

# Against All Tyranny!

Essays on Anarchism in Brazil

Edgar Rodrigues, Renato Ramos and Alexandre Samis  
Translated and edited by Paul Sharkey

"Anarchist Sources" series # 2

Emigration was one of the great dreams of nineteenth century European workers, and Brazil was just one of the 'New Worlds' which took them, and showed them that the promise such promised lands was easily broken. But the anarchist dream of freedom and revolution came with them, and workers - Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian and Brazilian - fought to make it a reality. And it was not only rampant capitalism they had to fight, but also state-worshippers, both Left and Right. This pamphlet contains an outline of the history of the anarchist movement in Brazil to the present day and records some of the figures who made it what it was.

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### A History of the Anarchist Movement in Brazil

Currently occupying some 8,511,965 square kilometres and with a population standing now at 160 million, Brazil was 'discovered by Portuguese navigators in 1500', colonised through the use of the lash and enriched by the use of slave labour, as were other countries 'discovered' by the Spaniards, the Italians, the Dutch, the French, the British and others.

The social question came into existence when a few people rented and bought human muscle to clear the land, lay roads, build bridges, villas, railways and anything likely to afford comfort to Brazil's masters of wretchedness and progress.

500 years of Brazilian history pretty much covered the entire range of events, with human beings bought and sold at auctions in public squares and male slaves set to breeding children (cheap labour involving no risk) with healthy female slaves, working for their keep, natives swindled out of their landholdings, and jails, thrashings meted out on the whim of the bosses and every conceivable means man might devise for lording it over his fellow-man.

Out of this oppression runaway slaves formed *quilombos* (fugitive slave settlements), the largest of which was established in Palmares and survived for almost a century (1602-1695), with a population of 20,000 living in a community with no laws and no masters. Zumbi and his comrades anticipated Tiradentes by two centuries when they tried to set up a nation within Brazil.

After independence in 1822, following the Ypiranga Declaration by Pedro I (who would have been Pedro IV of Portugal), Brazil became prey to lots of escapes and popular revolts: in 1823 there were the Setembrada and Novembrada revolts, the Ouro Preto uprising in 1833, the Sabinada in 1837, the Balaiada in 1838, the Cabanagem revolt in 1835-1840, the Guerra dos Farrapos revolt in 1835-1845, the Liberal Revolution in 1842, the Praiera Revolution in 1848 and the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889. Shortly before the latter, on 13 May 1888 the Golden Law abolishing the trade in human beings had been promulgated.

All this rebelliousness aimed at altering the mean, shameful, inhumane practices of the bosses. Revolutionary ideas arrived from the Old World by ship, in books published in Europe. They entered through ports like Rio de Janeiro and Santos and Brazil's borders were breached and the country invaded by the revolutionary ideas in the heads of every immigrant who arrived in search of freedom and fertile ground in which to plant anarchism.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, some young Brazilians left to study in France and Portugal and were exposed to libertarian ideas there. Others studied in Brazil itself and came across books by Kropotkin in the bookshops and, upon reading them, found answers to their preoccupations. Around this time Manuel de Mendonça wrote the social novel *Regeneração*.

In Bahia, the doctor and hygienist Fabio Luz came across Kropotkin's *Paroles d'un révolté*, read this revolutionary book and became an anarchist. He wrote and published two early 20th century novels *Ideólogos* and *Os Emancipados*, on which basis he is regarded as the first Brazilian writer to offer a novelistic treatment of the social question.

These two anarchist intellectuals were joined by Elisio de Carvalho, medical student J. Martins Fontes, Pedro do Couto, Rocha Pombo, Pausilipode da Fonseca, João Gonçalves da Silva and Maximino Maciel to form the group that later published the review *Kultur* in Rio de Janeiro and launched the Popular University in 1904. Both of these were anarchist ventures.

Avelino Foscolo in Minas Gerais state, Reinaldo Frederico Greyer in Rio Grande do Sul, Ricardo Gonçalves (there is a street in São Paulo named after him), Benjamin Mota, Edgard Leuenroth and João Penteado in São Paulo, Orlando Corrêa Lopes, Francisco Viotti, Domingos Ribeiro Filho, Lima Barreto and José Oiticica in Rio de Janeiro were the founding fathers. From Portugal came Neno Vasco, a celebrated lawyer who made a name for himself as an anarchist in



São Paulo (1901-1911). Together they were all responsible for planting the seeds of anarchism in Brazilian soil.

