

Volume I
Number 4
January 2014

 **workersoftheworld**

International Journal
on Strikes and
Social Conflicts

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Workers of the World is the journal of the International Association Strikes and Social Conflicts, born in Lisbon on March 2011. The Association now has the participation of more than three dozen academic institutions from Europe, Africa, North and South America. Website: <http://iassc-mshdijon.in2p3.fr/>

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Letter from the editor

This is the fourth issue of *Workers of the World – International Journal on Strikes and Social Conflicts*. Differently from what we might start calling ‘usual’, this issue is not thematic (as the previous one – and the next, which will be dedicated to “Conflict in contemporary rural world: new perspectives on an old problem”, and it doesn’t have a *dossier* either. This is for a very good reason – authors from different continents keep providing us with a constant flow of article proposals which can’t wait (too much) to be published.

So in this issue we have articles from Northern and Southern Europe, North and South America, from young researchers as François Guinchard, Gary Blank and Marcos Schiavi and others no longer as young... You can have an overview of the articles and a short notice about their authors at the end of this issue.

We regret though not having the possibility to publish in this issue any article from Africa or Asia, related with the struggles of the large detachments of the Indian, Chinese and Indonesian working classes, to mention just a few of the most significant ones. This is also an invitation to researchers worldwide to propose such articles.

Workers of the World is the journal of the International Association Strikes and Social Conflicts (<http://iassc-mshdijon.in2p3.fr/>), born in Lisbon, in March 2011. The Association membership includes now more than three dozen academic institutions from four continents. *Workers of the World* is an academic journal with peer review published in English, for which original manuscripts may be submitted in Spanish, French, English, Italian and Portuguese. It publishes original articles, interviews and book reviews in the field of labour history and social conflicts in an interdisciplinary, global, long term historical and non Eurocentric perspective.

Articles should be sent, according to the Editorial and publishing rules that you may find in our site (<http://workersoftheworldjournal.net/>), to the executive editor at workersoftheworld2012@yahoo.co.uk.

António Simões do Paço
Executive Editor

The Centrality of Social Relations: E.P. Thompson's Concept of Class and the Renewal of Historical Materialism¹

Gary Blank

E. P. Thompson was an avowedly Marxist historian, but did not hide his aversion for what he termed Marx's "*Grundrisse* face." Marx's critique of political economy, Thompson suggested, only confronted the political economists on their own turf. Marx became entrapped within the "circuits of capital," developing a highly conceptualized and abstract analysis of the capitalist mode of production in which determinism appeared to be "absolute." According to Thompson, it was necessary to make the analytical shift from the circuits of capital to capitalism—in which the hypotheses of historical materialism were not simply assumed, but shown to be so historically. Against Marx's allegedly absolute determinism, Thompson posited a "historical" version of determination as the "exerting of pressures" or "logic of process," in which determinations emanating from one direction are met with countervailing determinations from another.²

Without suggesting that the differences between Marx and Thompson are unimportant, however, it is possible to see a similar dialectical method at work between them, at least with respect to historical process and determination. Rather than engaging in a detailed historical account of capitalism's emergence, Marx sought to identify the "economic law of motion" of capitalism at its highest level of abstraction.³ Yet, as Geoffrey Pilling has noted: "The task of Marx's critique of political

¹ I would like to thank George Conninell for the intellectual guidance he provided in writing an early version of this paper, and gratefully acknowledge the helpful comments and criticism provided by two anonymous reviewers of this journal.

² THOMPSON, E.P. *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*. London: Merlin Press, 1978. p. 355.

³ See SMITH, M.E.G. *Invisible Leviathan: The Marxist Critique of Market Despotism beyond Postmodernism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994. p. 53.

economy was *not* one that involved him finding a ‘constant’ in terms of which everything could be quantified but of establishing the laws of mediation through which the ‘essence’ of phenomena manifested itself as ‘appearance.’”⁴ These laws are not the theoretical expression of empirical regularities but expressions of the key material forces constituted by capitalist social relations, what Marx called tendencies. Like Marx, Thompson also proceeded from the “organic whole,” rejecting any attempt to splice reality into “independent, autonomous” fragments such that the technological or economic is construed as independent from the social and from the cultural. For this reason, Thompson also placed social relations, particularly social production relations, at the centre of his analyses. An affirmation of the primacy of social relations does not replace one form of determinism with another (“productive forces determinism” with, say, “production relations determinism”). Social relations assume analytical priority, but since humans are intentional actors, consciousness interacts with social being in determining ways. The challenge of historical analysis is to chart their mediation.

Yet it is here where Marx and Thompson may seem to depart. In his famous Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), Marx famously noted: “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.”⁵ Here, “social being” and “consciousness” form a unity, but determination seems to flow in only one direction, from the former to the latter. This has the danger of reducing historical materialism to little more than a version of naturalistic materialism, because it makes no provision for the active role of consciousness and intention in constituting reality. In other words, the meaning endowed to social being as a product of consciousness has no purchase on its “independent” existence. The social then simply becomes a reflection of the natural, as it is in G.A. Cohen’s technological-determinist version of historical materialism based on the 1859 Preface.⁶ Ironically, it is against the 1859 Preface that Thompson’s fidelity to Marxism has been judged. Many Marxists have

⁴ PILLING, G. “The Law of Value in Ricardo and Marx,” In: FINE, B. (ed.), *The Value Dimension*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986, p. 21.

⁵ MARX, K. *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, in MARX, K. and ENGELS, F. *Selected Works*, Volume One. Moscow: International Publishers, 1969. p. 503. In *The German Ideology*, a similar point is made: “Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.” MARX and ENGELS, *The German Ideology*. New York: International Publishers, 1977, p. 47.

⁶ For critical assessments of Cohen, see WOOD, Ellen Meiksins. *Democracy Against Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, chapter 4.

argued that Thompson's conception of class is excessively subjectivist, privileging the subjective over the objective, the cultural over the economic, agency over structure, and social consciousness over social being.

In this paper, I argue that Thompson's concept of class is not a muddled half-way-house between genuine historical materialism and post-structuralism, but is instead an important *extension* of historical materialist inquiry. As is evident from the 1859 Preface, there was a discernible economic determinism and reductionism in the "historical materialist" Marx. This determinism must be assessed critically—it will not do to suggest that it was simply shorthand used to evade the Prussian censors, or to suggest that Marx has been completely distorted by his "vulgar" successors.⁷ However, what Thompson demonstrates so ably is that a confrontation with Marx's deficiencies does not force us to decide for or against historical materialism. Thompson points the way to a "renewal" of historical materialism through a consistent application of the dialectical method to historical explanation. In doing so, Thompson shifts analytical attention from things (e.g., industrial machinery) and—like "*Grundrisse* face" Marx—focuses on the determining effects of historically specific exploitive relations of production.⁸ This enables Thompson to remedy two specific deficiencies in classical Marxism. The first is the relationship between social being and consciousness, which Thompson re-conceives as a dialectical interaction through the mediation of "experience." The second is the historical origin of the working class through a process of making, a process which was largely unaddressed in the classical canon. I will seek to highlight Thompson's contributions in both these areas by first detailing his theory of class formation, and then assessing the claims of two of his more "classically"-minded Marxist critics. To demonstrate Thompson's contributions in both respects, this paper first develops a detailed reinterpretation of his theory of class formation; critically assesses the "structural" conception of class offered by Thompson's more "classically"-

⁷ These two possibilities are raised by Perry Anderson in his assessment of the controversy over the Preface. See ANDERSON, Perry. *Arguments Within English Marxism*. London: Verso 1980. pp. 120-4. Perry does, however, make a valid point when he notes that "The infrequency of its [base and superstructure] use by Marx contrasts sharply with the transformation of the metaphor into a universal formula by Second International and Stalinist thinkers." pp. 120-1.

⁸ Two sources were particularly helpful in developing my understanding of this point: WOOD, *Democracy Against Capitalism*, chapter 4; and COMNINEL, G.C. *Rethinking the French Revolution: Marxism and the Revisionist Challenge*. London, 1987. chapter 7. Of course, many Marxist scholars have noted the limitations of the 1859 Preface, but few have contrasted its logic with the logic of Marx's critique of political economy, a contrast that has very significant implications for our understanding of historical materialism.

minded Marxist critics; analyzes the contemporary relevance of these debates for the development of a non-Eurocentric historical materialism; and, finally, reconsiders the Marx's own language of class in light of Thompson's concerns.

Thompson on experience, consciousness and class

The central ideas informing Thompson's theory of class and class formation are expressed in the preface to his *The Making of the English Working Class* (hereafter *The Making*), originally published in 1963. Consequently, it has become a touchstone for critics and partisans alike⁹ -- and just as a narrow focus on Marx's Preface led to a neglect of his other writings on historical materialism, so too has a one-sided focus on Thompson's preface produced inattention to his other writings on class.¹⁰ Still, the preface is certainly Thompson's most concise elaboration of his theory, and the distinctions introduced in his later writings—particularly between “class situation” and “class formation,” and between “experience I” and “experience II”¹¹ largely extended and clarified the central concepts introduced by the preface. It therefore seems apt to comment on the preface first, and then to introduce the important concepts of Thompson's later writings after the arguments of his critics have been elaborated.

For Marxists reared on the “structural” definition of class, perhaps the most jarring statement in the preface is the claim that “[c]lass is defined by men as they live their own history, and in the end, this is its only definition.”¹² It is jarring because it is not offered as *one* definition of class, or as a particular *aspect* of class (perhaps class consciousness or “class-in-itself”). Instead it is offered as the *only* definition of class, and one which

⁹ W.H. Sewell suggests that Thompson's preface may be “the most frequently cited” since Marx's. See SEWELL, W.H. “How Classes are Made: Critical Reflections on E.P. Thompson's Theory of Working-class Formation.” In KAYE, H. J. MCLELLAND, K. (eds.), *E.P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990. p. 51.

¹⁰ Indeed, the ink was barely dry on *The Making of the English Working Class* before Thompson began to ink polemics against his Marxist opponents. “The Peculiarities of the English” and, later, “The Poverty of Theory” are the two most oft-cited examples. Still, two shorter essays by Thompson are just as helpful in clarifying his notion of class. They are: “The Politics of Theory,” in SAMUEL, R. *People's History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981; and “Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?”, *Social History*, 3:2 (1978), pp. 133-165.

¹¹ See THOMPSON, “The Politics of Theory” and “Eighteenth-century English society.” *Op.Cit.*

¹² THOMPSON, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. Middlesex: Penguin, 1968. p. 10.

seems to privilege the subjective factor over the objective. Such a polemical “bending of the stick” was entirely characteristic of Thompson. However, it opened the door to charges of inconsistency from Marxists and non-Marxists alike when it was discovered that Thompson did, in fact, leave much room for “objective” structuration. Thus, it is important to appreciate that Thompson’s “bottom line” definition of class is not an assertion of subjectivity *over* objectivity, or agency *against* structure—it is an affirmation of the idea that class is a historical relationship between human beings.¹³

An understanding of class as a *specific* kind of social relationship informs Thompson’s distinction between “class consciousness” and “class experience”:

class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), 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. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not. We can see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way.¹⁴

Production relations are inherently conflictual, ensuring that the experience of these relations is a “class” experience. However, these experiences are “handled” in cultural terms. It is helpful to underline that such experiences can *only* be handled in cultural terms, because the class

¹³ See THOMPSON, “Eighteenth-century English society”. *Op.Cit.* p. 147. Thompson’s usage of “men” as shorthand for “human beings” in the passages quoted here is regrettable, but not necessarily typical. In many instances, Thompson was careful to explicitly include men and women in his concept of class, and one feminist scholar even finds it to be “most compatible with feminist project”. See ACKER, Joan. “Class, Gender and the Relations of Distribution,” *Signs*, 13:3 (1988), p. 478. This discrepancy is symbolic of a much wider gender blindness in Thompson’s work, with gender (and race) relations receiving little analytical attention. It can justly be asked, therefore, whether Thompson’s account of class formation and consciousness, for all of its richness, is inherently deficient for neglecting its profoundly gendered character. For further critical discussion, see Joan W. Scott’s influential statement, “Women in *The Making of the English Working Class*,” in SCOTT, Joan W. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988 and more recently, GREGG, Robert. “Class, Culture and Empire: E.P. Thompson and the Making of Social History”. *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 11:4 (1998), pp. 419-460.

¹⁴ THOMPSON. *The Making. Op.Cit.* p. 9.

actors in question are living human beings, not structures. As they attempt to understand their experience of production relations, they will necessarily rely upon cultural resources, especially those that have been transmitted from the past. For this reason, class experience, but not class consciousness, appears as determined—consciousness is inseparable from cultural inheritances which are variable across nation, region, age, and occupation. Thompson nevertheless betrays a strong conviction that class experiences *will* make their mark on culture, yielding a common logic of response among similar occupational groups. An important implication of Thompson's framework (but de-emphasized in the preface) is that cultural inheritances can act to *inhibit* the feeling or articulation of an identity of interests among those in similar positions in production relations. If class "happens" when men articulate an identity of interests between themselves, and class consciousness is necessary for such an articulation to occur, then class consciousness and class are co-requisite. This is quite different from the classical Marxist understanding of class consciousness, which suggested that the "class-for-itself" only forms after a protracted period of class struggle. In that account, class consciousness arrives when members of a class not only articulate their shared interests, but also commit to a revolutionary political strategy appropriate to their "objective" class interests.¹⁵

The identity that Thompson draws between class and class consciousness is unconventional and even seemingly contradictory. Even if it is agreed that class is a historical social relationship, not a "thing"; a "happening," not a structure; and a cultural phenomena rather than a mathematical quantum, it is not clear why class should be identified with a particular form of class consciousness (that is, consciousness of an identity of interests). Thompson's Marxist critics readily acknowledged that individuals "experience" class in cultural terms. But they continued to insist that individuals could collectively constitute classes even without possessing any particular consciousness or understanding of the production relations in which they are objectively embedded. As discussed below, Thompson may have come to see some legitimacy in these criticisms, encouraging the further clarification of his concepts.

¹⁵ For some considerations regarding the relationship between Thompson's concept of "class consciousness" and the traditional notion of "class-for-itself," see WOOD, Ellen Meiksins. "The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class," *Studies in Political Economy*, Issue 9 (Fall 1982), pp. 65-70. This article appears, in slightly amended form, as chapter 3 of Wood's *Democracy Against Capitalism*. The crucial question of "class-for-itself" is addressed at the end of the paper.

However, even if Thompson's terminology could benefit from refinement, he nevertheless points to something of crucial importance—*viz.*, that class relations are *not* coterminous with production relations. As Ellen Wood has suggested, relations of production “are the relations among people who are joined by the production process and the antagonistic nexus between those who produce and those who appropriate their surplus labour.”¹⁶ By its very definition, production relations imply an antagonism of interest between direct producer and appropriator, and so it is hardly surprising that many Marxists have simply equated them with class relations. Yet there remains a crucial distinction: the production relation is a direct relationship between producer and appropriator, but the class relation is not. Workers at different sites of production, or peasants on different *seigneuries*, may experience a similar relation of exploitation vis-à-vis their respective ruling class appropriators; but they are never brought together as a class through the production process or process of surplus extraction. Class, therefore, “implies a connection which extends beyond the immediate process of production and the immediate nexus of extraction, a connection that spans across particular units of production and appropriation.”¹⁷ From this perspective, to say (as Thompson does) that class “is something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships”¹⁸ is to suggest that class relationships are formed between people who have a common experience of production relations but are not brought together *directly* on the basis of these production relations. Experience and consciousness then emerge as crucial analytical categories mediating between production relations and class relations.

It is also clear that if production relations and class relations are distinguished in the way Wood suggests, the process of forging class relationships can only be a cultural, conscious process, through which agents come to comprehend an identity of interests based upon similar positions in production relations. Experience is therefore also an important mediation between “social being” and “consciousness,” or the interface where the two meet. As Thompson elaborates in the *Poverty of Theory*, social being is not some “gross materiality” separated from consciousness. Instead,

What we mean is that change takes place within social being, which give rise to changed *experience*: and this experience is *determining*, in the

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ THOMPSON. *The Making. Op.Cit.* p. 8.

sense that it exerts pressures upon existent social consciousness, proposes new questions, and affords much of the material which the more elaborated intellectual exercises are about.¹⁹

Here, Thompson's defence of "experience" is directed at Althusserians, but his initial validation of the concept in *The Making* was directed against economic historians and "crude" Marxist theorists. That Thompson was driven to defend his basic theoretical framework against such a diverse array of critics speaks to a common assumption: that the making of the English working class was largely a corollary of industrial and technological advance. This assumption can be traced back to certain writings of Marx and Engels themselves. In *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*, Engels remarks that that "the proletariat was called into existence by the introduction of machinery."²⁰ Similarly, references to the "proletariat" in the *Communist Manifesto* are intended to evoke the *industrial* working class. In their initial stage of development, proletarians are compelled to strike "against the instruments of production...seek[ing] to restore by force the vanished status of the workmen of the Middle Ages."²¹ Class consciousness arrives later, when the "development of industry," "unceasing improvement of machinery," and "improved means of communication" compel proletarians to overcome attachments to a pre-industrial past, enabling the formation of trade unions and a political party capable of striking against bourgeois "conditions of production."²²

There is certainly much of value, and even striking prescience, in the *Manifesto*. Yet Thompson's insistence that the industrial proletariat was not a "fresh race of beings"²³ is a reminder that the potted account of proletarian consciousness offered by Marx and Engels—and often taken for granted by subsequent Marxists—assumed a rather limited conception of working-class "experience." Growing concentration of industry and improvement of communication were highly significant for the advancement of trade union and party organizations, and corollary forms of class consciousness. However, in *The Making* Thompson stresses that the changing productive relations and working conditions commonly associated with the Industrial Revolution were felt in a very particular ways precisely

¹⁹ THOMPSON. *Poverty of Theory*. *Op.Cit.* p. 200. See also WOOD, Ellen Meiksins. "The Politics of Theory". *Op.Cit.* p. 62.

²⁰ ENGELS, F. *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. Frogmore: St Albans, 1969. p. 50.

²¹ MARX, K. and ENGELS, F. "Manifesto of the Communist Party". In: MARX, K. and ENGELS, F. *Selected Works*, Volume One. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 111-2.

²³ See THOMPSON. *The Making*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 213.

because they were imposed “not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman—and the freeborn Englishman as Paine had left him or as the Methodists had moulded him.”²⁴ It is hardly sufficient, then, to regard religious traditions, constitutionalism, Dissent, remembrances of customary right, notions of equality before bourgeois law, craft traditions, and other pre-industrial inheritances as so many forms of “false consciousness” to be shed with the advancement of industry. The problem is that these political and cultural inheritances had a profoundly *contradictory* effect upon class formation. Tracing the “reactionary” or “backward-looking” nature of these traditions from the perspective of revolutionary socialism is not especially difficult; but understanding their contribution to class consciousness, in ways that shaped particular forms of political organization and social values, is a truly challenging analytical task.

Thus, Thompson argues against the suggestion that Luddism was reactionary through and through, preferring instead to call it a moment of “*transitional* conflict.” On the one hand, it did look backward to old customs and paternalist legislation that “could never be revived.” On the other hand, it tried to revive ancient rights “in order to establish new precedents.” At different times, their demands included a legal minimum wage, the control of “sweating” of women and juveniles, arbitration, engagement by masters to find work for skilled men made “redundant” by machinery, and the right to open trade union organization. In this way, the Luddites actually sought to articulate an alternative political economy and morality to that of *laissez faire*, one which looked forward not so much to a paternalist as a democratic community.²⁵

Without the sort of “transitional” conflicts exemplified by Luddism, it is difficult to envision how a movement like that of the Chartists could have emerged. Chartism was not simply a “necessary” or “logical” response to the vagaries of industrialization but a product of cultural, political, and social struggles waged by previous generations of workers as they experienced capitalist development. The Chartist demand for universal suffrage, for example, was an extension of previous Reformist and Radical political campaigns that engaged sections of the working class—campaigns for equality before the law, an end to “Old Corruption” and parasitism,²⁶ freedom of the press, and for redress after Peterloo.²⁷ Chartism was as much

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 603.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 734-68.

a social and economic movement as a political one, since the vote was regarded as means for working people to achieve “*social control* over their conditions of life and labour.”²⁸ Thus, Chartism also inherited the socio-economic struggles that Thompson so assiduously documents—early trade union demands for a “fair” price, “just” wage, and respect for standards of workmanship;²⁹ Luddism; illegal trade union organizing; and customary demands for a minimum wage, the ten-hour day, and restrictions of female and child labour.³⁰ These struggles, carried out at the earliest stages of industrialization, were integral to the emergence of a new working-class consciousness and the political break with the middle class that made Chartism possible.

Thompson’s focus on the “experience” of the early industrial worker also allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social being and consciousness. As was noted above, certain formulations in Marx’s “historical materialist” writings, especially the 1859 preface, seemed to posit a rigid determination between social being and consciousness, with the former wholly determining the latter. Thompson’s concept of experience, in contrast, allows for a mutual determination between both categories while still retaining a notion of social being as “primary” in an analytical sense. Thus, in the *Poverty of Theory* Thompson argues that there is

dialogue between social being and social consciousness. Obviously, this dialogue goes in both directions....consciousness, whether as unself-conscious culture, or as myth, or as science, or law, or articulated ideology, thrust back into being in its turn: as being is thought so thought also is lived—people may, within limits, *live* the social or sexual expectations which are imposed upon them by dominant conceptual categories.³¹

The key phrase here is “within limits.” The Hegelian idealist philosophers that Marx polemicized against, like contemporary post-structuralists, were reluctant to connect the ideational realm to any material foundation, rendering it completely autonomous. In contrast, Marx and Thompson both insist that an analysis of social being is a necessary starting point for an understanding of consciousness. Individuals find themselves in societies that are structured in determinate ways (especially through

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 910.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 261

³⁰ The struggles of the weavers are dealt with particularly well by Thompson. See *Ibid.*, pp. 334-342.

³¹ THOMPSON. *Poverty of Theory. Op.Cit.* p. 201.

production relations), and this has a profound bearing upon what is thought about.³² Thompson's innovation is to point out that as changes to social being are "experienced" (perhaps through intensified exploitation or enhanced state repression), these changes will be understood through existing (or "imposed") consciousness—challenging certain predispositions, while reinforcing others. As people react to this experience (and Thompson insists that "no worker known to historians ever had surplus-value taken out of his hide without finding some way of fighting back"³³), they employ their conscious understanding of how things are—and how things ought to be—to effect a transformation of their conditions. Even when they are not fully successful in realizing their ambitions (and they rarely are), their agency does alter social being, including production relations.

Thompson's discussion of the Speenhamland decision serves as an excellent illustration of this dialectical approach. In 1795, bread prices soared as war stalked the European continent. Workers mainly understood this experience through perspectives of moral economy and customary rights, although the experience proved so extreme that a minority embraced elements of Jacobin politics as well. To enforce their customary rights, aggrieved workers engaged in a "climactic year" of rioting, compelling the authorities to subsidize wages in relation to the price of bread.³⁴ Similarly, the Norwich worsted weavers understood their experience of intensified exploitation through Jacobin and trade union traditions, and succeeded in keeping up wages in the 1830s by "a combination of picketing, intimidation of masters and 'illegal' men, municipal politics, and violent opposition to machinery."³⁵

It would be easy to claim that such victories were small and necessarily short-lived, mere respites from the irrepressible juggernaut of industrialization. Yet this urge should be resisted. Victories, even if limited, were still victories, and demonstrated that workers acting on their consciousness could alter social being. Moreover, workers' capacity to do so was profoundly shaped by specific regional traditions, especially the differing sets of inherited ideological and organisational resources that could be leveraged for collective action and resistance. Although they confronted broadly similar macro-economic tendencies and pressures, weavers in the West Riding proved much less willing than those in Norwich to engage in

³² See THOMPSON. "Eighteenth-century English society". *Op.Cit.* p. 149.

³³ THOMPSON. *Poverty of Theory*. *Op.Cit.* pp. 345-6.

³⁴ THOMPSON. *The Making*. *Op.Cit.* pp. 72-3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

militant action against exploitation, resulting in a much earlier erosion of their artisanal status. The reasons for this divergence are undoubtedly complex, but it is undoubtedly significant that the Jacobin and trade union traditions that were so instrumental for struggles in Norwich were largely absent in the West Riding. Workers' agency ensured that production relations were never rigidly determining in their force, nor homogenizing in their outcome.³⁶ The history of capitalism therefore appears as a "structured process," where capitalist relations of production are determining only in the sense of setting broad limits and exerting pressures.

As important as it is to note the wide latitude that Thompson gives to consciousness, agency, and historical process, it should not be forgotten that a class *is* made. The determinations provided by production relations are experienced so powerfully that they do give rise to a common consciousness, ultimately fostering class relations. That class relations were established among such a heterogeneous group of workers, with such variegated traditions and in so many different regions, suggests that capitalist production relations exerted a very powerful determining force on consciousness, even before the full onset of industrialization. Contra Engels, it was not machinery which "called" the proletariat into existence, but instead the expansion of capitalist relations of production, and the determining effect that these relations had upon experience and consciousness.³⁷

Thompson makes this point explicitly in part two of *The Making*, noting for example that the decline in weavers' living standards *preceded* "serious competition" with the power loom, and stemmed instead from "the abominable system of reducing wages" in out-work.³⁸ Both the homogeneity *and* the heterogeneity of working-class experience in the early-nineteenth century contributed to class consciousness and class formation. On the one hand, all workers felt the determining pressures of exploitative capitalist production relations. On the other hand, these pressures were transmitted to various groups of wage labourers—from factory hands, out workers, and miners to agricultural labourers and skilled building workers—each of which brought different cultural traditions to bear in developing an understanding of their exploitation. These distinctions

³⁶ THOMPSON. *Poverty of Theory*. *Op.Cit.* p. 98. See also LACHER, H. *Beyond Globalization: Capitalism, territoriality and the international relations of modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 33; and WOOD. "The Politics of Theory". *Op.Cit.* p. 63.

³⁷ Wood makes this point well in *The Origins of Capitalism: A Longer View*. London: Verso, 2002. p. 65-9.

³⁸ THOMPSON. *The Making*. *Op.Cit.* p. 314.

engendered intra-class division but they were also a source of strength. As Thompson repeatedly points out, artisans played a particularly prominent role in the making of the working class precisely because they were *not* factory hands. Their experience of capitalist exploitation was not just an affront to their material standard of living, but also to deep-seated customary norms and attendant notions of self-esteem and independence. Artisans reacted to exploitation by utilizing their strong organizational traditions--membership in “friendly societies,” stable trade union organization, involvement in educational and religious movements³⁹--to press the most radical political demands of their time. Factory workers, while feeling the material depredations of capitalist exploitation just as strongly (if not more so), were more vulnerable to victimization by their employers, and found the Radical appeal to old customary rights less relevant to their own situation. Their initial energies were therefore poured into their own trade union organization.⁴⁰ Class consciousness resulted from a confluence of these two traditions—(primarily) artisanal Radicalism and trade union militancy—which both had their foundation in changing production relations.⁴¹ Thompson’s notion of working-class “experience” therefore calls into question the pervasive reification of “machinery” and “technology” in most accounts of the Industrial Revolution, and returns the focus to exploitative social relations—exactly where the attention of historical materialists should lie.

Thompson’s Marxist critics and the “retreat from class”

The above assessment of Thompson’s work is drawn in very broad strokes, and hardly does justice to the full complexity and originality of his theoretical and historical writings. However, it captures the most essential theoretical implications of Thompson’s work, and helps to establish his concept of class as a legitimate extension of historical materialist ideas. The importance of introducing experience into historical materialist analysis becomes all the more apparent when the arguments of Thompson’s “Marxist” critics are confronted. Many examples could be raised, but this section focuses on G.A. Cohen for two reasons. First, his “defence” of Marx’s theory of history⁴² proved to be highly influential for subsequent

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 266-7.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 706-7.

⁴¹ See *Ibid.*, chapter 16, particularly pp. 781-2.

⁴² COHEN, G.A. *Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Marxist scholarship, including strands that are often considered to be divergent (e.g., the historical sociology of Perry Anderson and the rational choice/analytical Marxism of Jon Elster, John Roemer and others).⁴³ Through these authors, some of Cohen's foundational propositions about Marxist theory acquired a widespread and sometimes unacknowledged resonance, assuming a taken-for-granted status among many critics and defenders of historical materialism alike. Second, and relatedly, Cohen's critique of Thompson illuminates some of the most crucial methodological and theoretical issues that remain unresolved within historical materialism specifically, and social inquiry more generally. Cohen's critique provides a unique window for recovering Thompson's place within the broad historical materialist tradition, and through this, reassessing commonplace assumptions about the relevance of class analysis in contemporary historical study.

Like most of Thompson's Marxist critics, Cohen makes clear that he does not question the "magnificence" of Thompson's historical writings, but rather his "misconceived" theoretical framework. Empirical history is ceded to Thompson—Cohen only wages his battle on the terrain of high theory.⁴⁴ In fact, it is this attempt to divorce the "theoretical" from the "historical" in Thompson which is the most problematic aspect of the Cohen/Anderson argument, for a central methodological conclusion of Thompson's analysis is that there cannot be a rupture between the theoretical and the empirical. Cohen's critique is predicated upon a strongly "structural" concept of class, one which Anderson upholds as "of exemplary clarity and subtlety."⁴⁵ A person's class

is established by nothing but his objective place in the network of ownership relations, however difficult it may be to identify such places neatly. His consciousness, culture, and politics do not enter the *definition* of his class position. Indeed, these exclusions are required to protect the substantive character of the Marxian thesis that class position strongly conditions consciousness, culture and politics.⁴⁶

This definition is certainly clear. Unlike the flights of Althusserian metaphysics that Thompson so vehemently attacked in *The Poverty of Theory*, this definition does not deny that class relations are "human

⁴³ See ANDERSON, P. *Arguments Within English Marxism. Op.Cit.* p. 40; ROEMER, J. (ed.), *Analytical Marxism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

⁴⁴ WOOD. "The Politics of Theory". *Op.Cit.* pp. 62-3.

⁴⁵ ANDERSON. *Arguments. Op.Cit.* p. 40.

⁴⁶ COHEN, G. *Karl Marx's Theory of History. Op.Cit.* p. 73.

relations.”⁴⁷ Instead, it simply claims that class relations exist regardless of whether members of classes are aware of them. Production relations are effectively equated with class relations, detaching experience and consciousness from the concept of class itself. In defending this equation, Cohen and Anderson offer a number of arguments that explicitly challenged Thompson’s contentions.

Cohen agrees with Thompson that there is no simple connection between production relations, on the one hand and consciousness, politics and culture on the other: “There is logic in it but not law.”⁴⁸ However, he suggests that Thompson has ignored the crucial distinction between “class-in-itself” and “class-for-itself”:

If Thompson were right, the French peasantry of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* could not be considered a class. This is a curious result, and hardly in line with the Marx Thompson invokes, who described them as “the most numerous class of French society,” the *class* base of Louis Napoleon’s power. It is precisely because a class need *not* be conscious of itself that the phrase “class-in-itself” was introduced.⁴⁹

For this reason, Cohen suggests that it is not appropriate to speak of class as a happening or process, but rather as something that “*undergoes* a process of political and cultural formation.”⁵⁰ It is still appropriate to speak of the “making” of the English working class, but only in the sense of being made “*into* what it once was not: a self-aware group with definite political dispositions.”⁵¹

For his part, Anderson invokes Cohen’s structural definition to raise similar objections, albeit with greater historical concreteness. He dismisses Thompson’s “voluntarist and subjectivist” conception of class because it would logically entail seemingly absurd conclusions, such as the conjecture that Athenian slaves, Indian “caste-ridden villagers,” and Meiji workers

⁴⁷ Indeed, Althusser’s explanation of production relations reads like a direct response to Thompson: “And if by chance anyone attempts to reduce these relations of production to relations between men, i.e., ‘*human relations*,’ he is violating Marx’s thought, for so long as we employ a truly critical reading to some of his rare ambiguous formulations, Marx shows in the greatest depth that the *relations* of production (and ideological and social relations) are irreducible to any anthropological inter-subjectivity—for they not only combine agents and objects in a specific structure of the distribution of relations, places and functions, occupied and ‘supported’ by objects and agents of production.” ALTHUSSER, L. and BALIBAR, E. *Reading Capital*. London: Verso, 1997. p. 180.

⁴⁸ COHEN. *Karl Marx’s Theory of History*. *Op.Cit.* p. 74.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

were not members of a class simply because they did not “come to struggle, think in class ways.”⁵² He also points to Thompson’s own writings on eighteenth-century English society as offering a powerful account of the structural reality of class even in the absence of class consciousness.⁵³ Like Cohen, Anderson concludes with the suggestion that it is better to say, “with Marx, that social classes may not become conscious of themselves, may fail to act or behave in common, but they still remain—materially, historically—classes.”⁵⁴

In response, it should first be noted that Cohen and particularly Anderson detect a real ambiguity in Thompson’s writings: how to refer to agents who are placed in certain production relations before class consciousness is achieved. Marx did refer to them as members of a class, albeit only a “class-in-itself,” but Thompson largely avoids this terminology. In fact, Thompson does go some way towards addressing this question in his writings on eighteenth-century English society, where he distinguishes between class “situation” and “class formation”:

We know about class because people have repeatedly behaved in class ways; these historical events disclose regularities of response to analogous situations, and at a certain stage (the “mature” formations of class) we observe the creation of institutions, and of a culture with class notations, which admits of trans-national comparisons.⁵⁵

Thompson’s usage of “class” here is confusing because he is referring to its existence before it has been “made.” Yet the context of Thompson’s article is clear enough: it seeks to affirm the presence of class struggle in England even before the formation of the working class and industrialization. “Class struggle without class”, as he puts it, was possible because people were situated in particular “class situations” (analogous to positions in the relations of production) without yet being part of a mature “class formation” (analogous to the “made” class of 1832).

It is tempting to see Thompson’s distinction between class “situation” and “class formation” as essentially similar to Cohen’s distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself. The dispute between Thompson on the one hand and Cohen and Anderson on the other could then be attributed to semantics. Yet there remains a profound difference,

⁵² ANDERSON. *Arguments. Op.Cit.* p. 40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁵⁵ THOMPSON, E.P. “Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?”. *Social History* 3:2, 1978, p. 147.

with far-reaching consequences. For Thompson, the distinction between class situation (position in production relations) and class formation (the “made” class) is not simply one of consciousness, but also of *real relationships*. Production relations are not class relations because the latter do not arise from the process of production itself. They can only arise through struggle, whereby individual producers come to articulate an identity of interest with those who occupy similar positions in the relations of production. This is exactly why classes are made through a process, and why the vagaries of “experience” and the contradictions of consciousness are so analytically important. When Cohen distinguishes between class-in-itself and class-for-itself, he suggests only the difference in consciousness entailed by the two forms. Consciousness then becomes entirely disembodied from social and material processes, because there is no longer any mediation between production relations, on the one hand, and class and class consciousness, on the other. We are not given any conceptual or analytical tools for understanding how and why abstractly similar production relations give rise to class consciousness in some circumstances and not others.

Of course, neither Cohen nor Anderson wish to suggest a rigid determination between production relations and class consciousness, but their conflation of production relations with class would seem to offer little alternative. Class consciousness hangs in the air as a *political ideal* to be delivered, not as a cultural form arrived at through the historical negotiation of working-class experience. It is hardly surprising that, when socialist conceptions of an ideal class consciousness failed to materialize in the late 1970s and early 1980s, proponents of the “structural” definition of class began to doubt whether social being had *any* determining effect upon consciousness. The Althusserians were the first to join the ranks of what Ellen Wood dubbed the “new ‘true’ socialists”⁵⁶ those who concluded that Marxism itself is invariably economistic and class reductionist, and that class and class struggle need not occupy any necessary place in the socialist project. Ideology and politics were reconceived as being entirely autonomous from any social basis, particularly any class foundation. A highly influential text in this trend, which even today remains a foundational document in post-Marxism and post-structuralism, was Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985). In grounding their claims, Laclau and Mouffe offer a potted version of what they take to

⁵⁶ See WOOD, E.M. *The Retreat from Class: A New ‘True’ Socialism*. London: Verso, 1986. pp. 1-2.

be the foundational assumptions underlying Marxist class reductionism: that the economy is a “self-regulated” mechanism, operating according to endogenous laws and without any “indeterminacy resulting from political or other interventions; that this mechanism automatically constitutes social agents, and that these social agents, by virtue of their positions in the relations of production, will possess “historic interests” which will be reflected at other “social levels”, including the “fundamental interest” of the working class in socialism.⁵⁷ At bottom, because Marxism upholds a “general law of development of the productive forces,” “the economy may be understood as a mechanism of society acting on upon objective phenomena independently of human action.”⁵⁸ For our purposes, what is remarkable about Laclau and Mouffe’s interpretation (and dismissal) of Marxism as technological determinism is that it not just strikingly resembles, but is *directly* predicated upon, Cohen’s account. In making their strident claims they actually reference the work of Cohen rather than Marx, carrying out an interpretation by proxy.⁵⁹

While following a somewhat different intellectual and political route, Cohen also came to conclude that there could be no meaningful relationship between class—conceived again as a purely “economic” position—and consciousness.⁶⁰ A decade after the publication of *Karl Marx’s Theory of History*, Cohen offered a new “restricted historical materialism,” which was

⁵⁷ LACLAU, E. and MOUFFE, C. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso, 1985. p. 76.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ This is noticed by WOOD. *Retreat from Class*. *Op.Cit.* p. 55, note 15.

⁶⁰ In a recent review of *Karl Marx’s Theory of History*, S. Kennedy notes that Cohen has “retreat[ed] from nearly all of the book’s arguments.” Kennedy does an excellent job of charting the evolution of Cohen’s thought, from initial bravado to a thorough cynicism that historical materialism can in fact explain anything. In *If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You’re So Rich?* Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000. p. 103), Cohen remarks: “To the extent that Marxism is still alive, it presents itself as a set of values and a set of designs for realizing those values.” See KENNEDY, S. “*Karl Marx’s Theory of History: A Defence*, Revised Edition,” *Historical Materialism*, 13:4, 2005, pp. 331-44. It seems that Anderson has not traveled as far down this road, but he has exhibited a pronounced “historical pessimism” in the face of “neoliberalism”: “Whatever limitations persist to its practice, neo-liberalism as a set of principles rules undivided across the globe: the most successful ideology in world history.” See ANDERSON, P. “Renewals,” *New Left Review*, II, 1, January-February 2000, p. 17. Boris Kagarlitsky suggest that “[f]or Anderson, the history of socialism is a history of ideas, and furthermore, of ideas that have gone out of fashion. See KAGARLITSKY, B. “The suicide of *New Left Review*,” *International Socialism*, 88, Autumn 2000, p. 129; see also ACHCAR, G. “The ‘historical pessimism’ of Perry Anderson,” *International Socialism*, 88, Autumn 2000, pp. 135-41. Unsurprisingly, recent events have compelled Anderson to take a somewhat less pessimistic view of future possibilities: see ANDERSON, P. “Jottings on the Conjunction,” *New Left Review*, II, 48,

[p]rimarily a theory about the course of material development itself rather than about the relationship *between* that development and other developments....Restricted historical materialism does not say that the principal features of spiritual existence are materially or economically explained.⁶¹

Thereafter, Cohen shifted the focus of his work from “material development itself” to ethical and moral philosophy, seeking in particular to identify the abstract basis for a desirable and feasible “socialist alternative” based on moral principles of equality and community.⁶² This might seem to be a dramatic departure from his original concern with the historical materialist theory of history, and indeed Cohen came to identify as an “ex-Marxist.” But it bears a striking resemblance to the trajectory of the post-Marxists, and for good reason. They both held the same technologically determinist understanding of historical materialist explanation, which, in reducing class to a purely economic location distinct from ideological, cultural and political spheres, lacked any understanding of the inherently *social* process of class formation that Thompson sought to capture. Having already abstracted politics and ideology from their understanding of class, it was not a great leap for either Cohen or Laclau and Mouffe to pursue a class-less politics. Ironically, it is the structural definition of class which threw open the doors to “voluntarism” and “subjectivism.”⁶³

The Cohen/Anderson structural definition leaves historical materialists with little ability to explain how forms of consciousness and culture that *preceded* class formation were rooted in exploitative production relations. Anderson is sceptical that such cultural forms can be explained materially, and we are left to assume that they were somehow severed from any basis in production relations. Thompson’s dialectical method, in contrast, allows us to situate the popular culture of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries “within its proper material abode,”⁶⁴ demystifying the kind of behaviour that Anderson views as “so coalescent and contradictory as to be ‘unclasslike’.”⁶⁵ Thus, in his collection of writings in eighteenth-

November-December 2007, pp. 5-37; and ANDERSON, P. "On the Concatenation in the Arab World," *New Left Review*, II, 68, March-April 2011, pp. 5-15.

⁶¹ COHEN, G.A. *History, Labour, Freedom*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1988. p. 368.

⁶² COHEN, G.A. *Why Not Socialism?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

⁶³ Worth noting in this context is Anderson’s claim—against Thompson—that socialism does not require “a victorious industrial proletariat to impose it.” Castroite Cuba and Maoist China are offered as two examples of such “socialism.” See ANDERSON, Perry. “Socialism and Pseudo-Empiricism,” *New Left Review*, I, 35, January-February 1966, p. 9.

⁶⁴ THOMPSON, E.P. *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture*. New York: New Press, 1993, p.7

⁶⁵ ANDERSON. *Arguments. Op.Cit.* p. 43.

century England, *Customs in Common*, Thompson explains how seemingly “unclasslike” behaviour was grounded in the experience of changing production relations, making popular culture “an arena in which opposing interests made conflicting claims.”⁶⁶ A good example is the essay “Patricians and Plebs,” where Thompson situates the gentry’s vaunted “paternal responsibilities” within the context of particular social relations of exploitation. The eighteenth century witnessed a tremendous expansion of market dependency, with two results: the gentry came to rely upon tenancy, trade and taxation as means of appropriating surplus labour, while plebeians became more vulnerable to market-mediated patrician exploitation. Such celebrated “responsibilities” as the roasted ox, the sports prize, the liberal donation to charity in time of dearth, the proclamation against forestallers, and the Christmas dole appeared, in this new historical context, as gestures calculated to ensure the deference of the poor, especially in times of possible social conflict.⁶⁷ In turn, such varied products of popular culture as food riots, wife sales, and “rough music,” were plebeian responses to patrician “technique of rule,” assertions of independence and self-sufficiency in a period when custom was under assault from property and the market.

Thompson is also quick to point out that the predominance of vertical “trade” consciousness rather than horizontal “class” consciousness did not mean that other forms of horizontal consciousness were absent in the eighteenth century. Cultural values, libertarian rhetoric, and patriotic and xenophobic prejudices were never passively absorbed by the plebs, but were reworked at the level of experience to handle changing material conditions. It is in this sense that we can see very “non-economic” conflicts, such as street protests by “the mob” against prohibition of Shrove Tuesday football, as incidents of class struggle without class.⁶⁸

Eurocentrism, Anglo-centrism and the problem of specificity

Thompson’s writings on the eighteenth century may also help to clarify contentious contemporary debates regarding the efficacy of

⁶⁶ THOMPSON. *Customs in Common*. *Op.Cit.* p.6

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63-64.

historical materialist analysis of non-European societies and history.⁶⁹ Post-colonial theorists and global historians, themselves often influenced by the linguistic and cultural turn discussed above, often criticize both Marx and Marxism for being irredeemably Eurocentric in their concerns and analyses. This alleged Eurocentrism manifests in two distinct, albeit related, ways. The first is most familiar and also largely incontestable: that Marx and Marxists have typically focused their analytical attention on developments in West, largely neglecting “the Rest.”⁷⁰ Indeed, E.P. Thompson can be regarded as one of the worst offenders in this regard. Unlike some of his fellow British Marxist historians, Thompson’s body of work is notoriously *Anglo-centric*, and has little to say even about the British empire, much less about the “Global South.”⁷¹ The second criticism is more far-reaching, and claims that even when historical materialists cast their gaze outside Europe, they cannot evade Eurocentrism because the very categories, models and assumptions they deploy (class, mode of production, etc.) are predicated on European historical experience. Despite their critical ambitions, historical materialists are actually complicit, if unwittingly, in the totalizing and universalizing pretensions of Western knowledge production more generally. Recovering historical difference, in the words of Dipesh Chakrabarty, can only be achieved by “provincializing Europe,” and with it the epistemological categories of Marxism.⁷²

This latter charge, of course, raises issues of immense historiographical and theoretical complexity, which a focus on Thompson alone cannot adjudicate, much less the exceedingly limited focus afforded here. But it does help to refocus attention from Thompson’s analytical Anglo-centrism (which has absorbed most commentary so far) to the far more interesting and pertinent question of whether Thompson’s specific conceptual and methodological innovations may help to renew historical materialism on a non-Eurocentric basis. Ironically, Thompson’s seemingly provincial focus on Britain informed an historical materialist vocabulary and approach that is uniquely attentive to historical and geographical difference, and is, in this sense, of potentially “global” application. His insistence on

⁶⁹ For a broad introduction to the debate and its implications, see BARTOLOVICH, C. and LAZARUS, N. Lazarus, eds. *Marxism, Modernity and Post-Colonial Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

⁷⁰ See HOBSON, J.M. *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. p. 7.

⁷¹ See GREGG, R. and KALE, M. “The Empire and Mr Thompson: Making Indian Princes and English Working Class”. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 6 September 1997.

