism generally—including of syndicalism.³³

This structuralist explanation can be usefully extended to the colonial and postcolonial world, although (as we argue later) it also has some important limitations. If, as Benedict Anderson’s foreword and our introductory essay have suggested, the era of the first modern globalization and empire was particularly conducive to anarchist and syndicalist activity, the epoch that followed was not. The cataclysmic events of World War I marked the start of a period of deglobalisation. The collapse of the Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman and Russian empires in the late 1910s was followed by the establishment of nation-states across Eastern Europe. The same period saw the rise of the closed, centrally planned, economy in the new Soviet Union, and the rise of economic nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s across the postcolonial world, including East Europe, Latin America, Ireland and even colonial South Africa.³⁴

Import-substitution industrialisation was only one component of a massive extension of state control over society in these countries: the incorporation of union leaders into the state (or the establishment of state-run unions), a rapid expansion of passport controls, welfare reforms and mass schooling, and sustained surveillance, bureaucratisation and repression. From the 1930s, the great powers also shifted away from *laissez-faire* under the blows of the Great Depression, adopting Keynesian demand-management policies. The 1940s and 1950s saw the remaining empires collapse (with the important exception of the Soviets’), and the application of either Soviet-style planning or import-substitution industrialisation by the new nation-states.

³³ Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe, “The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary Syndicalism”, in Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (eds.), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: an International Perspective*, Otterup/ Aldershot: Scolar / Gower Publishing Company, 1990, 17–19.

³⁴ This section draws upon Philip Bonner, Jonathan Hyslop and Lucien van der Walt (with the assistance of Andries Bezuidenhout and Nicole Ulrich), “Workers’ Movements”, in Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, London, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, 1121–28.

The new world of globalisation was in place by the 1930s, and was one in which the expansive nation-state (rather than the empire) was the norm, fracturing the peasantry and working class along “national” lines. States had always been viewed as vehicles of class as well as national liberation by sections of the union and other popular movements. This perception was now reinforced by nation-states’ growing role in managing and planning society, welfare, employment, and labour markets, in socialising people into national identities and loyalties, and in managing class conflict at a national level. Where the vote existed, it strengthened the image of the enabling, developmental, state.

Nationalism enjoyed a place of unprecedented hegemony globally, with fascist, populist, and even Communist parties adopting a nationalist outlook.³⁵ On the Left, nationalist, national-populist and Communist parties proved to be powerful competitors with anarchist and syndicalist movements. Not infrequently, they co-opted anarchist and syndicalist discourses and demands. The *Guomindang* in China garnered some anarchist and mass support because of its commitment to revolution, and to wresting control from warlords and imperialism.³⁶ In Latin America populist governments and parties appealed to workers precisely because they espoused an anti-oligarchical and anti-imperialist line while simultaneously calling for workers’ dignity, moral and cultural uplift, union organization, and vowing to satisfy workers’ material needs. The populist discourses of Juan Perón’s government (1946–1955) in Argentina and the APRA party in Peru (1930–1948) are prime examples of the appropriation of anarchist and syndicalist discursive elements.³⁷

The Communist Parties—the dominant anti-capitalist current in many contexts—likewise often absorbed anarchists and syndicalists’ political discourses. For example, in Latin America, they took their

³⁵ On fascism and populism see, Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism-Fascism-Populism*, Manchester: Verso Editions, 1982. On communism, see, for example, Michael Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labour Movement: the idea of the nation in socialist and anarchist theory*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, 115–166.

³⁶ Arif Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991, esp. 23–24, 252–256.

³⁷ This is point is implicit in the study by Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946–1976*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, esp. 28–40. On APRA, see, Luis Tejada, “La influencia anarquista en el APRA,” *Socialismo y Participación*, no.29, 1985, 97–109.

cue from anarchist and syndicalist movements to advocate a worker-peasant alliance and women's emancipation. The centralisation of the Communists has often been seen as playing a central role in their rise, but that factor should not be overstated: their rise was also integrally linked to the very fact of a Soviet Union and a People's Republic of China (PRC).

Communist Parties held a distinct advantage in their competition with anarchists and syndicalists inasmuch as the Soviet Union, the PRC, and their satellites, appeared to be conclusive proof of the virtues of the statist "dictatorship of the proletariat" over anarchist-communism. Besides benefiting from the Soviet Union's prestige, which grew especially rapidly in the 1940s, Communist Parties benefited from direct aid, including cash subsidies, political training, weapons, diplomatic aid, and a vast, unprecedented, outpouring of Marxist publications. "Moscow gold" was not a myth; the Communist Parties were qualitatively different entities to the independent left, including the anarchists and syndicalists. Vigorous critiques of Soviet regimes as "state-capitalist" or as "authoritarian socialist" certainly provided moral ammunition, but were no substitute for ready cash.

The deglobalised period was, clearly, not one conducive to anarchism and syndicalism. States repressed more efficiently, yet commanded a new degree of loyalty; class struggles were managed from above; migration slowed; the "nation" was often a far more immediate reality than the international proletariat; the anarchists and syndicalists' key rivals, the Communists, received state subsidies; the bureaucracies of the international union federations formed from 1945, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, were deeply embroiled in the activities of the rival state blocs of the Cold War. Meanwhile, levels of class struggle declined from their peak in the 1910s and early 1920s, weakening *all* working class and peasant movements—at least until the upsurge of the late 1960s.³⁸

Structural factors certainly help explain the retreat of anarchism and syndicalism starting in the 1920s; concomitantly, the change in these conditions, including a new phase of globalisation, starting from the 1970s, the rise of neo-liberalism and the associated decline of welfare as well as of national-level state-brokered class compromises, and the

³⁸ Darlington, 147–151.

collapse of the Eastern bloc, is integrally linked to the anarchist and syndicalist resurgence of the 1990s.