In 1890 Giovanni Rossi arrived from Italy with his colleagues to establish the Cecilia colony in Paraná. To São Paulo came the Italian Artur Campagnoli and, shortly after him, Gigi Damiani, Alexandre Cherchiai, Oreste Ristori and Frederico Kniestedt, sound militants from Italy and elsewhere who, following a leap in the dark and adapting to the tropical Brazilian climate, forms of work, customs and cuisine, still had to learn the Portuguese language. The only particular in which Brazil differed not a whit from Europe was the social question, man's exploitation of his neighbour.

It can be fairly stated that the driving force behind the anarchist movement in Brazil came from Italy, in the shape of Italian immigrants who would inject greater intensity and urgency into the social question and their demands and embarked upon systematic propaganda on behalf of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism. Dozens of newspapers were published in Italian or Portuguese, hundreds of lectures were given and revolutionary plays were staged, leading to lots of arrests and deportations. Others were forced to look to a change of trade in order to go to ground, whilst a few bettered themselves and gave up their beliefs.

As a result of this 'sowing' in which pride of place went to the Italians, followed and supported by the Portuguese, the Brazilians, the Spaniards and others, upwards of one hundred anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist newspapers and reviews (titles, that is) were in circulation in Brazil, including four daily newspapers. They founded and ran rationalist schools, set up theatre groups and staged more than a hundred libertarian and anti-clerical plays, held anti-war rallies and rallies against compulsory military service and pressing for reduction in working hours (at a time when these varied between 10 and 16 hours per day), fought for health and work insurance and for countless improvements to make work less of a nightmare for the Brazilian proletariat. Upwards of a thousand of them were summarily deported as foreign agitators and dozens perished fighting with the police. The first murdered anarchist was the Italian Polenice Mattei, killed in São Paulo on 20 September 1898.

If we are to understand the trajectory of anarchism in Brazil, which is intermingled with the revolutionary syndicalist or anarcho-syndicalist movement, we have to have a short encapsulation of the common ground and differences between them.

By the Anarchist Movement is meant the activity of anarchist groups, in concert or separately, and made up of organisational cells, communes, groups, study centres, unions and federations. The anarchist movement is not exclusively an organisation of workers for workers; it is the action of individuals who oppose and join battle against capitalism, seeking the destruction of the State and the establishment of a New Social Order which is horizontally decentralised and self-managed. Not a revolt of stomachs but rather a revolution in consciousness! The anarchist movement does not stop at the class struggle, nor does it seek to replace the governors with the governed; its object is to do away with classes and create a brotherhood of man heedless of colour, age or sex. It does not aim at some metaphysical equality or some equality of size, strength or needs, but at equality of opportunity, rights and duties for all.

Anarcho-syndicalism, a strand of trade unionism, was so-called after the split created at the IWMA's 5th Congress in The Hague in 1872 and it was espoused by a majority of Brazilian workers prior to the installation of fascist syndicates by Vargas's *Estado Novo* regime in 1930. Anarcho-syndicalism is at once a doctrine and a method of struggle.

As a doctrine it takes the worker as the basic cell of society striving to complete his development. As a method of struggle, it seeks to end capitalism through direct action, through a

revolutionary general strike and to replace it by a society run by self-managing workers. Its strength resides in a spectrum of freely associated workers' voluntary associations (trade unions, unions and federations).

What differentiates anarchism from anarcho-syndicalism is the methods at their disposal. The anarchist movement is made up of individuals and aims to turn them into active, independent units capable of producing and administering along self-managerial lines without political or religious crutches or leaders: it reaches as far as freedom and intelligence can reach. Syndicalism is a workers' movement (all trades included) geared more to the administration of production and consumption. Its remit is limited and materialistic and it lacks the range and reach of the anarchist philosophy of life.