⁷² CHAKRABARTY, D. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

fine-grained, richly detailed, and temporally specific class analysis was hardly popular among his Marxist contemporaries. But it was only through this rigorous attempt to apply and adapt the concepts and models of historical materialist theory to the contingencies and particularities of an historical process (even one as familiar as British industrialization!) that the centrality of agency and experience could become evident. These are insights of universal relevance because they provide an antidote to *any* universalizing models of class or other structures of domination and stratification. Concerns about the specificity of African or Asian history, in this light, are valid not just for “the Rest” but also for Europe itself.⁷³

Thompson’s methodology, then, provides a compelling basis for a truly non-Eurocentric historical materialism which uses class experience to chart what exactly is locally specific in changes or trends that are seemingly universal or at least regional in scope. Much can be learned, indeed, from the many efforts that have already been made to apply Thompson’s ideas to processes of proletarianization in the Global South, particularly India and Africa. Frederick Cooper notes how many Africanist labour historians, in a willingness to counter stereotypical notions of African “traditionalism” and “authenticity,” one-sidedly stressed the “making” of an African working class without adequately attending to the specific ways in which African workers utilized their own cultural resources and affiliations to negotiate their experience of changing production relations. New, horizontal class relations and forms of class consciousness often did emerge from this encounter, but they were not as universal, sustained, or hegemonic as Africanist labour historians often suggested. African class formation, as a result, was understood less as a genuinely historical process than simply a teleological one.⁷⁴

An opposite tendency has been observed by Rajnarayan Chandavarkar in India, where the founding historians of what became the highly influential Subaltern Studies school initially took up Thompson’s ideas in the early 1980s to counter the crude economic reductionism of the Stalinist-influenced Marxist historiography that was then prevalent.⁷⁵ Unlike their Africanist counterparts, they frankly acknowledged that an Indian

⁷³This point is well made in COOPER, F. “Work, Class and Empire: An African Historian’s Retrospective on E.P. Thompson”. *Social History*, 20:2, May 1995, p. 237.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 235-241.

⁷⁵ CHANDAVARKAR, R. “‘The Making of the Working Class’: E.P. Thompson and Indian History,” *History Workshop Journal*, 73, 1997, pp. 177-181. A concise but informed discussion of the evolution of the Subaltern Studies school and its relationship to broader trends in social history can be found in DWORKIN, D. *Class Struggles*. Harlow, UK: Pierson Education, 2007. Chapter Eight.

working class had not been “made”; but they went even further, claiming that proletarianization in India failed to generate any sort of novel, class-inflected cultural forms of the sort that Thompson observed in eighteenth-century. Chakrabarty, a leading scholar in the school, claimed that rural migrants in Bengal had simply “imported a peasant culture into the industrial setting,” one that was primarily a “pre-capitalist, inegalitarian culture marked by strong primordial loyalties of community, language, religion, caste and citizenship.”⁷⁶ While this analysis had the virtue of highlighting the cultural specificity of the Bengali working class, it also missed the ways in which this culture, far from being “primordial,” was transformed through the experience of new production relations and urban living environments, and even provided the materials from which entirely new horizontal class solidarities could be informed.⁷⁷ In seeking to avoid class reductionism, Chakrabarty and others in the Subaltern Studies group one-sidedly emphasized the cultural traditions and inheritances of particular social groups. As Chandavarkar observes, this only produced “a static timeless indeed Orientalist characterization of a ‘traditional’ Indian” not far removed from the essentialist depictions of colonial discourse.⁷⁸

Luckily, we do not have to choose between an economically reductionist Marxism which buries specificity under universalizing hierarchic models, and a post-colonialism which inadvertently does the same by essentializing difference. An agency-based historical materialism of the sort that Thompson pioneered provides a method, though not a template, for writing the non-Eurocentric global historical narratives that can carefully connect locally specific experiences with global movements and flows. As Cooper notes, “Capitalism may not define a metanarrative, but it faces us with a megaquestion”: how so many Asians, Africans, Latina Americans (and indeed Europeans!) came to depend on wages for their livelihood.⁷⁹ Answering it requires not a rejection of Marxist theory itself, but a working out of the tension within Marxism of the distinction between “abstract” labour power and “real” labour power.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ CHAKRABARTY, D. *Rethinking Working Class History: Bengal, 1890-1940*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989. p. 69.

⁷⁷ CHANDAVARKAR. *Op.Cit.* p. 187.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁷⁹ COOPER. *Op.Cit.*, p. 239.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 240.

Marx's language of class and the critique of political economy

These considerations do not refute the “structural” definition of class itself, but instead reveal its deafening silences. Thompson, rather than assuming the prior existence of a class, took on the challenge of explaining how a class was historically “made.” In doing so, he wrestled with historical materialism’s thorniest problems—notably the relationship between social being and consciousness—not through theoretical permutations, but through a direct engagement with the complexities, contradictions and ambivalences of historical sources. The concepts and distinctions that he formulated along the way—production relations versus class relations, class “situation” versus “class formation,” the “logic of process,” and above all the importance of “experience” as a mediating factor—are very useful in concretely tracing the determining role of production relations upon consciousness. In the face of this challenge it is still possible to maintain a static definition of class as coterminous with the structure of production relations—but such a definition does not get us very far in understanding the questions of greatest interest to historical materialists.

Thompson is largely correct in suggesting that “*Grundrisse* face” Marx was silent on the category of “human experience” and gave little heed to how production relations were “handled” through consciousness and culture.⁸¹ But Marx should not be ceded to the structuralist and analytical philosophers who once claimed, and now largely reject, his name. In the first place, a high level of abstraction was a necessary characteristic of the critique of political economy. Capitalism’s “laws of motion” can only be understood in the abstract. Despite its abstract character, however, the critique of political economy offers many profound insights into the working-class experience of capitalism, not least that of alienated labour and “commodity fetishism.” Moreover, as Daniel Bensaid has pointed out, it was in the *Grundrisse* where Marx utilizes the insights of the critique of political economy to offer nothing less than a “*new way of writing history*”—history as characterized by the “discordance of temporalities.” Marx writes of “*The uneven development of material production relative to e.g. artistic development....the really difficult point to discuss here is how relations of production develop unevenly as legal relations.*” This is a far cry

⁸¹ THOMPSON. *Poverty of Theory. Op.Cit.* p. 356.

from the rigid correspondence of the 1859 Preface, and in fact points to the kind of questions that Thompson himself would address.⁸²

Secondly, the discussion of class in the “historical” Marx is hardly as cut-and-dry as Cohen and Anderson suggest. Bertell Ollman has observed that Marx’s usage of class “varies with his purpose in making the particular classification.”⁸³ The concept should not be detached from the structured knowledge it seeks to express, and ultimately of which it is an integral part.⁸⁴ The structural definition of class employed in *Capital* is clearly advantageous for illustrating capitalism’s abstract “laws of motion,” but in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* the “historical” Marx opts for a different usage:

In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their cultural formation from those of other classes and bring them into conflict with those classes, they form a class. In so far as these small peasant proprietors are merely connected on a local basis, and the identity of their interests fails to produce a feeling of community, national links, or a political organization, they do not form a class.⁸⁵

The distinction that Marx makes here between two senses of class is much more assimilable to Thompson’s perspective than Cohen’s, because the difference is not simply one of consciousness, but also of real social relations. In his own reading of the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Thompson aptly noted:

For Marx, a class defined itself in historical terms, not because it was made up of people with common relationship to the means of production and a common life- experience, but because these people *became conscious of* their common interest, and developed appropriate forms of common organisation and action.⁸⁶

In this reading, the peasantry is a class insofar as its members are situated in production relations that compel them to struggle against their

⁸² See BENSAID, Daniel. *Marx for Our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique*. London: Verso, 2002. pp. 20-1. In support of this view, Bensaïd refers to the *Grundrisse*. *Op.Cit.* pp. 109-11.

⁸³ OLLMAN, Bertell. *Social and Sexual Revolution*. Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1978, p. 41. See also the discussion in DAHRENDORF, Ralf. *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959). Chapter One.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁸⁵ MARX, Karl. “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile* (edited by David Fernbach). Middlesex: Penguin, 1973. p. 239.

⁸⁶ THOMPSON, E.P. “Revolution Again! Or Shut Your Ears and Run”. *New Left Review* 1/6, November-December 1960, p. 24. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer from *Workers of the World* for bringing this article and quotation to my attention.

exploiters; these struggles, in turn, help to shape a distinct cultural formation. This sounds like an apt description of the working poor of eighteenth-century England, who occupied distinct class “situations” and engaged in class struggle without class. Insofar as the connections between those occupying similar positions in the relations of production are merely local, and there is no “feeling” of identity producing national links, a class community, and class political organizations, the peasantry does not form a class. This is much like saying that production relations have not produced the kind of social relationships which bind together persons in similar class situations on the basis of consciously recognized common interest. In other words, the peasants of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* were not a class because they were not joined by the kind of class relations that characterized the English working class in 1832. The problem with the structural definition of class—even when it is amended to encompass the for-itself/in-itself distinction—is that it does not highlight the qualitative difference between production relations and class relations. Marx seems to have been cognizant of this difference, and recognized that the structural definition of class obscured as much as it clarified when used in an historical context.

Where does this leave the traditional class-in-itself, class-for-itself distinction? The answer is: wounded, but not fatally so. The distinction may still be useful, so long as its limitations are appreciated. Thompson rarely if ever employed the distinction himself, probably because its salience, from Marx onwards, was largely political rather than analytical. It is sensible for a Leninist to insist that the working class has certain fundamental “objective” interests which are determined by its members’ position in production relations, and that it will not become a class-for-itself until it has achieved genuine class consciousness, i.e., consciousness of the necessity of social revolution. The political context of the Leninists’ comments are clear, and subject to challenge from social democrats, Stalinists, Maoists, and anyone else who has a different opinion on what constitutes “genuine” class consciousness. It makes much less sense for the historian—even the Marxist historian—to engage in a similar game. Largely because of his own break from Stalinism,⁸⁷ Thompson is able to assume the challenging historical task of explaining how a class was made, demonstrating convincingly that production relations provide a basis for class, but do not themselves *constitute* class. Thompson agrees with the classical Marxist notion that

⁸⁷ Bryan Palmer has devoted particular attention to the relationship between Thompson’s political trajectory and his historical writing. See PALMER, Bryan. *The Making of E.P. Thompson: Marxism, Humanism, and History*. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1981 and *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions*. London: Verso, 1994, especially chapters 4-7.

class consciousness is a product of class struggle, but his contribution is to note that this struggle is necessarily one of forging new social relationships on the basis of production relations. These new social relationships—class relations—constitute class, and are the necessary social object of class consciousness itself. We may disagree with Thompson on the historical detail, and of course seek to trace the class's later development—after all, classes are never “made” in the sense of being finished or having acquired their definitive shape.⁸⁸ However, we must still recognize that classes have origins, and these origins can only be understood if production relations are distinguished from class relations, and class consciousness is recognized as being integral to class itself. It may still be useful to speak of a “class-for-itself”—but only if we clearly identify this category not with class consciousness as such, but with a certain variety of political consciousness linked to socialist strategy.

Conclusion

Thompson is one of a rare breed of modern Marxist writers who, in recognizing the shortcomings of classical Marxism, neither explicitly rejected the enterprise entirely (as did many Althusserians) nor destroyed the project through a thousand revisions (as did the analytical Marxists). Instead, Thompson sought to improve the explanatory power of classical Marxism by returning to what might be called its first principle: a focus on “human relationships,” particularly social relations of exploitation. Thompson's decision to take this messy course—rather than embrace the illusory “rigour” of structuralist or analytical philosophy—certainly has much to do with his methodological background as an historian. His insistence that historically specific social relations constitute the analytical heart of historical materialism led him to sharply criticize not only the fashionable “new Marxist idealism” of his time, but also the abstract character and alleged “absolute” determinism of Marx's “*Grundrisse* face.” Yet the abstract laws and tendencies of Marx's critique of political economy are themselves predicated upon an analysis of specific social relations, and imply a dialectical approach to determination. Thompson's historical writing should be seen, then, not as a refutation of Marx's critique of political economy, but as an historical application of the critique's central

⁸⁸ This point is usefully made in HOBBSAWM, E.J. *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour*. London, 1984. p. 194.

postulates. This way of viewing Thompson does not deny his originality as a Marxist writer, but instead underlines the specific nature of his contribution, which was to bury the implied economic/technological determinism of the 1859 Preface.

Thompson's concept of class clarifies two particular problems in the classical Marxist tradition. The first is the relationship between social being and consciousness, which Thompson reconceives as a dialectical interaction mediated through "experience." The second is the historical origin of the working class through a process of making, a concern largely unaddressed in the classical canon. Thompson's central insight that class relations are distinct from production relations and require a very specific kind of "horizontal solidarity" between persons in similar class "situations," is at once a crucial theoretical extension of Marxism and an affirmation of historical materialism's explanatory potential. The structural definition of class is not adequate for historical explanation. In forcefully demonstrating this simple yet crucial point, Thompson did much to renew historical materialism.

Latin America: Dependency and Super-exploitation

Adrián Sotelo Valencia

Introuduction

In this article, the relationship between the concepts of dependency and exploitation is analyzed in the specific socio-historical context of contemporary Latin America. In the first section, the concept of labor exploitation is reassessed with regard to its role in Marxist theory. In the second, the rise of dependency theory is discussed and its principal components and approaches are set out. Then in the third part the debate and main arguments that have been put forth against the theory of labor super-exploitation are reviewed. Finally, the errors and limitations of these criticisms are highlighted and the current significance of dependency theory for the analysis of contemporary capitalism is considered, with particular emphasis on the theory of labor super-exploitation.

In order to understand the influential dependency approach put forth by Ruy Mauro Marini, one can first appreciate his definition of the exploitation of labor as found throughout his texts. We find that the system for ensuring the maximum exploitation of labor, in addition to increasing working hours and intensity and labor productivity, also attempts to expropriate part of the worker's consumption fund in order to convert it into an additional source of capital. These three mechanisms can be expressed in general terms as the practice of remuneration of labor power below its value, which implies the existence of an entire social system that yields low wages for labor, insufficient for its reproduction under normal conditions.

Whether or not one agrees with Marini's views on dependency theory, what cannot be denied is the original contribution that he makes to the theorization of labor exploitation. His approach manages to connect, organically and dialectically, the realization of relative and absolute surplus

value to the development of labor productivity, and therefore to technology. From this proposition, it is clear that dependency theory has no place among neoclassical theories of economic stagnation, as some critics claim, but instead encompasses the development of capitalism within macro and microeconomic conditions of structural dependency.

This is due to the following reason. Dependency, as understood in Marini's terms, implies the negation of the central belief that the UN Economic Commission for Latin America proposed from the very start, namely, that economic "autonomy" in Latin America would come with industrialization, import substitution, technical progress, and the development of internal markets. Not only has their thesis not proven true over the last three decades, but as Marini warned in various works¹ dependency has in fact deepened.

It is worth exploring in greater detail Marini's argument that Latin America contributed to the shift from absolute to relative surplus value in classic capitalism in England during the industrial revolution. It is argued that the region played this role particularly from 1840 onwards when it created a global food supply that affected the cheapening of the English labor force in the industrial revolution, thus helping to strengthen the transition towards the production of relative surplus value.² As one of his original contributions in this area, this idea forms the basis of any contemporary theorization of labor's super-exploitation.

In light of this approach, we are led to consider the role that contemporary Latin America is playing as a labor pool for the development of industrialized countries such as the USA, Western Europe and Japan – particularly in view of the conversion of many of our countries, such as México, into net importers of food and raw materials. The utilization of labor super-exploitation as a lever for the development of productivity implies a strong relationship between the increasingly "flexible" management of labor currently under way and the dynamic of technology deployment in Latin America.

The latter issue is of great importance as it relates to the introduction of production systems and work organization of a Toyotist nature that significantly increases the intensity of work and sponsors the improvement

¹ MARINI, R.M. *América Latina: democracia e integración*. Caracas: Editorial Nueva Sociedad, 1993.

² MARINI, R.M. *Dialéctica de la dependencia*. México: Editorial ERA, 1973. p.16.

of productivity per employed laborer at the expense of wages and overall working conditions. This forms part of a historic process in Latin America. Indeed, from the very beginning, advanced capitalism articulated and subordinated labor in the appropriation of absolute surplus value through extended working hours and the intensification of the labor force, and relative surplus value (lowering the value of the labor force), at least from the time of the industrial revolution in England, and gradually incorporated workers in the consumption of goods produced by the factories of big industry.

It was this that influenced Marx himself in *Capital* to visualize the possibility of exploiting labor by reducing wages below the value of workforce as a phenomenon aimed at countering the tendency for the rate of profit to decline.³ By conceptualizing this possibility as a long-term structural practice and making it part of his general analysis of capital analysis, he found it consistent with his larger methodological premise as developed in *Capital* that the value of labor power (like any other commodity) always corresponds to its market price.⁴

Subsequently, a new period was originated, one famously characterized by students of the sociology of work as the Fordist-Taylorist system of mass production where the newly inserted worker on the assembly line was both producer and consumer of goods produced by modern industry as in the illustrative case of automobiles.⁵ The merit and novelty of the dependency approach proposed by Marini is that he forged the super-exploitation category that was left out of the overall analysis of Marx's *Capital* as the core and guiding principle of capitalist development in the underdeveloped socioeconomic formations of the periphery of the world system. This has allowed us to historically and structurally differentiate such countries from the development of countries under classical capitalism.

Applying that category to the analysis of contemporary capitalism, and in particular to the new historical stage that opened in the late 1980s with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the US invasion of Iraq in the so-called Gulf War (1991), all of which coincided with a widespread and large-scale transition to tangible and intangible production and telecommunications (a third industrial

³ MARX, K. *El Capital*, III. México: FCE, 1974. p.235.

⁴ MARX, K. *El Capital*, I. México: FCE, 2000. p. 177.

⁵ BRAVEMAN, H. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

revolution), Marini points out three conditions that capital had to first address in order to open this new stage of history.

First, he emphasized the achievement of the higher degree of exploitation of labor throughout the system in order to increase the mass of surplus value, something only possible with the defeats of the labor movement insurgent in the countries of the capitalist center and in the periphery, including Latin America. Second, there was a need to intensify the concentration of capital in advanced economies in order to ensure investment in scientific and technological development and industrial upgrading, thus implying large transfers of value from the dependent countries of Latin America (the so-called unequal exchange) in order to increase capital accumulation. This development consequently aggravated the problems of employment, salary, social exclusion and poverty in large parts of the population in the periphery. Third, an expansion of market scale was needed in order to put into place the large investments required to modernize the industrial apparatus. Marini concludes that all of this updated the laws and basic mechanisms of the capitalist system: “especially the law of value ... which operates by comparing the actual value of the goods, the working time invested in its creation, and therefore including the time that meets the demand for inputs and means of production and reproduction of the labor force”.⁶

During the 1990s, the achievement of these three conditions allowed the conversion of the Latin American economy into a neoliberal economy dependent on a sustained pattern of accumulation and reproduction of capital subordinated to capital-cycle dynamics of hegemonic countries of advanced capitalism, and, increasingly, the reproductive cycle of the Chinese economy. The structural setting of the Latin American economy as geared to the world market, based on reproductive patterns embedded in processes of “re-technology import” and central countries, is a reflection of this new form of dependency that makes it more vulnerable to external contradictions imposed by the global capitalist accumulation in the 21st century.

We can therefore suggest three themes that permeate dependency theory today and suggest the agenda for future research. They are:

⁶ For this comment, consult MARINI, R.M. “Preface”. In: SOTELO VALENCIA, A. *México, dependencia y modernización*. México: El Caballito, 1993. Available at <http://www.marini-escritos.unam.mx/028_modernizacion_es.htm> Accessed on February 24, 2013.

- 1) The “new dependency” which is the propensity for the specialization of production in Latin American economies that is stimulated by the systematic application of neoliberal economic policy;
- 2) The concentration of income as one of the perverse features of the dependent economy that requires investigation; and
- 3) The politically derived tensions that obtain between democracy and the growing propensities to political authoritarianism.
- 4) A pronounced tendency to extend the exploitation of labor, even in the advanced countries.

Theory and Method of Capitalist Exploitation

Marx’s theorization of labor exploitation incorporates some observations that have been frequently misunderstood or misinterpreted by critics of Marxism and dependency theory. Firstly, when Marx elaborates his theory of value in *Capital*, he constructs it at a very high level of abstraction (although we must not forget that Marx employs distinct levels of abstraction in developing the thematic and theoretical structure of that work). So that, for example, in relation to the value of commodities and, in particular, labor power, Marx starts from the supposition that value corresponds to price. In this respect he tells us that “We began with the supposition that labor-power is bought and sold at its value. Its value, like that of all other commodities, is determined by the labor- time necessary to produce it”.⁷

Secondly, the concept of labor exploitation as the core social relation of capitalist society in Marx is a concept upon which the theories of surplus value and profit within the capitalist mode of production are based. In the absence of the concept of exploitation, it would not be possible to understand the labor theory of value as a fundamental axis of capitalist accumulation and production.

This brings us to a third observation. In defining the labor theory of value, Marx sets out the methods of exploitation associated with relative and absolute surplus value as those that are essential for the long term

⁷ MARX, K. *Op.Cit.*, 2000, p.206. See also Volume 3, Chapter 10 of *Capital* where Marx writes “since it was assumed that commodities are bought and sold at their values....” MARX, K. *Op.Cit.*, 1974, p.207.

reproduction of the capitalist system in a historical context. This implies an understanding of both forms of surplus value as dialectically linked concepts within a specific socio-historical formation, within which labor processes and social relations of production are articulated. From these two concepts of surplus value, we can identify distinct periods in the development of capitalism by the relative predominance of productivity increases rooted in technological development over increasing the length of the working day as opposed to the intensity of work, or both.

The Emergence of Dependency Theory

During the 1960s and 1970s, dependency theory emerged in Brazil as an attempt among Latin American thinkers to explain the problems of the region in an international context.⁸ There were two principal currents within dependency theory.⁹ The first, which defined itself as an approach and rejected the possibility of developing a theory, saw dependency as essentially a temporary or transitional situation. This current was primarily associated with the São Paulo school, led by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and employed a method based in socio-political analysis.¹⁰

The other theoretical current emphasized the need to forge a theory of dependency, considering it as a structural phenomenon within the capitalist mode of production that could only be overcome by overthrowing dependent capitalism itself. The most prominent figure of this position was Ruy Mauro Marini who used an analytical method based on Marx's *Capital* and Lenin's theory of imperialism.¹¹ In this article, the focus is on the second current of Latin American social thought, since it is the one which endures, even now in the era of neoliberalism and TINA ("There is no alternative") thinking. We now turn to discuss the main thesis of Marini followed by a discussion regarding dependency theory in the Marxist perspective so as to highlight and assess its relevance for the present day.

⁸ BAMBIRRA, V. *Teoría de la dependencia: una anticrítica*. México: ERA, 1978; CARDOSO, F.H. "Notas sobre el estado actual de los estudios de la dependencia". In: BAGÚ, S. et al., eds. *Problemas del subdesarrollo latinoamericano*. México: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1976. pp. 90–125.

⁹ BLOMSTRÖM, Magnus and ENTE, Bjorn. *La teoría del desarrollo en transición*. México, Fondo de. Cultura, 1990; KAY, C. *Latin American Theories of Development and Underdevelopment*. London: Routledge, 1989.

¹⁰ See CARDOSO. *Op.Cit.* and CARDOSO, F.H. and FALETTO, E. *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina*. 16th Edition. México: Siglo XXI, 1979.

¹¹ See Kay. *Op.Cit.* and MARINI. *Op.Cit.*, 1973.

Marini's Theses

Marini takes Lenin's theory of imperialism as a starting point, drawing on Marx in the formulation of the theory of labor super-exploitation, and later incorporating the theory of unequal trade. This synthesis is put forth in Marini's 1973 book *Dialectic of Dependency* (*Dialéctica de la dependencia*) and consists in connecting labor super-exploitation with productivity (which, in turn, is linked to relative surplus value) in dependent countries, thereby discovering their intimate correlation. Marini argues that "impacting on a productive structure that is already based in greater exploitation of the workers, technical progress made possible capitalist intensification of the rhythm of the worker's labor, increasing his productivity and, simultaneously, sustaining the tendency to remunerate him at a lower rate than his real value".¹² And in another essay he affirms that "once an economic process based on super-exploitation takes hold, a monstrous mechanism is set in motion, whose perversity, far from being mitigated, is accentuated in the mobilization of the dependent economy to increase productivity through technological development".¹³ The reorientation of the export-focused Latin American economy towards the exterior was a phenomenon that stretched over the long period from the middle of the 19th century until the 1930s/1940s, and has been well documented by historians in the region¹⁴. From the 1950s – when Mexican industrialization (and that of other Latin American countries such as Argentina and Brazil) began to take off – relative surplus value began to co-exist with absolute surplus value in the emergent sphere of high-tech industries.

This was especially the case in the transnational companies which imported their investments, their technologies, their business management models, and their workforce – for example, in the automotive industry with the Ford-Taylorist system of mass production.¹⁵ However, beginning in the 1970s, the largest dependent countries in the region (in particular Brazil)

¹² MARINI. *Op.Cit.*, 1973. pp.71–72.

¹³ MARINI, R.M. "Las razones del neodesarrollismo". [A response to Fernando Henrique Cardoso and José Serra] *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*. N. 40 (Núm. Extraordinario [E]), 1978. pp. 63–64.

¹⁴ See for example DONGHI, Tulio Halperin. *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1993 as well as CARDOSO, Ciro Flamarion Santana and BRIGNOLI, Hector Pérez Brignoli. *Historia económica de América Latina, 2. Economías de exportación y desarrollo capitalista*. Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1979.

¹⁵ See GUTIÉRREZ GARZA, E. "De la relación salarial monopolista a la flexibilidad del trabajo", México, 1960–1986. In: GUTIÉRREZ GARZA, E. ed. *Testimonios de la crisis 2. La crisis del Estado del bienestar*. México: Siglo XXI, 1988. pp. 129–179.

began to experience recurrent structural crises and crises of realization. While previous crises had taken place within the old export-oriented economy, these now involved a certain degree of an industrial base.¹⁶ This situation would bring, over the course of the 1970s, countries such as Chile, Argentina, and Brazil to undertake a process of restructuring of productive capacity to align their economies with the world market. This process has been addressed within dependency theory as the pattern of reproduction of capital.¹⁷

While many thought that with this transition, dependency was ‘extinguished’, and with it, dependency theory, Marini’s thesis of labor super-exploitation continued to reflect the socio-economic reality of the region. Super-exploitation as a production regime is not negated in dependent countries when relative surplus value emerges, even to a limited extent, and imposes its logic – though not its hegemony – in the production and accumulation of capital. This is particularly true in periods of intense industrialization of the economy such as occurred in Latin America in the last quarter of the 20th century, in particular in the largest countries of the region such as México, Brazil and Argentina, which significantly increased their industrialization coefficients following the Second World War.

This is the substantive difference between industrialized and dependent capitalism. In the former, as productive capacity increases, the hegemonic regime imposed, especially after the first industrial revolution in England, is that of relative surplus value. This is particularly true when it contributes to the reduction of the socially necessary amount of labor required to produce the value of labor power, and, as a consequence, the necessary labor time. Moreover, relative surplus value heavily influences the reproduction of capital, and shapes, among other things, the concrete forms that labor exploitation assumes in the context of specific historical-structural formations. In the dependent economies, things are different. Here, the super-exploitation of labor is the hegemonic category that overpowers both relative surplus value and remnants of archaic forms of exploitation and production. While the increase in manufacturing exports in Latin America changed some historical forms of structural dependence,

¹⁶ MARINI. *Op.Cit.*, 1973. p.75.

¹⁷ MARINI, R.M. *El patrón de reproducción de capital en Chile*. Cuadernos de CIDAMO 7. 1982. Available at: http://www.marini-escritos.unam.mx/index.htm#op_capitalismo Accessed on February 24, 2013.

however, it did not change the dependency itself, because those countries today, in the 2000s, still rely on the *super-exploitation* of the workforce.¹⁸

The essence of the theses Marini developed along with his wider work on dependency theory and labor super-exploitation, consists of remunerating labor power below its value. This is seen as the structural basis of the cycle of capital in dependent economies. This super-exploitation develops and reproduces, even with increasing labor productivity and the rise of relative surplus value, to such an extent that the latter does not manage to become hegemonic in the economy and society. From here arises the thesis of the amplified reproduction of dependency that expands and intensifies in accordance with the development of global capitalism, both internally and along with the advanced countries and the international economy.

Critiques of Labor Super-Exploitation: Cardoso, Serra and Cueva

Marini's debate with Fernando Henrique Cardoso and José Serra at the end of the 1970s was undoubtedly the most important theoretical-ideological confrontation that has taken place around dependency theory.¹⁹ In contrast to Marini, Cardoso and Serra conceived of labor super-exploitation as a conjunctural phenomenon and not as a process endogenous to capital accumulation in dependent economies. In the same manner as Ricardo (whose work Marx critiqued thoroughly), moreover, they calculated the increase in the rate of profit in a way that conflated the rate of surplus value with the rate of profit. Nonetheless, the authors accepted that income inequality increased in Brazil under the military government. Cardoso and Serra recognized that durable consumer goods constituted the backbone of the economy, not only in Brazil but also in other Latin American countries. They also accepted a growing polarization in a capitalist market between modern consumption in the dependent countries and the existence of income sources and markets that did not correspond to this modern consumerist pattern, including the wages received by the labor force.

¹⁸ This argument is discussed in greater detail in SOTELO VALENCIA, A. *Los rumbos del trabajo. Superexplotación y precariedad social en el Siglo XXI*. México: Editorial Porrúa-UNAM, 2012.

¹⁹ CARDOSO, F.H. and SERRA, J. "Las desventuras de la dialéctica de la dependencia". *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*. n. 40 (Núm. Extraordinario [E]), 1978. pp. 9–55; MARINI. *Op.Cit.* 1978.

Based on the preceding points, Cardoso and Serra (in contrast to Marini) misunderstand the thesis of labor super-exploitation and incorrectly represent it as the impossibility of producing relative surplus value by further cheapening the social value of labor power in the dependent country, either due to the null or limited consumption of consumer durables by the working class. Because of this, they argue that Marini leaves the door open for capitalists to prolong the working day indefinitely and/or cut wages without limit (i.e. absolute surplus value). This would make it impossible for the system to reduce the social value of labor power through an effective increase in labor productivity.

Instead of continuing to explore the relationship between productivity and (absolute and relative) surplus value, Cardoso and Serra are diverted into “demonstrating” that a reduction in the cost of constant capital achieved fundamentally by an improvement in its quality or its more efficient use “would increase the value relation of productive capital” (and it seems that both authors understand this relation as equivalent to the Marxist concept of the organic composition of capital) so that by “keeping constant the productivity of labor and the rate of surplus value (supposing that wages do not go up in value), the rate of profit would rise, notwithstanding that these last two are constant”.²⁰

Like Ricardo, Cardoso and Serra confuse the rate of profit and rate of surplus value. They forget that the rate of profit is calculated as the relation between the surplus value produced by the workers and the constant and variable capital employed, something that any accountant attentive to the financial state of a business knows. Beyond this, they also fail to understand that the very reduction in the cost of constant capital and that the increase in its efficiency in a concrete capitalist economy increases the rate of profit by merely changing distribution patterns, stimulating the concentration of capital without adding a single atom of new value transformed into surplus value, and therefore, profit. This is true because constant capital only transfers its pre-existing value to the final product rather than creating new value.

In summary, labor super-exploitation is seen by Cardoso and Serra as a passing phenomenon that will be “overcome” with technological progress. In doing so, they completely bypassed any attempt at explaining the now undeniable fact of labor’s increasing exploitation in Latin America over recent decades despite the increasing integration of cutting edge

²⁰ CARDOSO and SERRA. *Op.Cit.* pp. 43-44.

technologies in production processes and the growing social productivity of labor.

Prolific in his critiques rife with arguments that enrich the debates within Latin American social sciences and Marxism, Agustín Cueva developed a critique of the theory of labor super-exploitation that we should consider.²¹ The first thing we must say, at the risk of appearing repetitive, is that Cueva commits an initial error of tarring with the same brush a group of authors of highly diverse ideological affiliations and currents of thought. This group includes André Gunder Frank, who, strictly speaking, is not a dependency theorist, and developmentalist authors such as Cardoso or Faletto, alongside Luis Vitale, Aníbal Quijano and Marini, supposedly all connected by the problematic notion of “dependency”. When labor super-exploitation enters the picture, however, the theoretical and conceptual differences between the authors become much clearer. In other words, it is when we come to labor super-exploitation, one of the central concepts in the Marxist theory of dependency, that the various authors diverge. There are radical differences between authors who favor other analytical categories such as class struggle (Cardoso), articulated modes of production (Cueva), and “styles of development” (Varsavsky), that distinguish them from other vertices of “dependency theory” (Frank) and in particular from Marxist dependency theory (Marini, Dos Santos).

Agustín Cueva’s principal thesis can be summarized as follows: dependency theory originated as a sort of neo-Marxism “at the margins of Marx”.²² It has a markedly nationalist character, both in that it substitutes class struggle for the nation-state contradiction and nurses a nostalgia for “autonomous” capitalist development which has been frustrated. By using a homogenized concept of “dependency” and “dependent”, class analysis and class struggle are overshadowed and nullified. This “constitutes the Achilles heel of dependency theory”.²³ Moreover, this theory works with “models” rather than laws, closely paralleling bourgeois thought along the lines of Max Weber’s “ideal types”. From this criticism, Cueva derives his argument that a Marxist analysis of the particularities of Latin American capitalism must be based “in the specific articulation of several modes of production,

²¹ CUEVA, A. "Problemas y perspectivas de la teoría de la dependencia". *Historia y Sociedad*. v. 3, Fall 1974. pp. 55–77.

²² *Ibid.*, p.56.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.62-63.

and of the phases of a given mode” falling into the “endogenism” that characterizes the work of many other authors.²⁴

For Cueva, Marini ends up working with models rather than laws, stepping outside the boundaries of Marxist practice. Instead, with the theory of the articulation of modes of production, which, in our view, fits neatly in the realm of structuralism, Cueva rejects the category of super-exploitation, incorrectly equating it with that of “pauperism”, alluding to Marx. However, we should point out that for the latter this category, in the context of the reserve army of labor, is reserved for the poor, and corresponds to a “part of the working class that has lost its condition of existence (the sale of labor power), and vegetates on public alms”.²⁵ Moreover, for Marx, pauperism is part of relative overpopulation and is made up of three categories:

- 1) Those able to work,
- 2) Orphans and children of the poor, and
- 3) Those unable to work: disabled, widows, etc.

It is obvious that this category has nothing to do with labor super-exploitation, since the latter implies a conceptual definition in terms of production, the methods of creation of surplus value, and wages. Cueva’s argument is based on a conceptual confusion between pauperization and labor super-exploitation.²⁶

The final element of Cueva’s critique is dependency theory’s problematic handling of the “internal-external” relation which, in his

²⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 58-65. This author is categorized in the “endogenist” current due to his conception of Latin American capitalism, based on its own internal conditions and contradictions, as evidenced by the following: “This is to say, the inherent limitations of this deeply-rooted obsession with explaining the internal development of social formations as a function of their articulation with other social functions, instead of approaching it the other way around”. CUEVA. *Ibid.* p. 74. Other authors share the same endogenist conception and focus on the articulation of modes of production, including Fernando Arauco in “Observaciones en torno a dialéctica de la dependencia”. *Historia y Sociedad*. V. 3, 1974, pp. 79-92: “The important contributions of Marini are centred on the analysis of this cycle, but the overall explanation of its functioning must also take into account – if it is to be able to adequately represent all of its causal structures – the issues that fall under the general category of articulation of modes of production”. Authors such as Roger Bartra use apparently novel concepts such as “subcapitalism” while still sharing the same beliefs on the articulation of modes of production and “structural dualism”. *Estructura agraria y clases sociales en México*. México: Editorial Era, 1974. pp. 24, 102.

²⁵ MARX, K. *Op.Cit.*, 2000. p. 807.

²⁶ As Cueva states: “Because of this, super-exploitation, which Marini highlights as a defining feature, can easily be named in quite classical terms: the process of pauperization...” CUEVA. *Op. Cit.*, 1974. p.67.

opinion, cannot be resolved due to the economic and developmentalist nature of this theory. Cueva's approach to resolving the conflict between the internal and external is the opposite of the one taken by dependency theory: "would it not instead be the nature of our societies that in the last instance determines their linkage with the international capitalist system?"²⁷

Cueva's conclusion is unequivocal: there is no theoretical space within Marxism to develop a theory of dependency; it is enough to apply the general laws discovered by Marx and Lenin to "understand" the specificities of capitalism in our countries. It is precisely that proposition that we are challenging in this essay. Nevertheless, in the final years of his life, the intellectual honesty of Agustín Cueva led him to recognize the theoretical and political legitimacy of dependency theory, and to accept that he had actually done an enormous favor to the intellectual right wing in Latin America with his arguments against dependency theory in the 1970s and 1980s.²⁸

Conclusion: The Enduring Relevance of Dependency Theory

In contrast to the cheery picture painted by liberals, social democrats and neoliberals of "developing" countries, as they like to call the dependent countries, and their talk of "independence" and of "sovereignty" of nations and workers, the dependency thesis on labor super-exploitation sees a tendency towards the exacerbation of this super-exploitation, currently driven by the so-called labor flexibilization in the productive sectors of our societies. Some initial progress has been made on developing the sort of in-depth critical analysis that these points deserve. These include, for example, the more recent work by Marini in which he defines globalization as the process by which the scale at which the labor theory of value operates becomes global – i.e. the determination of the socially necessary labor time for the production and reproduction of the workforce takes place for the first time in truly international conditions.²⁹ Moreover, this concept of globalization applies not only to labor power, but also to other elements (fixed capital) that determine the cost of production. This includes means of production, tools, etc., as well as land, which is considered a means of

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.75.

²⁸ *Las democracias restringidas en América Latina: elementos para una reflexión crítica*. Quito: Editorial Planeta, 1988.

²⁹ See MARINI. *Op.Cit.* 1993 in SOTELO VALENCIA. *Op. Cit.* 1993.

production, but also a means of circulation in its capacity as a raw material incorporated in the final product.

What these three elements (labor power, land, and capital) have in common is that the process of globalization is simultaneously disseminating technological progress via the incorporation of cutting edge production processes and technologies: information technology, biotechnology, new materials, and microelectronics. These technologies, developed in the major scientific and financial centers, have brought about a new technological paradigm qualitatively different and superior to the Fordist-Taylorist paradigm of mass production that dynamized industrial production in the long period of post-war capitalism.

In addition to conceiving of globalization as a juridical-institutional reference point that shapes how nations must manage their international relations, Marini's reflections provoke the need for a contemporary debate on the question of labor super-exploitation. His analysis makes it clear that it is no longer a tendency exclusive to the dependent economies, but one which, with the globalization of capital and the structural and superstructural processes that accompany it, will become generalized into ever less regulated labor markets and processes in the developed countries, affecting increasingly broad segments of the working class in those countries.

To address the current condition between dependency and exploitation it is necessary to conduct research in three directions. On the economic plane, one of the characteristics of what we may call the "new dependency" is the propensity to the specialization of production in the Latin American economies stimulated by the systematic application of neoliberal economic policy. The specialization of production is a concept that defines the new profile of these economies in terms of the orientation of their resources (capital, the labour force, and land) to the most profitable activities of the world market, to the detriment of production and internal markets, provoking strong internal recessionary movements, capitalist crises and recurring imbalances.

The second line of necessary research is from the social perspective, tackling the concentration of income as one of the perverse features of the dependent economy, that continues to encourage production at the borders of the restricted market, with the bulk of production focused on luxury goods which does not enter, or enters only to a limited extent, into the consumption of the majority of the labour force. Only limited segments of the population – particularly the dominant classes that constitute the fringes

of society who have purchasing power capable of stimulating effective demand markets – continue to benefit from the condition of dependent capitalism. This concentration of income reflects the changes under way in the productive sphere; that is to say where the incomes of the distinct classes in society are forged. In this way, a structure of polarized production leads to growing polarizations in the upper and lower spheres of internal markets and hence in incomes.

Finally, a third direction of research, which we can only mention briefly here, takes place in the political level, highlighting the tensions between democracy and growing propensities to political authoritarianism. This working hypothesis is that of a necessary concentration of power in the state in order to ensure both the specialization of production (the new model of the reproduction of dependent capitalism) and the maintenance of a polarized and highly concentrated income structure in favor of capital and to the detriment of labor.

Fortunately, researchers are discussing these issues today as well enriching analyses in the following broad areas:

- a) The role of the state in dependency.
- b) The question of the meaning of “sub-imperialism” in light of the theory of dependency.
- c) The question of the relationship between the exploitation of labor and relative surplus value in developed countries.
- d) The question of the informality and precariousness of labor.

In the final analysis, the super-exploitation of labor, the specialization of production, the concentration of income, unemployment, misery and exclusionary policies of the Latin American capitalist states, formally democratic but in reality rooted in counter insurgency and authoritarian power structures, configure the perverse features of a structural dependency that is opposed to the demands for democratization by Latin American workers and popular classes, who demand greater participation in the decisions that affect their lives.

Globalisation, Trade Unions and Labour Migration: Old Dilemmas, New Opportunities

Ronaldo Munck

Preface

As we enter uncharted waters in terms of the outcome of the global crisis of capitalism that began in 2007, we might well ask if it represents a new global opportunity for labour and the subaltern classes more generally. In particular, I seek to address the complex and, sometimes conflictual, relations between trade unions and migrant workers. In the first instance, I pose the *Challenges* which migration represents for trade unions in the context of globalisation. More broadly, I examine the challenges for progressive social theory posed by the current global crisis. I then move on to the *Mutations* of the global system since the 1990s on the basis of Gramsci's dictum that "the old has died but the new has not yet been born". This is the necessary framework for the subsequent analysis of *Workers* in the context of the processes of globalisation and precarisation. My hypothesis is that we are now moving beyond the categories of North and South in terms of the mutations of capitalism and their impact on the workers of the world.¹ Finally, I turn to the sometimes under-rated *Complexity* of the way workers are responding to the mutations of capitalism and thus posing a very real challenge to the stable reproduction of capitalist rule. I outline the limitations of a rights-based labour response to exploitation and the opportunities arising for a new multi-scalar global social unionism.

¹ MUNCK, Ronaldo. "Beyond North and South: Migration, Informalization and Trade Union Revitalization". *Working USA, The Journal of Labour and Society*. vol. 14, n.1, 2011, pp 5-18.

Challenges

In the emerging field of “global labour history”² the question of labour migration within and between countries must surely be central. We now understand better the dual social and spatial dimensions of labour’s expansion as labour force and labour movement. The global is now understood as a more complex domain than the one portrayed by the dominant Eurocentric perspective of a dynamic centre and a passive periphery. We are also much more attuned to the dialectic between class divisions and others, primarily those based on gender and ethnicity. We also now grasp the complexity of the subsumption of labour to capital and the very diverse forms the social relations of production may take.³ However, we still struggle to bring migration studies and labour studies within the same global paradigm as most migration studies still maintain a complete divide between national and transnational migration processes, in a strange reflection of methodological nationalism perhaps.

In terms of the broad sweep of global history, the main difference between the mid- 19th century and the current period is the shift from social class to social place as determinant of life chances. In very rough terms, in 1850 around half of the inequality between individuals globally could be accounted for by uneven development between countries and half by income differences between social classes. Today, according to Branko Milanović’s calculations the split between location and class looks very different: some 85 percent is due to differences between mean country incomes and only 15 percent due to social class differences.⁴ We do not have to accept as he seems to that “a new spectre haunts the world” not communism this time round, but mass migration from the poor countries, but clearly it means imperialism or neo-colonialism impacts on labour as much (or not more) than social class and that labour migration has a clear socio-economic logic.

Trade unions today face many challenges as a result of a quarter century of neoliberal globalisation and its resultant decomposition of labour. Migration – the free mobility of labour- has traditionally been seen as a

² DE VITO, Christian. “New perspectives on global history. Introduction”. *Workers of the World: International Journal of Strikes and Social Conflicts*. n.3, May 2013.

³ BANAJI, J. *Theory as History. Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011.

⁴ MILANOVIĆ, Branko. *The Haves and the Have Nots: A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality*. New York: Basic Books, 2011. p.7.

problem for trade unions. Migrant workers have been seen as undermining well-established labour norms and, for that matter, are also viewed as a “difficult to organize” sector. Much as workers are divided by gender, age and ethnicity they are also divided according to national origin and citizen status. What I am proposing here, in terms of turning capital’s global crisis into labour’s global opportunity, is a decisive shift towards migration as a hinge in terms of the future of globalisation and as an opportunity for a trade union revitalization in pursuit of social transformation. At a historical conjuncture when national protectionism, xenophobia and racism are bound to come to the fore, this approach may, at the very least, play a positive role in terms of defending democracy and, perhaps, forwarding social transformation.