However, structuralist explanations, in locating the decline of anarchism and syndicalism in factors entirely external to the movement, provide an incomplete picture. The Communist Parties were undoubtedly shaped by their relationship with Moscow (or Beijing), but were never simply the tools of Soviet (or Maoist) foreign policy. The very existence of mass Communist Parties (all with a demonstrably deep working class roots) base, in both the great powers (notably Italy and France) and in the less industrialised countries (like Brazil, Egypt and South Africa) demonstrates that significant, popular, radical currents continued to exist despite growing state power and largesse, including “Moscow gold.” The global revolt of “1968” further demonstrated that the working class was very far from being “integrated” in the West, East or South.

It is necessary then to examine some of the internal problems in anarchist and syndicalist movements. The movement was always a diverse and contested one, and there were weaknesses in some of its wings that had adverse consequences for its durability. One of these was the excessive heterogeneity that characterised many contexts. In China, for instance, there were 92 different groups formed between 1919 and 1925, but no national federation or common programme,³⁹ creating space for the rapid growth of the more efficient (but initially far smaller) Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The tendency to schism was arguably accelerated by the rise of Bolshevism.⁴⁰

Nestor Makhno, reflecting on the weakness of the Russian anarchist movement (outside the Ukraine, that is), saw it as lying precisely in a state of “chronic general disorganisation”—a state, he stressed, that was at odds with Bakunin’s approach.⁴¹ Bakunin had formed the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy (f. 1868), to work within the International Workingmen’s Association, or First International (f. 1864). This was “a secret organisation with a well-determined programme—atheist, socialist, anarchist, revolutionary”.⁴² Without

³⁹ Dirlik, 11–13.

⁴⁰ Darlington, 167–177.

⁴¹ Nestor Makhno, Piotr Archinov, Ida Mett, Valevsky, Linsky, *The Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*, Dublin: Workers Solidarity Movement, [1926] 2001, 4.

⁴² Errico Malatesta, quoted in Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism*, London: Freedom Press, [1934] 1996, 130.

a homogenous programme and a unitary organisation, Bakunin, Makhno and many others argued, the movement was bound to dissipate its forces unnecessarily. This advice was not, however, always heeded.

Another weakness—again, not universal—was the replacement of a clear programme for decisive action for revolutionary transition by a naïve faith in “a miraculous solution to the problem”.⁴³ This led, at times, to alliances that contradicted basic principles and undermined movement autonomy, power and politics.

Papers in this volume have noted Mexico’s House of the World Worker’s (*Casa del Obrero Mundial*, COM or *Casa*) ill-considered alliance with Venustiano Carranza’s regime against the peasant Zapatistas, and the uncritical involvement of a section of Chinese and Korean anarchists in formations like the *Guomindang*, the Korean Provisional Government, and the IWWP. More famously, the Spanish CNT joined the Popular Front Government in 1936 precisely because (argued the dissident CNT faction, the Friends of Durruti) “the leadership had no idea which course of action to pursue”, despite “lyricism aplenty”.⁴⁴

The problem did not arise from anarchists and syndicalists entering into alliances with a wide range of forces: as this volume has shown, alliances were beneficial to movements in contexts like Argentina, China, Cuba, Egypt, Korea, Peru and the Ukraine). Rather, it arose when alliances substituted for, and contradicted, revolution itself.

Again, this was not a flaw inherent in anarchism or syndicalism—as the writings of Bakunin, and the activities of the *Makhnovichna* and the Korean People’s Association in Manchuria, discussed in this volume, indicate.⁴⁵ Indeed, the CNT itself had resolved at its May 1936 congress at Zaragoza on the necessity of complete expropriation, coordinated and defended by a coordinated national military using modern military techniques. As Makhno reaffirmed Bakunin’s insistence on ideological and organisational unity, so the Friends of Durruti reaffirmed his stress on the necessity of a “National Defence Council”,

⁴³ José Peirats, *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, London: Freedom Press, [1964] 1990, 13–14.

⁴⁴ The Friends of Durruti, *Towards a Fresh Revolution*, Durban: Zabalaza Books, [1938, 1978] no date given, 12, 24.

⁴⁵ Bakunin, “The Programme of the International Brotherhood”, in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, London: George Allen and Unwin, [1872] 1971, 152–154.

elected by and accountable to the unions and mass movements, and the forcible destruction of state power.⁴⁶

Conclusions: the future in the present

In a very practical, non-utopian sense, classical anarchism and syndicalism, especially as it was manifest in the colonial and post-colonial world, bequeathed a legacy of struggles for holistic human emancipation and dignity. Playing a key role in popular and emancipatory struggles in the colonial and postcolonial world from the 1870s to the 1930s and beyond, anarchism and syndicalism must be given its due weight in the larger story of struggles against imperialism, national oppression and racial domination. Likewise, the history of anarchism and syndicalism must be recognised as a global one, where large-scale movements like the one in Spain, played a key role but were neither exceptional nor isolated; rather, they were part of an interconnected subaltern resistance movement that spanned the continents in a struggle to remake the world and that, in its most advanced forms, faced the question of power seriously.

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⁴⁶ The Friends of Durruti, 25. For more on the debates on these issues, see van der Walt and Schmidt, 190–209.

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