Bolshevism is a variety of socialism. It was the political doctrine of the Russian Social Democrats eager to see comprehensive implementation of the maximum programme of Lenin and Plekhanov and is also used as a synonym for communism and Marxism. It emerged in August 1903, during the 2nd Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party begun in Brussels and completed in London. It came to Brazil following the 1917 Russian revolution and its profile was raised through the formation of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) in 1922. It competed with the anarcho-syndicalists for the upper hand in the unions and from then on became a serious opponent of the anarchist and syndicalist movements.

Looking back over the historical route of the Brazilian libertarian movement, we come upon socialists of the Fourier school, Garibaldians, Maria Baderna from the Mazzinian tendency, anarchist followers of Proudhon and Bakunin and revolutionaries from the Paris Commune entering Brazil by irregular means in search of political asylum turning up in Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

As this writer sees it, the history of anarchism on Brazilian soil finally began to be written in 1888 with the arrival of Artur Campagnoli. Campagnoli was a sound Italian militant, a jewellery artist who died in São Paulo in 1944 and who is credited with having established himself as the unchallengeably highest profile anarchist in Brazil. He arrived in São Paulo in 1888, bought what was regarded as an infertile plot of land and launched the Guararema Anarchist Colony with the help of some Russian, French, Spanish and (mostly) Italian anarchists. By the 1920s and 1930s he had the aid of Brazilians too. Two years later the agronomist Giovanni Rossi and around 200 immigrants arrived from Italy in two batches to set up the Cecilia Colony in Paraná. From 1890 to 1894 that anarchist experiment held out against pressures from the republican government which had just been installed in Brazil. Strangled by undue tax burdens and by army incursions, the die-hards among them awaited deportation and settled in the environs of the colony under the palms where the black and red flag of Anarchy fluttered for four years.

In the same period, there were anarchist newspapers such as *Gli Schiavi Bianchi* (São Paulo, 1892) in Italian and *L'Avenire* (São Paulo 1893) in Italian and Portuguese, with Galileu Botti in charge and, in Italian, *Il Risveglio* (São Paulo, 1893).

In 1898, the Portuguese-language *O Libertario* appeared in São Paulo under the management of Benjamin Mota. Also in 1898, *O Despertar* was published in Rio de Janeiro under the guidance of José Sarmiento Marques and in January 1898 the First Workers' Congress was held in Rio Grande do Sul with two anarchist clubs participating. On 20 September, Brazilian anarchism's first martyr Polenice Mattei, was murdered in São Paulo.

In over a hundred years, the anarchist movement in Brazil suffered countless set-backs. It eventually enjoyed the support of four daily papers, dozens of weeklies, monthlies, bi-monthlies



and periodicals. But it experienced hard times when it had no mouthpiece with which to rally its militants.

Over that period, a number of books and pamphlets were published: most of these at the instigation of libertarian groups that raised subscriptions to cover the publication costs. Classic works were issued by commercial publishing houses. Adding the libertarians' output to that of the booksellers, the number of books published on Brazilian soil stood at a little over twenty by 1964.

In 1964 the military dictatorship took power and with it came a fruitful period of great activity in the publication of libertarian works. In the midst of repression, writers and publishers stood up to the dictatorship in the decade of greatest repression (1970-1980) and amid the flood of authoritarian trash the researching and publication of anarchist books continued.

In Brazil, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism worked very closely together as movements. The differences between them are apparent from the press. The anarchists, who give pride of place to ideology, carry out educational work. They see the human being as the most important 'element' in need of professional as well as cultural preparation so that every militant might be able to shift for himself, without the crutches of religion, employer or police. They always give the mind priority over the belly. To these ends anarchists set up free schools, people's universities, social drama groups and engage in intensive educational, sociological, broadly cultural libertarian propaganda.

During the first two decades of the 20th century they sponsored stunning demonstrations on behalf of the founder of the Modern School, Francisco Ferrer and of comrades who were jailed, tortured and expelled from Brazil. They supported and helped the Russian workers at the time of the 1905 revolution, backed the Mexicans in 1910 and the Russians again in 1917, revered the Chicago Martyrs on May Days and never overlooked the victims of rampant capitalism in Brazil itself.

During the 1914-1918 war, Brazilian libertarians were active on several fronts across the country: against unemployment, rising living costs, scarcity of basic foodstuffs, resisting profiteering bourgeois, the mind-bending clergy and a 'paternalistic' State that even supplied human cannon-fodder to the battlefields. To ease hunger and under pressure from the libertarian proletariat which was holding rallies at the factory gates, the government gave the go-ahead for direct sale by the producer to the consumer (a process known as free fairs these days) without taxes levied.