Trade unions – as organisers of the “factor of production” called labour – have throughout history, often in practice if not programmatically, displayed a protectionist attitude towards the free mobility of workers.⁵ There are many historical examples of trade unions opposing the entry of foreign workers into the national labour market or seeking social exclusion of those already there.⁶ More recently, there has been a recognition, from within the trade unions themselves, that “solidarity with migrant workers is helping trade unions to get back to the basic principles of the labour movement”.⁷ One argument is that to “democratize globalization” the same level of movement by workers that applies at the national level should prevail. Latin American trade unions have committed to “promoting increasing, strengthening and guaranteeing the freedom of movement for all workers... to stay in their own land, emigrate, immigrate and return”.⁸ A dynamic labour movement should recognise that migrant workers are an

⁵ Trade unions have a long tradition of opposing migration that is seen to undermine local bargaining strengths. Indeed, employers have historically imported “scab” labour to undermine strikes. In migration receiving countries – be it Latin America in the early 20th Century or Europe today – trade unions (and socialist parties) have been suspicious of state initiatives to encourage inward migration. Migrant workers can then become an integral part of the national labour movement, becoming “nationalized” as it were, or they can maintain and be kept at a distance. In Europe, right up to quite recently, there have been salient examples of migrant workers being prevented from establishing a significant union role. See PENNINX, R. and RUSBLAD, J., eds. *Trade Unions and Immigration in Europe, 1960-1993*. New York: Bergham Books, 2001. Trade unions – given their role in national labour markets – will also seek to influence the state in terms of what categories of workers may or may not enter the country. They may also, of course, change positions as they did in the US recently and become more “pro-migrant”.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ DAVID, N. “Migrants get trade unions back to basics”. *Labour Education*. n. 129. Geneva: ILO, 2002. p.2.

⁸ GODIO, J. (2005) *Sociedades de trabajo y sindicalismo socio-político en América Latina y el Caribe*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2005. p. 56.

integral part of the working class and that they have often played a pivotal role in the making of labour movements.⁹

In recent years, trade unions in most parts of the world have begun to recover from the impact of neoliberalism and its unregulated market approach. This has occurred at peak level with the formation of a unified trade union confederation as a result of the end of the Cold War. The old International Trade Secretariats also became energised as the new World Councils that organise internationally across a given sector. At the national level, there has been a certain resurgence by trade unions in some regions such as in Latin America, while in the US there was a marked political radicalization at peak level. The growing academic literature on trade union revitalization¹⁰ has found evidence transnationally of advances in key areas of activity such as the organising of new sectors of workers, greater political activity, the reform of trade union structures, building of coalitions and, not least, an increase in international solidarity activity.¹¹ We could argue that we are at the start of a phase when trade unionism will yet again be reconfigured and revitalized to meet the new conditions it faces.

⁹ Migrants are not, of course, an uncomplicated part of the national working class. By definition, they have left the productive world and social relations of the national society they were part of. Academic analysis has developed interesting accounts of the complex “transnational” lives of migrants. However, they are not only harbingers of new sociological positionality. Guillermo Almeyra has written about the way emigration has depopulated vast rural regions of Mexico, transformed its demography, left vast tracts of land uncultivated and, more controversially, created a massive “conservative” and “anti-national” social movement. Acting as a safety valve for rural discontent, emigration has arguably prevented the explosion of more Chiapas’s, with the Zapatistas revolt lingering in isolation. Against the cultural anthropologist’s extolling of cultural syncretism, Almeyra decries the way in which emigration perpetuates the vision that the US model is the one to aspire to and that individual as against collective solutions are the answer. Almeyra is a revolutionary Marxist of long-standing, it should be mentioned, in evaluating this implicit critique of migration studies orthodoxy. ALMEYRA, G. “Los vaivenes de los movimientos sociales en México”. *OSAL*, IX,4. pp 87-101.

¹⁰ The trade union “revitalization” debates have taken off in recent years in response to the different ways in which the union movement has begun to restructure itself after neoliberalism. Frege and Kelly summarise the main findings in relation to the industrialized countries around five main arenas: organizational restructuring (through mergers and internal reorganization), coalition building (with other social movements), partnerships with employers (new bargaining frameworks), political action (in relation to the state) and, lastly, international links (for example at the European level). See FREGE, C. and KELLY, J. “Union Revitalization in Comparative Perspective”. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*. vol 9, n.1. pp 7-24. Of course, the results are uneven across countries and across the issues where new engagements have accrued. We can perhaps assume that many of these issues also apply in the semi-industrialized countries such as Brazil, South Africa and the Philippines. We may also wonder whether some elements lead backwards to more traditional collective bargaining or corporatist models while others with a social movement or international orientation point more towards a progressive role for labour.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Labour has always been slow to adapt to capital's mutations and crises. That there has been a time lag of 25 years between the neoliberal capitalist offensive and labour's re-composition is not surprising and fits the pattern of 19th and 20th century waves of labour disintegration and recomposition.¹² This cyclical nature of labour-capital relations seems to have been ignored by analysts circa 2000 who perhaps reflected the mood at the time that U.S capitalism had really broken the cyclical nature of capitalism. Thus Castells argued that "The labour movement seems to be historically superseded"¹³ because while capital is global, labour is local: "labour is disaggregated in its performance, fragmented in its organization, diversified in its existence, divided in its collective action".¹⁴ While some of these points were conjuncturally correct, its overall analysis ignored that labour is a social movement. A more long-term view of the last century would show that trade unions have not only endured, but that they have also been "making society more democratic, more respectful of the poor, moving human rights above the claims of capitalist property".¹⁵ That is no mean achievement given the brutality of the neoliberal counter-revolution.

If the current crisis poses a challenge to the organised labour movement, it also requires a more robust response from critical social thinking than we have seen until now. At one level, the current crisis of capitalism vindicates the traditional Marxist reading of capitalism and its contradictions. This has been recognised across the political spectrum – albeit grudgingly – since the outbreak of the crisis in 2007. Since the last major crisis of capitalism in the 1930s, the world system has embarked on two major policy regimes. Keynesianism led to the "embedded liberalism" of the Bretton Woods¹⁶ regime that lasted until approximately 1975. It was characterised by market allocation of resources, but constrained by a political process that allowed for social need to a certain extent. This was followed by the neo-liberal "efficient market hypothesis"¹⁷ which provided the rationale for globalization and the extension of a new economic order across the globe. Today we are faced with the conundrum of 'financial

¹² ARRIGHI, Giovanni. *The Long Twentieth Century: money, power and the origins of our times*. London: Verso, 1996. p. 348.

¹³ CASTELLS, M. *The Power of Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997. p. 360.

¹⁴ CASTELLS, M. *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. p.475.

¹⁵ FRIEDMAN, G. (2008) *Reigniting the Labour Movement. Restoring means to ends in democratic labour movement*. London: Routledge, 2008. p. 10.

¹⁶ RUGGIE, J. "International regimes, transitions and change: embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order". *International Organization*. vol. 36, n.2, 1984, pp. 397-415.

¹⁷ FARMER, D and LO, A.W. "Frontiers of finance: evolution and efficient markets". *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. vol. 96, n.10, 1999, pp. 9991-9992.

regime change”¹⁸ which the powers that be will find no easier to achieve than the “regime change” in Iraq carried out at the peak of U.S arrogance across the globe.

Classical Marxism allows us to understand the re-making of the working class on a global scale over the last 30 years or so. The dynamic (yet destructive) nature of this system is evident not least in the rise of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) as vibrant centres of capital expansion and accumulation in a “classical” mode. New working classes are being forged in these regimes and the future of class struggle will depend largely on their outcome. As Mike Davis puts it laconically “Two hundred million Chinese factory workers, miners and construction labourers are the most dangerous class on the planet. (Just ask the State Council in Beijing.) Their full awakening from the bubble may yet determine whether or not a socialist Earth is possible”.¹⁹ What we need to add, however, to this Marxist perspective is an understanding of how “primitive accumulation” continues to operate through “accumulation through dispossession”²⁰, a “Third-worldist” perspective articulated before its time by Rosa Luxemburg against Lenin and the other orthodox Marxists of her day.

Karl Polanyi – coming out of the European socialist tradition, but also influenced by Christian thinking – developed a bold new paradigm of capitalist development following the Second World War. While much of his analysis of capitalist development is recognisably Marxist he departs from this analytical tradition in several key ways. His broad sweeping “double movement” thesis – market deregulation followed by society protecting itself – captured the mood that neo-liberal globalization had its limits. Protests against environmental degradation, movements against “free trade” agreements or struggles against factory closures could find a unifying thread

¹⁸ WADE, R. “Financial Regime Change?” *New Left Review*, n. 53, Sept-Oct. 2008, pp.5-21.

¹⁹ DAVIS, M. “Spring Confronts Winter”, *New Left Review*, 72, Nov-Dec 2011. p. 15.

²⁰ “Accumulation through dispossession” is a term coined by David Harvey to describe the current operation of “primitive accumulation” in the era of globalisation. This appropriation, of separation of production, cannot be restricted to the period of capitalism’s emergence. Rather Harvey maintains that “accumulation by dispossession” is a continuing process within capital accumulation on a global scale. It achieves access to cheaper inputs as well as access to widening markets and this helps keep up profits and keep capitalism’s tendency towards “over-accumulation” at bay. Harvey also updates Marx’s original conception by showing how it might apply to intellectual property rights, privatization and environmental predation. The first is evident in the way pharmaceuticals appropriate traditional medical knowledge for example, and also the privatization of mineral exploitation, which constitutes the means whereby the “global commons” is passing into private hands for profit. See HARVEY, D. *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.

here. Polanyi argued explicitly against Marx that labour was not a commodity: “Labour is only another name for a human activity which goes with life itself, it cannot be shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused without affecting also the human individual who happens to be the bearer of this peculiar commodity”.²¹

It is in relation to “decommodification” that Polanyi probably provides his most powerful strategic insight into current movements beyond neoliberalism. The socially disembodied self-regulating market will inevitably be challenged by the self-protective tendencies in society. Thus, for example, according to Polanyi, the function of trade unions was not to get a higher price for the commodity of labour but, rather, “that of interfering with the laws of supply and demand in respect of human labor, and removing it from the orbit of the market”.²² All moves from within the social realm aimed at constraining the unregulated operation of market decommodification thus challenged the market economy in its fundamentals. The strategy of decommodification and of re-embedding the economy within society can serve as a “logic of equivalence”²³ acting to articulate a range of very diverse protective or defensive struggles by subaltern nations, classes and ethnic groups. This is, in my view, a necessary supplement to the classic Marxist analysis of capitalism and its contradictions.

Mutations

It seems clear we are now living a historical period similar to that which Antonio Gramsci characterised as one in which “the old has dying

²¹ POLANYI, K. *The Great Transformation: The Economic and Political Origins of our Time*. Boston: Beacon, 2001. pp.75-76.

²² *Ibid.*, p.186.

²³ The “logic of equivalence” forms part of the anti-essentialist critique of traditional Marxism by Ernesto Laclau seeking to reinscribe politics in the struggle for emancipation. It refuses class essentialism and a pre-given privileged role for the proletariat. Rather it builds on Gramsci’s notion of hegemony and the need to build a radical democracy through a “war of position”. In the discursive construction of antagonism, the logic of equivalence is one of condensation that divides the symbolic field into an “us and them”. There are a plurality of relations of subordination that need to find a logic of equivalence if they are to be brought to bear for emancipation. We can find this process at work most clearly in the creation of broad popular (pueblo) identities through populist, anti-colonial and actually existing socialist revolutions. It remains to be seen whether the alter-globalisation might generate an alternative hegemony through a logic of equivalence, but at present that seems unlikely. See LACLAU, E. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso, 2005.

and the new cannot be born”.²⁴ While neoliberal globalisation continues to dominate, it no longer has hegemony. Dominant class strategies are in disarray across the world, and in some regions this has reached crisis point. Are we at one of those conjunctures when major mutations of the system are about to occur? What are the prospects for the elaboration of an alternative hegemony emerging from the subaltern nations, classes and ethnic-religious groups? Whatever our answers to these difficult questions, I think we can agree on the need to pose them in an affirmative way. Too many interventions around workers and migrants (not to mention the “precariat”) are posed defensively as a reaction to the violation of assumed human rights. Now is the time to forge alternative hegemonic thinking and put some shape on the hitherto rather vacuous formulation that “another world is possible”.²⁵

The dominant economic model generated massive social transformation via globalization, financial deregulation, privatization and commodification of the life course. The deregulation of financial markets – as the Eurozone now acknowledges – created a series of asset bubbles which came to a head in the United States in 2007. A shadow banking system had outstripped the regulated banking sector. So then, as Robin Blackburn puts it, “The banks’ heedless pursuit of short-term advantage led to the largest destruction of value in world history during the great Crash of 2008. Government rescue measures were to offer unlimited liquidity to the financial sector, while leaving the system largely intact”.²⁶ That is to say, neoliberal ideologies and their supporters have lost hegemony, but they remain dominant. While Keynesianism is the intellectual inspiration for all types of critics of the crisis, a coherent alternative path has not yet been forged and, in fact, most counter-measures will simply accentuate the crisis through so-called austerity measures against working people.

In the early days of the crisis, mainstream commentators pinned their hopes on the BRICS that were seen as somehow detached from the financial crisis. China and India might slow their pace of growth, but they would act as engines of global recovery. There were hopes pinned on the informal sector, which would act as a safety net for those thrown out of work. The former Chief Economist of the IMF told us that “The situation in

²⁴ GRAMSCI, A. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970. p.276.

²⁵ See, for example, SANTOS, B.S., ed. *Another Production is Possible, Beyond the Capitalist Canon*. London: Verso, 2006.

²⁶ BLACKBURN, R. “Crisis 2.0”. *New Left Review*. n.72, Nov-Dec. 2011. p.35.

desperately poor countries isn't as bad as you'd think".²⁷ In reality, the crisis was very soon seen to be world-wide – an inevitable consequence of globalization – and thus it was clearly systemic. The much-vaunted technological New Age had not materialized. The flotation of Facebook and renewable energy would hardly generate a new model of accelerated growth. As to the BRICs, export led growth slowed down in the midst of a global recession and a “hard landing” for China is now forecast. “A thoroughly triangulated global recession”²⁸ now loomed with the US, Europe and the BRICs all involved in a “perfect storm” scenario that even Karl Marx could not have imagined.

The impact of the crisis on workers and migrant workers in particular was massive and unfolded very rapidly. Globalisation had created an economically, socially and spatially much more integrated world. Labour diasporas have formed dense social networks intimately integrated into the spatial expansion of capitalism. It is through these networks, as David Harvey puts it, that “we now see the effects of the financial crash spreading into almost every nook and cranny of rural Africa and peasant India”.²⁹ In the OECD countries, the role of unemployment is climbing rapidly with systemic failures bound to multiply. When the young *indignados* gather in the plazas of Spain, their life chances are not so qualitatively different from that of their counterparts in North Africa. This was not the case in 1968: the social distance between a Berkeley student and a Vietnamese peasant was unbridgeable. As to global migration, the picture is quite unclear. We have certainly not seen the end of migration. More likely, we will see a transformation of the migration regimes with new countries emerging as sending and receiving units as well as a real “churning” of existing flows.

While some analysts portray the subaltern masses as a “multitude”³⁰ they do not offer an alternative hegemonic strategy. Towards the very end of

²⁷ Cited in BREMEN, J. “Myth of the Global Safety Net”. *New Left Review*. n.59, Sep-Oct. 2009. p.30.

²⁸ DAVIS, M. *Op.Cit.*, p.14.

²⁹ HARVEY, D. *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism*. London: Verso, 2010. p.147.

³⁰ The “multitude” is a term of Machiavelli’s recently revived by Hardt and Negri as a new agent of resistance against global capitalism. The multitude is conceived as an unmediated, immanent revolutionary social subject contesting Empire. Universal nomadism has created new figures of struggle and new subjectivities which express and nourish a new constituent project. The deterritorializing power of the multitude is the productive force both sustaining Empire while at the same time expressing the force that makes necessary its destruction. Hardt and Negri do not offer a political programme or strategy: “only the multitude through the practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real”. HARDT, M. and NEGRI, A. *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard

Empire, Hardt and Negri gesture towards the need for a political programme for the global multitude, but do not go beyond a few platitudes. Indeed, they come up with little other than some issues – such as the right to “global citizenship” – couched in the traditional language of rights and demands. How this might be achieved, and via what political mechanisms, is not explained. Struggles are not seen as connected horizontally; they all challenge Empire vertically and directly. This thoroughly a-political vision might resonate with “autonomist” currents, but it is not capable of articulating the various, very disparate struggles against the dominant order now under way. As Laclau puts it “any ‘multitude’ *is constructed through political action – which presupposes antagonism and hegemony*”.³¹ Spontaneous aggregation of disparate struggles cannot occur without the necessary political articulations and the establishment of a logic of equivalence between them.

Within the trade union movement – and even more within the international NGO’s (incorrectly called “global civil society” by some) – there has been a tendency to answer the crisis from a rights-based perspective. A prime example is the Decent Work Campaign (DWC) promoted by the ILO, the international trade union movement and the European Commission. It is a concept and programme based on the understanding that work is a source of personal dignity, family stability, peace in the community, democracies that deliver for people and economic growth that expands opportunities for productive jobs and enterprise development. Its core objective is “to obtain recognition and respect for the rights of workers” (ILO). While I will return to its limitations as a contemporary labour strategy shortly, I here want to raise the limitations of a rights-based strategy more generally. This is not the place to assess the broader issue of whether the international human rights movement is more part of the problem than the solution. We must note though that the human rights regime reflects the ethics and politics of a particular period in Western Europe. It is also probably true that it promises more than it can possibly deliver. It has undoubtedly served at times to legitimate repression and bad governance. The only point I want to make here however, following Kennedy, is that: “human rights has so dominated the imaginative space of emancipation that alternatives can now only be thoughtas negations of

University Press, 2000. p. 411. There is no logic of equivalence as all struggles are incommensurable. The revolutionary subject is immanent and thus we need not be concerned with political action or the construction of an alternative hegemony.

³¹ LACLAU, E. *Debates y combates. Por un horizonte de la política*. México: FCE, 2011. p.133.

what human rights asserts – passion to its reason, local to its global, etc”.³² In brief, a human rights optic might hinder the development of a rounded politics of transformation for the current era. And we need to always bear in mind as Kennedy reminds us that “speaking rights to politics is not the same as speaking truth to power”.³³

Migrant workers are not only (or even primarily) organised through trade unions, but also by specifically migrant-oriented organisations, be they ethnic, faith-based or single issue campaigning organisations. There is a wide range of non-governmental or community-based organisations focused on the organisation of migrants *qua* migrants. Many of these are focused on migrants’ human rights, in particular immigrants’ citizenship rights. This is ironic because, as Piper notes, “migrants’ rights are one of the, if not *the*, least clear and enforced group of human rights targeting marginalised groups”.³⁴ Certainly, some migrant led organizations do focus on political organizing and are open to alliances with the organised labour movement, for example. Overall, however, most NGO activism on behalf of migrants has more often a crisis or relief orientation, and as Piper puts it “such crisis interventions or ‘ambulance services’ are generally not activist- oriented”.³⁵

There is a particularly noticeable rise of female migrant worker organising. The gendered dimension of these workers is now coming to the fore especially from the emerging regional and global campaigns such as those around migrant domestic workers. Feminist oriented campaigns have taken up the gender rights of these workers albeit not always in alliance with those advocating for their labour rights. Until recently, much of the emphasis was on women migrants as victims, with the trafficking discourse and problematic to the fore. Increasingly, however, women migrants are developing autonomous agency in both the sending and receiving countries with some prospects that this might help overcome current fragmentation and mutual isolation. In the literature, there is a considerable gap between studies based on female migrants workers as migrants (migration studies) or

³² KENNEDY, S. “The International Human Rights Movement: Part of the Problem?” *Human Rights Law Review*, 3, 2001, p.108.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.121.

³⁴ PIPER, N. “Social Development, Transnational Migration and the Political Organising of Foreign Workers”. UNRISD: Geneva, Paper No 39, 2009.

³⁵ PIPER, N. “Social Development, Transnational Migration and the Political Organising of Foreign Workers”. Contribution to Committee on Migrant Workers, Day of General Discussion on the theme of *Protecting the rights of all migrant workers as a tool to enhance development*. <www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmw/docs/piper.doc> Accessed on Dec.8, 2013.

as workers (labour studies) and, as Lyons puts it, it is rare to see a “focus on their complex identity as ‘female migrant workers’”.³⁶

A general conclusion we might draw is around the need for more concerted alliances between trade unions, NGOs and community-based organisations around the claims and needs of migrant workers as gendered subjects. At present different organisational histories, lack of solidarity and no clear unifying perspective has hampered these efforts. A multi-level scholarly perspective is also needed to clearly articulate workers and women’s rights at local, national and transnational levels. From these debates, there might emerge as Lyons puts it “the ability to find ‘common ground’ from which to address the needs of female migrant workers”.³⁷ We can pursue this search in particular through the feminist lens of intersectionality³⁸ that focuses on the multiple – and often simultaneous – axis of identity that contributes to social inequality between women such as gender, race and class amongst others. This multidimensional conceptualization is equally applicable to migrant workers and their intersectional positionality and identity.

Basically, the struggle of workers – through trade unions and other bodies – is not a separate sphere from the broader struggle for social transformation. Nor for that matter is labour migration a separate sphere as Stephen Castles³⁹ has recently argued but, rather, part of the overall process of social transformation. Thus, for example, the struggles for workers’ rights in Egypt cannot be separated from the momentous social, political and cultural transformations currently underway in that country. A European “industrial relations” paradigm has very little purchase indeed in most parts of the world. A United Nations or NGO “human rights” perspective is also, arguably, quite limited beyond the rhetorical domain. The world of workers, which we now turn to, has always known the value of politics, of direct action, of mass struggles and an understanding that social transformation is based on struggle.

³⁶ LYONS, L. “The Limits of Transnational Activism: Organizing for Migrant Workers Rights in Malaysia and Singapore”. University of Montreal, Transnationalization of Solidarities and Women Movements Workshop, 2006. p. 3. <http://cccg.umontreal.ca/pdf/Lenore%20Lyons_en.pdf> Accessed on Dec.8, 2013.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.15.

³⁸ LUTZ, H. et. al., eds., *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

³⁹ CASTLES, S. “Understanding global migration: A social transformation perspective”. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. v.36, n.10, 2010, pp. 1565- 1586.

Workers

The working class – Marx’s proletariat – came into being with the emergence of capitalism as a mode of production characterised by “free” wage labour. Extra- economic coercion gave way to the dull compulsion of market forces. The international dimension, and the role of migrant workers in particular, was crucial in this early making of the working class.⁴⁰ Free migration across national borders was considered natural and xenophobia was rare; internationalism in the economic sense was thus not forced. But this early internationalist phase was short-lived as state formation began to lead to the national integration of the European working classes in particular, culminating in the first inter-imperialist war of 1914-18. Trade unions were “nationalised” as it were, becoming an integral element of social and political cohesion within the boundaries of a given nation–state. The formation of trade unions in the so-called developing world, following the second inter-imperialist war of 1938-45, also took on a strongly national character with the workers and their organisations playing a key role in many national liberation struggles.

Both Karl Marx and Karl Polanyi understood that capitalism would not realize its full potential until it was globalised. For Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*: “The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self- sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal interdependence of nations”. Polanyi, for a different historical period was to write that “The true implications of economic liberalism can now be taken in at a glance. Nothing less than a self-regulating market on a world scale could ensure the functioning of this stupendous mechanism.”⁴¹ Globalisation – as it unfolded from the 1980’s onwards – utterly transformed the world of work. There was, in first place, a massive increase in proletarianisation as millions more were brought under the sway of capital. National development regimes were soon to be superseded along with the state socialist system. This led to a shift from the formal to the real subsumption of labour. However, in the second place, we need to stress that this global proletarianisation took place under the aegis of imperialism and was thus marked by a racist template.

Labour in the global era is characterised, above all, by increased mobility, within and between nation-states. In 1970, there were 82 million

⁴⁰ See, for example, LINDEN, M.V. *Transnational Labour History*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003.

⁴¹ POLANYI, K. *Op.Cit.*, p.145.

people living outside their country of birth; by 2000 this figure had risen to 175 million. Yet it is good to remember that internal migrants in China and India are probably double that number and we should always take migration in the round from a development perspective. Migrant workers represent in some ways a return to colonial era forced labour patterns as the export of cheap labour (or its transfer within countries) becomes a viable and legitimate path to development. Hardt and Negri may sound apocalyptic, but there is a ring of truth to their proclamation that “A specter haunts the world and it is the specter of migration”.⁴² The problem is translating this complex new reality into a politics of transformation that goes beyond an extolling of flight as a response to oppression. The migrant is in a liminal position betwixt and between borders or the rural/urban divide, partly mobile, partly settled. They represent a challenge to the organised (settled) workers’ movement as we have argued, but also for the managers of globalization and will be a test case in determining whether sustainable global development is achievable.

The other key feature of the labour condition in the era of globalisation is that of flexibility, the leitmotif of the neoliberal restructuring of labour. For globalizing capital, the flexibilisation of labour was a key imperative: this entailed functional flexibility, wage flexibility and numerical flexibility. This drive was global in nature even though it took different national forms according to the degree and type of labour market embeddedness and the strength of the labour movement. The latter responded with a call for a “social clause” to be included in multilateral trade agreements to prevent “social dumping” across borders. At the end of the day, there was little to show for this campaign beyond a few showcase agreements of European companies on paper. The old labour strategies were bound to fail when the terrain set by capital had changed so dramatically. Flexibilisation was but a part of a concerted strategy by capital to weaken labour through de-regulation across the board and a so-called “informalization” of the relations of production.

Perhaps the most salient mutations of the global political economy of labour can be encapsulated in the term “Brazilianization”, first deployed by German sociologist Ulrich Beck. For Beck “The unintended consequence of the neoliberal free-market utopia is a Brazilianization of the West...the spread of temporary and insecure employment, discontinuity and loose informality into Western societies that have hitherto been the bastions of full employment”.⁴³ Precarious, insecure or informal relations of production

⁴² HARDT, M. and NEGRI, A. *Op.Cit.*, p.213.

⁴³ BECK, U. *The Brave New World of Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. p.1.

accounted for maybe one tenth of employees in 1960s Germany, but that figure is now around 40% and rising. There is a problem in the way Beck assumes the West is the norm and we may also question whether the “golden era” of capitalism was really that secure for workers in the West in the 1950s. Nevertheless, it is a useful way of bringing home the changes wrought by globalisation and the impact of neoliberalism on the relations of production and the lives of working people.

What Brazilianization might mean is a reversal of Marx’s famous dictum that “The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future”.⁴⁴ Unregulated and informal relations of production and income generation are not “marginal” to capitalist development or simply the dubious privilege of underdevelopment. The World Bank was simply wrong in theory and in practice when it stated that “the informal sector shrinks with development”.⁴⁵ Indeed, we can now posit the emergence of a new global informal working class which, following Davis, “is about one billion strong, making it the fastest-growing, and most unprecedented, social class on earth”.⁴⁶ The great expansion of the informal sector across the global South since the 1980s was accompanied by its emergence in the North as “a stealth workforce for the formal economy”⁴⁷ with the likes of Wal-Mart and other multinationals creating commodity chains reaching deep into the informal sector across the South. What we see today is a pattern beyond the old formal-informal (or North-South) divide, with a continuum of casualization as the global recession continues to impact on the world of work.

Another major characteristic of contemporary labour migration is its so-called *feminisation*. From the 1980s onwards, there was a marked increase worldwide in the number of women entering paid formal employment in many regions. The new international division of labour created an upsurge in female employment in the electronics industry of South Asia and Mexico in particular. In the 1990s, these tendencies increased as export-led industrialisation led to a more profound internationalisation of once peripheral economies. That process – commonly known as globalisation – was based on “global feminisation through flexible labour”.⁴⁸ With the de-regulation of the economy, a retreat

⁴⁴ MARX, K. *Capital Vol. 1*. London: Penguin, 1970. p. 13.

⁴⁵ World Bank. *World Development Report 1995: Workers in a Lean World*. New York: World Bank, 1995. p.35.

⁴⁶ DAVIS. Op.Cit., p.178.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ STANDING, G. “Global Feminization through Flexible Labour”. *World Development*. Vol. 17, n.7, 1989, pp 1077-1095.

of the state from economic offers and flexibility as the new watchword in labour relations, we also saw a profound shift in gender patterns of employment. Inevitably, the gender composition of migration within and between countries changed as well with women accounting for more than half of transnational migration by 2000.

Clearly, there were many variations behind this global trend and there have been counter-tendencies in the years since with men predominating in some migratory flows. In some countries, however, such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka women make up between 60 and 80 per cent of all migrants. As the International Organization for Migration (IOM) notes: “international labour contracts are highly gendered, with women workers being mainly recruited to work in the domestic sector”.⁴⁹ Household structures are changing and “traditional” gender roles are being overturned, particularly in the sending countries. In the receiving countries, this phenomenon has given rise to a new wave of political self-organisation of female migrant domestic workers.⁵⁰ This domain, in particular, has proven fertile ground for new forms of alliances between trade unions, self-organised migrants and a range of support organisations, from which new models are emerging.

An emerging social paradigm we might finally consider is that of the “precariat”, constructed as a hybrid term of a proletariat, subject to precarious working conditions. It is designed to capture the new norm of insecure work and fragile/fragmented life conditions.⁵¹ Precariousness is now the norm in terms of tenure, working conditions, labour rights and, indeed, life itself, for increasing numbers of the world’s workers. Temporary contract workers, undocumented migrant workers but also some of the new “teleworkers” (Information Technology-IT) form part of this new global precariat. Divisions between working people deepen as national, ethnic and gender differences are rearticulated. The feeling of precariousness extends to the once secure core of protected “standard” employment. As Mario Candeais puts it “precarisation is a general process to dismantle and polarise the levels of social rights and standards of

⁴⁹ IOM. *World Migration. Costs and Benefits of International Migration*. Geneva: IOM, 2005. p.110.

⁵⁰ SCHWENKEN, H. “Respect for All: The Political Self Organization of Female Migrant Domestic Workers in the European Union”. *Refuge*. vol. 20, n.3, 2003, p.45-52.

⁵¹ HALL-JONES, Peter. “Precariat Meet’n’Greet”. 2009. <http://newunionism.wordpress.com/2009/11/22/precariat/> Accessed on December 8, 2013.

living”... which creates “a massive insecurity and weakening of individual agency and self-confidence”.⁵²

The term precariat undoubtedly has led to a flourishing of critical social thinking around the contemporary labour condition. It is drawing on existing paradigms of labour and development and has decisively broken with some Eurocentric conceits about its exceptionalism. However, there is still an overwhelming focus on the “new” precariat of the North on the fringes of the IT economy and less on the conditions of the workers in the majority of the world. I would also be wary of statements such as “The precariat is not part of the ‘working class’ or the ‘proletariat’”.⁵³ This seems to imply an essentialist understanding of the proletariat quite alien to the classical Marxist paradigm. It is the European image of the full time permanent male worker that seems to lurk behind this distancing operation. It is well to remember the theoretical and political problems associated with the ill-thought out Marxist category of *lumpen proletariat*⁵⁴ which served in another era to categorise difficult to place workers, but at the cost of theoretical incoherence in terms of workers and their role in the production process and within capitalist relations of production.

The long period of neoliberal globalisation, and its current unwinding under the weight of its own contradictions, has undoubtedly accentuated the insecurity associated with capitalist development. These fissiparous tendencies are now clearly present in the once secure capitalist heartlands of the West when once they were assumed to be an innate “Third

⁵² CANDEIAS, F. “Double precariation of labour: perspectives of expanded (re) appropriation.” 2010, p. 4. <http://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/wgdw_uploads/Double_precariation.pdf> Accessed on December 8, 2013.

⁵³ STANDING, G. *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011. p. 6.

⁵⁴ *Lumpenproletariat* is a term used by Marx to describe those who were on the margins of the working class and who were not productive. They included, for Marx, “swindlers, confidence tricksters, brothel-keepers, rag-and-bone merchants, beggars, and other flotsam of society”. The category represents a theoretical problem for Marxism – much as the “non-historic nation” concept borrowed from Hegel did. The Marxist theory of history and its vision of the unfolding contradictions of capitalism are fatally undermined by both categories. More recently the term of lumpen-proletariat was appropriated by the likes of Frantz Fanon and some of the Black Panthers. As Huey Newton puts it “more and more of the proletariat will become unemployable, become lumpen, until they have become the popular class, the revolutionary”. NEWTON, Huey P. “Speech at Boston College, 18 November 1970”. In: HILLIARD, David and WEISE, Donald, eds. *The Huey P. Newton Reader*. Hilliard and Donald Weise. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002. pp.160-175. For Fanon, the lumpen proletariat was one of the “most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people”. FANON, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1965. p.129. We could consider whether the “precariat” and talk of a new “classé dangereux” is following in the footsteps of this discourse and whether this is an adequate guide to transformation in the complex era of post-globalisation.

World” condition where “marginality”⁵⁵ rather than incorporation prevailed. Yet there is something profoundly Eurocentric in a category which still sees the old proletariat as the norm and now seeks to equate the flexi-time European IT professional with the conditions of the “wretched of the earth” in the South’s mega-cities. There is still a qualitative difference in terms of life chances between those living in the periphery and those in the core capitalist countries, albeit in crisis and with degraded welfare states. In brief, while tendencies towards “precarisation” are undoubtedly global we are a long way from the creation of a new global precariat.

Having examined the recent mutations of capitalism – as an eminently historical mode of production – and its impact on the world of work, the next section turns to the complexity of labour’s reaction. Capitalism does not unfold neatly and logically according to the schemas of the old Marxist-Leninist manuals. Workers, peasants and migrants – and hybrids of all three – have a degree of agency difficult to comprehend from a purely analytical perspective. International political economy – even in its radical versions – has tended to assume a workerless globe. Social movement theory – in the autonomist variant – sees amorphous multitudes, but writes off the organised workers’ movement. Both currents seem oblivious to the political domain as though war, revolution, religion and geo-politics have little impact on society. In the next section, we will foreground politics in seeking to develop a complex political economy of labour for the transitional era we are living in.

⁵⁵ “Marginality” theory developed out of modernization theory in the 1960s but with the early dependency theorists also contributing to the paradigm. While the first focused largely on the “culture of poverty” the latter emphasized the economic dimension. In particular Jose Nun argued that there was a growing separation between a labour elite and the growing marginal mass. The latter, attracted to the city by the prospect of goods, constituted an industrial reserve army of labour driving down wages and creating more poverty. NUN, J. “Superpoblación relativa, ejército industrial de reserva y masa marginal”. *Revista Latinoamericana de Sociología*, n.2, 1969. Empirical research in the 1970s soon disproved this thesis and showed that people were poor through a perverse and asymmetrical inclusion in the new order rather than exclusion. In theoretical terms it was also clear that there were many links between the formal and informal sectors with the latter playing a crucial, not marginal, role in capital accumulation. OLIVEIRA, F. “A Economia Brasileira: Crítica a Razão Dualista”. *Estudos CEBRAP*. n.2, 1972. There were also Fanon-inspired analysis that the “marginal mass” or the shanty towns would act as a new revolutionary vanguard or, from above, the fear that they would be the new “classé dangereux”. Current transformations under the aegis of neoliberalism have revived interest in the marginality problematic. See GONZÁLEZ, G. R. et. al. “From the Marginality of the 1960’s to the ‘New Poverty of today’”. *Latin American Research Review*. Vol. 39, n.1, 2004, pp. 183-187.

Complexity

Globalization, if it did nothing else, brought to the fore complexity as a fundamental basis of critical social theory. For a while, the global was more or less taken for granted, as a nebula “out there” somehow impacting on what we did “down there”. It was seen as a *deus-ex-machina*, something like the weather providing us with sunny skies (the sales pitch) or, more likely, the dark clouds of jobs migrating elsewhere. Rather than conceive of globalization as a unified, unambiguous entity, the complexity approach directs us towards the relationship between structure and process or between a system and its environment.⁵⁶ In relation to the fluid movement of people we call migration, the complexity approach conceives of it as “a series of turbulent waves, with a hierarchy of eddies and vortices, with globalism a virus that stimulates resistance, and the migration system a cascade moving away from any state of equilibrium”.⁵⁷ In terms of the workers movement, a complexity approach would direct us towards the uneven and combined nature of capitalist development and the need for a multi-scalar⁵⁸ labour strategy.

The main institutional response to the precarisation of work on a global scale has been the Decent Work Campaign of the ILO (International Labour Organisation) founded in 1919 to promote labour standards designed for varying national systems of production. These were designed to assist in regulating national labour markets and offer protection for employees assumed to be in stable full-time employment and comprised predominantly of male workers. There was also an assumption made that the Western European model of “social partnership” was universal. This was a labour policy for the Keynesian era based on built in full employment and the

⁵⁶ URRY, J. *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

⁵⁷ Papastergiadis cited by Urry. *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁵⁸ The “multi-scalar approach” to global labour studies emerged out of geography in the 1980s. Delaney and Leitner have defined scale as “the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size and as the local, national and global”. DELANEY, D and LEITNER, F. (1997) “The social construction of scale”. *Political Geography*. 16, 1997, pp.93-97. The social and political construction of spatiality is seen as a mayor contribution to an understanding of the complexity of globalisation. Scale categories should not however, be taken as ontological givens but as social constructions. In particular, one scale (for example the “local”) should not be granted privilege or seen as more socially and environmentally “correct”. Andy Herod’s work on the scale politics of labour restructuring in the US shed light on how labour movements relate to the politics of scale. Technological change in the ports during the 1960s and inter-union rivalries led the longshoremen to shift from a regional to a national bargaining strategy. Since then a multi-disciplinary approach to the social-spatial dialectic of labour formation and resistance has produced the start of a new paradigm. See HEROD, A. *Labour Geographies. Workers and the landscapes of Capitalism*. Guildford: Guildford University Press, 2011 and MCGRATH-CHAMP, HEROD and RAINNIE, eds. *Handbook of Employment and Society: Working Space*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010.

efficacy of macro-economic policy management. In the very different global order of the 1990s – after the collapse of Keynesianism, the death of full employment and the crisis of “competitiveness” – the ILO launched the Decent Work Campaign as a response to the global labour predicament. It was a step back from historic labour directives and posed a vague aspiration to “humanize” globalisation through a non-ideological set of aspirations.

However, the world today is not the world of 1919 or even that of 1969 when the ILO received the Nobel Peace Prize. As Guy Standing puts it, “the ILO was set up as a means of legitimizing labourism, a system of employer-employee relations based on the standard employment relationship, and a means of taking labour out of international trade”.⁵⁹ Tripartite labour relations are hardly the dominant model today: the “standard” employment relationship survives only in small pockets, and labour is treated very clearly as a commodity on the global labour market. It seems utopian to posit a capital-state-labour tripartite alliance in today’s crisis to create “decent work” for all. It would appear to be more part of the recent move by international financial institutions to create a so-called Post Washington Consensus designed to overcome the contradictions of the raw neoliberal model. For the international trade unions to invest energy in this campaign might seem futile from a worker perspective, although it may well form part of the system of political alliances that the union leaderships need to forge.

Critical social thinking – cognisant of complexity – might direct us elsewhere to develop a workers’ strategy and revert the currently subaltern states of labour. A useful starting point might still be the so-called law of uneven and combined development⁶⁰ that was first developed by Trotsky in the context of the Russian Revolution. Following Lenin’s understanding that capitalism always developed unevenly across space, he added the proviso

⁵⁹ STANDING, G. “The ILO: An Agency for Globalization?” *Development and Change*. vol. 39, n.3, 2008, pp 355-394.

⁶⁰ “Uneven and combined development” was a theoretical concept developed by Leon Trotsky to account for the particular development characteristics of pre-revolutionary Russia. Against the orthodox Marxists of the Second International, Trotsky was to show that revolution in a backward country was possible. Capitalism brought together under one system countries with very uneven levels of development. This not only speeded up the pace of development but also gave the backward country access to the highest levels of technology available worldwide. For Trotsky, the law of combined development means that “there is rapprochement of different stages of the journey, a combination of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with the most contemporary forms”. TROTSKY, L. *The History of the Russian Revolution*. London: Pathfinder, 1970. In Russia, state and capital came into contact with the most advanced counterparts globally. The proletariat could also advance exponentially and be in a condition to lead a socialist revolution rather than wait for a democratic revolution and full industrialization to proceed. Currently this theory is showing a revival as part of the effort to create a Marxist theory of international relations.

that it was also “combined” in one world system. Imperialism, for Trotsky, “links up incomparably more rapidly and more deeply the individual national and continental units into a single entity”.⁶¹ Thus, a country like Russia at the start of the 20th century could present an amalgam of archaic production systems alongside the most contemporary forms. It also meant that the Russian proletariat could “skip stages” and begin the construction of socialism without having to go through the development of capitalism. In one stroke, Trotsky surpassed the dominant evolutionary perspective of both Second and Third International Marxism, which also of course underpinned mainstream modernization theory in the 1950s.

More recently, critical social theory has added a much needed spatial dimension to its analysis of the political economy of labour. The notion of “scales” emerged in the 1990s to challenge the traditional understandings of political and social processes. Globalisation had not produced a flat world and the local, national and regional scales of human activity were vital. The labour movement clearly operates at a local, national, sub-regional, regional, sub global and global levels through different organisational forms ranging from international trade union confederations to local union branches. These scales are not to be seen as a hierarchy and many false debates around “think global” or “act local” were now superseded.⁶² What is clear is that workers organisations need to “make connections” across the scales. All trade unionists, for example, now agree that the global context is crucial whatever national or nationalist orientation they might have. Also, and vital for strategy, the same way countries can “skip stages”, workers are now able to “skip scales”, thus for example moving from a local struggle straight to the global level.

In this complex capitalist world, not reducible to unilinear evolution, trade unions also evolved through a variable geometry taking different shapes across time and space. Trade unions emerged as collective organisations representing the economic (or workplace) interests of workers. Perry Anderson once wrote that “trade unions are essentially a *defacto* representation of the working class at its workplace”⁶³ reflecting the capitalist division of labour as a given. The development of political unionism reflected the rise of the socialist and communist parties seeking to harness workers for their political projects. Later political unionism reflected the nationalist politics of the anti-imperialist movements. Workers would seek advancement through the benign influence of the state. More

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁶² HEROD. *Op.Cit.*

⁶³ ANDERSON, P. “The limits and possibilities of trade union action”. In: CLARKE, T. and CLEMENTS, L. eds., *Trade Unions under Capitalism*. London: Fontana, 1977. p. 335.

recently – in the context of an industrializing periphery – we have seen the emergence of a social movement unionism.⁶⁴ Trade unions, from that perspective, needed to engage with workers' lives outside the workplace and in the context of a state that was not permeable. Thus, trade unions might articulate wider community demands and forge close links with community organisations of various types. The uneven and combined development of the working class across time and space has brought economic, political and social unionism to the fore in varying combinations. It is this variable geometry that needs to be examined concretely and not taken for granted.

South Africa provides a rich experience in terms of the repertoires of trade union activity. Both political and social unionisms were deployed in the development of independent black unions in the 1980s. Epithets flew back and forth about “economism” (the “workerist” tendency to emphasize the workplace issues), “populism” (against those who prioritised the wider anti-apartheid movement) and social unionism found its role through community boycotts of workplaces in struggles and through the so-called “stayaways”.⁶⁵ In the post-apartheid period since 1994, the powerful Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) has found itself torn between its political role as a partner in the African National Congress government and its role representing its members' economic interests.⁶⁶ The divide between production politics and state politics at times seems acute. Another divide is that between the organised working class and the growing precarious migrant workforce. Here we have only seen the odd glimmer – or to be precise conference declarations – of the 1980s social unionism which

⁶⁴ “Social movement unionism” was a term developed by the new international labour studies in the 1970s reflecting radical labour practices in Brazil, South Africa and, for some, the Philippines. See SEIDMAN, G. *Manufacturing Militancy: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa*. Berkeley: California University Press, 1994. In the early manifestations, it reflected a critique of mainstream industrial relations theory influenced by English social history (E.P. Thompson). It also reflected a left critique of nationalist or state oriented unions, common then in both Africa and Latin America. It was only much later that it became codified as a strategy for the trade unions, notable by Kim Moody and his call for a “global social movement unionism”. MOODY, K. *Workers in a lean World: Unions in the International Economy*. London: Verso, 1997. Today it is a term used quite widely by trade unions in the North and South to express a wish for a more “social movement” type of orientation. WATERMAN, P. “Social-Movement Unionism: A New Union Model for a New World Order”. *Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1993. In that sense, it reflects the influence of “new” alter-globalization and global justice movements on the organised labour movement in trade unions.

⁶⁵ WEBSTER, E and LAMBERT, R. “The Re-Emergence of Political Unionism in Contemporary South Africa”. In: COBBETT, W. and COHEN, R., eds., *Popular Struggles in South Africa*. London: Currey, 1988.

⁶⁶ PILLAY, D. “Working class politics in South Africa: the return of social movement unionism?” *Labour, Capital and Society*. N.44, 2012.

played a vital role in forging a national-popular collective will against apartheid.

In Latin America – at a similar time and context – social unionism developed as a response to authoritarian military regimes and “savage capitalist” development. In Brazil this was most notable with the new unionism of the 1980s forging links with Church and community groups and then going to form the Workers’ Party. Neoliberal restructuring weakened these and other labour formation in the 1990s. Since then, however, there has been a marked resurgence of labour with both vertical (from national to regional to city levels) and horizontal (across sectors and wider social struggles) links becoming a feature at least in Brazil and the Southern Cone Countries.⁶⁷ Another political current to emerge in this period was that based on “autonomism”⁶⁸ represented most visibly by the Zapatistas in Mexico and to a lesser extent, the *piqueteros* of Argentina. With its Nietzschean belief in a “multitude” beyond politics this current has ultimately marginalised itself. Elsewhere in the Andean countries (Bolivia and Ecuador), trade unions and indigenous movements have built political articulations with a revitalized left to seize state power and begin a serious process of social transformation.

Meanwhile, in the heartlands of advanced capitalism, the impact of neoliberalism – with both the “export” of jobs and the “import” of foreign workers – led to the emergence of a new or perhaps, re-invented “community unionism”.⁶⁹ In the U.S., the mainstream AFL-CLO went

⁶⁷ FERNANDEZ, A. ed., *Estados y Sindicatos En Perspectiva Latinoamericana*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2007.

⁶⁸ “Autonomism” was a far-left political current organisation in Italy during the late 1960s from the workerist (Operaismo) wing of communism. Its main characteristic was a belief that the working class was, or could be, an autonomous agent of social transformation, independent of the state, trade unions and political parties. It also moved attention away from the rationalized labour movement repertoire of strikes and marches to emphasize more diffuse forms of working class resistance such as absenteeism and go-slow. Through the concept of “social labour” the Italian autonomists (Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, Antonio Negri et al) extended the traditional Marxist concept of the working class. Autonomist feminists (Mariarosa Dalla Costa) further extended the concept by incorporating unpaid female domestic labour into the category of work. Through Antonio Negri’s current work and in a more general and diffuse manner the autonomist current influences current labour studies, not least in relation to emergence of a precariat.

⁶⁹ “Community unionism” is the term given in both the US and the UK to recent trade union practices of engaging with various community actors. While it has historical roots in labour movement practices, it is deemed particularly suitable for a period of labour market fragmentation and of polarisation within and between communities. Union-Community links can be short-term or longer term strategic alliances. One modality is represented by the Workers Rights Centres in the US often focused on the needs of migrant workers. These relationships can sometimes be fraught with community organisations (e.g. migrants) seeing the trade union movement as representative of a “labour aristocracy” while trade unions may view community organisations as unelected and unrepresentative and

through a leadership transformation which took it beyond the “business unionism” it was once characterised by and previously unthinkable alliances with Latin American workers ensued. Up and down the country local and national unions forged alliances with migrant workers’ organisations giving rise to the workers’ centres.⁷⁰ There was also an older U.S tradition of rank and file activity to call upon, such as the campaign for “union cities”.⁷¹ In the U.K., a strongly labourist trade union movement began to sporadically explore alliances with migrant worker’s associations and the often faith based movements which supported these.⁷² There also “community unionism” was the term which came to the fore to describe what was basically the social unionism we described above, building on (not necessarily superseding) the “bread and butter” economic unionism and the political unionism in support of the Labour Party.

This is not the place to draw facile conclusions: clearly the whole tenor of my argument is to present issues for debate. In many social and political arenas these and similar debates are being played out in practice. Their outcome is necessarily uncertain. In terms of the challenges posed at the start, I have sketched out a possible answer based on real social struggles and an open critical theory. Existing labour strategies, based on old models and a moribund Eurocentrism, will almost certainly fail to deliver in their objectives. The current global turmoil is throwing up an existential crisis for global capitalism as we know it and a serious challenge

unaccountable. Nevertheless many long-term “community unionism” experiences have proven transformative for the trade unions who tend to acquire a more complex and broader notion of the world of work and the means to advance the workers’ movement. See MCBRIDE, J and GREENWOOD, I. eds., *Community Unionism. A Comparative Analysis of Concepts and Contexts*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 and MILKMAN, R. “Immigrant Workers, Precarious Work and the US”.In: MUNCK, R. SCIERUP, C and DELGADO WISE, R. eds., *Migration, Work and Citizenship in the New Global Order*. London: Routledge, 2011.

⁷⁰ See FINE, J. “Community Unions and the Revival of the American Labor Movement”. *Politics and Society*. vol. 33, n.1, 2005, pp.153-199.

⁷¹ “Union cities” are old/new forms of trade union operations at a city level, particularly common in the US and the UK. They are territorial (rather than workplace) expressions of trade union power and politics. In the US there are central labour Councils in most cities while in the UK they are called Trades Councils. They are the local expression of the national trade union bodies, the AFI-CLO and TUC respectively. Most often these bodies are weak and focus on routine local politics mainstreaming good links with local business leaders. However, they occasionally burst into action as the Milwaukee County Labour Council did in the 1990s through a leadership which was close to the civil rights movement and began to act as a serious counterweight to local business. With government powers now being devoted to local growth authorities, and city level urban growth coalitions forming the time is ripe for a revival of this territorial expression of the labour movement. They are now part of the broader movement creating “street heat” over the unfolding economic crisis.

⁷² *Op.Cit.*

for the subaltern classes and nations. The precarisation of labour is but one strand of a complex mutation of capitalism now underway. Thus, trade unions will need to engage with the political economy of labour migration as we have argued, but also with a much wider range of dramatic events including war and revolution.

Working-Class Historiography in France, Italy and Spain: A Comparative Study (1939/45-1982)

Roberto Ceamanos Llorens¹

The immediate post-war period: the Spanish wasteland versus the French and Italian evolution

While the end of the Second World War saw the recuperation of freedom in Italy and France, the result of the Civil War in Spain was the beginning of a lengthy dictatorship. These circumstances were decisive in the development of the historiography of the working class in these countries. In Spain, the history of the working class was the work of the victors.² From abroad, exiles and anti-Franco sympathisers wrote different works favouring the anarchist movement and, to a lesser extent, socialism.³ The French university world sympathized with this historiography of exile

¹ Researcher, Project: “Transitions from dictatorships to democracies in Portugal, Greece and Spain (1969-1982): a comparative analysis (Transición de las dictaduras a las democracias en Portugal, Grecia y España (1969-1982): un análisis comparado”) (Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad de España, 2013-2015). Investigation Group: History of Spain in the Twentieth Century: society, politics and culture” (Historia de España en el siglo XX: sociedad, política y cultura) (Gobierno de Aragón/Fondo Social Europeo, 2011-2013).

² GARCIA, Maximiano. *Historia de las Internacionales obreras*. Madrid: Ed. del Movimiento, 1956-1957; and *Historia de los movimientos sindicales españoles*. Madrid: Ed. del Movimiento, 1961. COMIN, Eduardo. *Historia del anarquismo español*. Barcelona: AHR, 1956; and *Historia del Partido Comunista de España*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1967. PASAMAR, Gonzalo. *Historiografía e ideología en la postguerra española: la ruptura de la tradición liberal*. Zaragoza: PUZ, 1991. CASANOVA, Julián. “El secano español revisitado”. In: *La historia social y los historiadores*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2003. pp. 7-35.

³ DEL ROSAL, Amaro. *Los congresos obreros internacionales en el s. XIX*. México: Grijalbo, 1958; and *Los congresos obreros internacionales en el s. XX*, México: Grijalbo, 1963. PEIRATS, José. *La CNT en la revolución española*. Toulouse: CNT, 1951-1953. ABAD de SANTILLÁN, Diego. *Contribución a la Historia del Movimiento Obrero Español*. Puebla: Cajica, 1962-1971. French writers: LAMBERET, Renée. *Mouvements ouvriers et socialistes. Chronologie et bibliographie. L'Espagne (1750-1936)*. Paris: Ed. Ouvrières, 1953; and LEVAL, Gastón. *Espagne libertaire, 1936-1939*. Paris: Cercle, 1971.

due to its opposition to Francoism, but considered it to be unscientific and written from beyond the academic world – a situation that the historiography of the French working classes was beginning to overcome at the time. In fact, in the post-Liberation period, the French working-class historiography regained the direction interrupted by the Nazi Occupation at the beginning of the Second World War.

Those specialists working prior to the war – writers such as Maurice Dommanget (a biographer of nineteenth century socialism) and Georges Bourgin (a specialist on the Commune) – were in the twilight of their careers at this moment. They were joined by a new generation born at the beginning of the century represented by the Socialist Georges Lefranc and the Communist Jean Bruhat. This was a historiography essentially centred on the French situation; for European history they turned to the *Histoire du socialisme européen* by Élie Halévy. These were histories written with political ends with the various sensibilities of the workers' movement being represented. Thus, *Histoire du Mouvement ouvrier français* by Édouard Dolléans (a reference point for decades) defended the autonomy of French socialism against the interference of Soviet Bolshevism. The work of these historians increased the prominence of working-class historiography, but did not remove it from the narrow realms of authors who were primarily militants in various wings of the workers' movement.

This historiography began to enter the French university system via a gradual process initiated by Jean Maitron. Accompanied by a notable range of historians of the working-class movement, Maitron took the first steps to institutionalising working-class historiography. In 1949, he founded the *Institut Français d'Histoire Sociale*, a centre where archives were kept and as well as a space for research and reflection though it was barely connected to other historiographies. One of his contacts was the Italian Giuseppe Del Bo. This institute had a modest bulletin where they published their research entitled *L'Actualité de l'Histoire* (1953-1960).⁴

⁴ HALÉVY, E. *Histoire du socialisme européen*. Paris: Gallimard, 1948. DOLLÉANS, E. *Histoire du Mouvement ouvrier français*. Paris: Colin, 1936-1953. DEL BO, G. "La Bibliothèque Feltrinelli". *L'Actualité de l'Histoire*. 6, 1954. pp. 46-48. CEAMANOS, R. *De la historia del movimiento obrero a la historia social. L'Actualité de l'Histoire (1951-1960) and Le Mouvement Social (1960-2000)*. Zaragoza: PUZ, 2004; and *Militancia y Universidad. La construcción de la historia obrera en Francia*. Valencia: Instituto de Historia Social-UNED, 2005.

Some of these characteristics can also be found in the Italian working-class historiography of the time: the predominance of the workers' movement, little connection to the outside world and militant in nature although in the Italian case, the Marxist influence was greater. However, this proximity to Marxism on the part of the Italian historians was more political than methodological. They maintained the idealistic historicism of their masters and wrote militant histories in line with the political culture of their authors based on an analysis of sources within a local framework.⁵ There was no lack of debate in these histories, such as that arising from the work of Rosario Romeo on the *Risorgimento* that tilted against the *gramsciana* tradition and opposed the idea of the "failed agrarian revolution". This historiography began to research the origins of Italian socialism through scientific studies – the preparation and study of sources and publication of works – on the history of the working-class movement. This task was supported by the *Movimento operaio* (1949-1956), a publication that gathered together local monographs that served to debate frameworks for general explanations.⁶

This historiography is characterised by the mark left by the French (FCP) and Italian Communist Parties (ICP) who – having become important players in politics and culture – capitalised on the writing of history. Faced with the writings of those Communists opposed to Stalinism such as Boris Souvaine and Angelo Tasca, the historiography linked to these parties was initially hegemonic. The FCP depicted their official history in the *Manuel d'histoire du PCF*. This simplified process connected the French Revolution with October 1917 and favoured the glory days of Communism, leaving the dark periods to the side. In their official historiography, the ICP also showed a disinterest in the early years under the leadership of Bordiga and the relationship with the Komintern while extolling the fight against the Fascists

⁵ Ex., LURAGHI, R. *Il movimento operaio torinese durante la Resistenza*. Torino: Einaudi, 1958. VITTORIA, Albertina. *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. Storia dell'Istituto Gramsci negli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta*. Roma: Riuniti, 1992. p. 46.

⁶ ROMEO, R. *El Risorgimento in Sicilia*, 1950; *Risorgimento e capitalismo*. Bari, 1959; and *Breve storia della grande industria in Italia 1861-1961*. Bologna: Capella, 1963. The bibliographical analysis by Luigi Bulferetti showed the tasks remaining: BULFERRETTI, L. *Introduzione alla storiografia socialista in Italia*. Firenze: Olschki, 1949. A decade later, Leo Valiani offered the abundant work undertaken: VALIANI, L. *Questioni di storia del socialismo*. Torino: Einaudi, 1958. ZANGHERI, R. "Gli studi storici sul movimento operaio italiano dal 1944 al 1950". *Società*, XII, 1951. pp. 308-347; and CECCHI, Ottavio. ed. *La ricerca storica marxista in Italia*. Roma: Riuniti, 1974. Representative works from this period: CONTI, Elio. *Le origini del socialismo a Firenze (1860-1880)*. Roma: Rinascita, 1950; MANACORDA, Gastone. *Il movimento operaio italiano attraverso i suoi congressi (1853-1892)*. Roma: Riuniti, 1953; RAGIONIERI, E. *Storia di un comune socialista. Sesto Fiorentino*. Roma: Rinascita, 1953; and ROMANO, Aldo. *Storia del movimento socialista in Italia*. Milano: Fratelli Bocca, 1954-1956.

and the post-war democratic strategy. Both parties favoured a historical interpretation that provided them with national legitimacy. In the Italian case, this fed on readings of Antonio Gramsci; those aspects that did not coincide with the official interpretation were eliminated.⁷ Likewise, in the Italian case, notable work was undertaken by the *Fondazione Antonio Gramsci* (1948) and the publication *Studi Storici* (1959) which showed a special sensibility for the working-class movement, aiming to compare it with other historiographical models.⁸ Under the aegis of the ICP, courses in history were published for their schools: texts about their origins, memoirs of militants, a special edition of *Rinascita* (a systematic attempt at an official history), a “popular” biography of Gramsci and another by Togliatti that was almost an autobiography where he presented his interpretation of the history of the party.⁹

The burden of political militancy on the writing of history began to decline at the end of the 1950s. The beginning of this change is usually given as 1955-1956 both for external reasons (Khrushchev’s report to the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the repression of the Hungarian Revolt) and internal ones among Italian historians. Among these must be highlighted the crisis in the magazine *Movimento operaio* motivated by the need to surpass the history of the origins of the working-class movement. It wished to make progress in the study of working class, union and political cultures, as well as change from being strictly local in order to cover the national and international situation. There was also a social and economic historiography running in parallel to the history of workers’ organizations that should not be forgotten, as well as a whole world of historiography from beyond Italian borders.¹⁰ Although

⁷ SOUVARINE, B. *Staline. Aperçu historique du bolchevisme*. Paris: Plon 1935; TASCIA, A. *I primi dieci anni di vita del PCI*. Bari: Laterza, 1973; Commission d’Histoire du PCF. *Manuel d’histoire du PCF*. Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1964. GRAMSCI, A. *Lettere dal carcere*. Torino: Einaudi, 1947; and *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Felice Platone. Torino: Einaudi, 1948-1951. Important for this latter, the critical edition by GERRATANA, Valentino (Torino: Einaudi, 1975, 2007). BOCCA, Giorgio. *Palmiro Togliatti*. Bari: Laterza, 1977, vol. II. p. 633.

⁸ www.fondazionegramsci.org. MANACORDA, G. “Nascita di una rivista di tendenza”. In: *Il movimento reale e la coscienza inquieta*. Milano: Angeli, 1992. p. 295.

⁹ CORTESI, L. introd. Tascia, A. *I primi dieci anni di vita del PCI*. Bari: Laterza, 1973; CARACCILO, A. and SCALIA, G. eds. *La città futura. Saggi sulla figura e il pensiero di Antonio Gramsci*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1959; MONTAGNAGNA, Mario. *Memorie di un operaio torinese*. Rome: Rinascita, 1949; TOGLIATTI, P. ed. *Quaderni di Rinascita. Trenta anni di vita e lotte del PCI* (1952). LOMBARDO, Lucio and CARBONI, Giuseppe. *Vita di Antonio Gramsci*. Rome: Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, 1951. FERRARA, Marcella and Mauricio. *Conversando con Togliatti*. Rome: Edizioni di Cultura Sociale, 1953.

¹⁰ GROppo, Bruno and RICCAMBONI, Gianni. dir. *La sinistra e il ’56 in Italia e in Francia*. Padoue: Liviana, 1987. Debates on *Movimento operaio*: ARFE, G. “La lunga

some inertia was maintained through these studies of the politicization and origins of the workers' movement, there was excessive attention to leaders and congresses, few studies of the social context and scarcely any methodological reflection. Henceforth, the international sphere was favoured and interest grew in foreign historiography, a process aided by the work of institutes such as *Feltrinelli* and the *Basso Foundation* and new publications including *Movimento operaio e socialista* (1955), *Annali del Istituto Feltrinelli* (1958) and *Rivista storica del socialismo* (1958).¹¹

New directions, relationships, and Spanish convergence

The 1960s and 1970s saw periods of renovation in the French and Italian historiographies of the working class that – aided by the increase in university positions and the decentralisation of the university system – saw them begin to be consolidated professionally. In France, the work of *Le Mouvement Social* (1960) was fundamental – favoured by the *Centre d'Histoire du Syndicalisme* (1966) – in surpassing the hegemony of the history of the working-class movement, consolidating its cross-disciplinary nature and pushing the boundaries of history through to the present time. To the preceding publication, the *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier Français* may be added: this was an ambitious project that had an influence on similar projects – an Italian biographical dictionary – and was the reason behind the transition from biography to prosopography.¹² Some of the main characters in these projects dedicated their doctoral theses to working-class history, thus strengthening its university-based nature. Some tackled the working-class movement, such as Claude Willard who studied “guesdisme”, but others went further. Rolande Treppe researched the change in the figure of the peasant to that of the miner and showed how the creation of the French working class was the result of a progressive and

resistenza del compagno Bosio” and BERMANI, C. “Libertario perché marxista”. *Mondoperaio* XXV, 1 (1972). pp. 20-23 and pp. 29-36; PIRO, F. “Bosio e l’esperienza di *Movimento operaio*. *Mondoperaio*. XXXIII, 3, 1980. pp. 120-126; and MERLI, S. *L’altra storia: Bosio, Montaldi e le origini della nuova sinistra*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977.

¹¹ SPRIANO, P. *Socialismo e classe operaia a Torino dal 1892 a 1913*. Torino: Einaudi, 1958; RAGIONIERI, E. *Socialdemocrazia tedesca e socialisti italiani*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961; and MASELLA, L. *Passato e presente nel dibattito storiografico italiano: storici marxista e mutamento della società italiana (1955-1970)*. Bari: De Donato, 1979.

¹² <http://biosoc.univ-paris1.fr/> MAITRON, J. and PENNETIER, Cl. dirs. *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier Français*. Paris: Ed. de l’Atelier, 1997. ANDREUCCI, Franco and DETTI, Tommaso. dirs. *Il movimento operaio italiano. Dizionario biografico, 1853-1943*. Roma: Riuniti, 1975-1979. CEAMANOS, R. “De la biografía a la prosopografía: el *Dictionnaire Biographique du Mouvement Ouvrier Français*”. *Ayer*, 56, 2004. pp. 245-267.

complex process. Michelle Perrot undertook a detailed study of the strike, the principal means of pressure and expression through which the workers transformed themselves into mindful wage-earners. Lastly, Yves Lequin revealed a model of industrialization that emerged from the rural world, with workers accepting industry so long as it could be controlled by them. However, the turn-of-the-century crisis affected domestic production methods and production was reorganized into large industrial establishments where a new class was forged in which the corporate spirit of trades was redrawn in favour of the notion of the wage-earning working man. He researched their working and living conditions and how their collective fight reinforced group awareness that favoured their participation in politics, split between republican integration and revolutionary breakaway.¹³

The history of the organized movement continued to benefit from commemorations such as the centenary of the Commune (1971) and, in particular, from the development of a historiography of Communism, introduced into the university system through a thesis by Annie Kriegel that concluded that the FCP was the result of the grafting of Soviet Bolshevism onto the French left-wing.¹⁴ However, influenced by the context of social transformation in May 1968, the fall of orthodox Marxism and the rise of the “Nouvelle Histoire”, French working-class historiography moved towards a history interested in the whole of the working class world supported by cross-disciplinary studies. A good example of this lies in the thesis by Patrick Fridenson on Renault. Blending social, economic and technical history with political sciences and social sciences of the workplace, he analysed the transformations in working conditions, company policy, working class and employers’ organisations, and the mentality of the French resulting from the automobile industry. Other fruitful encounters in working-class history took place in cultural history: history “from below” sparked interest in a working-class culture that had not broken away from its peasant and artisanal past, but which developed among an atmosphere of exploitation and fighting for rights. Moreover, historians began to study the history of women who suffered from the chauvinism of the society as a

¹³ WILLARD, Cl. *Les guesdistes*. Paris: Ed. Sociales, 1965. TREMPÉ, R. *Les mineurs de Carmaux. 1848-1914*. Paris: Ed. Ouvrières, 1971. PERROT, M. *Les ouvriers en grève (France, 1871-1890)*. Paris: Mouton, 1974. LEQUIN, Y. *Les ouvriers de la région lyonnaise dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle (1848-1914)*. Lyon: PUL, 1977.

¹⁴ KRIEGEL, A. *Aux origines du Communisme français (1914-1920)*. Paris: Mouton, 1964. CEAMANOS, R.: “Historia social de la Comuna de 1871: ¿crepúsculo del ciclo revolucionario iniciado en 1789 o aurora de la revolución proletaria?”. *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*. n.26, 2004. pp. 197-208 and “La historiografía francesa sobre el PCF. Controversias científicas y polémicas (1964-2010)”. *Historia del Presente*. 2010.

whole, paying attention to the work, behaviour and problems of women and their connections to the larger working-class movement. Alain Touraine analyzed the fall of the working-class movement and the rise of the new social movements from a sociological point of view. The class conflict typical of an industrial society had disappeared. In post-industrial society, the objective was to improve health, education, culture and the unrestricted development of one's personality. The workers as a social class passed into history and their evolution was covered in the *L'ouvrier français* trilogy by Michel Verret.¹⁵

Aware of the need to obtain a comprehensive overview of working-class history, Italian historians strengthened their contacts with other historiographies. They disseminated the debates around the works of Eric J. Hobsbawm and Edward P. Thompson in Great Britain and Rolande Treppe and Michelle Perrot in France that questioned the traditional way of writing the history of the working classes. The reflections of the British Marxists on working-class culture and the importance of day-to-day experiences in the forging of a common identity were received as signs of cultural and methodological vitality.¹⁶ The French historiography of the working class became known in Italy through the translation of the *Histoire générale du Socialisme* (under the aegis of Jacques Droz) and the diffusion of French theses on working-class history.¹⁷ Italy experienced a period of social transformation to which must be added an ideological context characterized by the dissatisfaction of workers and students with the actions of the ICP and the rise of alternative movements, which reached a peak with the "movimento '77". In that same year, 1977, Georges Haupt – a member of the *Groupe de travail international sur l'histoire sociale moderne et*

¹⁵ FRIDENSEN, P. *Histoire des usines Renault*. Paris: Seuil, 1972. REBÉRIOUX, M. dir. *Critique littéraire et Socialisme au tournant du siècle. Le Mouvement Social*. n. 59, 1967 and *Culture et militantisme en France: de la Belle Époque au Front Populaire. Le Mouvement Social*. n. 91, 1975 ; PERROT, M. dir. *Travaux des femmes dans la France du XIXe siècle. Le Mouvement Social*. n.105, 1978. CEAMANOS, R. "La historia obrera: una línea de investigación pionera de la *histoire des femmes*". *Clepsydra*. n.4, 2005. pp. 113-126; TOURAINE, A. *La société post-industrielle*. Paris: SNEG, 1969; VERRET, M. *L'espace ouvrier*. Paris: A. Colin, 1979; *Le travail ouvrier*. Paris: A. Colin, 1982; and *La culture ouvrier*. Saint-Sébastien-sur-Loire: ACL, 1988.

¹⁶ HOBBSAWM, E.J. "Per lo studio delle classi subalterne". *Società*. XVI, 1960. pp. 436-449; "Dalla storia sociale alla storia della società". *Quaderni Storici*. v.22, 1973. pp. 49-86; and *Lavoro, cultura e mentalità nella società industriale*. Laterza: Roma-Bari, 1986. THOMPSON, E.P. *Rivoluzione industriale e classe operaia in Inghilterra*. Milano: Il Saggiatore, 1969; and "Alcune osservazioni su classe e «coscienza di classe»". *Quaderni storici*. v. 36, 1977. pp. 900-908. "Un' intervista a E.P. Thompson: per un dibattito sulla storia sociale del movimento operaio". *Movimento operaio e socialista*. Vol. 1-2, 1978. pp. 77-101.

¹⁷ DROZ, J. dir. *Storia del socialismo*. Roma: Riuniti, 1974-1981.

contemporaine at the *Maison des sciences de l'homme de Paris* – contacted Lelio Basso of the *Fondazione Basso-Issoco* to organize a series of meetings to which leading figures in the writing of French working-class history – Perrot, Trespé, Lequin and Madeleine Rebérioux – were invited. The objective was to link the history of the working-class movement to a wider social history. In a seminar entitled “Storia sociale e storia del movimento operaio” (Roma, 1978), Trespé stressed the importance of recovering the day-to-day experiences, the mentality and, above all, the culture of the working class; a year later, during a seminar entitled “Cultura operaia e disciplina industriale” – featuring the participation of Edward and Dorothy Thompson – this theoretical reflection emphasized the transformations in working-class culture and fostered the founding of *Memoria* (1981), which was an innovative reference point for feminism that – starting from the teachings of Franca Pieroni Bortolotti – aimed to retrace the memory of Italian women.¹⁸

Starting from the collective bases mentioned above and new works such as *Quaderni storici* (1966), these Italian historians set out to have a written version of working-class history that maintained a dialogue with the social sciences, updated the methodology (oral history and micro-history) and expanded the field of historical research to the creation of the working class, its fabric, relations with capital, private lives, organization of free time and connections between the world of the family and associative life through the influence of the work of Maurice Agulhon.¹⁹ The pioneering writings by Stefano Merli comprised an essential contribution to a history concerned with the development of capitalism and the living and working conditions of the working class. Later, Franco Ramella studied the process of the creation of the working class from the transition of community and

¹⁸ SALVATI, Mariuccia. ed. *Storia Sociale e storia del movimento operaio. Annali della Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso-Issoco*. IV, 1979-1980 and *Cultura operaia e disciplina industriale. Annali della Fondazione Lelio e Lisli Basso-Issoco*. VI, 1982; BORTOLOTTI, Pieroni. *Alle origine del movimento femminile in Italia (1849-1882)*. Torino: Einaudi, 1963.

¹⁹ British oral history was collected in THOMPSON, P. “Storia orale e storia della classe operaia”. *Quaderni Storici*. v. 35, 1977. pp. 403-432. For critical use of oral sources, see PASSERINI, Luisa. *Storia orale. Vita quotidiana e cultura materiale delle classi subalterne*. Torino: Rosenberg/Sellier, 1978 and *Torino operaia e il fascismo. Una storia orale*. Roma: Laterza, 1984; LANZARDO, Liliana. *Classe operaia e partito comunista alla Fiat*. Torino: Einaudi, 1971; MERIGGI, M.G. “Note in margine all’attuale dibattito storiografico”. *Classe*. vol. 18, 1980. pp. 15-22. GEMELLI, Giuliana and MALATESTA, Maria. eds. *Forme di sociabilità nella storiografia contemporanea francese*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1982. His influence led to works such as PIVATO, Stefano. *Pane e gramática. L’istruzione elementare in Romagna alla fine dell’Ottocento*. Milano: Angeli, 1983.

rural relationships to those in the world of the factory in Piedmont.²⁰ This renovation also happened in the historiography of the ICP: there were criticisms of the strict identification of class and the workers' movement, a detailed examination of the post-1945 period, comparisons between the two great Western European Communist Parties (FCP and ICP) and the renewing of viewpoints by political scientists and sociologists interested in the mechanics of the creation of leaders and recruitment of militants as well as in the links between the Party and the political, social and cultural arena that it inhabited.²¹

While the French and Italian historiographies of the working class advanced along these lines, Spanish historiography slowly began to take off in the late sixties. In conditions that were difficult due to the controls imposed by the dictatorship, historians with Marxist sympathies wrote a history that was committed to the fight against Franco and centred on the working class movement – a model that was being updated in France and Italy. At this point, criticisms arose of this conventional historiography. Closely linked to the social changes experienced – which saw other social sectors gain greater influence and other types of mobilization – Spanish historians discovered new angles that were successful in western historiographies. History writing would have to become depoliticized, the automatic representation of the worker by class organisations questioned, an overview of the history of workers given priority – working conditions, day-to-day life, mentality and culture – and contact with foreign historiographies increased. To achieve this, it was necessary to accurately define concepts, a process that required the collaboration of the social sciences. Along these lines, historians began to write working-class histories that were less politically militant and more academic. They formed specialized associations and publications that – as in the Italian and French cases – consolidated the scientific nature of working-class history, gaining a home in the expanding university system and advancing through innovative means that allowed it to converge with its European counterparts.²²

²⁰ MERLI, S. “La grande fabbrica in Italia e la formazione del proletariato industriale di massa”. *Classe*, vol. 1, 1969. pp. 1-87 and *Proletariato di fabbrica e capitalismo industriale. Il caso italiano, 1880-1900*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1972. RAMELLA, F. *Terra e telai. Sistemi di parentela e manifattura nel biellese dell'ottocento*. Torino: Einaudi, 1984.

²¹ BALLONE, Adriano. “Storiografia e storia del PCI”. *Passato e presente*. vol. 33, 1994. pp. 129-140. AGOSTI, Aldo. “L'età dell'oro della storiografia sul Partito Comunista Italiano (1960-1989)”. *Revista de Historia Actual*. vol. 6, 2008. pp. 103-113.

²² ÁLVAREZ JUNCO, José and PÉREZ, Ledesma Manuel. “Historia del movimiento obrero. ¿Una segunda ruptura?”. *Revista de Occidente*. vol. 12, 1982. pp. 19-41. The conferences of the *Asociación de Historia Social* (1989) and the contents of *Historia Social*

Conclusions

Following the Spanish Civil War, a highly politicized historiography sprang up in Spain consisting of the victors within and the exiled without. Meanwhile, the French and Italian historiographies of the working class evolved with similar results: supremacy of the history of the working-class movement and their own national histories and limited connections with the outside world. Additionally, these were politically militant histories that aimed to eventually achieve a scientific methodology through the publication of research based on the study of sources. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, as the imprint of militancy faded, the French and Italian historiographies of the working class began to gain research centres and publications in which to reflect and strengthen ties, renewing their methods and subject areas, and consolidating themselves in the university world. This is the path that Spanish historiography would also take later and, following the transition to democracy, would witness a convergence with wider European historiographies of the working class.

(1988) bring together some of the main lines of Spanish historiography of the working class. On its development see BARRIO, Ángeles. *A propósito de la historia social, del movimiento obrero y los sindicatos*. In: RUEDA, G. coord. *Doce estudios de historiografía contemporánea*. Santander: UC, 1991. pp. 41-68; GABRIEL, Pere. “A vueltas y revueltas con la historia social obrera en España”. *Historia Social*. vol. 22, 1995. pp. 43-53; PIQUERAS, José Antonio and SANZ, Vicent. “The Social History of Work in Spain: From the Primitive Accumulation of Knowledge to Offshoring”. *International Review of Social History*. vol. 50, 2005. pp. 467-483 and CEAMANOS, R. “De la ruptura a la convergencia. La historiografía social obrera española y francesa (1939-1982)”. *Historia Social*. vol. 61, 2008. pp. 147-168.

Was there a “Great Labour Unrest” in The Netherlands?¹

*Sjaak van der Velden*²

Introduction

In early 2011, I was invited to the international conference “Revisiting the ‘Great Labour Unrest’ (1911-14)” that took place in Paris on September 15-16. In commemoration of the great strike wave in Great Britain that was part of what is now known as the “Great Labour Unrest,” the organizers invited a number of researchers to come to Paris. The topic I was asked to deal with was if there was also a comparable strike movement in the Netherlands. A colleague from South Africa also shed light on this question, asking if the big strikes in his country in 1913-1914 were also part of a global labour revolt.

It is known from international historiography³ that the years preceding and following the First World War were a period of intense class struggle culminating in several revolutions. What about the Netherlands? In 1918, there had even been an attempt at revolution by the leader of the social-democratic party and there were riots, strikes and demonstrations during and after the war in which the Netherlands remained neutral. Yet what about the period which is in the UK labelled as the “Great Labour Unrest”? In my presentation in Paris, I strictly compared the Netherlands to the events in the UK. In this contribution, I will broaden the scope a little

¹ This article was originally presented as a paper at the International Conference “Revisiting the ‘Great Labour Unrest’ 1911-1914”, Paris, September 15-16, 2011.

² <<http://www.iisg.nl/staff/svv.php>>; sjaakvdvelden@gmail.com.

³ SILVER, Beverly J., ARRIGHI, Giovanni and DUBOFSKY, Melvyn, eds. “Labor Unrest in the World-Economy, 1870-1990”. *Review of the Fernand Braudel Center*. vol. XVIII, no. 1, winter 1995; KELLY, J. (1997) ‘Long waves in industrial relations: mobilization and counter-mobilization in historical perspective’, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations* no. 4, 1997. pp. 3-35; KELLY, J. *Rethinking Industrial Relations: mobilization, collectivism and long waves*. Routledge: London, 1998.

further to the post-war years, but the original purpose of this research will still be visible. Was there truly a “Great Labour Unrest” in the Netherlands?

1. Dutch historiography on the period 1911-1914

In the UK, the Great Labour Unrest of 1911-1914 is a well-known phenomenon among labour historians, although it is not undisputed. Cole named a chapter of his famous book on the history of the British working class movement “The great unrest”, but Pelling seemed a little patronizing when he wrote about the “so-called ‘labour unrest’ of the period”.⁴ In Dutch historiography, however, there is no mention of a Great Labour Unrest during this period. The literature shows no sign of awareness that 1911-1914 was an era that deserves a specific labelling.

In 1926, when the socialist and poet Henriette Roland-Holst published volume 2 of her still informative work *Capital and labour in the Netherlands* she gave a thorough description of the Dutch labour movement during the pre-war years.⁵ She mentioned the yearly demonstrations since 1911 to win the right to vote, the growth of the social-democratic party that was even offered a post in the new government of 1913 and the 1911 seamen’s strike. Despite these events, Roland Holst did not give a specific label to these years. Others such as the non-academic writer of the history of the social-democratic party (Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij, Social-Democratic Workers’ Party, SDAP), W.H. Vliegen, who was in 1894 also one of the founders of that party, solely mentioned numerous strikes.⁶ When in 1956 the Dutch social-democratic or “modern” union federation celebrated its 50th anniversary, they asked an academic who was sympathetic to social democracy, Fr. De Jong, to write the official history. He also mentioned a number of big strikes that took place in the years 1911-14, but just like the other two he did not specifically label this period as one of great unrest.⁷ The successor of De Jong’s book was published in 1975 by

⁴ COLE, G.D.H. *A short history of the British working-class movement 1789-1947*. London, George Allen & Unwin: 1948. pp. 317-327; PELLING, Henry. *A history of British Trade Unionism*. London: Penguin, 1971. p. 139.

⁵ ROLAND HOLST-VAN DE SCHALK, Henriette. *Kapitaal en arbeid in Nederland*. Volume 2. Rotterdam: Brusse Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1932.

⁶ VLIEGEN, W.H. *Die onze kracht ontwaken deed. Geschiedenis der sociaaldemocratische arbeiderspartij in Nederland gedurende de eerste 25 jaren van haar bestaan*. Volume 2. Amsterdam: Ontwikkeling, 1926. p.485.

⁷ DE JONG EDZ, Fr. *Om de plaats van de arbeid. Een geschiedkundig overzicht van ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen*. Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1956.

two left-wing historians, Ger Harmsen and Bob Reinalda.⁸ Their different position from De Jong’s was expressed in the title of the book. While De Jong titled his book *Om de plaats van de arbeid* (On Labour’s Position), Harmsen and Reinalda made it clear that the labour movement in their opinion should not just aim at giving labour a better position in capitalist society. The movement should instead work “*Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid*” (For the liberation of labour) from capitalism. Although we might expect from them a search for periods of intensification of the class struggle, we also look in vain for a Great Labour Unrest period in their book. The year 1913, however, is coined “a year of intense class struggle”.⁹ In 2004, I published a popular book based on my thesis on strikes in the Netherlands and did not refer to anything like a Great Labour Unrest.¹⁰ Of course, I did notice the growth of strike activity as my predecessors had.

Despite the fact that Dutch labour historians have not given the years 1911-1914 a specific name, the period is described as one with an intensification of efforts by labour to win economic and political demands. In short, in Dutch historiography (and I also consulted more general historical works and the contemporary newspapers that have recently been published on the internet at <http://kranten.kb.nl/>) researchers do not mention a “Great Labour Unrest”. There was however an intensification of the strike movement and struggle for political improvements for the working class. This indicates that there is good reason to investigate whether we may (promoted by the centennial of the Great Labour Unrest in the UK) from hindsight label the strike movement of the early 1910’s as a “Great Labour Unrest”.

2. The Dutch strike movement, 1911-1914

If we want to know whether the Netherlands witnessed a Great Labour Unrest during 1911-1914 we simply need data on labour conflicts. The Dutch Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS, Statistics Netherlands) offers such data on its website (<http://statline.cbs.nl>). The line drawn with this data as shown in Figure 1 can lead to only one simple conclusion. Yes,

⁸ HARMSSEN, Ger and REINALDA, Bob. *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de Nederlandse vakbeweging*. Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij Nijmegen, 1975.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁰ VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak. *Stakingen in Nederland. Arbeidersstrijd 1830-1995*. Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2000. (Second edition published online in 2008 at www.onvoltooidverleden.nl/index.php?id=312); *Werknemers in actie. Twee eeuwen stakingen, bedrijfsbezettingen en andere acties in Nederland*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2004.

the number of conflicts grew at a fast rate during the years under study. 1911, 1912 and 1913 even saw the highest numbers of conflicts of the twentieth century so far (and even more than the nineteenth century even though this is not visible in the figure from Netherlands Statistics). If we omit the last five months of 1914, because in that period the unions declared a truce and stopped all strikes because of the outbreak of the war, the average strikes per month was at roughly the same level as during 1913 (33.1 and 33.3 respectively). The conclusion is evident: this really was a time that labour unrest in the Netherlands grew to an unprecedented level. There was a Great Labour Unrest. It appears that the discussion is closed.

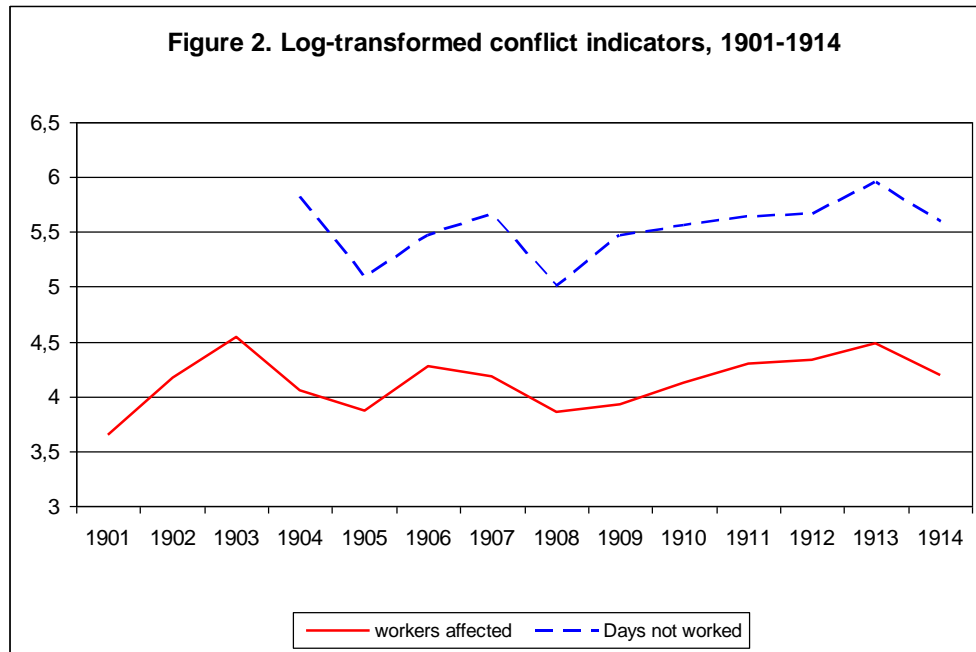


Source: Statistics Netherlands

However, since according to International Labor Organizations' publications from 1935 onwards it has been widely agreed to use the number of days not worked per 1,000 workers as an indicator to compare strike activity over time,¹¹ we may come to a different conclusion if we

¹¹ DRIBBUSCH, Heiner and VANDAELE, Kurt. "Comprehending divergence in strike activity. Employers' offensives, government interventions and union responses". In: VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak et. al., eds. *Strikes around the world. Case-studies of 15 countries*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007.

look at this number instead of the frequency of the conflicts. And showing the number of workers affected by the conflicts might also present a different picture. In Figure 2, both indicators are shown after log-transforming them because otherwise the visibility of the number of affected workers, which is by its very nature much smaller than the number of days not worked, would be too low.



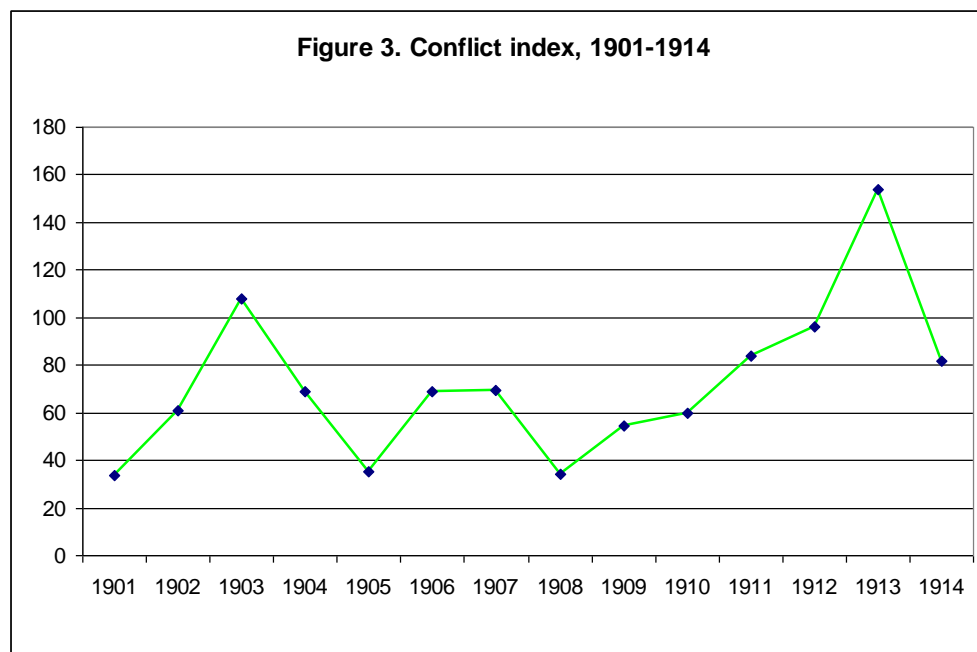
Source: Statistics Netherlands; Statistics Netherlands only started calculating days not worked in 1904.

Adding the two strike indicators from Figure 2 to our view of the period makes the picture more complicated. The picture still shows an almost continuous growth of strike activity since 1909, but the growth in comparison to 1903-04 is not as extreme as it was in Figure 1 where only the number of conflicts was considered. The number of affected workers for 1904 (34,500) was never exceeded during the period immediately preceding the Great War.

It is difficult to interpret more than one data set at the same time. Making comparisons over time and place is also difficult using more than one data source. To overcome these problems, researchers have tried to combine the three indicators of labour conflict activity into one number. In 1966, P. Galambos and E.W. Evans published their effort in the Bulletin of

the Oxford University Institute of Economics and Statistics.¹² Others, including myself, have built on their work.¹³ A problem with indices is that they strengthen the need for qualitative support of the interpretation. The index does not tell whether a fall or rise comes from a change in the number of conflicts or from in change in the number of days lost or the number of workers affected. When we keep this limitation in mind, an index may be a useful means to get a condensed view of developments. Using the data published by Statistics Netherlands, an index can be calculated as follows:

$$I_1 = (C_t / C_{avg} + SL_t / SL_{avg} + DL_t / DL_{avg}) \times 100/3 \quad 14$$



Source: Statistics Netherlands.

¹² GALAMBOS, P. & EVANS, E.W. Evans. "Work-stoppages in the United Kingdom, 1951-1964: a quantitative study". *Bulletin of the Oxford University Institute of Economics & Statistics*. vol. 28, 1966. pp. 33-55.

¹³ VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak. "Strikes in global labor history. The Dutch case". *Review. A journal of the Fernand Braudel Center*. vol. 26, no. 4. pp. 381-405.