On the international stage, they held the Peace Congress in Rio de Janeiro and sent three delegates to the Congress held under the auspices of the trade union Ateneo of El Ferrol, Spain in 1915. The latter congress was broken up with gunfire by the Spanish government. What befell the Brazilian anarchist movement's delegates is clear from the following text:

'On the Wednesday afternoon, there was a rally in the San Francisco square [Rio de Janeiro] called by the People's Anti-War Agitational Commission, made up of representatives of the various workers' unions in the city.

'The meeting was kicked off at around 5.00 pm by João Gonçalves da Silva who spelled out its aim of registering a protest at the Spanish government ban on the meeting of the International Peace Congress in El Ferrol.

'Next up were José Elias da Silva and Dr Orlando Corrêa Lopes, who attacked the European governments, stating that the proletariat alone was suffering in the war, ought to rebel against it and strive for a cessation.

'Then spoke the working woman Juana Buena, the partner of João Castanheira, the worker, a casualty of Spanish police savagery. A very emotional Juana Buena read out her address, setting out loudly and clearly her revolutionary ideas that did not die with the death of her late partner, but which rather were entrenched and confirmed.'

Finally, Leal Júnior spoke to wind up the rally with the following protest resolution:

'Given, that the right of assembly and free expression of opinion is a basic and established right acknowledged throughout the civilised world, and

'Given, that the International Peace Congress was convened by the working class and revolutionary elements in El Ferrol for the purpose of orchestrating concerted action by proletarians in Europe and the Americas on behalf of a concrete positive demonstration against war and in favour of the establishment of a real peace founded upon the effective solidarity of said proletariat in the achieving of a highly humanitarian objective and genuine defence of civilisation,

'The popular masses assembled in the rally called by the People's Anti-War Agitation Commission and held in the San Francisco de Paula square at 5.00 pm today, enshrine in this motion its indignant protest at the actions of the Spanish government in banning said Congress, persecuting and deporting the foreign delegates to it and, through its policy, murdering one of the delegates sent over by the proletarian and libertarian associations of Brazil, the worker João Castanheira, as recorded by the telegrams carried in this city's newspapers.

'Rio de Janeiro 12 May 1915.'

A rally in Rio de Janeiro closed with a big procession past the Workers' Federation premises in the erstwhile Largo de Campim. It was followed by demonstrations by libertarians in Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul and several cities in São Paulo state. The labour and anarchist press also lashed out at the war-mongers, even distributing postcards with anti-war slogans and making a great impact across Brazil over the war years.

São Paulo was the scene of insurrectionary strikes in 1906 and 1907 as part of the campaign for the eight hour day. In Santos the strikes for the eight hour day only ended in 1921. The libertarian-leaning proletariat tried to make headway against the capitalist jungle by unleashing the strikes that culminated in the 1917 insurrectionary strike, with sympathy strikes in the states of São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná. In 1919 an uprising erupted in Rio de Janeiro, with three workers killed by the Rio de Janeiro police and nearly a hundred more jailed and deported. In 1919 Eptácio Pessoa exploited this chance to expel about thirty anarchists.

1919 witnessed the launching of a Communist Party of Brazil, whose organisers repented once they discovered that the Soviet government was jailing, torturing, killing and deporting anarchists who had helped it overthrow the Romanovs.

The Brazilian bourgeoisie was stricken with terror and was calling for an immediate response to the 'disorder.' A tide of nationalism started to sweep through Brazil as a backlash against the 'left'. In 1920 upwards of 2,000 Portuguese fishermen from Matosinhos and Póvoa de Varzim became casualties of this Brazilian patriotism. Many of them had migrated to Brazil as teenagers and their children had been born in Rio de Janeiro. The only offence committed by these workers of the sea was that they had declined to become naturalised Brazilians. Cock-eyed legislation banned them from pursuing their trade and the Integralist [fascist], Captain Frederico Vilar, used it to dispatch these decent people home to Portugal with the blessing of Eptácio Pessoa. Italian, Portuguese, Spanish anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists were also expelled that year, leading to protests from workers and intellectuals in Brazil and in Europe.