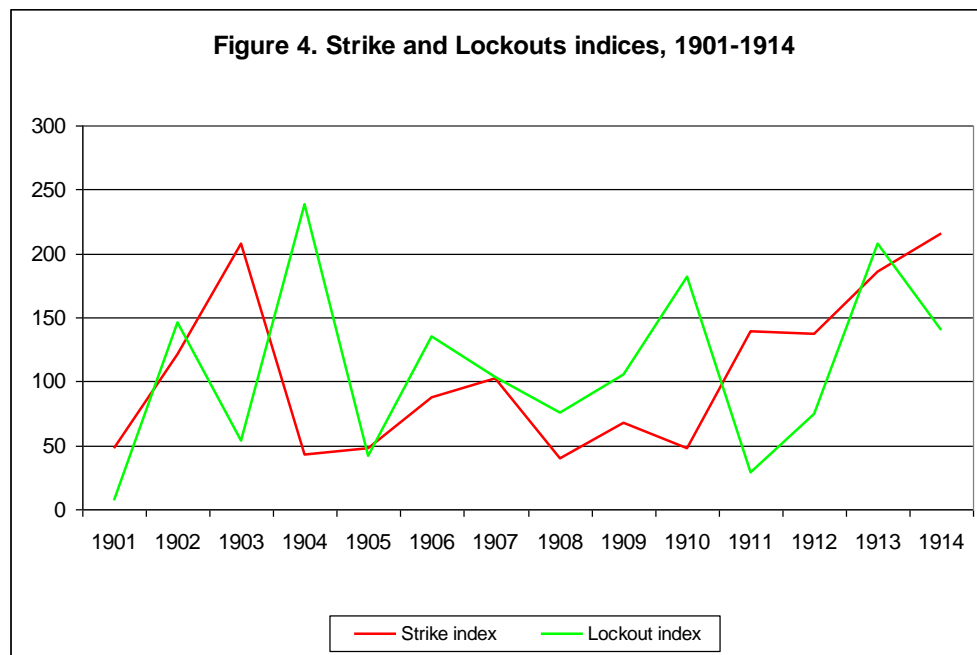
¹⁴ C= Number of conflicts, SL = Strikers and locked out workers, DL = Days lost, _t = actual year, avg= Average of all years under research.

Figure 3 shows the index for the years 1901-1914. Using an index that connects the three indicators (number of conflicts, affected workers and workdays lost) confirms the idea that the Netherlands also witnessed a Great Labour Unrest that started in 1908 and lasted until the war broke out. If we take in consideration that almost all strikes and actually all lockouts in 1914 started before August 1, the relative index for 1914 reached almost the same level as 1913 (not shown in the figure). The conclusion at hand is that Dutch workers started an offensive in 1908 that only came to a standstill because of World War I.

Unfortunately, this conclusion is too premature. The official data published by Statistics Netherlands shows the sum of strikes and lockouts. It is known that separating strikes and lockouts in statistics may be troublesome. Therefore, many researchers and data collectors have decided or have felt forced to resign to combined data.¹⁵ When Statistics Netherlands published the original data in the years under research it had not decided yet to publish aggregated data and the data was still divided. On the website of the International Institute of Social History (IISH), a new database on strikes in the Netherlands was published (<https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>). This dataset not only gives data that are for some years much higher than the official data by Statistics Netherlands, but it also separates strikes and lockouts. Separating strikes from lockouts makes it possible to recognize the aggressor and defender in a labour conflict. After all, strikes are tools of workers while lockouts are a tool of employers to enforce their demands. From now on, I will use the IISH dataset for analyzing developments. Using formula 1 we can also calculate indices for strikes and lockouts separately. Figure 4 shows the development of these indices.¹⁶

¹⁵ LYDDON, Dave. "Strike statistics and the problem of international comparison". In: VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak *et. al. Op.Cit.*, 2007. p. 25.

¹⁶ The calculated indices for 1914 are based on the number of conflicts before August 1 and related to the number of months during which they were counted by dividing the indicators by 7 and multiplying the outcome with 12.



Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

Before analyzing Figure 4 we must stress that the lines do not show relations between the two indices, but only the developments of strikes and lockout activity related to base values where the average = 100 . On average, one lockout occurred against 16 strikes during the period 1901-1913 (see Table 2).

Six of the 13 years show an opposite movement of the indices. This means that during those years (1903-05, 1907, 1910-11) the total conflict index (comparable to Figure 3) is a little flattened while during the other years the development as shown by the overall index is strengthened. The highest peak in strike activity was 1903, the year of a general railway strike and a general strike against a limitation by law of the freedom to strike. The general strike was lost, many workers were victimized and labour retreated as is shown by the drop in strike activity in 1904. Capital on the other hand showed its force by more than quadrupling lockout activity that year. This opposite movement of labour and capital is lost out of sight when the conflict activity as published in the official data is analyzed. Yet there is more.

There is a well known saying that there are lies, damned lies and statistics. This saying should always be kept in the mind when studying strike statistics. So far we have seen that applying more sophisticated ways

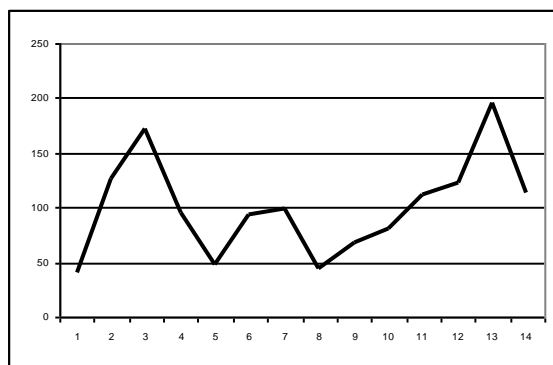
of measuring labour conflict activity leads us to put into perspective the simple official data published. In Figure 1, we witnessed a clear growth of activity during the years immediately preceding World War I. Figure 4 led to the conclusion that the class struggle as measured by strikes and lockouts was more intense in 1903-04 than in 1910-1914.¹⁷ Drawing the lines of Figure 4 was, however, done without keeping in mind the development of the number of workers. In 1901, there were 1.466 million workers in the Netherlands, a number which grew to 1.886 million in 1914. This growth by almost 30 percent of course influenced the strike capacity of the Dutch working class.

We should therefore take this growth into account when calculating an index.¹⁸ Unfortunately information about unemployment is scarce for these years. Adding unemployment figures to the index would make the picture even more complicated; after all unemployed workers are unable to enter strike statistics.

$$I_2 = ((NS_t / NS_{avg} + S_t / S_{avg} + SDL_t / SDL_{avg}) / (W_t / W_{avg})) \times 100/3^{19}$$

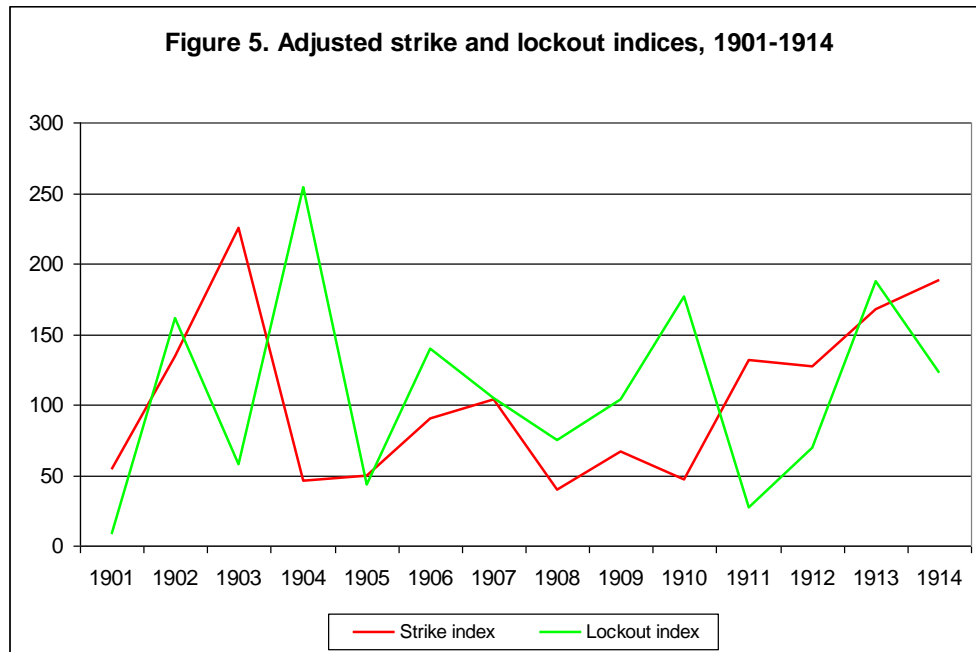
Figure 5 shows the strike and lockout indices after dividing the respective labour conflict indicators through the number of workers.

¹⁷ To avoid criticism that the raw data which is different for Figures 3 and 4 and therefore may have influenced the outcome, I also calculated an overall index with the data I collected. The line is roughly the same as in Figure 3.



¹⁸ Others like Kelly and Wilson take another denominator, the share of a specific country in the total world production, but to me this seems improper when one studies human behaviour. PERRY, L.J. & WILSON, Patrick J. "Convergence of work stoppages – a global perspective". *Journal of World-Systems Research*. vol. XIII, n. 2. p.206.

¹⁹ NS= Number of strikes (NL = Number of lockouts), S = Strikers, W = Workers, DLS = Days lost during strikes.



Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

Now the picture is strengthened that class conflict in the Netherlands during 1910-14 was never as intense as it had been in 1903-04. The line that indicates strike activity in Figure 4 shows that 1914 exceeded 1903. After taking the number of workers into account in Figure 5, however, the strike line never exceeds the 1903 value. Of course, we may note an almost uninterrupted growth of the strike index from 1910 to August 1, 1914. This may indicate that despite the fact that the level of activity was lower than in 1902-04 the feeling was one of recovery after the 1903 defeat. Yet in general, with the general strike of 1903 in mind, it makes sense that no one coined 1911-1914 as a “Great Labour Unrest”.

Still, we may ask a number of questions. How did the attitude of workers, unions and employers in the 1910-14 eras develop? Was there notwithstanding the relatively low level of strike and lockout activity a feeling in society that a revolutionary development was in progress similar to the one that the Lord Mayor of Liverpool spoke about in 1911 for the British case?

3. Revolution in progress? The discussion about the general strike

The publications about strikes and lockouts of Statistics Netherlands in the years 1911-1915 mentioned the growing numbers. Especially in 1913

when the number of strikes "since 1901, the first year of which data is collected, is the highest counted in any year".²⁰ A few pages later the same report mentions that the same is true of the number of days lost. With these simple observations, this aspect of the story ended. A few hundred pages followed with the most meticulous information about even the smallest conflict, but not a single word about the threat of a revolution.

We may wonder of course whether other sources show more awareness of some special times people lived in. Did they realize that across the North Sea the period was coined "the Great Labour Unrest"? As we have already seen, Dutch historians were aware of the unprecedented level of strike activity during the pre-war years and especially in 1913. In a number of social-democratic journals, I found references to the strikes in England, but no sign of the feeling that the Netherlands might be on the brink of a revolution. What did take place, however, was a renewed intensification of an old discussion. One might even call this the last years until the 1960s of a discussion about the role of strikes in the victory of socialism. Roland Holst and Vliegen both mentioned this discussion between the advocates of a return to 19th century radicalism and the proponents of a more reformist attitude.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the majority of the international labour movement had moved definitively away from the idea that workers should fight for a revolution. The socialist international – founded in 1889 – was strongly in favour of a revision of the old socialist idea of a revolution. No socialist revolution, but an improvement of workers' lives under a democratic regime was their goal. This goal could only be attained if a shift in union leadership would take place from – as Beatrice and Sidney Webb labelled him – "the casual and enthusiast and irresponsible agitator to a class of salaried officers expressly chosen out of the rank and file of trade unionists for their superior business capacity".²¹ In the larger part of the labour and union movement, this shift had already taken place but now it was also firmly confirmed ideologically.

Only small groups of socialists, unhappy with this "betrayal", tried to swing the tide back, but they were not very successful. Radical socialists started a discussion about the use of mass-strikes as a way to achieve socialism but it was a minority discussion. In 1902, general strikes for

²⁰ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS) *Werkstakingen en uitsluitingen in Nederland gedurende 1904.....1920*. Gravenhage: Belinfante, 1915. p. XI.

²¹ WEBB, Sydney and WEBB, Beatrice. *The history of trade unionism*. 1894. (https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_History_of_Trade_Unionism)

general suffrage took place in Belgium and Sweden. Although they differed considerably, these strikes proved that the general strike was indeed a possibility. The union bureaucracy and social-democratic leaders were however not convinced that they should aim for more than improvements and reform by using the weapon of these mass movements.

In the Netherlands, this hesitating attitude was of course confirmed by the outcome of the 1903 general strike. As we have seen before, the strike was lost and many workers were sacked. Not a result favourable to the case of the revolutionaries let alone that the greater part of the working-class could thus be turned into enthusiastic supporters of mass strikes. The revolutionary current in social democracy therefore remained small and it seemed to lose the discussion intellectually and practically. Until 1905. The year of the first Russian Revolution was the start of an intensification of the international discussion about the use of the general strike. The Polish-German revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg was one of the well-known advocates of revolutionary mass action in the international discussion and she was greatly inspired by the Russian events. What happened in the czar's empire was in her eyes a confirmation of the fact that working in the organs of parliamentary democracy was not enough to establish socialism. The masses of the working class were able to conquer the world by using the weapon of the revolutionary mass-strike.²²

Rosa Luxemburg had political friends in the Netherlands. Amongst them was Henriette Roland Holst who in 1905 had already published a German brochure *Generalstreik und Sozialdemokratie* which was translated into Dutch one year later.²³ She wrote the book on request of Karl Kautsky who did not have time to complete this project. This is proof of the close connection between the German and Dutch labour movements, an almost inevitable connection because the Dutch economy became more and more intertwined with the growth of the Ruhr region. Other Dutch socialists who played a role in the German Social Democratic party and discussions were Anton Pannekoek and Herman Gorter who also advocated a return to the idea of a socialist revolution instead of reforming capitalism.²⁴

²² LUXEMBURG, Rosa. *Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften*. Hamburg, 1906.

²³ ROLAND HOLST-VAN DER SCHALK, Henriette. *Algemeene werkstaking en sociaaldemocratie*. Rotterdam, 1906.

²⁴ BOURRINET, Philippe. *The Dutch and German Communist Left. A contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement*. London: International Communist Current, 2011 [1991].

The majority of the members of the Dutch party were not convinced of the revolutionary analyses and sentiment. Their hard work and perseverance in the city councils and parliament, and the successes won by the modern union movement were proof for the majority that social democracy was the best way to improve the living and working conditions of the labouring masses. They were very pragmatic and not easy to convince by events happening in far away Russia where the czar was still in power. There were, by the way, also social democrats who took a hybrid stand. They were in favour of parliamentary work, but also enthusiastic about the Russian revolution of 1905.²⁵ The discussions, but also the personal accusations of betrayal versus splitting the movement, finally resulted in an actual split. In 1909, the minority was expelled from the party because they refused to stop the publication of their own magazine. They then established a new social democratic party. This *Sociaal-Democratische Partij* (SDP) was the first party in Europe that tried to move away from modern social democracy back to a revolutionary social democracy or socialism.

The union movement witnessed a parallel discussion, but this mainly took place between and not within organizations. This had to do with the fact that the socialist union movement had already split. In 1906, the modern unionists had left the radical Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat (NAS, National Labour Secretariat) and with the support of social democrats founded a new national union, the Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV, Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions). In short, the contradictions between the two organizations were federalism (NAS) against centralism (NVV), and revolution (NAS) against reform (NVV). In discussions between the two union currents, the NAS was often labelled syndicalist but Buschman, the author of the history of the NAS, made it clear that this union was not syndicalist in the theoretical sense, but federalist and revolutionary.²⁶ From this it may be clear that there were ideological relations between NAS and SDP although the Marxists in the SDP were convinced that they had to be where the masses were. And the masses were in the NVV that grew explosively and not in the NAS that still suffered from the bad outcome of the 1903 general strike.

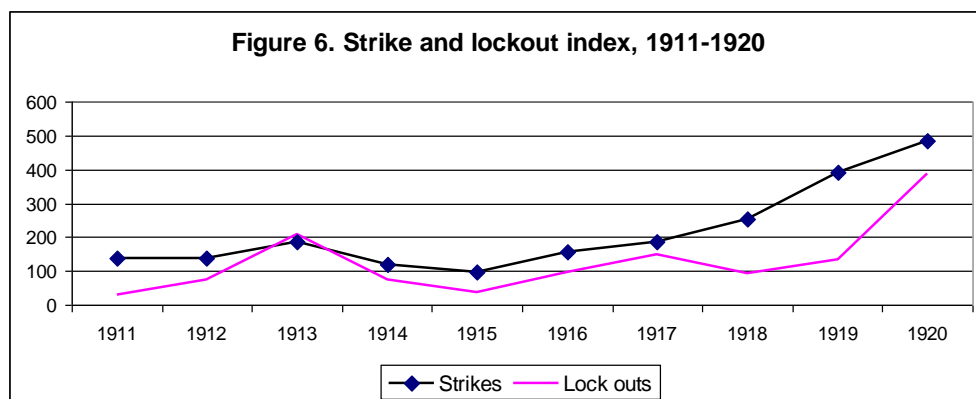
1909, the year of the split in Dutch social-democracy, was also the year that the economic conjuncture started an upswing and possibilities for the workers to gain a wage rise improved. In other words, as always during

²⁵ VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak. *LINKS. PvdA, SP en GroenLinks*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2010. pp.48-75.

²⁶ BUSCHMAN, Marten. *Tussen revolutie en modernisme. Geschiedenis van het Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat in Nederland 1893-1907*. Den Haag: Amrit, 1993 [1933].

economic upswings, it was time to start an offensive. This offensive is reflected in Figure 5 where the strike index grows in 1909. Capital reacted a year later with an aggressive growth of the number of lockouts and a temporary retreat of labour. However, labour obviously felt more confident than it was in 1905; strike activity started growing again in 1911.

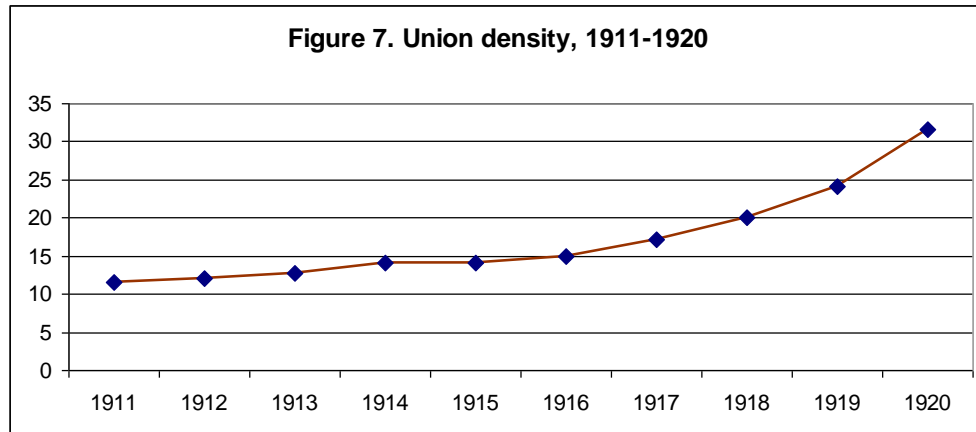
The movement grew until the outbreak of the war. Although the Netherlands remained neutral in the conflict, the union movement decided to stop all offensive acts to employers and the state at the beginning. As is visible in Figure 6, both strike and lock out activity plummeted. Only when the effects of the war also deteriorated the Dutch economy and working-class life, the activity of both workers and employers started to grow again. The years of public unrest, culminating in the failed effort to start a Revolution in 1918, was mentioned earlier. On the wave of international class struggle, the Dutch also became more offensive. Meanwhile capital was reluctant and gave in to many workers' demands. Only in 1920 did employers retake the initiative. This was an omen of the end of the post-war wave of strikes and working-class victories.



Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

The development of strike activity shows growth just like the percentage of Dutch workers who joined a labour union. This union density is shown in Figure 7. The unions survived the downfall visible in Figure 6 of strikes and lockouts. The fact that the union movement continued to grow during those early years of the war was mainly the result of the introduction of a state-sponsored unemployment benefit system. After the firm establishment of this system, all unions grew on the wave of working-class radicalism since 1916. A firm indication that workers joined the unions in

response to the growth of strikes, food riots and demonstrations is the fact that the more radical NAS grew faster than the moderate NVV and confessional unions.²⁷



Source: Statistics Netherlands

But let us return to the subject of our research, the years coined the "Great Labour Unrest" in the UK. Was there any connection between the strike movements in both countries?

4. Connection to the British movement: the 1911 seamen's strike

In 1911, a close connection between the Dutch, the British and the Belgian union movements came to the fore. Seamen from these three countries jointly struck against the big shipping companies. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) started the strike, but did not play a significant role during the strike itself.

At an International conference of seamen in 1902, the unions present decided that agitation on an international level was necessary to fight the power of the shipping companies and improve the working conditions of the seamen. It was only in 1911, however, before a strike broke out. This strike was preceded the year before by rumours that an international strike was at

²⁷ VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak. *Werknemers georganiseerd. Een geschiedenis van de vakbeweging bij het honderdjarig jubileum van de Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (FNV)*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2005. p.89.

hand because the chairman of the ITF, Havelock Wilson, visited numerous ports during a strike promotion tour. He did so without the consent of the ITF. The Dutch syndicalist, or better, radical, General Seamen's Union (AZB, *Algemeene Zeemans Bond*) showed enthusiasm about the growing internationalism. "All signs indicate that internationalism, the cooperation with people of the same conviction, with colleagues and fellow-sufferers from abroad and overseas, is developing and will soon come to perfection".²⁸

The strike broke out on June 14, 1911, but was not as international as some expected. The Germans refused to participate. They concluded their own agreement with the German shipping companies. The Germans were also unhappy with the selfish actions by Havelock Wilson. The strikes in England, Belgium and the Netherlands on the other hand broke out simultaneously, but their courses were hardly connected.

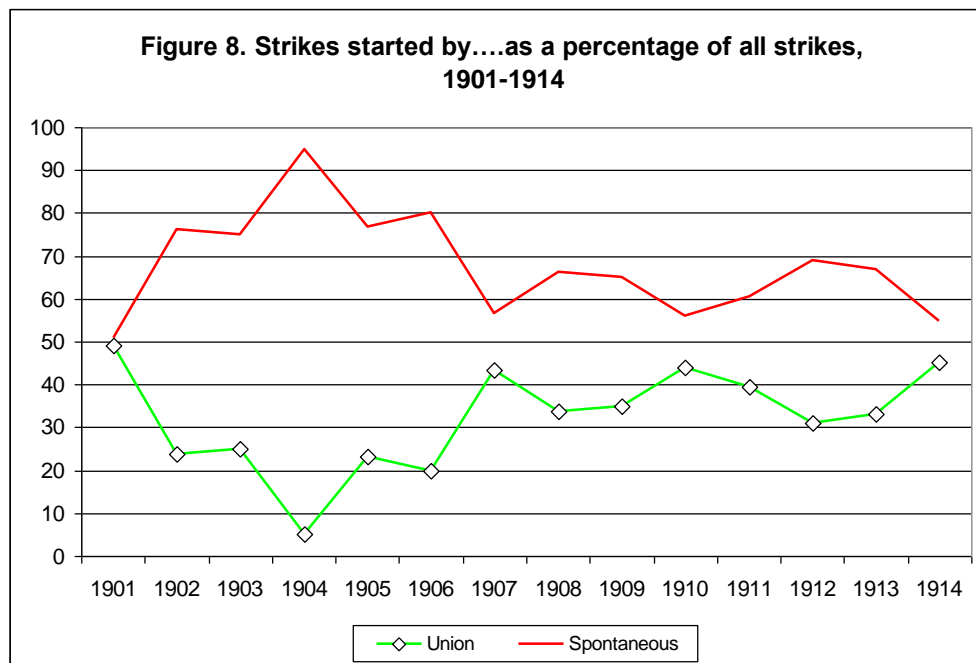
The above-mentioned discussions between social democrats and more revolutionary unionists were evident during the strike. The social democratic union in Rotterdam lead the strike completely differently from the more radical union in Amsterdam. In both cities, the strike was complete, but the course was very diverse. After one month, the union in Rotterdam reached an agreement with the shipping companies. A modest wage raise and a collective agreement (the first one ever) for three years were the principal results. In Amsterdam, the radicals managed to extend the strike to the dockworkers and others professions in the port. The strike was accompanied by violence that caused casualties during the "Bloody night of Kattenburg"²⁹ but all this was in vain because of the arrival of many blacklegs. The Amsterdam seamen started mustering on August 9 and their strike was lost.

The discussion continued, but the tone had changed for the worse. The Rotterdam union was accused of betrayal because it negotiated a collective agreement and went back to work before the strike in Amsterdam was over. The Rotterdam union replied that they at least had won some improvements while the Amsterdam strikers remained empty handed.

²⁸ "Alles wijst er op dat het internationalisme, het samenwerken met gelijkgezinden, met vak- of lostgenooten van over de grenzen en over de zeeën, zich ontwikkelt en spoedig tot meerdere vervolmaking zal komen" Internationaal Nieuws, *De Nederlandsche Zeeman* vol. 8, nr. 96, september 1910. p. 1

²⁹ Kattenburg was a working-class neighbourhood in Amsterdam.

The Dutch seamen's strike was initiated by an international union leader, but without the approval of the union itself and in the Netherlands the strike showed a divided union movement and working class (and a few gains for the Rotterdam strikers, of course). After 1911, strike activity by Dutch workers continued to grow in 1912, 1913 and 1914 as we have seen in the previous figures. If we want to discover a revolutionary mood or at least an increased mood of resistance, it may be useful to investigate the beginning of the strikes. Were the strikes started by unions after unsuccessful negotiations and after ultimatums were issued? Or were the workers unwilling to wait and walked out on their own account, spontaneously?

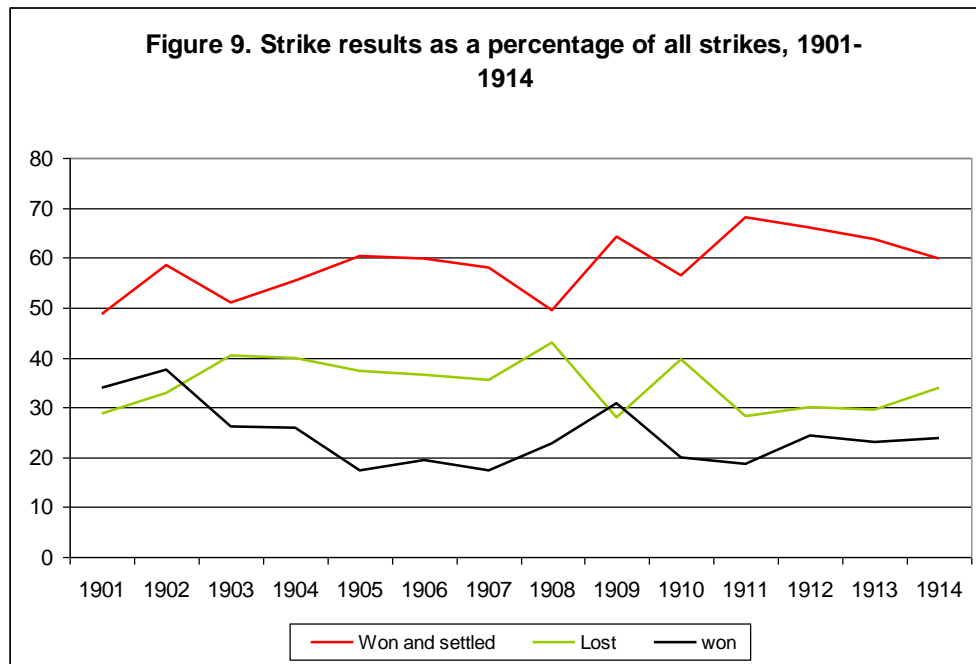


Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

Figure 8 shows who took the initiative to strike as percentages of all the strikes for which this aspect is known. This means that a strike that started spontaneously may have been taken over or supported by a union after the beginning; something that was more common to the NAS while the NVV more often refused to support in hindsight. It is of course also possible that the opposite happened; a union ignited strike may have lost union support in the course of the events. Given these considerations, the figure is a good indication for the feeling among the workers, the rank and file, but also the feeling in the unions as a whole. The information is biased because

from a diminishing but still big part of the total number of strikes it is not clear who started them. Given the character of the historical sources (mostly union magazines and strike reports by unions) we may expect that a large part of the unknown strikes was spontaneous because unions were in general eager to show their activities, especially the NAS. But if we confine ourselves to the strikes of which we know who initiated them it is clear that the initiative for the 1910-1914 strike wave came more from the rank and file than from the unions. These organizations of the working class only became more active in 1914 and were certainly not the initiators of some Great Labour Unrest. From the differences between the two unions, we may not conclude that there was a clear division between the two national unions regarding strikes. Yes, the NVV was more in favour of negotiations first, a full strike fund and was also more reluctant to start solidarity strikes than the NAS. Yet from these ideological differences, we may not conclude that the NVV was hostile to strikes while the NAS was engaged in all strike activity. From the data, it is clear that NAS involvement with spontaneously started strikes was bigger than the NVV's, but also that more union strikes were started by the NVV. Over the whole period, the NVV was more often involved in strikes than the NAS. Thus, simple conclusions about the attitude of the two currents in union life are probably incorrect. This can be explained from the fact that despite ideological differences most union members and union leaders from both NAS and NVV had the interests of the workers as their main goal.

If we take the information about the start of strikes into account we may conclude that Dutch workers launched an offensive with a growing number of strikes during the years preceding the outbreak of World War I. Union leaders were in general more reluctant than the rank and file and this is understandable because the unions were still recovering from the blow they received in the aftermath of the 1903 general strike. Strike activity plummeted in 1904 and the strikes that took place were in majority initiated by the rank and file. When in 1910 strike activity once again rose, it was again the rank and file who was responsible. And they were also successful as is shown in Figure 9 where the outcome of Dutch strikes is shown.



Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

From the lost strikes, we may conclude that this indicator grew after the lost 1903 strike and remained relatively stable until 1908 when the positive economic conjuncture made employers more willing to give in to workers' demands. The line that shows the sum of won and settled strikes is a sign of a new mood in Dutch labour relations. After 1903, many employers wanted a return to nineteenth-century patriarchal relations and they were the ones that locked out workers in response to strikes or the growth of union membership (see Figure 5). Others, however, realised that there was no turning back. These modern employers wanted to negotiate with unions and conclude collective agreements. Because of this attitude, a growing number of strikes ended in neither victory nor defeat, but were settled after negotiations. This was a positive outcome for the strikers who won more than they had possessed before the strike, but the employer could also have a good feeling because he did not lose it all.

This development coincides with the growth of the part that unions played in initiating strikes because unions are often more aware of the possibilities and especially the impossibilities to win a strike. They therefore pose more moderate demands than the rank and file during wildcat strikes. This difference between union strikes and wildcat strikes is confirmed for

the entire period 1904-1940 when 67% of the union strikes were won and only 43% of the wildcat strikes.³⁰

5. Explaining the movement

We demonstrated a growth of strike activity in the Netherlands during the same period labelled the “Great Labour Unrest” in the United Kingdom. A similar growth can be seen in other countries. In 2000 and 2003, I investigated the strike movements in 1883-1999 for sixteen core countries of capitalism (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States) to find out that the five-years moving average of their strike and lockout indices showed clear peaks around 1925, 1955 and 1980 after which a fading away is visible. Low levels were reached in 1918, 1935-1945 and the early 1960s.³¹ In the research by Dr. Wessel Visser from Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and myself published in 2006, we analysed strike index movements in both the Netherlands and South Africa that were more parallel than one might expect.³² The years preceding World War I and 1920 witnessed peaks in both countries.

Looking at this figure for the period 1900-1920, it is obvious that strike activity was growing to an unprecedented level from 1900 onwards, but was interrupted by the outbreak of the 1914-1918 war.³³ After this, the growth continued to 1920 before an immense downfall started. A similar interrupted growth started in the early 1930s, followed by another world war that caused a plummeting of strike activity.

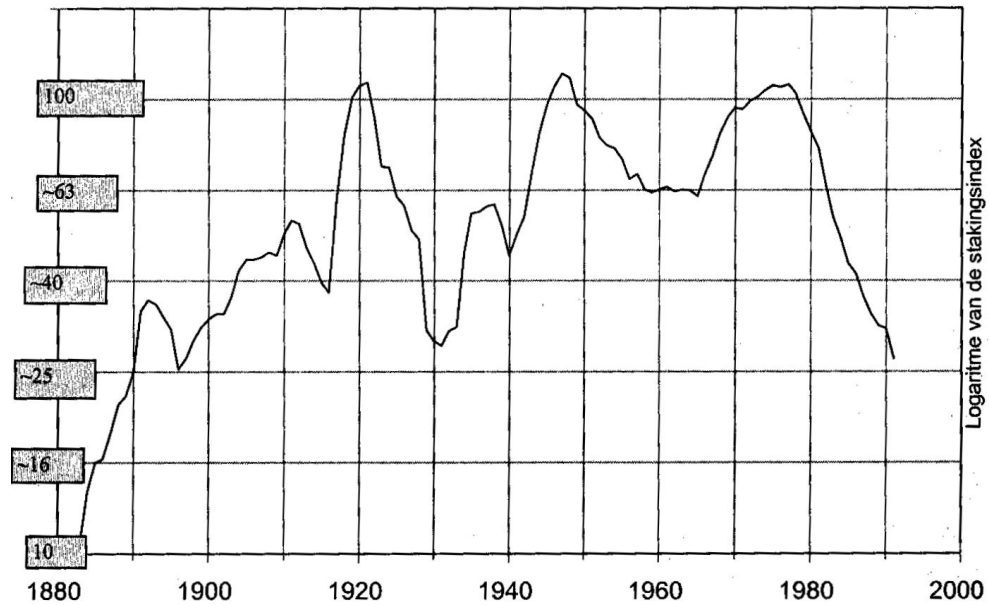
³⁰ VAN DER VELDEN. *Op.Cit.* 2000. p.126.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.280, 400.

³² VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak and VISSER, Wessel. “Strikes in the Netherlands and South Africa, 1900-1998: a comparison”. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*. vol. 30, n.1, 2006. p.71.

³³ We must bear in mind that international statistics for the entire period show many flaws and omissions. So far this is the best we can get from ILO data and other international publications.

Figure 10. Strike index (1970=100) in sixteen countries, 1883-1995 (log-transformed, 5-year moving average)



Source: Van der Velden.³⁴

Both lowerings of international strike activity may be explained by political-military events, but the “natural” developments of strike activity requires another interpretation. The fact that in so many countries strike and lockout activity moved more or less simultaneously calls for an explanation. It makes sense to look at the development of the economy. Is there any similarity between the movement of strike activity and the economy? As said before, the upswing of strike activity in the Netherlands seems to be related to the economic prosperity of 1909-1910 that was accompanied by a rise in real wages for Dutch workers. Cole, however, uses just the opposite as one of the explaining factors of the growth of labour unrest in Great Britain: a lowering of real wages.³⁵ Thus, two diametrically opposed developments in working-class life can go together with a rise in working-class militancy in different countries. This remark is in line with the results of my thesis.³⁶ The calculation of correlations between the Dutch strike index and a number of independent variables for twenty-year periods gave many contradictory results. The development of national income to mention

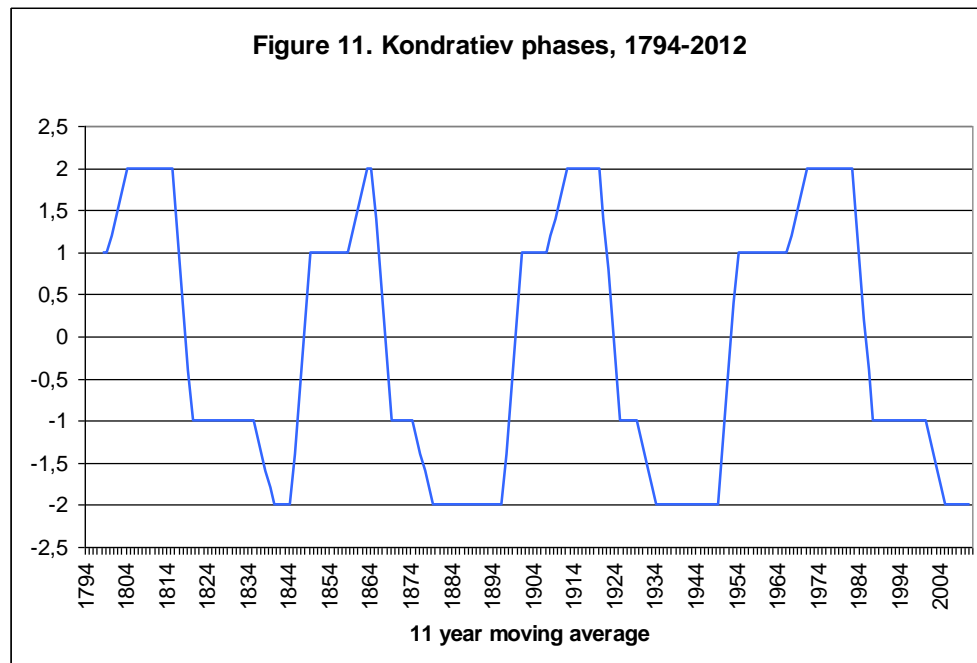
³⁴ VAN DER VELDEN. *Op.Cit.* 2000. p.280

³⁵ COLE. G.D.H. *Op.Cit.* p.480.

³⁶ VAN DER VELDEN. *Op.Cit.* 2000. p. 273.

just one of the thirteen political, institutional and economic indicators showed alternating values from +0.35 (1961-1980) to -0.11 (1921-1940). Surprisingly, only the development of real wages correlated positively over the entire period of 1881-1994. Before jumping to conclusions, we must be aware of the fact that a correlation tells us nothing about the direction of the relation. It may be that rising wages make workers more confident and thus more prone to ask for more and strike to get it. It may also be that higher strike activity results in higher wages. Simple correlations do not answer the question of which of the explanations is correct.

Nonetheless, there is even more. There is probably also a long-run economic cycle, the Kondratiev wave of roughly forty to sixty years. Recently the Russian economists Aivazov and Kobayakov³⁷ published an overview of the known Kondratiev waves (see Table 1). The growth of strike activity of the pre World War I years clearly coincides with the latter half of the rising phase of the Third Kondratiev wave, the growth phase built upon electrical engineering and chemistry. This growth is also visible in Figure 11 where the Kondratiev is presented on the basis of four phases within the Kondratiev.



³⁷ AIVAZOV, Alexander and KOBAYAKOV, Andrey. "Nikolai Kondratiev's 'Long Wave': The Mirror of the Global Economic Crisis. The Global Economy is facing a 'Long Wave' Recession". *Global Research*. November 27, 2008.

The economic growth of 1894-1920 during which the conjuncture movements were only relatively small vibrations, perhaps inspired the labour movement to fight for improvements. On the other side, this same economic growth was the material base of social democracy and its theory of a reformed capitalism; workers did get some improvements in those years. There is still more. The Kondratiev waves are no more than a very rough indication of economic development that is difficult to support with hard figures.

Workers in struggle do not automatically and mechanically follow economic developments. Economic growth since 1894 was accompanied and partly directed by political turmoil. Examples of this are the workers asking for political recognition and universal suffrage. There was also the threat of a war because tensions grew between the imperial powers that had just finished their scramble for Africa.

It is clearly not just the economy and general politics that tempt workers to strike. If the relation was that straightforward, then we would also see an international growth of strike activity during 1945-1965. This was the era of post-war economic recovery but also of anti-communist attacks on radical labour and state intervention in the economy. These interventions by political powers may have hindered workers to strike and explain the downswing of strike activity since 1948. There is a lot of literature on the relationship between strikes and the economic long waves³⁸, but so far no one has discovered more than a visual development with ups and downs without robust explanations. Focusing on economic development as an explanatory variable looks like the search for a mechanical mover in history. A mover in which there is no room for agency; a situation where the historical subject is ignored. As such, it seems that this kind of search will go on forever without finding any more than visual resemblances.

The waves in strike activity and the so-called Kondratiev waves show us such a resemblance. This may help us to formulate possible relationships, but the real explanation needs a thorough investigation of the historical events. What happened in the Netherlands was a period of economic growth that coincided with a struggling working class. The

³⁸ CRONIN, James E. "Stages, cycles and insurgencies: the economics of unrest". In: HOPKINS, T.K. Hopkins and WALLERSTEIN, I. *Processes of the world-system*. vol. 3, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1980. pp. 101-118; SCREPANTI, Ernesto. "Long Cycles in Strike Activity: an Empirical Investigation". *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. vol. XXV, n.1, 1987; GATTEI, Giorgio. "Elke 25 jaar? Stakingsgolven en lange economische cycli". *Vlaams Marxistisch Tijdschrift*. vol. 25, n. 1, 1991 [1989].

workers struggled for recognition by employers and the state that unions were the representative bodies of the workers in the newly constructed system of labour relations. The struggle was possibly supported by the fact that the union movement was divided and from Van den Berg's research it is clear that a divided movement inspires most unions to show a more radical attitude. That is the way to win more support from the workers.³⁹

6. Conclusion

In the preceding pages, I have looked for answers to a number of questions. The first question posed by the organizers of the Paris Conference was: Was there a 'Great Labour Unrest' in the Netherlands such as the period coined as such in Great Britain? Second, was there a relation between the strike movements during 1900-1914 in the UK and the Netherlands? And third, regardless of the fact whether the two movements were connected or not, is there an explanation for the strike movement in the Netherlands? My answer to the first question is that in historical sources and literature there was no such thing as a "Great Labour Unrest" in the Netherlands. The phrase is not mentioned at all. There was, however, a growth in strike activity, but this remained in the shadow of the lost 1903 general strike. This strike was the moment in the history of Dutch labour in which revolutionaries and reformers definitively parted ways.

One of the strikes that shaped the strike movement of 1900-1914 was the seamen's strike of 1911. This strike was part of an international campaign by Havelock Wilson of the ITF and had its counterpart in a strike in England. While the strike by the British workers was a massive and undivided manifestation of working class strength, in the Netherlands the strikers were divided along the lines of "syndicalism" and "modern" unionism. Rotterdam and Amsterdam showed different stories with different outcomes.

Although the strike movement was not coined the "Great Labour Unrest" the years under study showed a growing strike movement. This movement had – apart from the seamen's' strike – no connection to the events across the Channel. There seems to be a weak correlation to the rising phase of the third Kondratiev wave. As is the case with all

³⁹ VAN DER BERG, Annette. *Trade Union Growth and Decline in the Netherlands*. Rotterdam: Tinbergen Institute Research Series, 2003.

correlations, this correlation does not have any explanatory character. After all, the Kondratiev itself is also shaped by the class struggle.

The strike movement of the years immediately preceding World War I was a great one, but smaller than the 1903 movement. An explanation for the emergence of this movement can only be found in the political and socio-economic peculiarities of Dutch history in those years although in the background the world economy and discussions in the world labour movement played a role. This final remark is perhaps a little disappointing and an open door, but so far I cannot find anything better. And, to my knowledge, no one has.

Table 1. Phases of the Kondratiev waves, 1780-2045

First Kondratiev wave.	Rising phase – from late 1780s-early 1790s to 1810-1817.
	Declining phase: from 1810-1817 until 1844-1851.
Second Kondratiev wave	Rising phase: from 1844-1851 until 1870-1875.
	Declining phase: from 1870-1875 until 1890-1896.
Third Kondratiev wave.	Rising phase: from 1890-1896 until 1914-1920.
	Declining phase of the third cycle: from 1914-1920 until 1936-1940.
Fourth Kondratiev wave.	Rising phase: from 1936-1940 until 1966-1971.
	Declining phase: from 1966-1971 until 1980-1985.
Fifth Kondratiev wave	Rising phase: from 1980-1985 to 2000-2007.
	Declining phase from 2000-2007 until approximately 2015-2025 (forecast).
Sixth Kondratiev wave.	Rising phase from 2015-2025 until 2035-2045 (forecast).

Table 2. Strikes and lockouts in the Netherlands, 1901-1920

Year	Strikes			Lockouts		
	Number	Strikers	Strike days	Number	Locked out workers	Lock out days
1901	153	6,152	68,939	2	300	1,890

1902	158	14,405	456,679	18	3,780	280,017
1903	199	61,913	278,417	19	1,616	15,729
1904	115	4,910	95,820	21	6,818	489,569
1905	167	5,225	66,115	7	2,505	15,862
1906	213	10,744	207,546	22	7,956	65,687
1907	173	12,919	322,683	20	3,640	116,733
1908	118	5,709	57,154	29	1,536	35,028
1909	156	6,437	203,126	41	1,801	58,250
1910	151	4,897	90,087	15	8,931	246,014
1911	234	18,521	427,642	9	977	12,874
1912	306	20,459	302,996	20	2,186	66,005
1913	447	24,441	423,143	29	5,966	359,252
1914	289	14,141	303,155	27	1,883	59,492
1915	286	14,027	150,321	11	1,006	22,429
1916	424	22,917	250,408	30	2,140	86,247
1917	385	34,443	333,584	20	5,438	222,286
1918	372	45,239	647,196	24	3,865	47,167
1919	729	59,044	1,019,053	29	5,810	89,245
1920	551	69,627	1,709,443	14	19,345	610,638

Source: <https://collab.iisg.nl/web/labourconflicts/stakingen-in-nederland>

The Francoist Persecution and Repression of Galicians of Portuguese Origin in Galicia (1936-1940): A transnational historical approach¹

Dionisio Pereira, Andrés Domínguez Almansa and Lourenzo Fernández Prieto

Within the framework of transnational history, this paper is based on the results of the research project *Names and Voices* (*Nomes e Voces* - www.nomesevoces.net), which explores the consequences of the 1936 coup d'état, led by General Francisco Franco, for citizens of Portuguese origin who lived in the Galician region of Spain.² Identifying this population group and understanding its importance in the repressive context of the coup provides a new approach to studies on migration flows and the level of

¹ Originally presented at the 43rd Annual Conference of the Association for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies (ASPHS), March 22-25, 2012. Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts.

² In 2006, the Galician universities (Santiago, Vigo and A Coruña) began systematic research on the Francoist persecution in Galicia between 1936 and 1939 within the project *Nomes e Voces* (Names and Voices), promoted by the Department of Culture of the Government of Galicia. With the external advice of Conxita Mir and Ángela Cenarro, this project benefited from the wave of research conducted from the 1980s onwards by Julián Casanova's team in Aragón and J. M.^a Solé i Sabaté, J. Villaroya and others in Catalonia. Other related projects are *A socialización na guerra contra a República e os apoios da ditadura franquista* ('Socialisation in the war against the Republic and the support of the Francoist dictatorship', 2009/PX303, Government of Galicia), *Políticas agrarias en un contexto autoritario, de la autarquía a la revolución verde (1940-1980)* ('Agricultural policies in an authoritarian context, from autarky to the green revolution (1940-1980)', HAR2010-18668, Ministry of Science and Technology) and *La fuente oral como base para el estudio de la represión. El caso de la represión colonial francesa en Túnez y franquista en Galicia* ('Oral sources as a basis for the study of repression: the case of the French colonial repression in Tunisia and the Francoist repression in Galicia', Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation [AECID] – Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

integration of immigrants in society and the labour market as well as a more detailed characterization of the persecution perpetrated by those responsible for the coup.

The connivance of Oliveira Salazar's regime in Portugal with the coup against the Spanish Republic has been well described in historical studies: from the involvement of the Viriatos League to the expulsion of fugitives and the extradition of persecuted peoples to rebel-held territory.³ As far as the victims are concerned, the presence of Portuguese citizens, however, has not been adequately documented and studied. This issue is almost unknown as a collective phenomenon, but very significant for an essay in transnational history, allowing us to pose several questions: why

³ Among the abundant works published, the most recent reference is SÁNCHEZ-ALBORNOZ, Nicolás. *Cárceles y exilios*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2012. Regarding the relations maintained during the war between Portugal and the rebels and between Salazar's and Franco's regimes, we should highlight the many works of TORRE, Hipólito de la. as well as LOFF, Manuel. "Los regímenes autoritarios". *Ayer*, no. 37, 2000. pp. 125-162; "La política cultural de los 'Estados nuevos' español y portugués (1936-1945): tradicionalismo, modernidad y confesionalización". *Revista de Occidente*, no. 223, 1999. pp. 41-62; and PENA RODRÍGUEZ, A. *El gran aliado de Franco. Portugal y la guerra civil española: prensa, radio, cine y propaganda*. Sada: Eds. do Castro, 1998; *Galicia, Franco y Salazar: La emigración gallega en Portugal y el intercambio ideológico entre el franquismo y el salazarismo (1936-1939)*. Vigo: Universidade de Vigo, 1999; and *O que parece é: Salazar, Franco e a propaganda contra a Espanha democrática*, Lisbon: Tinta da China, 2009. Consult also the following general and specific works on the Spanish Civil War and Portugal: SIMÓN LORDA, D. *Médicos ourensáns represaliados na guerra civil e na posguerra. Historias da longa noite de pedra*. Santiago: Fundación Dez de Marzo, 2002 and "La Guerra Civil española y la posguerra en el norte de Portugal (A propósito de una conferencia de José Dias Baptista en Ourense)", DEZ/EME (Revista da Fundación Dez de Marzo), 2003; ROSAS, F. ed. *Portugal e a Guerra Civil de Espanha: colóquio internacional*, Lisbon: Colibri, 1998; DELGADO, I. *Portugal e a Guerra Civil de Espanha*, Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1981; and STONE, G.A. *Spain, Portugal and the Great Powers, 1931-1941*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. With regard to Galician fugitives, police actions and conflicts at the border during the war, see REIGOSA, C. "Maquis na raia galego-portuguesa". *A Trabe de Ouro*, no. 16, 1993; RODRÍGUEZ GALLARDO, A. "Entre brandas e inverneiras: Refuxiados e guerra civil na fronteira entre Ourense e Portugal". *A Trabe de Ouro*, no. 57, 2004. pp. 23-37.; SIMÕES, D. *Barrancos na encruzilhada da Guerra Civil de Espanha: Memórias e testemunhos, 1936*. Lisboa: Colibri, 2007; DIAS BAPTISTA, J. "A Guerra civil espanhola e os barrosões". In: CANEIRO, X. C. *et al. O Cambedo da Raia, 1946: Solidaridade galego-portuguesa silenciada*. Ourense: Asociación Amigos da República, 2004. pp. 123-161; ROSA, E.B. "O papel da fronteira luso-galaica na questão dos refugiados da Guerra Civil de Espanha (1936-1939)". In: ALVAREZ, A. dir. *Xornadas sobre represión, solidariedade e resistencia antifranquista*. Celanova: Asociación Arraianos, 2008. pp. 99-110; GRANDÍO SEOANE, E. "A raia que deixou de selo: A fronteira galego-portuguesa en xullo de 1936". In: BALBOA LÓPEZ, X. and PERNAS OROZA, H. eds. *Entre nós: Estudos de arte, xeografía e historia en homenaxe ó profesor Xosé Manuel Pose Antelo*. Santiago de Compostela: USC-SPIC, 2001. pp. 999-1022. Also consult the following on the repression of Portuguese citizens: MÉIXOME, C. "A represión sobre os portugueses no Val Miñor". *A Peneira do Val Miñor*. no. 10, December 2008. p. 2.

has the memory and history of this phenomenon not been remembered or studied? Does the invisibility of this social group reflect its integration or deliberate concealment? Did they suffer persecution as Portuguese people or as citizens or residents of the Spanish territory?

It took ten days for the initially failed military uprising that led to the civil war in Spain to be successful in the Galicia region. Far away from the military fronts, the perpetrators of the coup initiated intense repressive actions in a broad range of forms as a method to replace the democratic regime and in order to break down the bases of political and social power. *Nomes e Voces* has documented the persecutions, organized research databases and investigated a past that has been unveiled only fragmentarily, through the study of 2,600 dossiers of legal processes, all of the death certificates in the civil registers of Galician town councils, 515 interviews and other research. The data until now has revealed that 14,000 people suffered reprisals and 4,600 people were murdered in the Galician region. The research project has also released a vast amount of previously unpublished documentation on the subject.⁴

1. A transnational historical approach

In contrast with exclusively national historiographical practice, the transnational approach provides a broader standpoint that increases the explanatory capacity of history. It enables a less chauvinistic or, in Spanish terms, less *casticista* (traditional) reflexion.⁵ Transnationalism opens a breach in the methodological stasis that has impregnated the social sciences, and more especially history, since the nineteenth century, when it was established in order to reaffirm the nation state that liberalism was constructing. The newly born transnational history was a response to the context of the new globalization that commenced with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and challenges the efficacy of nation states as an analytical framework.⁶ By removing the difference imposed by borders, the search for

⁴ The project may be consulted at <<http://www.nomesevoces.net/gl/informes/>>. The database of victims enables individual searches according to different parameters, such as nationality: <<http://vitas.nomesevoces.net/>>. See also NOMES E VOCES. *Vítimas Galicia (1936-1939). Informe de resultados*. Santiago de Compostela: Meubook, 2010.

⁵ GUARDIA HERRERO, C. and PAN-MONTOJO GONZÁLEZ, J. L. “Reflexiones sobre una historia transnacional”. *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea*, no. 16, 1998. pp. 9-31.

⁶ For the space in which history is constructed and the crisis of national history, see FERNÁNDEZ PRIETO, L. “Historia local, nacional e transnacional”. In: SÁ MACHADO, P. and MAIA MARQUES, J. A. coords. *Maia, História Regional e Local, Actas do Congresso*. Maia:

a transnational approach has yielded important results recently in relation to the study of migration, the labour movement and cultural history as well as rural and environmental history.⁷

J. P. Bohórquez-Montoya⁸ suggests that transnationalism has vast meanings that may be considered in different fields to tackle cross-border social relationships, networks and flows of people, ideas and information, the reproduction of cultural processes at a global scale, the expansion of capital and social movements that articulate the local and the global in a transnational social space. It thus supersedes the previous, solely economic, approach presented by Immanuel Wallerstein in world-systems theory. By separating itself from traditional units of analysis, such as the tribe, the parish, the nation or the state, trans-state investigation allows us to focus on the processes followed by transmigrants and on the forces that they faced. Transnational labour history is a recent field of study that overcomes the traditional historical archetype of the working class, constructed by British historiography on the basis of the English empirical model, and makes it possible to study different labour processes at a global level so as to discover social facts and emerging innovative processes that otherwise would go unnoticed.⁹

In the case at hand, this perspective allows us to discover the high number of Portuguese citizens who were affected by the repressive

Câmara Municipal da Maia, vol. 1, 1999. pp. 101-109. For national history, trans-state history and globalization, as well as rural history as a space of transnational history, see by the same author “Estado, sociedad rural e innovación tecnológica en la agricultura: Los cambios en torno a 1900”. In: *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea*, no. 17, 1999. pp. 67-103 (specifically pp. 68-76).

⁷ THELEN, D. “Of Audiences, Borderlands, and Comparisons: Toward the Internationalization of American History”. *The Journal of American History*, vol. 79, no. 2, 1992. pp. 432-462; “La experiencia vivida, un reto para la historia profesional moderna: Californianos del sur e historiadores científicos ante el cambio de siglo”. *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea*, no. 17, 1999. pp. 145-172; “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History”. *The Journal of American History*. vol. 86, no. 3, Special Issue, 1999. pp. 965-975; TYRRELL, I. “American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History”. *The American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4, 1991. pp. 1031-1055; LINDEN, M. van der. *Historia transnacional del trabajo*, Valencia: Biblioteca de Historia Social, 2006.

⁸ BOHÓRQUEZ-MONTOYA, J.P. “Transnacionalismo e historia transnacional del trabajo: hacia una síntesis teórica”. *Papel Político*. vol. 14, no. 1, 2009. pp. 273-301.

⁹ In fact, it has developed only in the past ten years, when Michael P. Hanagan and Marcel van der Linden began to clarify its subject and scope, helping recentralise the history of labour and working classes in historiographical discussion. HANAGAN, M. and VAN DER LINDEN, M. “New Approaches to Global Labor History”. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, no. 66, 2004. pp. 1-11.

processes of the civil war in Spain in a context of the internationalization of social and political issues during fascism.

2. Portuguese to Galicia and Galicians to Portugal: a continuous flow

While it is true that the characteristics of the emigration of Galician people in Spain to Portugal are relatively well known, this is not the case of the parallel transfer of Portuguese people to Galicia.¹⁰ This migratory movement can be seen in the movement of Portuguese stonemasons to Galicia in the seventeenth century and the spread of a large number of day labourers to the region in the following centuries. This was a persistent, diffuse movement of emigrants, who were easily integrated into the adoptive society and, precisely for this reason, are difficult to visualize and quantify.

This presence of the Portuguese in Galiza [Galicia] is not very well known due to the absence of specific studies and arises as a counter-current to the larger, mass movements of Galegos [Galicians] who immigrated to Porto or Lisbon in the same epoch. The description of the movement of workers to Galiza appears to show a random, individualized character, but also strongly suggests the facility with which they inserted themselves, boosted by their affinities with the language and customs that ultimately were very effective...it appears to be relatively common cases of teams of sawyers or masons who travelled to Galicia in search of work, some of whom ended up staying in rural areas. Even today you may find Portuguese newsagents and caretakers...raised on the farm or...young women who become prostitutes; after all, people of diverse occupations in the rural areas said they “went to Spain” (Galiza) and lost there, in a great many cases, knowledge of their origins.¹¹

Nevertheless, the presence of Portuguese labourers in the work sites of Galician cities and in the farmlands of Galician hamlets began to be significant with the urban explosion in southern Galicia, around 1900,

¹⁰ See, among others, ALVES, J. F., FERREIRA, M. F. V. and MONTEIRO, M. R. “Imigração galega na cidade do Porto (2ª metade do século XIX)”. *Revista da Faculdade de Letras - História*, series II, vol. IX, Porto, 1992. pp. 215-236; FERNÁNDEZ CORTIZO, C. “[La emigración gallega a la provincia portuguesa de Trás-os-Montes y Alto Douro \(1700-1850\)](#)”. In: *Douro: Estudos & Documentos*, year 12, 2007, no. 22. pp. 79-112; FERNANDES ALVES, J. F. “Imigração de galegos no Norte de Portugal (1500-1900)”. In: EIRAS ROEL, A. and GONZÁLEZ LOPO, D. EDS. *Mobilidade e migrações internas na Europa Latina*. Santiago de Compostela: USC/Cátedra Unesco, 2002. pp. 1-11.

¹¹ MEDEIROS, A. “Discurso Nacionalista e Imagens de Portugal na Galiza”. *Etnográfica: Revista do Centro de Estudos de Antropologia Social*. VII, 2, Lisbon, 2003. p. 334.

associated with the business of emigration to America, which, together with canning, were at the core of the development of maritime industries. Fialho de Almeida, a Portuguese writer and traveller passing by the city of Vigo, noticed at that time his fellow countrymen bent over their work as stonemasons or road pavers in the context of the accelerated urban development of the city.¹²

At the heart of such industrialization, Vigo's urban growth stimulated the exploitation of granite quarries in the neighbouring municipality of O Porriño for the building sector. High numbers of Portuguese worked in these quarries and were the object of special legal measures, as this report in a local newspaper shows:

The municipality sent a notice that recognised the Portuguese colony resident in this city (quite numerous, actually) obliging them inexcusably, each and every one, to list their domicile as well as present their consular identity cards for registration in the civil government...¹³

During the First World War, the combination of incessant emigration to America in Galicia as a whole with the growth of the industrial and the service sectors, as well as the progressive development of the cities and towns that were the administrative centres of their respective regions, led to an increase in the demand for a cheap labour force from the north of Portugal.¹⁴ The activity of Portuguese workers could then be detected across Galicia, in mines and quarries, in the timber sector, in building and ceramics, in the construction of railways, in agricultural work paid by the day, in crafts or in itinerant trades. The vast majority of these workers were basically economic migrants from rural areas in Portugal.

Yet socio-political reasons also help explain the presence of the Portuguese who lived in pre-war Galicia: there were multiple desertions from the army to avoid service in the First World War as well as Portuguese exiles across Spain after the failed attempts to overthrow the Portuguese military dictatorship in 1926 and from the Portuguese dictatorial regime of Salazar, which was consolidated as the New State in 1933. These included such important figures as the former president of the Republic, Bernardino

¹² FIALHO DE ALMEIDA. *Galiza, 1905*, Santiago: Laidvento, 1996.

¹³ An account by the correspondent of the journal *Faro de Vigo*, 2 August 1906, in IGLESIAS VEIGA, J. R. "Crónica dos escenarios das nosas antigas fotos". In: RODRÍGUEZ SÍO, F. and IGLESIAS VEIGA, J. R. *Unha ollada no tempo: Achegamento ao patrimonio fotográfico do Porriño*, O Porriño: AMI/Concello do Porriño, 2007.

¹⁴ PEREIRA, D. "Proletariado e loita de clases na Galiza de anteguerra". In: CONSTENLA BERGUEIRO, G. and DOMÍNGUEZ CASTRO, L. eds., *Tempo de sermos: Galicia nos séculos contemporâneos*. Vigo: Servicio de Publicacións da Universidade de Vigo, 2002.

Machado, and the writer Aquilino Ribeiro, who dwelled in the Galician territory for some time.¹⁵ There were even organizations of exiles: in 1932, the *Federação dos Anarquistas Portugueses Exilados* (Federation of Portuguese Anarchists in Exile, FAPE) was created in Paris, which had a number of organised groups in Galicia allied to the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (Iberian Anarchist Federation, FAI) such as *Os Intransigentes* (The Intransigents) and *Os Inadaptáveis* (The Unadapted) in the region of A Coruña and *Os Conquistadores Modernos* (The Modern Conquerors) in Lousame.¹⁶

3. Portuguese workers in the Galician Republican era (1931-1936)

During the Second Republic, the Portuguese colony in Galicia was formed mostly by thousands of workers scattered across the territory and devoted to multiple trades: workers in stone quarries or construction sites; road pavers (*calceteiros*) in the construction of roads and streets in towns and cities; itinerant or permanent sawyers; wolfram or tin miners in San Finx (Lousame) and Carbia (Vila de Cruces); slaters (*cabaqueiros*) in Neda's tile and brick factories; itinerant traders; sailors in the Rías Baixas; or railway workers (*carrilanos*) in the construction of the Zamora-Madrid line.¹⁷

An interesting case was that of the stone quarries in the province of Pontevedra. In the quarries of Portas or O Porriño, which produced paving stones for city streets or for exportation to the Netherlands and England, Portuguese quarry workers were subjected in the 1920s and 1930s to long day and night shifts, lit only by tallow lamps. This was also the case in the stone quarries of Moaña and Domaio, in the Vigo inlet, which were heavily used for the development of the city and harbour of Vigo. By 1926, among the companies that exploited the quarries, two Basque-held businesses stood out: the *Sociedad General de Obras y Construcciones de Bilbao* (Bilbao General Work and Construction Society) and *Eraso, Dávila y Cía.* (Eraso, Dávila and Co.), which employed hundreds of workers in conditions

¹⁵ NÚÑEZ, J. "Portugal en la Conspiración del 18 de Julio de 1936 y el apoyo luso a través del Archivo del General Varela". Undated. Available at <www.historiaymilicia.com>.

¹⁶ PEREIRA, D. *A CNT en Galicia, 1922-1936*. Santiago de Compostela: Laivento, 1994.

¹⁷ In the A Canda-A Gudiña stretch, for example, there were hundreds of Portuguese workers. By 1931, they represented half of all railway workers. See PEREIRA, D. "Alzamento fascista e represión no camiño de ferro Zamora-Ourense: Bisarras de Monterrei, As Frieiras, A Portela e Seabra". *A Trabe de Ouro*, no. 73, January-March, 2008.

characterized by a great lack of workplace safety. Among them were many Portuguese from Esposende, Viana and Guimarães, who had formed a large colony and also worked in fishing, farming, the lumber industry and, in the case of women, canning. They had built a “tin neighbourhood” near the stone quarries with houses of this material, which took the name of *O Latão* (the big tin can), and also invented a jargon, *entenderecho*, which somehow or other has reached our times. Sometimes suffering extremely serious work accidents, such as the one that occurred in the Eraso stone quarry in 1933, resulting in the death of five Portuguese labourers, this group represented approximately 7 percent of the population in the coastal strip of the town council of Moaña.¹⁸

As to the sawyers, the presence of Portuguese workers was well known in many towns in the interior of Galicia, such as Carballo, Cabo Vilaño (A Laracha) and Teo. These were places where workers of Portuguese origin had settled in the 1920s, simultaneously with the expansion of forest exploitation and the boom of the transformation of wood into boards.¹⁹

In conclusion, the colony of Portuguese workers in the Second Republic included thousands of people, whose concentration in the southwest of the province of Pontevedra resulted in the formation of the city of Vigo (1927) and in three of the towns on the shores of the Miño (O Porriño, Tomiño and Tui). Each of these cities had a Portuguese community centre that helped give cohesion to the group and deal with the problems that arose from their life together in a different state. Proof of the colony’s growing importance was the creation of a network of consular agencies by the Portuguese state, most of them in the province of Pontevedra. In the first third of the twentieth century, there were consuls or vice-consuls in the cities of Vigo, A Guarda, Tui, Pontevedra, Vilagarcía de Arousa, Verín, Ourense, Ferrol and A Coruña.

¹⁸ GONZÁLEZ FERNÁNDEZ, X. M. and VILLAVERDE ROMÁN, X. C. *Moaña nos anos vermellos: Conflictividade social e política nun concello agrario e marinheiro*. Sada: Eds. do Castro, 1999.

¹⁹ DOMÍNGUEZ ALMANSA, A. *Asociacionismo agrario e poder local en Teo, 1890-1940: A formación da sociedade civil na Galicia rural*. Teo: Concello de Teo, 1997; GONZÁLEZ PROBADOS, M. *Crise económica, movemento obreiro e socialismo na Galiza republicana, 1931-36*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Santiago de Compostela: Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1988; PEREIRA, D. (1998): “Empresarios, fábricas e traballadores: o sector da madeira (1920-1936)”. In: PEREIRA, D. *Sindicalistas e rebeldes: Anacos da historia do movemento obreiro na Galiza*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 1998.

Portuguese immigrant workers were also involved as well in the social and labour conflicts that took place in the country, but employers initially used them to drive down wages and working conditions. The figure of the strikebreaker of Portuguese origin was a constant in the evolution of Galician labour ideology and even led to the creation of the *Unión Galaico-Portuguesa* (Galician-Portuguese Union)²⁰ articulated by socialist militants from both sides of the border in the first five years of the twentieth century. Later on, in the early times of the Second Republic, the railway works in the area of A Canda in Ourense²¹ and the building sector in Vigo and Redondela, were the scene of conflicts between workers in branches of the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT, General Union of Workers) and contractors, as the latter preferred to contract a cheaper, more submissive workforce from Portugal rather than union members. In those days, the labour crisis resulted into attitudes distant from proletarian internationalism in some construction unions in Vigo, which defended restrictions on the hiring of Portuguese workers, alleging a lack of jobs²² that provoked the protests of the Portuguese Centre of Vigo, which acted as representative for the Portuguese workers. The *Sociedad de Canteros, Marmolistas and Similares* (Society of Stonemasons, Marble Masons and Similar Trades, which belonged to the UGT) declared at that time: “We don’t forget, since it still hurts us, the anti-social and anti-proletarian behaviour of the Portuguese who always, in Vigo and all of Galicia, come to strangle our social conflicts and provoke salary cuts in our profession”.²³

As the Republic progressed, employees of Portuguese origin joined locals of the major trade unions, the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT; National Confederation of Labour) and the socialist UGT.²⁴ Even in urban and town areas that were distant from the *raia* or border between Galicia and Portugal, we are aware of cases of Portuguese workers that were politically and socially involved in, among others, the CNT unions of the lumber, mining, fishing and building sectors

²⁰ BREY, G. *Economie et mouvement syndical en Galice, 1840-1911*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. Lille: Atelier national de reproduction des theses, 1990.

²¹ PEREIRA, D. *Sindicalistas e rebeldes: Anacos do movemento obreiro na Galiza*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 1998; “A represión franquista contra os cidadáns portugueses radicados na Galiza (1936-1939)”. In: ÁLVAREZ CACCAMO, X. M. et al. *O Miño, unha corrente de memoria. Actas das xornadas sobre a represión franquista no Baixo Miño (2006-2007)*. Ponteareas: Edicións Alén Miño, 2008.

²² GONZÁLEZ PROBADOS, M. *Op.Cit.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ There are many examples in rural and town areas of Pontevedra adjoining Portugal, such as Tui, or in the province of Ourense such as in Entrimo, Albarellos de Monterrei or Campobecerros (Castrelo do Val), in the sphere of anarcho-syndicalist unions, and Verín, in the case of unions belonging to the UGT.

in different towns such as A Coruña and Lugo.²⁵ Also left-wing parties, such as the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) and the Communist Party (PC) as well as their youth wings had Portuguese members.²⁶ The anarchist FAI of A Coruña itself included notable Portuguese-born activists. Some workers even stood out in the groups to which they belonged, such as certain sawyers, railway workers or miners in the anarcho-sindicalist sphere,²⁷ or prominent socialist and communist leaders.²⁸ Again, the example of Moaña, in the Vigo inlet, is an illustrative one: the *Sociedad de Canteros y Oficios Varios de Moaña y sus contornos "La Internacional"* (The International Society of Stonemasons and Miscellaneous Trades of Moaña and Its Surroundings) included a high number of Portuguese quarry workers among its militants and even its directors. In fact, the society was chaired by Manuel da Conceção from 1930 and 1934, and another two Portuguese workers, Manuel Gomes de Oliveira and Laurindo Ribeiro Pereira, were members of its board of directors.

²⁵ Cabo Vilaño (A Laracha), San Finx (Lousame), O Barqueiro and Lugo, respectively.

²⁶ We know many details about members of the JJSS, JSU (the youth groups of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party and the Communist Party, respectively), the PSOE, the PCE and the UGT in Vigo, Cangas, Moaña, San Clodio de Ribas de Sil, Teo, Santiago, Fontao (Vila de Cruces) and Ferrol.

²⁷ The sawyer, Joaquim Carlos Álvarez Ribeiro, was chairman of the *Sindicato de Agricultores y Profesiones Varias* (Union of Farmers and Miscellaneous Trades, belonging to the CNT) of Cabo Vilaño (A Laracha); the railroad worker (*carrilano*) Antonio Ribeiro, was on the executive of the *Sindicato de Oficios Varios* (Union of Miscellaneous Trades, belonging to the CNT) of Campobecerros (Castrelo do Val); Julio Azevedo Veiga was a contributor to the journal *Solidaridad Obrera* and militant of the FAI of A Coruña; the miners, Manuel Paiva Martínez, Manuel dos Santos da Conceção and José Díaz N., were members of the *Sindicato Minero* (Union of Mineworkers, belonging to the CNT) of San Finx; and day labourers Avelino García Teixeira and José Barreira, were militants of the *Sindicato de Agricultores y Profesiones Varias* (Union of Farmers and Miscellaneous Professions, belonging to the CNT) of Albarellos (Monterrei).

²⁸ Among them were communists Luis Soares Certal, a cinema operator in Ferrol; day labourer Francisco Ferreira Gago, in O Barqueiro; the sawyer from Cangas, Adonis Teixeira Alonso, from the UGT and the JSU, just as his neighbour the blacksmith Manuel González Dantas; socialist stonemason Perfecto Magariños Novegil, also from Cangas; in Calo (Teo), labourer José Gómez de Jesús, was a member of the *Sociedad de Oficios Varios* (Society of Miscellaneous Trades, belonging to the UGT), led by the Liste brothers and a sawyer of Portuguese descent and communist ideology whose surname was Paradela. See DOMÍNGUEZ ALMANSA, A. *Asociacionismo agrario e poder local en Teo, 1890-1940: A formación da sociedade civil na Galicia rural*. Teo: Concello de Teo, 1997. Román Ramos, was chairman of the *Sindicato Minero de Fontao* (Fontao Union of Mineworkers); day labourer from Verín, José Dobarrio Lorenzo, was a leader of the *Fronte Popular* (Popular Front) and militant of the PCE and the *Sociedad de Oficios Varios* (UGT); and stonemason Telmo Freitas Lima, from the Sindicato de San Pedro da Ramallosa (San Pedro da Ramallosa Union), was very active in the area of Nigrán. Consult MÉIXOME, C. *Op.Cit.*

Because of their activities in workers' organisations and their involvement in social and labour conflicts, some of these Portuguese union members suffered reprisals in Galicia during Republican times. Anarchist Avelino García Teixeira, a prominent participant in the great strikes of 1933 and 1934,²⁹ was arrested on several occasions at his home in Albarellos (Monterrei) and, in April 1936, was the subject of another attempt at deportation to his country of origin through the use of the *Ley de Vagos y Maleantes* (Vagrancy Law). Something similar happened to Isolina Celeste Sousa Castro, partner of a member of the CNT, José Aldán Rivas, from Tui. She was arrested after the general strike of June 1932 that was called in sympathy with the workers of the Arsenal of Ferrol and also after a strike in December 1933. She was expelled to Portugal on both occasions.³⁰

The Revolution of October 1934 was joined by Portuguese workers as well. In this case, the ideology of most of them was socialism. Among them were, for example, a handful of militants of the farming and workers' societies of the region of San Clodio and Quiroga, who had to return to the area of Viana do Castelo to escape the persecution of the Spanish authorities. Moreover, Arturo Suárez "O Portugués" (Portuguese) was arrested in the surrounding area for the same reasons, charged with shooting at a train, placing bombs and attempted murder.³¹ In the libertarian sphere, the chairman of the *Federación Obrera* (Workers' Federation, belonging to the CNT) of A Guarda, David Álvarez Paz, son of Portuguese parents who had dual nationality, was imprisoned.³²

4. The Francoist persecution and the Portuguese

Insofar as they participated in social conflicts, these Portuguese citizens suffered a fate similar to that of their Galician comrades. Although still incompletely, we know the cases of 159 Portuguese people living in different places of Galicia who suffered reprisals after the coup of 1936.

²⁹ These were the general strikes called by the CNT across the state to protest against the right-wing government that had resulted from the election of November 1933, and the failed Revolution of October 1934.

³⁰ PEREIRA, D. and FERNÁNDEZ, E. *O movemento libertario en Galiza (1936-1976)*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2006.

³¹ REDONDO ABAL, F. X. *Memorias de Marcelino Fernández Prada: Un alcalde socialista e revolucionario*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2007.

³² Other Portuguese citizens in Galicia were known by their left-wing, secular ideology, as was the case of the resident of Cangas, Manuel Alves Ribeiro. See SANTOS CASTROVIEJO, I. and NORES SOLIÑO, A. *Historia de Cangas, 1900-1936: Unha ribeira de pescadores*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2005.

Some of those who had participated in the resistance to the military coup in the early days died or were arrested after armed conflicts in A Coruña, Lousame, Vigo-Lavadores, Baixo Miño or the region of As Frieiras, in Ourense.³³ Others, who had been able to flee to Asturias by sea, or by land crossing Portugal towards the central area controlled by the Republic, died later when fighting on the loyal side or spent years in concentration camps, penal colonies and jails in Galicia or outside it, having fallen into the hands of the Francoists. Most of them stayed in Galicia – some even took part in clandestine activities, as was the case of FAI militant Julio Azevedo in A Coruña – and were taken away and executed (*paseados*) after being court-martialled. Others, tried by military tribunals, were deprived of their civil rights, their properties were seized, and they were fined or given prison sentences, which they served in different prisons, where the weakest of them died.³⁴

There were also some who had to flee to their own country in order to escape persecution in Galicia.³⁵ And even some who were expelled at the Portuguese border by the Spanish authorities for being “hostile” to the new regime. There they were awaited by the newly created *Polícia de Vigilância e Defesa do Estado* (State Vigilance and Defence Police, PVDE) in Portugal. For example, in late July 1936, the *Companhia da Guarda Fiscal* (Fiscal War Company) of Chaves sent fifteen Galician citizens and seven Portuguese ones who had been detained in the headquarters of the Company in a train from Galicia to the Porto Police Delegation, under the surveillance of a PVDE officer.³⁶ Among the many deported were the former Portuguese

³³ María Bello and Manuel Paiva in A Coruña and Lousame, respectively; Manuel Barbosa, José da Silva and José Silva in Salvaterra and Pontearreas; Enrique Acuña Barciela and Manuel Correa de Carvalho in Lavadores. We should also mention the murder of a group of Portuguese *carrilanos* who lived in the town of Campobeceros (Castrelo do Val), in Ourense. They were summarily executed or shot by a firing squad in application of the edict of war during the clashes that took place at the railway on the last days of July 1936. See PEREIRA, D. and FERNÁNDEZ, E. Op.Cit.; PEREIRA, D. “Alzamento fascista e represión no camiño de ferro Zamora-Ourense: Bisbarras de Monterrei, As Frieiras, A Portela e Seabra”. *A Trabe de Ouro*, no. 73, January-March, 2008.

³⁴ SIERRA, F. and ALFORJA, I. *Fuerte de San Cristóbal, 1938: La gran fuga de las cárceles franquistas*. Pamplona: Pamiela Ediciones, 2005.

³⁵ This was the case of anarchist and itinerant trader from A Coruña, Arnaldo Teixeira; of the member of the International Red Aid of Lavadores, Fernando de Almeida, who had already been arrested during the Revolution of October 1934; the resident of Samieira (Poio), Augusto Anes; *carrilanos* from the southeast of Ourense, such as José Antonio Rodríguez, Joaquín Alonso Alonso, José da Silva Vides and Jacinto Álvarez Álvarez, and at least four Portuguese-born residents of Verín: Francisco Manuel Baptista, Néstor, Lima Rosa Ribeiro and Duarte Fernandes.

³⁶ RODRÍGUEZ GALLARDO, A. *O ruído da morte: A represión franquista en Pontearreas (1936-39)*. Sada: Eds. do Castro, 2006.

consul in A Coruña, the musician Anthero Dias de Alte da Veiga, expelled by the Francoists at the advanced age of 70 for belonging to the Freemasons.³⁷

Our investigation has unveiled the other side of the coin as well, that is, Portuguese citizens who joined the *Falange* (Spanish Fascist Party) and left a mark on the country. These was the lumber contractor Francisco López dos Santos, murdered in 1938 at his home in Priegue (Nigrán) by a group of fugitives, owing to his activities as informer;³⁸ the resident of Saceda-Palmés (Ourense) Antonio Ferreira Suárez, a well-known *paseador* (executioner) killed in a clash in late 1936;³⁹ the Falangist from O Barco de Valdeorras, José da Silva Meirales, executed by a firing squad in Ourense in 1942, convicted of the robbery and murder of a right-wing married couple;⁴⁰ the Falangist sawyer born in Leiría and resident in Zas, Carlos Antonio Leal; and the brothers Ramón and Manuel Fernández, who lived in Portor, Negreira.⁴¹ Other Portuguese citizens, such as Luis Nogueira Pintos, a resident of Ourense, acted as informants and revealed the location of the many fugitives who were hiding in the Portuguese hamlets at the border, liaising between the Portuguese PVDE and the Ourense Border Inspection Delegation.⁴² Specific research on this topic would provide more clues about this different, and sombre, form of integration of Portuguese citizens in Galician society.

Portuguese citizens persecuted after the coup of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)⁴³

Table 1 - Deaths

	A Coruña	Lugo	Ourense	Pontevedra	Outside Galicia	Total

³⁷ VELASCO SOUTO, C. "Xullo 1936 - Agosto 1937: A pegada da represión na Coruña". In FERNÁNDEZ, E. ed. *A fuxida do Portiño: Historia, memoria e vítimas*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2009.

³⁸ GONZÁLEZ, J. A. *Nigrán: Memoria de una guerra. 1936-39*. Vigo: Eds. do Cumio, 1998.

³⁹ PRADA, J. *Ourense, 1936-1939: Alzamento, guerra e represión*. Sada: Eds. do Castro, 2004.

⁴⁰ GARCÍA YÁÑEZ, F. *O Barco e a Terra de Valdeorras durante a II República e o Franquismo (1931-1977)*. Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2005.

⁴¹ LIÑARES GIRAUT, A. *Negreira na Guerra do 36*. Sada: Eds. do Castro, 1993.

⁴² DASAIRAS, X. *Crónicas rexiomontanas: O territorio e a historia na comarca de Monterrei*. Monterrei: Mancomunidade de Concellos da Comarca de Monterrei, 1999.

⁴³ Prepared by drawing on sources listed in the Primary Sources at the end of this paper.

Murdered	1	3	10	18	1	33
Executed	-	1	2	9	1	13
Armed operation	2	-	-	7	-	9
Death in prison	-	-	-	5	3	8
Others	1	-	1	-	-	2
Total deaths	4	4	13	39	5	65

Table 2 – Individuals arrested and prosecuted

Murdered	A Coruña	Lugo	Ourense	Pontevedra	Outside Galicia	Total
Imprisoned under sentence	6	2	4	21	2	35
In prison* without sentence	8	2	20	29	-	59
Total	14	4	24	50	2	94
Total (tables 1 and 2)	18	8	37	89	7	159

* Court martialled and detainees held without trial, sometimes for a long time.

Tables 1 and 2 show the various modes of Francoist persecution of Portuguese citizens who were involved in political, social and union activities in republican Galicia.⁴⁴ Some considerations should be made in

⁴⁴ Murdered: indiscriminate killings, named *paseos* (cases of individuals taken away and executed), *sacas* (mass removals of inmates from the prison for the purpose of executing them); Executions: by shooting following a court-martial; Armed operations: deaths that resulted from armed clashes after the military coup, punishment and cleansing operations; Deaths in prison: detention centres or in prisons due to escape, physical abuse, disease...; Others: 1 killed in the Republican Army and 1 undetermined.

relation to these modes of deadly repression. While in the Galician case as a whole, the volume of people executed after being court-martialled represents a third of the total number of victims, the percentage of Portuguese victims does not exceed 20 percent.⁴⁵ One might think that repressors resorted even more rarely to enforcing the “law” that the victors imposed by military force for the benefit of their criminal practices when the victims were Portuguese nationals, perhaps owing to the potential difficulties that might arise in the relationships with Portugal. However, in the case of the thirteen citizens of Portuguese origin executed by shooting in Galicia under military jurisdiction, there is no evidence that the Portuguese authorities started any action or made any protest whatsoever. Nothing seems to suggest that the Portuguese authorities attempted to prevent any deaths of Portuguese in Galicia during this period as a whole; on the contrary, there is evidence to believe that Portuguese consuls were, in general, enthusiastic spokesmen of the Francoist military coup of July 18, 1936.⁴⁶

From a gender perspective, we found that the repression affected women as well. We have registered twelve cases (8 percent of the total), six in the province of Ourense, five in the province of Pontevedra, and one in A Coruña province. At least two women were taken away and executed, and another one died during the shootings that occurred in A Coruña on the first days of the military coup.

The Francoist repression did not discriminate by age either. There were 68 year-old victims and others who had barely turned 17. Regarding professions, the black list mentions those that were the most frequent among the Portuguese who worked in Galicia: *carrilanos*, miners, stonemasons and quarry workers, day labourers, sawyers, carpenters or peasants. One fact stands out: all the Portuguese who were prosecuted and killed were workers and manual employees, unlike the Galicians who were persecuted, whose data show a division into three unequal thirds in the following order: 1) manual employees; 2) middle and professional classes; 3) farmworkers, artisans and fishermen.

Two aspects should be highlighted in relation to the territorial profile. First, the origin of the Portuguese citizens who were subjected to reprisals: on many occasions, their records just show a generic “Portugal” as

⁴⁵ L. Fernández Prieto (ed.) *Informe de resultados. Víctimas Galicia (1936-1939)* (‘Results Report: Victims in Galicia, 1936-1939’), Inter-University Research Project Nomes e Voces, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2010.

⁴⁶ Such was, for example, the attitude of the Portuguese consul in Verín, Tomás Rocha dos Santos. See DASAIRAS, X. *Op.Cit.*

place of birth; as a result, we only have reliable information about approximately a third of these citizens. Second, the vast majority of them were from the five northern districts of Portugal (particularly Viana do Castelo, followed, in this order, by Bragança, Porto, Vila Real and Braga); less than 20 percent came from the central or southern districts of Portugal.

With regard to the cartographic distribution of the repression of the Portuguese in Galicia, we should highlight the concentration of repressive actions in the provinces of Pontevedra and Ourense (see maps 1 to 4), and more specifically in the southwest of the province of Pontevedra (Baixo Miño, O Condado, area of Vigo), where most Portuguese citizens lived (46 percent of the dead and 41 percent of those affected by other modes of repression), as well as in the southeast of Ourense (Verín, Viana, Valdeorras) along the route of the railway under construction (15.4 percent and 16 percent, respectively).⁴⁷ The reasons for this are the high concentration of Portuguese workers in these regions, their integration into unions and left-wing parties, and their active involvement in the armed clashes of the first days.

Regarding the cartographic distribution of the forms of persecution, there are registers of the death of residents of Portuguese origin in twenty-one town councils (maps 1 and 2), but other forms of persecution (arrests or legal proceedings) that did not result into killings occurred in forty-one town councils (maps 3 and 4). While the former were concentrated in the south, the latter spread out across the territory. As to the percentages that could correlate the number of Portuguese victims and that of Galician victims, the details that we have been able to obtain are not very significant, but are enough for us to state that the Portuguese suffered reprisals to the same extent as the Galicians (maps 2 and 4). We still do not have information that could define the patterns underlying such data.

In any event, it should be remembered once again, that this figure of victims of reprisals is considered “minimum”, bearing in mind the low visibility of Portuguese emigrants in Galicia due to the country’s long tradition of emigration to Galicia, as well as the fact that both regions shared a cultural identity. In addition, it turns out that Portuguese names were

⁴⁷ The number of Portuguese citizens who suffered repression along the route of the railway could even increase if we take into account those who were executed by shooting in the border territories of As Portelas and A Seabra. We know from the Lubián Civil Register that near the hamlet of Acibeiros, in the townlet of Caserna, two itinerant traders of Portuguese origin who lived in A Pobra de Seabra were killed on August 21, 1936: Francisco Cardoso Souzas and Manuel José Gerónimo. They were buried in the Acibeiros cemetery.

adapted to Spanish and, therefore, we are dealing with lists of Galician men and women who suffered reprisals that are very likely to contain an even higher number of Portuguese citizens. Furthermore, the vast number of “unknown” individuals in these lists (particularly in the province of Ourense) may well include Portuguese nationals whose national affiliation was not known and who had not been claimed by their families, as these had always ignored their whereabouts. We have not considered here the verified presence of Portuguese people among the fugitive guerrilla fighters that were active at the border of Ourense and Portugal after the war. We do know, however, that reprisals by Francoist authorities were common and resulted from the important cooperation of the residents at the border with the guerrillas that had been acting in the area from as early as the end of the war in 1939. A significant case was, for instance, the arrest in 1940 of five Portuguese women who lived in the town of Verín. Thereafter, during the Second World War, Portuguese republican fighters born in border towns such as Sernande, Pinheiro Novo, Vinhais, Chaves or Melgaço and the guerrilla liaisons on both sides of the border, suffered the same fate as their Galician comrades or those in the rest of the Spanish state.⁴⁸

Lastly, we may draw some conclusions. The hypothesis that the killing and persecution of Portuguese citizens in Galicia might be linked to the identification of the “other” as the most convenient scapegoat on which the punishment could be focused does not seem plausible in view of the data. In the case of Spain, the “other” was anti-Spain, Marxism or the republican democratic power, and the Portuguese who were persecuted or exterminated were included in this same package. Nevertheless, the presence of a high number of Portuguese citizens among the neighbours who were slaughtered in some towns (nearly a half of the dead in Castrelo do Val and Oímbra), together with the fact that these Portuguese workers were linked to the constantly itinerant construction of the railway network, may be significant from a local point of view if we attempt to find, in the different nationality and the poor social inclusion of the Portuguese in a given territorial space, some macabre incentives for the killers. However, the global data obtained in Galicia seem to suggest precisely the full integration of most workers from the other side of the river Miño – even when it came to persecution. There was significant transnational integration, in spite of the power of the different state structures that granted Spanish or Portuguese citizenship on one or the other side of the border. This was also

⁴⁸ The episode that occurred in the hamlet of Cambedo in late 1946, after which around 50 local people were arrested in different towns at the border of Chaves is well known. See Caneiro *et al.*, *Op.Cit.*

the case in the union and political forces associated to the respective nation states. Our research findings allow us to argue precisely for the centrality of the logic of integration, and even continuity. The immense majority of these people may have been emigrant workers, but the patterns and behaviours indicated above (including those of the Falangist Portuguese who turned into the executors of repression) demonstrate their significant integration into Galician society.

5. Conclusion

The overall data for Galicia indicate that the number of Portuguese nationals subjected to *paseos* and executions amounts to 1.4 percent of the total number of victims; approximately 15 percent of *paseados* and 10 percent of those executed who were not of Galician origin; and less than a half of the foreigners who were killed in Galicia in those times. If we bear in mind that theirs was a community larger than others, Portuguese natives represented a small part of the victims of repression. Except in certain isolated cases (as occurred with Gypsies), xenophobia against the Portuguese cannot be considered as a determining factor. In this regard, people's origin appears to be less important than the circumstances in which power was consolidated and asserted after the military coup, and the strategy of terror followed in the first months and used to reinforce the new hegemony. Being a foreigner may have played a certain role in the repression, not really as a result of xenophobia, but because the victors took advantage of foreigners' lack of consolidated social and affective networks and their scarcer chances of being helped. Thus being a foreigner might make people less socially protected and more vulnerable to perpetrators. The case of Vigo is a significant one. The modernization and prosperity of the city attracted people from other territories who integrated, became militants or acted in a social and political way. As a result, they fell into the net of repression, but here also the proportion of Portuguese citizens affected followed the same parameters owing to, among other reasons, their capacity to integrate into the adoptive society.

The Portuguese were invisible in the repressive process of the coup d'état of 1936 in Spain, both in popular memory and in history, until our thorough investigation of the entire process found them. Their invisibility forms part of the whole of an unknown and inconvenient past, and is one of several new aspects that systematic research has unveiled. In any event, what may be taken as a conclusion is the social and cultural integration of those Portuguese workers as well as their families who suffered repression

in the following decades. There does not seem to be a specific and deliberate concealment. They did not suffer persecution for being Portuguese or for their different nationality since the process itself reflected their integration as Galicians who were citizens or residents of the Spanish territory.

The transnational perspective allows us to draw conclusions that, in this case, reach beyond borders, just as these Portuguese themselves crossed the limits between two states and proved the capacity for relationships between cultural and linguistic worlds that were very similar at a domestic and social level. These deaths and repression show that the emigrants from south of the Miño were fully integrated in spite of and above state structures, attaining some sort of transnationality that overcame even the trade union and political structures associated to the different states.

Lastly, here are some of the many questions that we have been unable to answer:

- To what extent were the circumstances described above (common work, class struggles and shared persecution, among others) behind the sympathetic support that a large part of the Portuguese population of the border lent to Galician fugitives after the military coup first, and to guerrilla groups, later? It should be borne in mind that such support is, in general, attributed exclusively to the humanitarianism that characterised small rural communities and even to Christian charity, according to anthropological and theological, rather than historical justifications.⁴⁹
- To what extent did their common experiences previous to July 18, 1936 and the subsequent repression influence the situation of conflict that prevailed in the district of Viana do Castelo in 1936⁵⁰ or the presence of guerrilla groups at the Portuguese border with Ourense, with many Portuguese members in their ranks? (This was the case of, for instance, the brothers Dos Santos Fernández “Os Cucos” [The Cuckoos] or Albino Gómez Rodríguez “O Albino” [The Albino].⁵¹
- With regard to the aforementioned mode of persecution in the rearward during the Spanish War, to what extent

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ RODRÍGUEZ GALLARDO, A. *Op.Cit.* 2006.

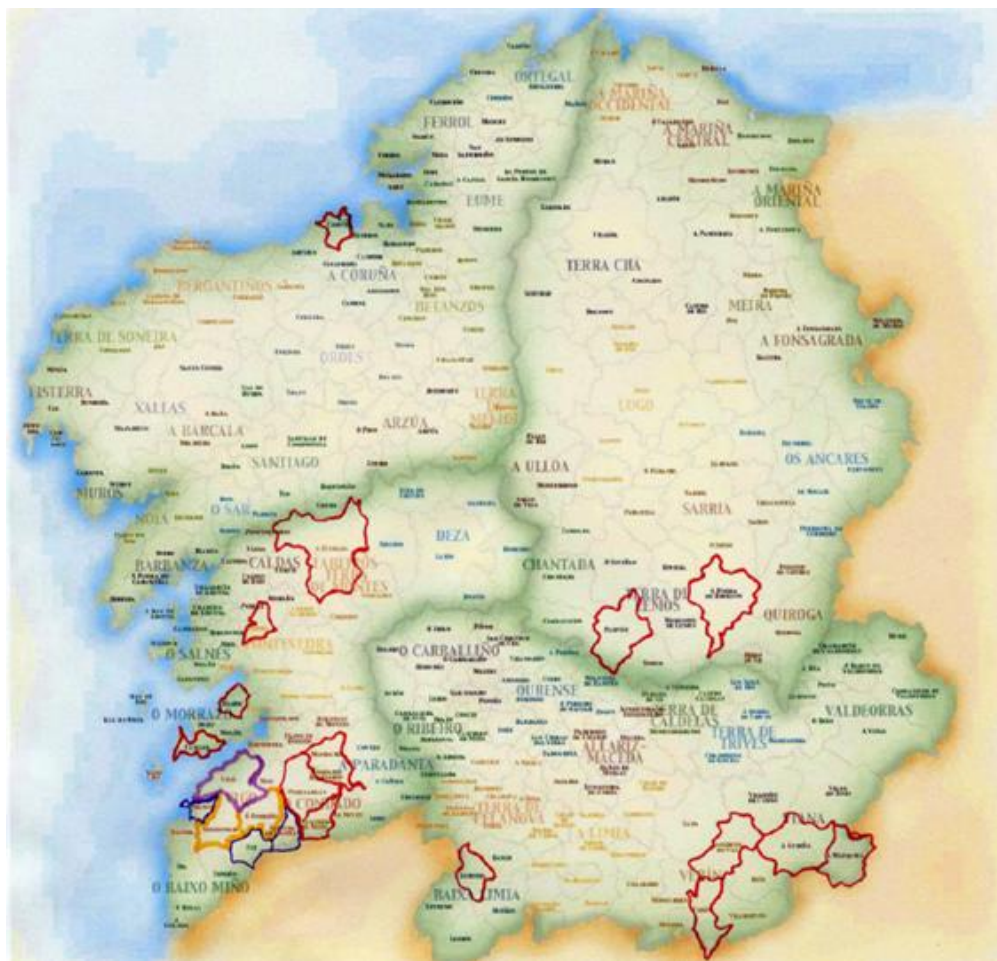
⁵¹ HEINE, H. *A guerrilla antifranquista en Galicia*. Vigo: Xerais; REIGOSA. *Op.Cit.*

does it not confirm the absence of a border in ancient Roman Gallaecia between the states of Spain and Portugal, a border called Miño in the places where the river is present, and *raia* where it is not? Does this not confirm the cross-border nature of two territories that the states, even ignoring people's will and needs, were unable to segregate?

We have unveiled and wanted to give visibility to these people from south of the Miño who along with their neighbours from the region as a whole paid the price of searching for a better life. We have unveiled them in order to integrate them in today's Europe, in a common collective memory that was denied by Franco's and Salazar's regimes. This is not only a duty of justice, even if it is fulfilled at the wrong time, but also a new vital space shared between the citizens of both countries.

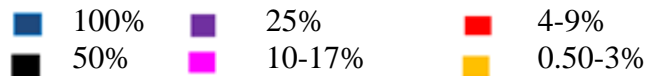
Annex: Maps

Map 1. Portuguese-born residents of Galician municipalities killed by political repression



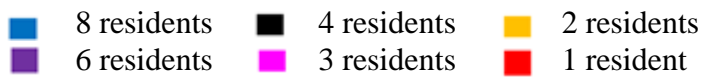
Source: prepared by the authors from the data available at <http://www.nomesvoces.net/gl>.

Map 2. Portuguese-born residents of Galician municipalities killed due to political repression. Percentage of the total number of people subjected to reprisals in each municipality



Source: prepared by the authors from the data available at <http://www.nomesvoces.net/gl>.

Map 3. Portuguese-born residents of Galician municipalities who were subjected to reprisals not resulting in death



Source: prepared by the authors from the data available at <http://www.nomesevoces.net/gl>.

Map 4. Portuguese-born residents of Galician municipalities who were subjected to reprisals not resulting in death. Percentage of the total number of people subjected to reprisals in each municipality



Source: prepared by the authors from the data available at <http://www.nomesvoce.net/gl>.

Politics in the Peronist Unions (1946-1955)

Marcos Schiavi

Unions and politics

The relationship between Peronism and the union movement determined the origins of the former's political movement and its subsequent power, clarifies its survival to a large extent during the years of political proscription, and, finally, explains Peron's return to power in 1973 almost two decades after being evicted from the presidency of the nation by a military coup. Even today, at the beginning of the twentieth century, this bond between unions and political parties is key to any sort of governability in Argentina. Since 2003 (though today to a lesser extent), unions have been among the main allies of the Peronist governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner.¹

Having overcome the traditional approach that stressed the monolithic cooptation of the working class by President Juan Domingo Perón, nowadays most of the new research on the 1946-1955 period analyzes the link between unions and politics from a different angle. It presupposes that unions and union members are active subjects with autonomous political practices. The opening up of Argentinian historiography thus makes it possible to analyze the relationship between

¹ Over the past two years, this relationship has undergone an important crisis. Nowadays, the government is directly opposed to three of the five National Trade Union federations existing in Argentina. The allies constitute the majority, but are not hegemonic.

unions and politics from a “new” perspective.

Today, we can ask ourselves about the nature of the political exchange between the unions and the government during the first years of Peronism. Taking the proposals of the Italian sociologist Alessandro Pizzorno² as a point of departure, it is possible to assert that the government was willing to exchange positions of power with the unions to obtain a certain social consensus. Generally, when unions politically negotiate they must maintain a moderate behavior, accepting their subordinated position in the labour market in the short term. In order to do this, the unions must convince their members that they will serve their interests better if they moderate their demands, or the organizations must be strong enough to face the pressure of the members and win more demands in an immediate way. This is what the Peronist unions intended to do during the Peronist years, despite different methods and levels of success, always depending on the specific political and economic circumstances.

In a classic paper, Deppe, Herding and Hoss³ considered that the relationship between the union base, the unions and parties (mostly when they are in the government) differed according to the cyclical changes of the different economies. They proposed that during periods of prosperity, when it was easier to obtain concessions from business, there was a greater probability of conflict between the political parties that recommended wage moderation and the unions under the pressure of the rank and file as well as between the union leadership and their base. By contrast, during periods of economic decline, when the working class is forced to defend itself from the attacks on their jobs and life conditions, there is little chance of economic success at the level of the factory or through wage negotiations on a larger scale. That is when the commitment was moved towards the political sphere: the workers expected political measures that would protect their interests. Normally, the parties which were founded on union support adopted these expectations, cooperating with more intensity in political reforms or at least in programs of state intervention. This sketch may be observed in the Argentinian case (although not in a linear manner), mainly during the first thirty months of the Peronist government (1946-1950).

² CROUCH, Colin & PIZZORNO, Alessandro. Eds. *El resurgimiento del conflicto de clases en Europa Occidental a partir de 1968*. Madrid, Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1991.

³ *Ibid.*

Peronism and unions

During their ten years in the government, Peron and his political movement won the massive support of the working class, surpassing 60% of electors. This electoral power consisted of an immense majority of workers who identified with the Peronist movement and its leader. Nevertheless, that electoral framework was not channelled through a powerful political party. The Peronist party structure was too weak. The unions – allies and pillars of the government – were actually the central axis of the two presidential campaigns won by Perón.

Despite the different attempts of the government to lessen its reliance on the unions, Peronism continued to politically depend on its alliance with the unions throughout the entire decade of 1946-1955 during the two terms of Perón's presidency. Far from diminishing, this dependency actually increased. Outside the union movement, Peronism was unable to obtain agreements and stable support. In this context, if we think about it in pragmatic terms, the government's desire to acutely control the union movement was understandable. The problems it faced to achieve this are also understandable.

Generally, the literature on this subject has explored the degree of autonomy of the unions in their relationship with the government and their power of decision and real influence at the political and economic level. Furthermore, this literature placed the union movement and its leadership at the same level, particularly in the General Confederation of Labor (CGT). In previous research, I emphasized the need to bring other tensions and actors to light, to broaden the horizon beyond this restricted political debate.⁴ I argued that it was necessary to enter into the dynamics of the relationship between capital and labour during these years, focusing, at the same time, on the unprecedented transformations that had occurred in workplaces. In this same research, I focused on the union base, a fundamental part of the Peronist-unionist relationship. That is to say, I chose to study *history from the bottom up* to make it possible to understand the actions of the fundamental protagonists of Argentinian politics in a better way. In this particular paper, taking what had previously been done as a point of departure, I will focus my attention on the dynamics of the top union spheres and not the base from which it draws its power. I suggest this since I think that the work that has been done so far on the rank and file provides us with the necessary tools to go deeper into this aspect. In this sense, I will try

⁴ SCHIAVI, Marcos. *La resistencia antes de la resistencia: La huelga metalúrgica y las luchas obreras de 1954*. Buenos Aires: El Colectivo, 2008.

to question the predominant visions about the role of the CGT during the Peronist decade, exploring particular circumstances and observing the dynamics between the heads of the main trade union confederation, the CGT, and the other national trade unions, particularly the Metallurgical Industry Trade Union (UOM).

There are two questions which structure this paper: How powerful was the CGT within the larger union movement? And how automatic was the support of the CGT and the national unions for the political and economic measures dictated by the government? This modest presentation does not aim to answer these questions fully. However, it does wish to promote new avenues of research on this topic.

I will first explore the principal hypotheses in the academic literature about the Peronist CGT. I will then focus my attention on two key moments in the period: November 1947 and June 1954, moments when the UOM called strikes. In these moments, I will analyze the bond between the CGT and the main industrial union in Argentina, the UOM.⁵ Taking into account its political centrality, it is important to avoid presenting this unique relationship between the two bodies as a generality that can be applied to all unions. This does not mean that the case is meaningless and that it cannot be projected onto other relevant unions. The analysis of each circumstance will be presented in the following manner: First, the political and economic situation will be outlined; second, the government proposals and plans; and third, the practices of the CGT will be observed to show how the UOM operated as well as the tensions created and consequences of their actions for both union bodies.

Insights on the union leadership

The main exponent of the interpretations about the link between the union movement and Peronism is Gino Germani, the founding father of Argentinian sociology. His central thesis is that there was a complete absence of autonomy of the workers in their relationship with the Peronist

⁵ The Argentinian Textile Workers' Union (*Asociación Obrera Textil*) may also be considered as one of the main Argentinian industrial unions of the period. However, in our thesis we have demonstrated that both at the organizational level and at the level of collective negotiations, the UOM was the most powerful one during the entire Peronist decade. See Schiavi, Marcos. *La dinámica sindical durante los dos primeros gobiernos Peronistas (1946-1955) El caso de las industrias metalúrgica y textil en la Ciudad de Buenos Aires y sus alrededores*. Tesis de doctorado Universidad de Buenos Aires – Université Paris 8, 2012.

government, an absence whose origins are found in the relationship between the unions and the government. He begins with the premise that during this period in Argentina there was a transition from a traditional society to an industrial one. In this transition, two convergent processes are developed (an industrialization phase together with massive migration from the interior of the country, both a direct result of the world crisis of 1929) in harmony with the scenario permeated by the fraudulent and unpopular regime installed after the military coup of September 1930. According to Germani, there was thus an “available mass,” that politically speaking, could not find the necessary institutional channels to blend into the system. Peronism, in this view, was the authoritative channel through which the new workers could be politically integrated.⁶

In opposition to this interpretation of Peronism as pseudo-totalitarianism, Juan Carlos Portantiero and Miguel Murmis are the biggest exponents of the perspective that values the rationality of the workers’ movement. They assert, in opposition to Germani, that in the emergence of Peronism, between 1943 and 1946, there was intense participation of workers’ organizations and unions, reaffirming a pragmatic continuity during the later Péron presidencies. Therefore, these authors reject Germani’s perspective of the passive and heteronomous participation of workers.⁷ Hugo Del Campo and Juan Carlos Torre follow the same interpretative line. They particularly focus their analysis on the actions of union leaders.⁸ They highlight the support received by Peronism in those initial years from both old and new trade unionists and they demonstrate certain precedents in the unions which facilitated their connection to Peronism: bureaucratization, reformist policies, pragmatism, appealing to state intervention and the mistrust and hostility of the working class towards existing political parties. Nevertheless, this autonomy and political presence seems to vanish with the arrival of Perón to the presidency in June 1946. This is what Murmis and Portantiero underline when they propose that the dissolution of the autonomy of the workers begins in 1946-1947. At the same time, both Del Campo and Torre consider the dissolution of the *Partido Laborista* (Labor Party created by the unions in November 1945 and the source of 70% of the votes which elected Perón to the presidency,

⁶ GERMANI, Gino. *Política y sociedad en una época de transición: De la sociedad tradicional a la sociedad de masas*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Paidós, 1962.

⁷ MURMIS, Miguel, & PORTANTIERO, Juan Carlos. *Estudios sobre los orígenes del Peronismo*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1972.

⁸ TORRE, Juan Carlos. *La vieja guardia sindical y Perón: Sobre los orígenes del Peronismo*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990 and DEL CAMPO, Hugo. *Sindicalismo y Peronismo: Los comienzos de un vínculo perdurable*. Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 1983.

and finally was dissolved by his order in May 1946) and the ousting of Luís Gay from the direction of the CGT as central developments. Del Campo states that these facts: "... initiated a process of concentration of power which would make any vestige of autonomy disappear from the union movement, subordinating it to an increasingly authoritative political regime".⁹

Torre, for his part, states that after these events, the union movement lost its character as an independent actor. The state subordinated it to the needs of the management of the new regime.

The classical historiography, despite its different temporalities and gradations, agrees that union autonomy became a chimera during Peronism especially during Péron's second administration. This argument is noticeable among those who perceive the whole working class as without autonomy as opposed to others who apply this description only to the CGT and the national unions. Robert Alexander speaks about a complete state of submission on the part of the workers' movement. Milciades Peña shares Germani's characterization of the working class as heterogeneous and heteronomous and states that the CGT became a government agency from the beginning. Walter Little considers that until 1951 there was a process of expansion and consolidation of unionism dominated by the state and that afterwards the government imposed a monolithic control where the unions were transformed into mere agents of governmental propaganda. One of the central hypotheses of Scott Mainwaring is that, between 1952 and 1955, at its highest levels, the workers' movement was virtually reduced to an agent of the government, while a certain autonomy was preserved at the plant level. For Louise Doyon, after the ousting of Luis Gay from the CGT, the latter ceased to aspire to be a representative of the workers' movement in relation to the government, behaving more like a representative of the government in the workers' movement. That is to say, according to Doyon, at the beginning of 1947, the CGT became the government's delegate and spokesperson within unionism, facing the mobilized organizations of the union base.¹⁰

⁹ DEL CAMPO. *Op. Cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁰ ALEXANDER, Robert. *The Peron era*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1951; PEÑA, Milciades. *Masas, caudillos y elites: La dependencia argentina de Yrigoyen a Perón*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Fichas, 1971; LITTLE, Walter. "La organización obrera y el Estado Peronista, 1943-1955". *Desarrollo Económico*. vol. 19, 75, 1979; MAINWARING, Scott. "El movimiento obrero y el Peronismo, 1952-1955". *Desarrollo Económico*. Vol. 21, 84, 1982; DOYON, Louise. *Perón y los trabajadores: Los orígenes*

The authors we have mentioned are part of what we may call the historiographical canon on the subject. It is clear that there is certain consensus among them when they pose the absence of autonomy among the CGT union leadership. What does not appear to be analyzed in depth in this canon are the internal dynamics between the CGT and the unions. Only Doyon pays attention to it in certain parts of her thesis. Yet this is precisely what needs to be studied since regardless of whether the CGT was autonomous or not, what must be reflected upon is the power it had in setting up open collective negotiations with employers. As a result, I aim to observe the CGT in action: seeing how mimetic its policies were with that of the government and, if necessary, how much power it had to discipline and control the national unions it represented. The next question, therefore, is how autonomous the unions were from the CGT and what their was relationship with their own rank and file membership.

The historiographical canon is therefore up for discussion. Indeed, we are witnessing a change of paradigm in the literature in terms of the links between the union movement and the Peronist government. Recently, there has been a resurgence of Argentinian working-class studies,¹¹ particularly influenced theoretically, methodologically and conceptually by historical materialism, especially British and North American Marxist authors. There has been a particular growth of the research focused on the early years of of Peronism.¹² This work has nourished my research through its empirical contributions, its interesting way of approaching the object and its renewed interpretations of questions that have been explored a thousand times, all of which reflect the present social circumstances in which we live.

del sindicalismo Peronista, 1943-1955. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editora Iberoamericana, 2006.

¹¹ See SCHNEIDER, Alejandro. *Los compañeros: Trabajadores, izquierda y Peronismo, 1955-1973*. Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2005 and CAMARERO, Hernán, *A la conquista de la clase obrera: Los comunistas y el mundo del trabajo en la Argentina, 1920-1935*. Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editora Iberoamericana, 2007.

¹² See ACHA, Omar. *Las huelgas bancarias, de Perón a Frondizi, 1945-1962: Contribución a la historia de las clases sociales en la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural de la Cooperación, 2008; CONTRERAS, Gustavo. "El Peronismo obrero. La estrategia laborista de la clase obrera durante el gobierno Peronista. Un análisis de la huelga de los trabajadores frigoríficos de 1950". *PIMSA 2006*; DICÓSIMO, Daniel. *Más allá de la fábrica: Los trabajadores metalúrgicos, Tandil, 1955-1962*. Buenos Aires: La Colmena, 2000; FERNÁNDEZ, Fabián. *La huelga metalúrgica de 1954*. Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural de la Cooperación, 2005; RUBINSTEIN, Gustavo. *Los sindicatos azucareros en los orígenes del Peronismo tucumano*. San Miguel de Tucumán: Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, 2005; and IZQUEIRDO, Roberto. *Tiempo de trabajadores: Los obreros del tabaco*. Buenos Aires: Imago Mundi, 2008.

The 1947 conflicts and the CGT

During the first three years of the Peronist government (1946-1948) there was a clear consolidation of the union movement. According to the data presented by Louise Doyon, the number of unionized workers in industry went from nearly 200,000 in 1945 to more than 700,000 in 1948, reaching a membership of 50% of all industrial workers. The Textile Workers' Union went from having 60,099 members in 1946 to 100,899 two years later. Concurrently, the most important strike peak of the Peronist decade took place in these years. In this initial period, just in the city of Buenos Aires, there were nearly 300 strikes with more than one million strikers and eight million working days lost. Strikes occurred frequently in industry, were promoted and directed by the recognized unions and had as an objective the broadening of workers' rights in the workplace. This expansion was produced above all through collective agreements and the establishment of rank and file union organizations called "internal commissions". It should be pointed out that all this was developed in the midst of a very favorable economic climate and at the height of the establishment of Peronist power.¹³

In November 1946, despite the government's will to impose their own candidate, Luis Gay, the old leader of the Telephone Workers' Union, was elected as the new General Secretary of the CGT. Nevertheless, his appointment would only last three months as he was soon ousted through government manoeuvres. In his place, Aurelio Hernández became head. It is from this moment on, that authors like Del Campo, Torre and Doyon posit that the CGT fully lost its autonomy.

Within the first tumultuous Peronist years, 1947 was the moment with the greatest level of conflict, a particular moment in which important unions became dominated by Peronists as well as witnessing diverse and polemical workers' congresses and an intensified anticommunist campaign in the workplace. It was during this year that there was the highest number of strikers and lost working days during the whole Peronist period. This wave of conflicts, as well as the decline in workers' productivity, enormously preoccupied the government and employers. Already in mid November 1946, the *Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión de la Nación* (STyP-National Labour and Social Welfare Secretary) reminded the unions and workers in an announcement that it was going to strictly implement regulations regarding strikes in order to stop a series of conflicts considered

¹³ DOYON, L. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 242-252

artificial. In July 1947, Perón made reference to the 40% fall in productivity:

Men which have contributed with their effort to the underpinning of the revolution, have serious concerns with respects to the announcement made; for they know the perils implied in that lack of productivity. The need of readjusting things to put them in place is evident.¹⁴

The arrival of Hernández did not reduce the proliferation of conflicts nor the fall of the workers's productivity. The newspaper *La Época*, of Peronist origin, defined strikes as a threat against public welfare and treason for the government. In October, in an act which took place in the new headquarters of the CGT, Perón stated: “ [...] We have come to our days giving everything that has been possible to give. We must now start to give with caution, because in order to give it is necessary to build first.”¹⁵

Aurelio Hernández was not a minor leader. A long-time activist from the Wood Industry Union, Hernández was a distinguished unionist and ex-communist leader. He had been a member of the Forum of the 9th Congress of the Central Committee of the left-wing Unión Sindical Argentina (USA) and General Secretary of the Local Communist Labor Union. In addition, he had been writer and editor of several important union publications.

Just a few days after being elected General Secretary of the CGT, he attracted attention by his statements about the unauthorized strikes and conflicts that were occurring without any supposed justification. He denounced the strikes as a communist manouvre, showing his direct alignment with the government. The CGT thus called for conflicts to stop. Nevertheless, this did not occur. In some cases, such as the textile workers, trade union headquarters were put under the control of the CGT leadership. Notwithstanding that measure, for it was illegitimate and illegal and not covered by the CGT statute,¹⁶ this top-down bureaucratic persecution could

¹⁴ *La Época*, 4/07/47.

¹⁵ *La Prensa*, 4/10/47.

¹⁶ This statute was modified in 1950. The Central Confederal Committee (Comité Central Confederal), gathered in December 1949 to write the project of a new statute to be dealt with at the National Congress in April 1950. There, one of the most important proposals encouraged by the leadership was the granting to the CGT of the power to intervene in member unions. This generated a prolonged debate in which the representatives of the most important unions demanded that article be excluded or modified to limit such powers. There was such a divergence that two projects had to be discussed and voted on: one which accepted the intervention in the unions and a second one which did not. In April 1950, after the voting which took place at the National Congress, the former measure granting interventionist powers was imposed by the majority. In the voting, the number of members represented by the different delegates was taken into account. The result was of 1,530,429 votes in favour and 1, 491,566 against.

not be generalized. Control, therefore, had to be established from another, more structural source.

Most union conflicts developed in the midst of collective negotiations. The strike by the UOM was no exception. However, this was not the only important problem. The UOM also wanted to unionize supervisors and chiefs. For capital, this would affect the performance of the plant, since it would have repercussions on discipline and hierarchical respect within the workplace. The union thus had to face more than just the management position. Within the same union, a competing organization arose when the *Unión de Empleados de la Industria Metalúrgica* (Employees of the Metallurgical Industry Union) was created in April 1947. By September, it had almost six thousand members and it had been received by the president's wife in a ceremony that assigned union legitimacy *per se* to it. The fact that the CGT leadership did not only not try to resolve this division, but in fact favored the breakaway union against its own statutes, created a tense relationship between the leadership of the UOM and the CGT. The support of the latter to the parallel union and its intention to control strikes would constitute the two axes of conflict between these organizations.

In mid May, the socialist newspaper *La Vanguardia* stated that the division in the Metallurgical Union was explained in part by the election of the General Secretary of the CGT, since the metallurgical delegation had seemed "generous with Mr. Gay" in the Congress.¹⁷ The opposing journal, *La Prensa*, in its article about the celebratory demonstration that had taken place on 20 October, highlighted the way in which the column of the UOM had arrived at the Plaza de Mayo in a truck with loud speakers requesting the audience to allow the advance of the protest until the front of the Pink House (the government palace) since the aim was "to let General Perón know that Hernández was a traitor".¹⁸ One day before, the *Congreso Nacional Obrero de la CGT* (CGT - National Labor Congress) had been inaugurated. There, the delegate of the Wood Industry Union, read a joint statement presented by his organization together with the port workers, food workers, glass workers and the UOM. The statement expressed that the CGT Congress had not been legally convened. At the end of October, in the face of an imminent metalworkers strike, by virtue of certain rumors in which there was an attempt to make the CGT appear as opposed to the resolution of the conflict, the CGT expressed that these versions were

¹⁷ *La Vanguardia*, 13/5/47.

¹⁸ *La Prensa*, 18/10/47.

inaccurate: “The truth is that the CGT has not had and does not have any participation in the conflict, and that, on the other hand, the UOM has not requested it either.”¹⁹

In these circumstances, in November 1947, after months of collective negotiations, the UOM called a strike. In those days, it was a young union with barely a few years of life. The motivation adduced by those who originally created it was that the communist leadership of the *Sindicato Obrero de la Industria Metalúrgica* (SOIM – Workers’ Union in the Metallurgical Industry), the biggest union in this sector at the time, had sold out in a 1942 strike. With the support of the Peronist government, the UOM was quickly imposed as the prevailing organization in the sector. It was the one that signed the collective agreements and had more members and gained even more after the communists decided to dissolve the unions they directed in 1946 and integrating themselves with the Peronist-dominated organizations. By the end of 1945, the UOM had 80,000 members. In June 1946, after an intervention of the CGT, Hilario Salvo became its General Secretary.

Regardless of the position of the government and the CGT and after months of collective negotiations, the UOM declared the strike at the beginning of November. The strike ended after the intervention of the STyP in favor of the workers, and the imposition of a major part of their demands in a collective agreement. As regards the divided unionization, the stance of the UOM prevailed and the parallel union was dissolved. The troublesome relationship between the UOM (and not only this union) and Hernández was settled in December of the same year when he and the other members of the CGT Management Committee resigned.

Twenty-four hours later José G. Espejo was elected General Secretary of the CGT. Its political line would not be modified with the change of its General Secretary. Espejo would be a great representative of a union leadership submissive to the government. There were no official explanations with regard to Hernández’s resignation. At first glance, the relevant reasons that can be assumed were the ineffectiveness of the CGT to stop the strikes as well as internal tensions (at least as was shown by the UOM case). The fact is that the CGT was powerless in the resolution of conflicts in these particular circumstances and that in the confrontation with the UOM the latter was victorious.

¹⁹*El Líder*, 28/10/47.

The 1954 conflicts and the CGT

The economic prosperity of the first years of Peronism was short-lived. Beyond the specific policies the government could apply, the model of economic growth depended centrally upon foreign currency income through the export of agricultural products and livestock and its deviation to the major cities. Industry needed the foreign currency to obtain raw materials and machinery, and to be able to pay high wages. The fall in exports, the deterioration of the terms of trade since 1949 and a bad harvest at the beginning of the new decade resulted in a decrease in foreign currency incomes and a severe economic crisis that was manifested in a rise of inflation and a fall in industrial activity.

The first important measure of the government to deal with the crisis (which peaked at the end of 1951 and during the following months) was the *Plan de Emergencia Económica* (Plan of Economic Emergency), initiated at the beginning of 1952 (once Perón was reelected as president). Its main purpose was to control the high inflation rate throughout restricting consumption and supporting the productive forces. Therefore, the public works' plan was reduced, the granting of credits was restricted, dispensable imports were limited and both prices and salaries were frozen. The purpose of the project of economic growth that began with the second Peronist government was to change the stimulus from the production of consumer goods to the production of intermediate goods and the creation of a capital assets area. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to increase industrial productivity. According to the industrialists, since there was a restriction on the import of large amounts of capital goods, the only solution left to obtain this growth was to increase productivity with the existent machinery. It was thus necessary to diminish and control the workers' movement and to revoke some of the gains won by the union movement in the first Peronist government, mainly the conquests that had disrupted the hierarchy in the factories.

Since 1949, labour conflicts had drastically diminished. Various authors in the literature coincide in arguing that from this moment on, the government's control over the CGT became stronger. Yet it is still necessary to prove if one thing explained the other. The aim of the government was to remove the possibility of an autonomous union movement in order to gain it for its own political project, especially in economic terms. In a speech given in mid May 1950 Perón stated:

How many times have we attended, at the economic level, the spectacle of a union leader who has an exaggerated demand, who wants what we call 'to keep the penny and the bun'? Conscious and responsible men are necessary in this action, men who don't request more that can be requested, because social possibilities end where economic impossibility begins.²⁰

The fact that the biggest economic crisis in Peronism, between 1949 and 1953, had developed without major conflicts in the industry makes us wonder if this happened due to a full control of unionism by the government or due to a political reading of the union leaders who, in the midst of the crisis, chose to sacrifice immediate economic interests in favor of a long-term policy. This sacrifice for economic interests, beyond its own reasons, had consequences on the union leadership. José Espejo had to step aside at the end of 1952.²¹ Before that, Hilario Salvo, General Secretary of the UOM since 1946, had walked the same path. In other important unions, such as the textile workers, there was also a renewal of the leaders.

After the wage freeze stipulated in 1952, the opening of collective negotiations two years later, in 1954, was regarded as highly difficult. Even more, if we take into account that after years of crisis, the economic situation showed considerable improvements which resulted in a better position for workers to negotiate. The government, for its part, had seen how a large part of its political support was reduced. Only the union movement remained an unconditional ally. Because of this, the collective negotiations of 1954 were seen as key. After years of economic sacrifices, unions had to deal with the government's intention to tie wage increases to productivity gains through the suppression of certain provisions in collective agreements imposed by the unions between 1946 and 1948 that had considerably limited management's discretion in the factories. There was also an attempt to regulate and control the internal commissions. Nevertheless, the national unions did not comply with this proposal to tie salaries to productivity. In 1954, only in the capital city of Buenos Aires there were more than 1,400,000 working days lost because of strikes. During the three previous years, 500,000 lost working days had barely been surpassed. Most of the strike conflicts occurred during the first semester and in the midst of collective negotiations.

The new leadership of the CGT had tried, from the start, to stop these conflicts. Eduardo Vuletich, Espejo's successor as the General

²⁰ *Democracia*, 16/5/50.

²¹ This displacement is usually linked to the support given by Espejo to the vice presidential candidacy of Eva Duarte de Perón in 1951. To this matter, we should also note the little mentioned tensions generated by the CGT intervention in the UOM in September 1952.

Secretary of the CGT, had a meeting in May 1954 with some of the leaders and ordered them to normalize labour relations and cease the strikes. The striking unions complied with this for a few weeks, then they paralyzed work activities again. Regarding the negotiations, Vuletich joined with management in its call for workers to obey the presidential commands and increase productivity. In the midst of the metalworkers strike, in the entries of the Central Committee of the CGT, we may see what these leaders expected the national unions to do:

[...]vindication protests are justified, but also in the condition of leaders of the country, when their interests are at stake, they must also be concerned about them, since the welfare of the country will be welfare for the people, that is to say, for the workers.²²

Yet the CGT, despite having intervened in specific unions to reduce strikes, was not able to impose its political line. Even though they were aware of the political interests mentioned above, the national unions could not neglect the particular interests of their members. What was discussed went beyond salary issues. The model the government sought to impose undermined two pillars of Peronist unionism: on the one hand, tying salaries to productivity implied in both the short and long term a hard blow to the wage homogeneity of urban Argentinian workers; on the other hand, the improvements obtained in working conditions and the power gained in the factories were emblems of the Peronist union movement. To lose them in order to obtain productivity gains was not an acceptable option.

In this context, the metalworkers struck between May and June 1954. At the time, the UOM was headed by Abdala Baluch, after Hilario Salvo had been expelled from the union. Faced with the intransigence of the industrial employers and pressure from the rank and file channelled through the internal commissions, the leadership was forced to declare the strike. The internal commissions were the driving force of the conflict. More than wages, what was at stake was workers' control in the workplace. The industrialists wanted to impose regulations on the internal commissions, a stricter control of absenteeism and a modification of the 36th article of the collective agreement with the aim of penalizing union delegates. None of these employer demands were won and, in this respect, the UOM was victorious. In the middle of negotiations, the Minister of Labor told the employers that the regulation of the internal commissions would, in no way, be considered, since the UOM did not wish to be responsible for the breaking of this dominant union practice.

²²*Actas Consejo Directivo*. Confederación General del Trabajo, 05/06/54, folio 172.

The strike concluded with the signing of a collective agreement with a 25 % wage increase and the maintenance of all existing working conditions.

The importance of the UOM made it a model, and because of this, it was not possible to impose the meaningful modifications in most agreements that the employers wanted. The government's proposal (supported by the employers) to tie salaries to productivity was frustrated. A year later, there was a new attempt. In March 1955, through the initiative of the government, the *Congreso Nacional de la Productividad y el Bienestar Social* (National Congress of Productivity and Social Welfare) was organized. Unions and management participated in it and its aim was to reach stable agreements to obtain a higher level of productivity. Despite the explicit support of the CGT, the event turned out to be a failure. There was no meaningful agreement and those few points which were agreed upon could not be implemented because of the resistance of the national unions.

After almost ten years in the power, the government and the CGT could not impose their objectives on the workers' movement. They could not win their demands when it was most necessary. This revealed the limited capacity of control exercised by the CGT. Louise Doyon states at the end of her thesis that in these circumstances, the union leaders overlooked the consequences that their attitude entailed for the government's viability. In another article, Juan Carlos Torre assigned considerable weight to this failure in relation to the fall of Peronism in September 1955. The question we should ask ourselves is whether they could have done anything different or not.

Conclusion

In 1947 and 1954, the UOM did not have the capacity or the will to practise economic moderation in favor of government policy. The CGT tried on both occasions to enforce the government's plans although with more variations in 1954 (quite notably when the government's control over the unions was supposedly higher). What both moments shared was the impossibility of the CGT to impose conditions on such an important union as the UOM.

The UOM, for its part, despite its general alignment to the government, had to respond to the interests of its rank-and-file organizations even when the levels of bureaucratization were high as in 1954. Nevertheless, what could not be done in these circumstances was indeed done during the economic crisis after 1949. In the midst of the crisis, the

levels of conflict dropped to risible numbers in the main Argentinian industries.

As was mentioned in the introduction, this article does not seek to provide definitive answers. It shows how the classical arguments in the historiography have been lacking and how new questions need to be raised. Thus, we may ask ourselves: Why was the CGT, under certain circumstances, unable to control the actions of nationally-based trade unions such as the UOM? Why was the mid-term political interest of government control undermined by immediate economic interest? Why did neither the CGT or the UOM accomplish this in 1947 and 1954? Should we look for the causes in the rank-and-file workers' movements? Or may it be found in the existing bonds between social conflicts and Peronist identity?

As we have analyzed, the support of the CGT and the unions for the economic measures of the government was not the same in every situation. It was not the same in 1947 and 1954 as at the beginning of the 1950s. The position of the CGT and the UOM was also not the same in both conflicts. During the crisis, did the CGT support a larger and broader control strategy or did the trade unions themselves choose to moderate their demands? How can we account for these variations? What changed in this equation?

Finally, we have one question left to ask ourselves: How much did the opening up of collective negotiations affect the power of the CGT? Were the different political decisions only explained by means of the economic crisis? Or may we consider union action as an autonomous policy with its own logic?

All of this constitutes only a few questions that calls for deeper research. This article is not a conclusion, but rather the opening of an analysis. If it has any conclusion it is that in order to analyze the policies of the Peronist unions, in addition to observing their discourses, it is necessary to know how capable they were to actually implement them.

The Birth of an International Anarcho-syndicalist Current

François Guinchard



Introduction

This article aims to define anarcho-syndicalism through the way it has been historically constructed. First, we have to precise about what our object of study is since the term has been used in a confusing way or has been quite neglected by historians. Anarcho-syndicalism is difficult to understand precisely because it does not have any "scientific" definition nor even one that would be common to those who endorse it. Without claiming to solve this problem, I aim to contribute in this article to clarifying the meanings of anarcho-syndicalism in historical context.

The term anarcho-syndicalism first appeared as a derogatory commentary and an insult against certain working-class militants in the nineteenth century. It was often used to refer as a whole to the trade-union activities of individuals and groups who defined themselves as anarchists. To study such an object is in fact a multifaceted task, involving the analysis of a wide plurality of historical practices and comparisons. In this respect, I

differ from the historiographical current specialised in studying French syndicalism, represented primarily by Jacques Julliard.¹ For him, anarcho-syndicalism first arises among libertarian members of the French *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) between 1895 and 1914. I will opt for a more restricted notion without discrediting other definitions; after all, the words used are less important than the realities they refer to.² We nevertheless owe to this same historiographical current the formulation of the category *direct action unionism* that groups together revolutionary unionists and anarcho-syndicalists through the common denominator of their trade union practices.³

Anarcho-syndicalism is more frequently understood – at least by those who call themselves anarcho-syndicalists – as a specific working class current, stemming from syndicalism. It is seen as arising during the first three decades of the twentieth century with its deepest expression during the Spanish Civil War. After the 1930s, it falls into a lasting marginality. Anarcho-syndicalism is sometimes opposed to, sometimes assimilated to, notions of a particular form of revolutionary unionism, syndicalism, that arose at the end of the nineteenth century, partly initiated by anarchists and synthesised notably in the *Charte d'Amiens* adopted by the French CGT in 1906.

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, a part of the syndicalist movement adhered to Bolshevism⁴ while another part reaffirmed the specifically anti-authoritarian character of their approach, giving birth to anarcho-syndicalism. (The industrial unionism inspired by the Industrial

¹ For example we may mention JULLIARD, J. *Autonomie ouvrière: études sur le syndicalisme d'action directe*. Paris: Le Seuil, 1988. MITCHELL, Barbara. *The Practical Revolutionaries: A New Interpretation of the French Anarchosyndicalists*. Westport (Connecticut): Greenwood Press, 1987. See also the French labour movement historians who became "classical": Jean Maïtron, Edouard Dolléans and Maurice Dommanget as well as the numerous writings of the protagonists themselves.

² DARLINGTON, Ralf. "Syndicalism and the influence of anarchism in France, Italy and Spain". *Anarchist Studies*. 17:2, Autumn-Winter 2009, approaches it without finding any fundamental differences, and never uses the term "anarcho-syndicalism" without inverted commas. In *Syndicalism and the transition to communism: an international comparative analysis*. Farnham (GB): Ashgate Publishing, 2008 he reserves this qualification for Spanish and Italian syndicalism (p.5). DUBIEF, Henri in *Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1969 – a seminal work on this subject although focused on the French case – also goes around it, designating as anarcho-syndicalists those who keep claiming to be revolutionary syndicalists after 1945 (p.53).

³ See particularly FERGO, José. "Le syndicalisme d'action directe: un objet épuisé ?" *A contretemps*. n°4, September 2001. In English the term "syndicalism" can play this role, even if we can translate it to French by *syndicalisme révolutionnaire*. See DARLINGTON. 2008. *Op.Cit.*

⁴ DARLINGTON. 2008. *Op.Cit.*

Workers of the World in the English-speaking world does not fall within this pattern). Though anarcho-syndicalism and syndicalism share many essential principles ("class struggle", "direct action", "autonomy", "federalism"), some criteria separate them: 1) the firm opposition of anarcho-syndicalism to political parties, while syndicalists declared political neutrality or strictly separate political and trade union commitments ; 2) the explicit statement that the goal of the anarcho-syndicalist organisation was to struggle for a "free", "libertarian" or "anarchic" communism, rejecting any form of the state, even a "revolutionary" or "transitory" one; 3) the anarcho-syndicalists' refusal to act within reformist or authoritarian organisations. 4) We may also note that anarcho-syndicalists tended to refuse all forms of centralization, criticizing the role of the unions and industry in the present and future society. These differences are sometimes difficult to fathom since some organisations, particularly in France, referred to themselves at the same time as revolutionary syndicalist and anarcho-syndicalist.

The new anarcho-syndicalist current after the Russian Revolution was consolidated by the formation of the International Workingmen's Association (IWMA/IWA)⁵ in Berlin in 1922 even if the word "anarcho-syndicalism" does not appear in its statutes or in its declaration of principles. For most of its national sections, the organic link with the First International (also called IWMA) founded in the nineteenth century is only indirect, but for some of them, such as Spanish and Argentinian sections, there was a direct legacy from earlier internationalist groups. The IWA of 1922 (also called the Berlin IWA) arose in reaction to the creation of the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU, or Profintern), which tended to put the world labour movement under the Russian communists' control. It brought together several national sections, mainly in Europe and Latin America, some of which were actually mass organizations. After the failure of the Spanish Revolution and World War II, the IWA was composed mainly by smaller and marginalised organisations such as libertarian-oriented unions that often resulted from schisms within other parties and organizations.

It would be excessively simplistic to think that anarcho-syndicalism suddenly appeared in 1922 with its definitive shape: its origins lie in earlier

⁵ On International Workers' Association, the reference to *men* was officially suppressed from the acronym in 1974, but it did not exist in other languages: AIT (Spanish, French, Portuguese), AIL (Italian) or IAA (German, Dutch, Swedish), and the IWA did not have any section in English-speaking countries until 1945. See GUINCHARD, François. *L'Association internationale des travailleurs avant la guerre civile d'Espagne: du syndicalisme révolutionnaire à l'anarcho-syndicalisme (1922-1936)*. Orthez (France): Editions du Temps Perdu, 2012.

debates (especially within the First International, and around the 1907 Amsterdam and the 1913 London congresses) and it would continue to adapt to social changes. To fully understand the theory and practice of anarcho-syndicalism, it is thus necessary to explain how and why it was differentiated from syndicalism, how it grew during the 1920s and how it was almost destroyed during the 1930s.

On the theoretical level, anarcho-syndicalists gave pride of place to the ideas of the Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin. In general, they also endorsed most of the anarcho-communist theorists (such as Kropotkin or Malatesta) and pre-war syndicalist writers (especially Pouget and Pelloutier). Later the writings of Rudolf Rocker, a founding member and first secretary of the IWA, would long influence the movement. Yet anarcho-syndicalism is a practice before it is a theory, and its main theoreticians were the revolutionary militants active in the movement. It is thus pointless to search for the theoretical "truth" of anarcho-syndicalism.

Contrary to studies of syndicalism,⁶ academics have not shown much interest in anarcho-syndicalism in the strict sense defined here. With the exception of a few rare articles and studies limited to national frameworks,⁷ we may highlight the work of two historians: 1) Wayne Thorpe, author of a 1989 Ph.D. thesis from the University of British Columbia entitled *Revolutionary syndicalist internationalism 1913-1923: the origins of the International Working Men's Association* on the process which led to the constitution of the IWA.⁸ This study is fundamental, but it ends precisely where our object starts; 2) Vadim Damier also wrote a thesis entitled *The Forgotten International (Zabytyi Internatsional): The international*

⁶ On this vast theme, apart from the references already mentioned, consult the broad literature reviews in ALTENA, Bert. "Réflexions sur l'analyse du syndicalisme révolutionnaire: l'importance des communautés locales". *A Contretemps*. n.° 37, May 2010, and LINDEN, Marcel Van Der. *Second thoughts on revolutionary syndicalism*. Amsterdam: IISG, 1998.

⁷ We can quote at least LINDEN, Marcel Van der and THORPE, W., Wayne. "Essor et déclin du syndicalisme révolutionnaire". *Le Mouvement social*. n°159, April-June 1992, pp. 3-36 ; Van der Linden, M. *Second thoughts... Op.Cit.* DARLINGTON, R. "Revolutionary Syndicalist Opposition to the First World War: A Comparative Reassessment". *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*. Tome 84 fasc. 4, 2006 ; LEHNING, Arthur. "Du syndicalisme révolutionnaire à l'anarchosyndicalisme: La naissance de l'Association internationale des travailleurs de Berlin". *Ricerche storiche*. n° 1, January-April 1981. For national and local studies, see also LORRY, Anthony. "Elements de bibliographie internationale". In: *De l'Histoire du mouvement ouvrier révolutionnaire*. various authors, Paris: Editions CNT-RP/Nautilus, 2001. pp. 289-299; DAMIER, Vadim. "Bibliographic essay". In: *Anarcho-syndicalism in the 20th Century*. Edmonton (Canada): Black Cat Press, 2009. pp. 207-224.

⁸ THORPE, W. *Revolutionary syndicalist internationalism 1913-1923: the origins of the International Working Men's Association*. Ph.D. Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989.

anarcho-syndicalist movement between the Two World Wars, but it was only published in two volumes in Russian. He also published a shorter book in English, *Anarcho-syndicalism in the 20th century*.⁹ Damier insists more than Thorpe on the transition from syndicalism to anarcho-syndicalism and on the differences between the two currents. We may also add Marcel Van der Linden's works on the international dimension of syndicalism¹⁰ and the proceedings of the "Pour un autre futur" symposium.¹¹ It was organised in May 2000 by the French *Confédération nationale du travail* (CNT), uniting historians and militants in discussions around the revolutionary labour movement before 1936. Indeed, the militants themselves have contributed to this history of anarcho-syndicalism, writing many texts for propaganda or polemical purposes, but these are often too synthetic or ideological. We should nevertheless mention the important study by José Muñoz Congost (former secretary of the IWA) about the IWA through its congresses.¹² I will refer in this article principally to these works. It is worth mentioning that there is a fine line between militants and researchers since most of the historians of this subject are or used to be involved in the labour movement.

Anarcho-syndicalism was *historically* constructed: economic, political and social evolutions determined its constitution and later adaptations. Thus, I employ a chronological outline, covering the first third of the twentieth century. Anarcho-syndicalism arose during the first internal disputes within the syndicalist movement (Section I), and from the challenges that surged after the First World War (Section II). It then declined through the period of crisis, fascism and the dominant strategies of the labour movement in the 1930s that weakened and isolated anarcho-syndicalism in general while at the same time exerted its most extensive influence during the Spanish Revolution, a unique historical development full of important lessons (Section III). Learning from and trying to adapt to social changes, anarcho-syndicalism was confronted with an existential alternative: keep its radical nature with the risk of staying marginal, or tone down its politics in order to fit into the mainstream union movement.¹³

⁹ DAMIER. *Op.Cit.* 2009.

¹⁰ In addition to the mentioned articles, see LINDEN, Marcel Van der and THORPE, W., eds., *Revolutionary syndicalism: an international perspective*. Aldershot (GB): Scholar press, 1990.

¹¹ Various Authors, *De l'Histoire du mouvement ouvrier révolutionnaire*. *Op.Cit.*

¹² MUÑOZ CONGOST, José. "La AIT a traves de sus congresos". *CeNiT*. n°250, September 1987 and following numbers.

¹³ See LINDEN, Marcel Van der and THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.* 1992.

I. Origins of anarcho-syndicalism

Revolutionary unionism and anarchism

At the end of nineteenth century, many anarchists committed themselves to the trade-union movement with the objective of anchoring anarchism into the working class.¹⁴ The most emblematic example is the French CGT¹⁵ but we find similar processes in other countries such as Holland, Italy and Germany. The French anarchists leading the CGT formed an alliance with other socialists, leaving apart their differences in order to find a common practice and strategy. They progressively moved away from anarchism to a new ideology, revolutionary syndicalism.¹⁶ The latter should not be described only as an intervention of anarchists inside the labour movement. It was differentiated from anarchism by its adhesion to the industrial system, which is regarded as a factor of social progress, by the acceptance of the centralization and specialisation of work, and by the leading role given to unions in the revolutionary process. The anarchists envisaged, on the contrary, a re-localised economy, orientated towards social necessities, based on autonomous and freely-federated communes. Nevertheless, some of them considered the idea of putting the means of production under unions' control as a possible transition stage to an anarchist society. This idea had points in common with the Marxist concept of a transitory workers' state. Some Marxists also found in syndicalism a return to the basics of socialism.

The 1906 charter of Amiens¹⁷ is a compromise text hashed out between various tendencies, declaring the political neutrality of the CGT. A division of tasks was established that is still pronounced in trade union and left-wing politics today: the unions would be in charge of economic demands and protests while political parties would take care of the political questions and social projects. The charter expressed a clearly revolutionary objective, but remained silent on the subject of the state; thus all the

¹⁴ For TREMPÉ, Rolande. "Sur le permanent dans le mouvement ouvrier français". *Le Mouvement social*, n°99, April-June 1977. pp.39-46 anarcho-syndicalism is the part of the anarchist movement which, being excluded from the Second International in 1896, turned towards syndicalism.

¹⁵ See, among others, the works of JULLIARD.

¹⁶ We can distinguish between the practice of syndicalism, which starts in the spontaneously use of direct action at the end of 19th century, and the doctrine of syndicalism. The second one is the creation of union leaders and intellectuals who intend, from the beginning of the 20th century, to give a theory to the movement. See DAMIER, V. *Op. Cit.* 2009. p. 23; DUBIEF, H. *Op Cit.* p. 5.

¹⁷ See especially the works of JULLIARD, J. and CHUECA, Miguel. ed. *Le syndicalisme révolutionnaire, la Charte d'Amiens et l'autonomie ouvrière*. Paris: CNT RP, 2009.

tendencies involved in the writing of the charter could adopt their own readings. Despite the national context in which the charter was developed, it received extensive international attention. However, the configuration of French syndicalism – with only one, almost hegemonic, confederation – was a specific case. In other countries, the larger unions were under the influence of highly bureaucratised, social democratic parties, forcing syndicalists to organise separately. Political neutrality was supposed to allow for unity, but in many cases it seemed to be more a myth, or even a dogma, than a fact. Nevertheless, the French CGT remained an international reference for syndicalism.

In Latin America, anarchists were also active in the early labour movement. Between 1901 and 1904, Argentine anarchists founded the *Federacion obrera regional argentina* (FORA, "regional" stands for anti-nationalist), which adopted the struggle for an anarchic communist society as its final objective in its 5th congress in 1905.¹⁸ At the beginning of the 20th century, the FORA was the main workers' organisation in Argentina, giving rise to the *Forist* movement, imitated in several neighbouring countries such as Uruguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Cuba.¹⁹ Thus the Latin-American revolutionary labour movement was a type of working-class anarchism, closer to anarcho-syndicalism than to revolutionary unionism (even if it is impossible to assimilate the two currents). A strictly-speaking syndicalist movement based on political neutrality also appeared at the time, initiated by dissident socialists. They tried to take advantage of the propaganda and organising work realized by the anarchists. This strategy was characterised by the creation of separate organisations (*Union General del Trabajo* in 1903, *Confederación Obrera Regional Argentina* in 1909), unsuccessful attempts at unification (in 1905, 1907, 1909, 1912), and finally by massive entryism into the FORA. This latter tactic would eventually succeed, since in 1915, the 9th congress of the FORA would abandon the principle of anarchic communism. Henceforth the anarchists were in a minority and from this

¹⁸ This position is called *finalism*, see COLOMBO, Eduardo. "La FORA: Le "finalisme" révolutionnaire". In: *De l'histoire du mouvement... Op.Cit.*, pp.107-111 ; see also the works of FINET, Hélène especially *Théories et pratiques de l'anarchisme argentin au début du XXème siècle: la FORA en question*. In: ANGAUT, Jean-Christophe (ed.), *Actes du colloque Philosophie de l'anarchie: Théories libertaires, pratiques quotidiennes et ontologie*. Lyon: ACL, 2012. pp.277-294, and *Le congrès anarchiste d'Amsterdam 1907: Anarchie ou syndicalisme à la lumière de la réalité argentine*. Orthez: Temps Perdu, 2007.

¹⁹ DAMIER, V. *Op.Cit.* 2009. pp.36-37. See also ALEXANDER, Robert. *International Labor Organizations and Organized Labor in Latin America and the Caribbean: A History*. Santa Barbara (California): ABC-CLIO, 2009. pp.5-11 and also the brochure of FERNANDEZ, Serafin. *La AIT en el continente americano*. Buenos-Aires: FORA, 1968.

moment onwards the "FORA-5th congress", marginalised but still active, would coexist with the "FORA-9th congress", which would move towards reformism.²⁰ The experience of the *Forism* and the debates between Argentinian anarchists and syndicalists certainly influenced the emergence of anarcho-syndicalism in other countries. They were discussed widely by other militants in Europe and America and were directly spread during international congresses by anarchists who had lived on both continents, such as Emilio Lopez Arango and Diego Abad de Santillán.²¹

In Amsterdam, during the international anarchist congress of 1907,²² anarchists and syndicalists battled over their respective theories. We mostly remember from that congress the controversy opposing the French *Cegetist* Pierre Monatte to the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta. Monatte expounded the revolutionary principles of the CGT, defending political neutrality and the idea that "syndicalism is sufficient by itself". For his part, Malatesta criticized this "self-sufficiency", while also being in favour of the union movement. He also thought that the unions must refrain from carrying out any political action, but he rejected syndicalism as a doctrine. For him, unions could only be inherently reformist, and anarchism must constitute the vanguard of the labour movement, an analysis which was very close to the Leninist one. Even if Monatte and Malatesta's opinions fundamentally differed about the nature and role of the unions, nevertheless they both agreed to defend their unity and neutrality.

However, another path was emerging, but it was hard to see: some syndicalists began to endorse some anarchist principles and some revolutionary unions parted with the reformists, refusing the leadership of the social democratic parties. But this tendency did not yet have a theory and was considered illegitimate even though it was about to expand significantly. These revolutionary unions organized two meetings at the margins of the Amsterdam congress, with a view towards coordinating their action. They expressed the need for a permanent structure, actually

²⁰ Taking in 1922 the name of *Union Sindical Argentina*, it would then form the Argentinian CGT in 1930, which would become the mainstay of the Peronist regime.

²¹ Both authors of *El anarquismo en el movimiento obrero*. Barcelona: Ediciones Cosmos, 1925. This book presents clearly the working-class anarchism of the FORA and its criticism against syndicalism.

²² A report was published by DELESALLE, Paul. *Le Congrès anarchiste tenu à Amsterdam, Août 1907: Compte-rendu analytique des séances et résumé des rapports sur l'état du mouvement dans le monde entier*. Paris: La Publication Sociale, 1908. See also MIÉVILLE, ARIANNE, MANFREDONIA, GAETANO AND FINET. *Le congrès d'Amsterdam 1907-2007: un siècle d'anarcho-syndicalisme*. Orthez: Temps Perdu, 2007.

competing with the International secretariat of trade-union councils (the embryonic international of the social democratic unions), in order to group together the revolutionary unions, and to facilitate information and solidarity between them. They decided to set up an international correspondence bureau, publishing the *International bulletin of the syndicalist movement*, weekly and in four languages, whose publication lasted until July 1914.²³

Evolution of pre-war syndicalism and the attempt for international coordination

After the Amsterdam congress, European syndicalism grew. In addition to the *Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften* (FVdG, *localist* branch of the German labor movement, which takes a clearly revolutionary turn and breaks with the SPD in 1908²⁴) and to the *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* of the Netherlands (NAS, inspired by socialism, but which broke with political parties between 1896 and 1905²⁵), new organizations appeared outside of major unions. These included the anarchist-inspired *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), in Spain and especially in Catalonia, founded in 1910; the *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* (SAC) in Sweden, also founded in 1910; and the *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (USI), created in 1912 by the revolutionary minority excluded from the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*. Similar organizations were also established in Belgium, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland and the Balkans.²⁶ The French CGT was then the only revolutionary union who stayed within the International secretariat of national trade union centres, but was unable to influence it.

In the United States, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was founded, breaking with the corporatist, racist and sexist practices of the American Federation of Labor. It quickly spread to other countries with IWW groups created in Canada, Australia, South Africa, Great Britain,

²³ THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.* 1989. pp.94-95.

²⁴ See BOCK, Hans Manfred. "Anarchosyndicalism in the German Labour Movement: a Rediscovered Minority Tradition". In: LINDEN, Marcel Van der and THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 59-79.

²⁵ See LINDEN, Marcel Van der. "The many faces of Dutch revolutionary trade unionism". In: THORPE, W. and Van der Linden. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 45-57.

²⁶ See also THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp. 37-38.

Russia, Chile, Mexico and Sweden.²⁷ In Latin America, anarchists continued to remain active in the labour movement.

In 1913 syndicalists from various countries decided to convoke an international congress in London. The entire movement supported the initiative, except the French CGT, fearing for its unity because its reformist tendency was strengthening.²⁸ The French attitude was strongly criticised abroad.²⁹

From September 27-October 2, 37 delegates representing 60 organisations (local and national unions, federations and propaganda groups) from 17 countries with a total membership of 220,000 members met at the international congress.³⁰ Two elements emerged from the discussions that foreshadowed the rise of anarcho-syndicalism: 1) the idea of the British delegate Jack Wills that parliamentary tactics must be rejected in favour of direct political actions, some of which were already happening such as in the anti-militarism movement; 2) the notion of the "capitalist system" suggested by the Italian Alceste De Ambris to characterise the structure of economic and political domination was debated and criticized on the grounds that it softened the anti-statism of the movement.³¹

Paradoxically, the final declaration of the congress sanctioned the necessity of fighting all forms of the state, yet also claimed that the syndicalist struggle was strictly economic. We can explain this by the confusion that existed at that time between "political" and strictly "parliamentary" action, or by the attempt to reconcile several different positions among the various groups. Finally, "The congress appeals to the workers in all countries to organise in autonomous industrial unions".³²

Some delegates suggested forming an international structure to undertake solidarity and direct actions more effectively; others were opposed to this, thinking that the moment had not yet arrived. Depending on their national situation, for some organisations this suggestion represented

²⁷ PORTIS, Larry. "Les IWW et l'internationalisme". In: *De l'Histoire du mouvement... op. cit.*, p. 54

²⁸ THORPE, W., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 49-51. See also GRAS, Christian. *Alfred Rosmer (1877-1964) et le mouvement révolutionnaire international*. Paris: Maspero, 1971. pp.86-90.

²⁹ See THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp.48, 56, 61-54, and also international syndicalist press of 1913.

³⁰ According to Alfred Rosmer's estimation, quoted by Gras, C. *Op.Cit.*, p.91, with a list of names of the delegates. See also THORPE, W., *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp.70-71.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp.79-81

³² The declaration is quoted in *Ibid.*, p.81.

an urgent necessity (FORA, FVdG, NAS, SAC) yet for others (USI, CGT, British syndicalists) it was considered a danger to their unity. The Spanish CNT was hesitant and divided. A consensus emerged around the Italian proposal to form an International Bureau and an information bulletin, to which syndicalist members of unified unions could subscribe and contribute without risk of exclusion, and to postpone the issue of the International to a future congress.

Regarding anarcho-syndicalism, the interest and the significance of this congress was that: 1) it highlighted the fact that an international syndicalist movement existed that was not just characterized by attempts to export the French model; 2) it formulated the theoretical and tactical basis of the movement in more explicit terms than the *charte d'Amiens* involving anti-statism and the abandonment of the objective of "class unity" within major unions; 3) finally, it created a permanent institutional link between the international community of militants and organizations. I believe that the syndicalists of the London congress came significantly closer to what would later become anarcho-syndicalism. Indeed, the term anarcho-syndicalism began to be used by Spanish and Russian organisations to define themselves during this period. In Spain, it was due to the influence of the anti-authoritarian IWMA (or St. Imier International), showing the strong roots of anarchism in the workers and peasants' movement. In Russia, it was a result of a long-standing anarchism and the labour movement, both repressed by an authoritarian regime, and galvanised by the revolution of 1905. Formerly, the word anarcho-syndicalism was mostly used by reformist unionists to denigrate the revolutionary wing, and after the war the Bolsheviks would use it again for the same purposes. At that time, other syndicalists would endorse it, being forced to explain what they mean by "revolutionary". The war, and then the Russian Revolution, with their worldwide repercussions, would underline some contradictions of the movement. The delegates delayed the fulfilment of the internationalist project discussed in London, but they were also gradually clarifying what would become anarcho-syndicalism.

II. After the war and the revolutions, a redefining becomes imperative

War and revolutions

The beginning of the conflicts of World War I abruptly interrupted revolutionary activity in Europe; no organisation was able to materialise the

watchword of general strike against the war. Most socialist parties³³ and their union allies supported the war, turning their backs on internationalism. The French CGT supported the *Union sacrée*, with the exception of a minority led by Merrheim, Monatte, and the newspaper *La Vie ouvrière*. In Italy, the USI declared its opposition to the war and organized protests, but a pro-war section split. The IWW in the United States led a campaign against entering the war, but suffered violent repression from which it would never fully recover. Overall, however, revolutionary syndicalists maintained an internationalist and anti-militarist course.³⁴

The International Bureau of Amsterdam, prevented from pursuing its work of information and coordination due to the war, soon ceased its activities. Nevertheless, the NAS published a call for all revolutionary organizations to participate in an international congress after the war, denouncing the reformist social democratic parties and labour unions as bearing a part of the responsibilities for the horrors of war. It also recommended the creation of a revolutionary syndicalist international, the only way to fight both nationalism and capitalism, and to prevent future wars, lamenting that it could not be done before 1914.³⁵

In February, as in October 1917, the Russian anarcho-syndicalists took an active part in the revolution, gathering around the anarcho-syndicalist propaganda union and newspaper *Golos Truda (The Voice of Labour)* that had been formed by Russian exiles. The anarchist influence, while less than that of the Marxists, is nevertheless significant: they were particularly active in the factory soviets and in some unions.³⁶ Increasingly critical of the one-party state in construction, they were soon censored, then repressed, and silenced before the founding congress of the Communist International in 1919.

The Bolshevik communists aimed to gather around them the left wing of the socialist parties and the syndicalist movement. The latter, enthusiastic about the initial form of the revolution (the soviets), had little

³³ The minority opposed to the war met in 1915 at the Zimmerwald conference. Some of them would join the Communist International while others founded in 1921 the International Working Union of Socialist Parties, which would join the Socialist International in 1923.

³⁴ See THORPE, W. "The European Syndicalists and War (1914-1918)". *Contemporary European History*. vol. 10, n.1, 2001. pp. 1-24 and DARLINGTON, R. "Revolutionary Syndicalist Opposition to the First World War..." *Op.Cit.* Without calling into question this assertion, the latter brings certain nuances.

³⁵ THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp.101-102.

³⁶ THORPE, W., W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. p.110 ; DAMIER, V. *Op.Cit.*, 2009. p.47.

information about the state control process underway in Russia. Lenin was, moreover, in the beginning, often better welcomed by the anarchists than by the social democrats, supporters of orthodox Marxism, and his theories were commonly thought of as a synthesis between Marxism and anarchism. Even for many anarchists, Soviet Russia then appeared as the centre of an invigorated world revolutionary movement.

At the same time, revolutionary movements taking the form of workers' councils exploded in Germany and Italy in 1918-1920 (and to a lesser extent in Hungary and England), in which revolutionary syndicalists actively participated. They drew from these experiences the conclusion that it was councils such as these, and not the unions as they used to believe, that must freely unite to lead the process of revolutionary collectivization. They nevertheless underlined the possible corporatist and reformist drift of workers' councils, demanding the construction of a revolutionary union.³⁷ In the rest of Europe and in Latin America, strikes and workers' revolts broke out, and several syndicalist organisations (the Portuguese CGT and the Chilean IWW) or anarcho-syndicalist organisations (the Mexican CGT and the Peruvian Regional Workers' Federation) were founded. In Spain, the CNT officially set its goal to establish libertarian communism, and acquired an industrialist structure (by branches and no longer by trade, but the local industrial unions were not organized in industrial federations), counting several hundred thousand members. From that date onwards, the CNT can unequivocally be described as anarcho-syndicalist. An anarcho-syndicalist organisation was also created in Japan.³⁸

The Moscow International

After the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks intended to form a new international, and the entire labour movement was obliged to take a stand towards this call. At the beginning, most revolutionaries around the world were unreservedly enthusiastic about such an initiative. The CNT and the USI temporarily adhered to the Communist International (CI), pending the establishment of a syndicalist international, as well as the revolutionary

³⁷ VENZA, Claudio. "L'anarcho-syndicalisme italien pendant le 'Biennio Rosso' (1919-1920)". In: *De l'Histoire du mouvement... Op.Cit.*, p.161 ; and DAMIER V. *Op.Cit.*, 2009. p.49, 51. The USI adopted this position during its third congress in Parma in 1919. For the German anarcho-syndicalists, see their organ *Der Syndikalist* n°3 (1918) and n°36 (1919). Those in Russia adopted a similar position.

³⁸ See PELLETIER, Philippe. "Un oublié du consensus: l'anarcho-syndicalisme au Japon de 1911 à 1934". In: *De l'Histoire du mouvement... Op.Cit.*, p.178.

wing of the French CGT, which had become a minority. In the countries closest to Russia, however, there were more critical positions: the Swedish SAC and the *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands* (FAUD, a fusion of the FVdG and other unions in 1919, defining itself as anarcho-syndicalist) considered Leninism as a new variant of social democracy.³⁹

The second congress of the CI (Moscow, July 1920) aimed to place the labour movement in each country under the authority of the communist parties, themselves controlled by Moscow.⁴⁰ The voting system gave the Bolsheviks a majority.⁴¹ To counter reformism, the creation of a Red International of Labour Unions (RILU, or Profintern, the Russian abbreviation) was announced by the prominent Bolshevik Solomon Lozovsky who would become its leader. Its mission was to work with the reformist unions and to collaborate with the Komintern and its sections. The founding congress was scheduled for 1921 and was received as an insult by most syndicalists present at the congress. They suggested that an autonomous congress composed of the concerned organisations take place so that they could decide their own orientations.⁴² But only members of the CI were allowed to participate in the debate and the initial proposal was accepted. The congress was also an opportunity for delegates to meet Russian anarchists, who informed them about the repression, the centralism and the authoritarianism of the new Soviet regime. Many syndicalists then lost any illusion about the nature of Leninism and the CI, but some held out hope that the RILU would be the type of International that they most needed and that they would be able to influence. On the voyage back home after the congress, several delegations (FAUD, CNT, USI, SAC, NAS) stopped in Berlin, discussed the situation and convened in the same city an international labour union conference in December 1920.⁴³ The result was a position of participation reserved for the RILU, but mostly differences between pro and anti-Komintern delegates.⁴⁴ For its part, the Russian government repressed any anti-authoritarian movement (Ukraine, Kronstadt, anarchists, etc.) and denigrated the "old syndicalism" in its organs.

³⁹ THORPE, W., *Op.Cit.* 1989. pp.132-135.

⁴⁰ WOLIKOW, Serge. *L'Internationale communiste (1919-1943): Le Komintern ou le rêve déchu du parti mondial de la révolution*. Paris: L'Atelier, 2010. pp.26-27.

⁴¹ THORPE, W., *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp.137-139

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.141-142. See also the *Compte-rendu du Conseil international des syndicats rouges pour la période du 15 juillet 1920 au 1 juillet 1921*. Moscow: ISR (French acronym for RILU), 1921.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.157-158, a report of this conference (in Dutch) figures in the NAS archives (IISG).

⁴⁴ Final declaration reproduced in THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. pp.172-173.

The FAUD was the first, by an internal referendum, to refuse to participate in RILU and to send delegates to Moscow.⁴⁵ In the clandestine CNT, its leaders imprisoned, a communist fraction succeeded in stacking it and in delegating its partisans to the Moscow congress.⁴⁶ Most of the other countries sent delegations with the objective of imposing a total autonomy of the RILU from the IC. Many organisations were in fact divided on what to do (NAS, French *Comités syndicalistes révolutionnaires* - CSR -, etc.). During the congress, the communists, still controlling the votes, imposed their vision of unions as a communication channel for the communist parties, and advocated for the infiltration in reformist unions. The opponents were prevented from expressing themselves freely, and the Red Army was even brought in to end their protests.⁴⁷

Split and foundation of the IWA

After the founding congress of the RILU, the SAC, the USI and the IWW decided in their turn to withdraw from it, while the CNT, the FORA and the CSR disowned their pro-communist delegates. The FAUD, supported by others, convened a new conference in Berlin in June 1922, to draw the conclusions of this split. The pre-war *International Bulletin of the Syndicalist Movement* was launched again, now with a clear anti-state, anti-party, and particularly anti-Bolshevik line, while the international communist press railed at syndicalism and anarchism.

The conference adopted an anarcho-syndicalist statement of principles:⁴⁸ it advocated the establishment by direct action and by a general strike of federalism and "free communism". The delegates also noted their failure in Moscow, the impossibility of uniting with authoritarian communists, and proposed the construction of a genuine revolutionary union international. An international congress was convened for this purpose in December 1922, again in Berlin.

The founding congress of the International Workers' Association was the logical outcome of the international dynamics of syndicalism, and directly ensued, if not from the First International, at least from the 1907 and especially the 1913 congresses. The thirty-odd present delegates

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.185, The German Communist Party (KPD) was looking to destroy the FAUD by encouraging splits. See DAMIER, V. *Op.Cit.* 2009. p. 73.

⁴⁶ THORPE, W. *Op.Cit.*, 1989. p.190

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.216.

⁴⁸ Reproduced in *Ibid.*, p.373.

claimed to represent more than two million workers⁴⁹ in fifteen countries.⁵⁰ They agreed to describe Soviet Russia as "state capitalism" and the RILU as an agency for the foreign policy of the Russian government. A declaration of principles, continued from the debates at the June conference, was adopted, as well as a proclamation entitled "To the working class of all countries". Without the term anarcho-syndicalism being adopted by everyone, it was truly anarcho-syndicalism which had just been established as an international tendency and organisation. The IWA displayed its affinities, in all its independence, with the anarcho-communist ideal, being halfway between a union and an anarchist organisation, seeing itself as a bridge between the anarchists, as long as they were not anti-unionists, and the syndicalists, as long as they were not authoritarian.

The adopted statutes were of federalist and libertarian inspiration. They considered the possibility of occasional alliances with other unions and revolutionary organisations, and allowed the membership of revolutionary minorities in labour unions. Rudolf Rocker, Alexander Schapiro and Augustin Souchy were appointed to the secretary's office of the IWA, based in Berlin.⁵¹ Each section appointed one of its members to the international office, which would in fact be the privileged interlocutor of the international secretary and a correspondent for the IWA's press service. The role of the international secretariat was limited to allowing an organic communication between the sections and to coordinate certain actions such as solidarity campaigns and the organisation of congresses. It sometimes helped new sections or sections that were in trouble, and attended national congresses when it was possible. Rocker's presence was predominant, as well as a network of historic activists, among whom may be mentioned Fritz Kater, Augustin Souchy Albert De Jong, Arthur Lehning Muller, Albert Jensen, Pierre Besnard, Alexander Schapiro, Armando Borghi, Diego Abad de Santillán, and Valeriano Orobón Fernandez. The IWA congresses were held every three years, interspersed with conferences, also called plenums (meetings of the International's representatives, without sovereign power). The delegates' mandates were still imperative, monitored, and if necessary revoked.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.342. The number used by the Dutch newspapers *De Arbeid* (January 13, 1923) and *Alarm* (January 20, 1923),. Thorpe assesses that the number of 1.5 million is more likely.

⁵⁰ Germany (FAUD), Argentina (FORA), Chile (IWW), Denmark (Syndikalistik propagandaforbund), Spain (CNT) Italy (USI), Mexico (CGT), Norway (NSF), the Netherlands (NAS), Portugal (CGT), Sweden (SAC), Uruguay (FORU) with observers from the German, French, Dutch, Russian and Czechoslovakian organisations.

⁵¹ IISG, IWMA archive, dossier "1st congress, Berlin 1922".

Since it is impossible to go into the details of the IWA sections' union activities in this text, I will rather examine the coordinated actions at the international level. In the foreground are the solidarity campaigns against attacks qualified as "reactionary" (whether fascist, Bolshevik or republican) and collections for strike solidarity and lawsuits involving prisoners and exiles (primarily Italians and Russians), members or not of the IWA, and their families. The release of prisoners was sometimes obtained. Propaganda also played an important role through the IWA's *Press Service* and manifestos published in particular on the occasion of Mayday. The main themes were anti-fascism, anti-militarism, the activity of the IWA's sections and criticism of other left wing movements, but all social issues were addressed. The IWA finally tried to set up international federations of industry, in the metallurgical, transportation and construction sectors.⁵² Only within construction would the IWA have some success, but it was short-lived due to the explosion of unemployment. The Latin American sections also created the *Asociación Continental Americana de los Trabajadores* (ACAT).

III. International decline and Spanish zenith

Crisis, fascist regimes, united and popular fronts weaken anarcho-syndicalism

The 1920s ended with an international wave of repression in reaction to the revolutionary wave. The 1930s were characterized by a general strengthening of states and of doctrines based on the nation state, as an answer to the global crisis which shook the world. This context would prove fatal for many anarcho-syndicalist organisations, caught between left-wing and right-wing states/nationalisms. Thousands of members would lose their lives or their freedom.

The Italian USI was the first to fall, eradicated by Fascism between 1922 and 1927 with only a clandestine core remaining as well as some exiles in France.⁵³ The Portuguese CGT was outlawed in 1926 by Salazar's regime and then went underground, still claiming to be the most important

⁵² See in particular the *Service de presse de la Fédération internationale du bâtiment* (International Federation of Construction Press Service), n.1 to 5, June 1931 to April-May 1932.

⁵³ *Rapport sur la situation en Italie*. IISG, IWMA archive, 1st congress.

union in the country, but it was nearly destroyed in 1934.⁵⁴ The German FAUD lost most of its members between 1923 and 1933, and during the early 1930s the majority of those left were unemployed. It became clandestine in 1933 and organized until the end of the decade an emigration and propaganda import network through the Netherlands, where militants took refuge.⁵⁵ The French CGT-SR⁵⁶ remained quite small despite an increase of membership after the 1936 strikes, but it too would disappear during the Second World War. The modest sections of Belgium, Bulgaria, and Poland were destroyed by state repression. The Scandinavian SAC and NSF, as well as the Dutch NSV, remained stable overall, but most of their members were unemployed.

Thus, in Europe, only the Spanish, French, Dutch and Scandinavian sections remained legal, but apart from the CNT, they were a small minority within their respective labour movements. In all other European countries, anarcho-syndicalist organizations only persisted clandestinely or in exile, cut off from workplaces, unable to attract a new generation of militants, and most often reduced to propaganda and fund-raising activities. Emigrant militants were often expelled from country to country, with many ending up in Spain from 1936 onwards.

In Latin America, a similar dynamic obtained. In Argentina, a coup outlawed the FORA in 1930; all its representatives were arrested, deported or killed yet it still kept up substantial workplace activity.⁵⁷ The establishment of dictatorships also hit hard all the other Latin-American *Forist* or anarcho-syndicalist organisations: in Cuba between 1925 and 1927, in Peru and Brazil after 1930. Those of Bolivia and Paraguay disappeared during the Chaco War between 1932 and 1935. The Mexican CGT converted progressively to reformism from 1928 onwards. So in 1936 only the Chilean, Bolivian, Uruguayan and Argentinian sections of the IWA remained, but they were weak, isolated and powerless. Likewise, the Japanese section was destroyed in 1935-1936.

On several occasions the IWA offered to the two other trade-union internationals proposals for joint campaigns (for example demanding the

⁵⁴ DAMIER, V. *Op.Cit.*, 2009. p.87. See also SCHAPIRO, Alexandre. *Procès verbal des séances du plenum d'Amsterdam*. IISG, Albert De Jong archive.

⁵⁵ DAMIER, V. *Op.Cit.*, 2009. p.88-89, MUÑOZ CONGOST, J. *Op.Cit.*, p.7232. see also *Les anarcho-syndicalistes allemands face au nazisme*. Besançon (France): CNT-AIT Doubs, 1999.

⁵⁶ *CGT-Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire*, a small syndicalist split from the communist *CGT-Unitaire*, which joined the IWA in 1926.

⁵⁷ MUÑOZ CONGOST, J. *Op.Cit.*, p.7233

six-hour work day in 1930 and boycotting German products in 1933), but it was always rebuffed. Nevertheless, some joint struggles occurred at the grass-roots level. On the other hand, it refused any alliances from the top down, seeing them as a political and bureaucratic manoeuvre, such as the idea of the "working-class united front" (1920s) or of the "popular front" (1930s). The anarcho-syndicalists held the communist organizations responsible, through their reformist and authoritarian strategies, for the consequences of the crisis, for the rise of fascism and for the failures of the workers' movement.

Spanish revolution's lessons

Spain has a special place in the history of anarcho-syndicalism. The CNT was the largest section of the IWA internationally and was the largest union in several regions of Spain. The organization was not only a militant political organization; it often organized education, leisure and a significant part of the socialization and cultural life of its members and sympathisers, gaining workers and peasants to the libertarian communist ideal. In 1931, the end of the monarchy gave impetus to social struggles, with revolts and strikes multiplying throughout the country (general strikes in Seville and Barcelona in 1931, the anarchist insurrections of 1932 and 1933, the Asturian uprising of 1934). In reaction to this, the repression was harsh. The members of the IWA – which held its 4th congress in Madrid in 1931 – then saw Spain as the only country where the revolution would be able to stand in the way of fascism and reaction.⁵⁸

At the Zaragoza congress in May 1936, with the adoption of the *Confederation concept of libertarian communism*, the CNT was equipped with a real concrete revolutionary action plan, able to be applied in the short term. But it was not prepared for the upcoming events: after a long period being underground, numerous militants had given all their energy in the unrests of the previous years and thousands of them were imprisoned. In addition, the CNT was divided (mainly between the moderate tendency, called *trentism*, and the radical one, the *Federación Anarquista Iberica*). In general, it was disorganized, many of its representatives were jailed, it had no industrial federation or a generalized influence over the whole national territory of Spain.

⁵⁸ *Mensaje del Secretariado de la AIT a la CNT*. June 1934, quoted by *Ibid.*

This situation of weakness of the IWA at the international level, and of their isolation at the national level, would lead the CNT to reluctantly adopt the tactic of a united antifascist front, which would end up turning against its own members. Indeed, the organization included a reformist (or moderate) current, and also an embryonic wage-earning bureaucracy, which would spearhead *Cenetist* participation in the republican government. The same government would vehemently overturn many of the revolutionary achievements. Consequently, many Spanish and foreign anarcho-syndicalists harshly criticized anarcho-syndicalist participation in the Spanish republican government, but without calling their solidarity into question. On the other hand, members of CNT were often in the forefront of those who organised the collectivizations during the Spanish revolution, mainly in Catalonia, Aragon and Valencia. For agriculture in rural areas as well as for industry in the large cities, workers' self-management had never been experimented on such a large scale. That explains why the Spanish revolution still remains an ever-present reference in libertarian culture.

After the war, the Spanish CNT, in exile as well as underground in Spain, split on the conclusions to be drawn from the civil war and from participation in the Republican government. Some wanted to maintain the alliance with all the anti-fascist forces and pressure the Allies to free Spain, while others did not trust them, preferring to go back to anarcho-syndicalist basics.⁵⁹

Conclusion – Modern anarcho-syndicalism: integration or marginalisation, “pragmatism” or “orthodoxy”?

From 1945 onwards, the other sections of the IWA were often reduced to small groups with a tiny presence in workplaces, with their activity largely oriented toward support for anti-Franco activities in Spain.

The Swedish SAC, in a context of welfare state development, took a reformist turn (co-determination, participation in city councils and state subventions) in order to survive as a union, trying to get the IWA to follow. It ended up leaving the IWA in 1958, followed by the Dutch section. The French CNT (founded in 1946) was weakened by the anti-Stalinist schism of the CGT which spawned the creation of *Force ouvrière*, and then by the

⁵⁹ See HERRERIN LOPEZ, Ángel. *La CNT durante el franquismo: Clandestinidad y exilio (1939-1975)*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2004.

temporary radicalism of the CFDT (many anarchists would join these two confederations). But anarcho-syndicalism enjoyed a modest revival after the protest wave of 1968.

The Spanish CNT reunified during the 1960s, but split again shortly after Franco's death, with a "pure" anarchist wing on one hand, and a "pure" unionist one on the other. The state exploited this schism trying to break up the revolutionary movement, giving rise to the Spanish CGT. Other splits occurred around similar issues in France and Italy during the 1990s, while anarcho-syndicalism reappeared in Eastern Europe after 1989.

Thus, today the IWA is not the only international organisation claiming to be anarcho-syndicalist: in 2010 the SAC, the Spanish CGT and a few other European organisations, most of them deriving from the IWA, formed the Red & Black Coordination. This tendency is more prone to alliances with other unions or parties, and uses the means allowed by liberal democracies (workplace representative elections, full-time union officers, public subsidies) to grow, leading to a certain institutionalization. The IWA refuses these strategies and tactics on the grounds that they cause deviations from libertarian principles. Its sections prefer to build a syndicalism radically different from bureaucratic trade-unions, at the risk of being more marginal in the present situation. As a result, the first ones see themselves as "pragmatists" and criticize the "dogmatism" of the second ones, who, for their part, denounce all kinds of "class collaboration". We need to point out that strong nuances exist within both of these international organizations and that many anarcho-syndicalist groups are members of neither, with diverse positions on many questions.

List of abbreviations:

ACAT: *Asociación Continental Americana de los Trabajadores* (American Continental Association of Workers)

AIL: *Associazione internazionale dei lavoratori* (IWA)

AIT: *Association internationale des travailleurs, Asociación Internacional de los Trabajadores* (IWA)

CFDT: *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (French Democratic Confederation of Labour)

CGT: *Confédération générale du travail, Confederación General del Trabajo* (General Confederation of Labour)

CGT-SR: *Confédération générale du travail - Syndicaliste révolutionnaire* (Syndicalist CGT)

CI: Communist International

CNT: *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, Confédération nationale du travail* (National Confederation of Labour)

CSR: *Comités syndicalistes révolutionnaires* (Revolutionary Syndicalist Committees)

FAUD: *Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands* (Free Workers' Union of Germany)

FORA: *Federación Obrera Regional Argentina* (Argentinian Regional Workers' Federation)

FVdG: *Freie Vereinigung deutscher Gewerkschaften* (Free Association of German Trade Unions)

IAA: *Internationale Arbeiterassoziation* (IWA)

IISG: *Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis* (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

IWA: International Workers' Association

IWMA: International Workingmen's Association

IWW: Industrial Workers of the World

NAS: *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* (National Labor Secretariat)

NSF: *Norsk Syndikalistisk Forbund* (Norwegian Syndicalist League)

RILU: Red International of Labour Unions

SAC: *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* (Central Organisation of the Workers of Sweden)

USI: *Unione Sindacale Italiana* (Italian Syndicalist Union)

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Moncayo, 1931-1936 (2006); *La Segunda República en la ciudad de Tarazona a través de la prensa (1931-1936)*; *Laicismo y clericalismo and El discurso bolchevique. El Parti Communiste Français y la Segunda República española (1931-1936)* (2010).

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Abstracts

Gary Blank

The Centrality of Social Relations: E.P. Thomson's Concept of Class and the Renewal of Historical Materialism

During the 1980s and 1990s, E.P. Thompson's once-celebrated approach to social history came to be regarded as little more than an unstable half-way house between analytical and structuralist Marxism, on the one hand, and post-structuralism on the other. Critics on both sides maintained that "experience" and agency could not be analytically privileged without fatally undermining the theoretical foundations of historical materialism itself. This article recovers Thompson for historical materialism by demonstrating that the profound theoretical contributions of his work have yet to be fully recognised and explored. Some of the blame for this must lie with Thompson himself, for he never fully reconciled the different understandings of "class" sprinkled throughout his oeuvre, nor did he systematically investigate the broad, theoretical implications that his work held for the abstract propositions of classical Marxism. I argue that Thompson's concept of class clarifies two particular problems in the classical Marxist tradition. The first is the relationship between social being and consciousness, which Thompson re-conceives as a dialectical interaction through the mediation of "experience". The second is the historical origin of the working class through a process of making, a concern which was left largely unaddressed in the classical canon. Thompson's central insight that class relations are distinct from production relations and require a very specific kind of "horizontal solidarity" between persons in similar class "situations", is at once a crucial theoretical extension of Marxism and an affirmation of historical materialism's explanatory potential.

Key words: agency, class, class consciousness, E.P. Thompson, experience

Adrián Sotelo Valencia

Super-Exploitation and Dependency in Latin America

Dependency theory in the tradition of Ruy Mauro Marini emphasized the super-exploitation of labor and helped direct attention to capital's quest to further expropriate part of the consolidated consumption fund historically won by labor. Marini's work represented a significant departure from the ECLAC conception of vulnerabilities exhibited by developing countries, opting instead to take Lenin's theory of imperialism as the key point of departure for analyzing dependency. Marini was critiqued on intellectual grounds by more conservative dependency theorists such as Cardoso, Serra and Cueva, consequently blunting the critical leading edge of dependency theory. This exploration of Marini's critical Marxist formulation helps contextualize the continuing relevance of dependency theory for comprehending the ongoing class struggle and large-scale transformations of capitalism in 21st century Latin America.

Key words: Latin America, dependency theory, super-exploitation, Marxist political economy, capitalist globalization, sociology of development, imperialism, sociology of labor

Ronaldo Munck

Globalisation, Trade Unions and Labour Migration: Old Dilemmas, New Opportunities

As we enter uncharted waters in terms of the outcome of the global crisis of capitalism that began in 2007, we might well ask if it represents a new global opportunity for labour and the subaltern classes more generally. In particular, I seek to address the complex and, sometimes conflictual, relations between trade unions and migrant workers. In the first instance, I pose the Challenges which migration represents for trade unions in the context of globalisation. More broadly, I examine the challenges for progressive social theory posed by the current global crisis. I then move on to the Mutations of the global system since the 1990s on the basis of Gramsci's dictum that "the old has died but the new has not yet been born". This is the necessary framework for the subsequent analysis of Workers in the context of the processes of globalisation and precarisation. My hypothesis is that we are now moving beyond the categories of North and South in terms of the mutations of capitalism and their impact on the

workers of the world. Finally, I turn to the sometimes under-rated Complexity of the way workers are responding to the mutations of capitalism and thus posing a very real challenge to the stable reproduction of capitalist rule. I outline the limitations of a rights- based labour response to exploitation and the opportunities arising for a new multi-scalar global social unionism.

Roberto Ceamanos Llorens

Working-Class Historiography in France, Italy and Spain: A Comparative Study (1939/1945-1982)

This article undertakes a journey through the historiography of the working class in three of the countries in Western Europe where the movement was strongest and most successful: France, Italy and Spain. The aim is to show commonalities and differences through the comparative study of these three cases. Clearly, political circumstances – international and civil conflicts; dictatorships and democratic transitions – affected the process in different ways in each of these historiographies, but, in the end, the road taken – despite the very distinct rhythms and intensity – was largely the same. Initially centred on a “militant” historiography – basically revolving around a study of the working-class movement – and moving towards (and not without complications) a university-based one with pretensions of a scientific nature, this was a transition that signalled fundamental changes in the way of understanding the writing of the history of the workers.

Key words: Working class historiography, France, Italy and Spain

Sjaak van der Velden

Was there a “Great Labour Unrest” in the Netherlands?

2011 witnessed the beginning of the commemoration of the Great Labour Unrest that shook the United Kingdom one hundred years ago. The Unrest was a big event in British history and British historiography. It is common knowledge among labour historians that before, during and after World War I the struggle between labour and capital was intense in many countries. The British Unrest was part of that era but what about the Netherlands? Across the North Sea strike activity also rose in 1911-1914. But as a result of Dutch peculiarities it was much higher during the first years of the century. In line

with international developments strike activity in the Netherlands rose to unprecedented heights immediately after the war. After describing the Dutch strike movement of 1900-1920 I conclude that there was no Great Labour Unrest in the Netherlands during the years coined such in the United Kingdom.

Dionisio Pereira, Andrés Domínguez Almansa, Lourenzo Fernández Prieto
The Francoist Persecution and Repression of Galicians of Portuguese Origin in Galicia (1936-1940): A Transnational Historical Approach

This work of transnational history is based on the results of the research project www.nomesevoces.net and presents the consequences that the process of political persecution and annihilation unleashed by the perpetrators of the 1936 coup against the Spanish Republic had to citizens of Portuguese origin who were resident in Galicia and the forms it has taken. The identification of this group and the discovery of its importance in such a repressive context allow a new approach to its presence as a migratory movement, to their degree of social and labor integration and also to advance in the characterization of persecutions by the Spanish golpistas in 1936. The Portuguese participation as victims is hardly indicated and even less documented and analyzed – a virtually unknown subject as a collective phenomenon and yet very significant permitting to pose several questions in an essay of transnational history: why was this an unknown issue in memory and in history until it was discovered by an in-depth investigation of the whole process? Does the invisibility of this group reflect its integration or a deliberate concealment? This persecution was suffered by them as Portuguese or as citizens or inhabitants of the Spanish territory?

Marcos Schiavi

Politics in the Peronist Unions (1946-1955)

The relationship between Peronism and the union movement shaped the origins of the former's political movement and its subsequent power. Having overcome traditional approaches that stressed the monolithic cooptation of working-class organizations by President Juan Domingo Perón, most of the new research on the period between 1946 and 1955 has analyzed this subject from a different angle. It presupposes that unions and union militants were active subjects with autonomous political practices.

The opening up of Argentinian historiography thus makes it possible to analyze union politics from a “new” perspective.

Key words: Argentina, Peronism, union movement, CGT, metalworkers

François Guinchard

The Birth of an International Anarcho-syndicalist Current

This article charts the historical emergence of an international anarcho-syndicalist current from the beginning of the twentieth century up to the 1930s. It is especially after the First World War and the Russian Revolution of 1917, that syndicalists (or revolutionary unionists), among which were many libertarians, had to specify the meaning of the revolution they advocated. One part joined up with Bolshevism while the other, underlining its anti-authoritarian and federalist dimension, formed an anarcho-syndicalist current. This process led to the foundation in 1922 of the International Workers' Association (IWA, taking over the name of the First International in reference to its anti-authoritarian tendency), which still exists today despite its marginalisation since the 1930s.

Key words: anarcho-syndicalism, syndicalism, internationalism, direct action