In southern Brazil, German and Russian anarchists made their presence known, in contrast to their countrymen who were hell bent on making their fortunes and to xenophobic Brazilian exploiters. Strikes in the textile industry in Santa Catarina state furnished the pretext for expelling German-born anarchists. In Porto Alegre the German-born anarchist Federico Kniestedt made headway with the newspapers *Der Freie Arbeiter*, *Aktion*, *Alarm* and *O Sindicalista*. The first three were in German, the fourth in Portuguese.



Also in the south, in Erebangó (later renamed Getúlio Vargas) to be precise, several families of Ukrainian Russians settled and formed a community. We have this account of their anarchist activity from one of them, Elias Itchenko, whom we visited when he was very ill: 'By 1920, the immigrants in Getúlio Vargas (formerly Erechim) had the disposition and transport and began to form cohesive groups and get together on a monthly basis. Our group had upwards of 40 members scattered over some 40 to 50 kilometres and taking in the groups in Floresta, Erechim, Erebangó and elsewhere. In those days there were:

'The Union of Russian Farmworkers, Getúlio Vargas (formerly Erechim) branch. Its chairman was Sergio Itchenko and the secretary was Paulo Uchacoff and the treasurer was Simão Poluboiarinoff.

'The Porto Alegre branch of the Union of Russian Workers with Niquita Jacobchenco as chairman.

'The Guarani, Campinas and Santo Angelo branch of the Union of Russian Farmworkers, including João Tatarchenco, Gregório Tatarchenco and others besides.

'The Porto Lucena branch of the Union of Russian Workers.

'One of the most active Russian militants in Rio Grande do Sul, who distributed the newspaper *Golos Truda* which was published in North America from 1911 to 1963 as well as all the written propaganda arriving from Argentina, was a Demetrio Cirotenco. For over two decades he was the main connecting factor holding together the Workers' Unions in Erechim and Erebangó mostly. He died later as the result of an accident, leaving a vacuum among the Russian peasants who only abandoned hope of seeing a society with libertarian foundations and form established in their native land in 1925.'

The most eminent Russian anarchist in Brazil was the writer, journalist, theatre critic, teacher and lecturer Ossef Stepanovetchi who wore a full beard like Kropotkin's. He was a native of the Ukraine and left his mark in Rio Grande do Sul, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Curitiba-Paraná, where he died.

The newspapers most widely read by these immigrants came from Argentina, Canada and the United States (*Golos Truda*) between 1918 and 1930, *Golos Trujnica* from Detroit, and from Nevada, Chicago and New York, *Dyelo Truda-Probuzhdeniye*.

The anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist moved reached its highest point during the second and third decades of the 20th century. In addition to the libertarian press, some journalists had a platform in the commercial press. One of them was the Portuguese-born José Marques da Costa who wrote a daily column for *A Pátria* (Rio de Janeiro) and carried this report:

'Camillo Berneri will appear at the meeting of the "Os Emancipados" next Friday at its local at 265, Rua Buenos Aires at 8.00 pm sharp. Anarchists, sympathisers and workers generally will get the chance to hear a brilliant talk by Camillo Berneri on "Giordano Bruno in Philosophy and in the Renaissance: the Life and Thought of the great philosopher of freedom". Admission free. Open forum. "Os Emancipados".'

Two political trends that reached Brazil from Russia and Italy respectively at this point to do great damage to the libertarian movement were dubbed Bolshevism and Integralism.

The first of these, overseen by the Moscow-based Third International and Profintern acting in the name of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' took the form of the Communist Party of Brazil launched in March 1922 by eleven defectors from the anarchist movement plus one socialist. They started to compete for union leadership positions and eventually helped the governments of Artur Bernardes, Washington Luís and Getúlio Vargas to make considerable strides against the libertarian movement and the free trade unions. In 1927 communists murdered the anarchist Antonino

Dominguez (and Damião da Silva) and wounded another 10 members of the Printers' Union at 4, Rua Frei Caneca in Rio de Janeiro. They attacked and stole the assets of the Footwear Workers' Union at 41 Rua José Mauricio. In this sense they helped fill the Oiapoque concentration camp and usher in the fascist dictatorship in Brazil with its vertical syndicates tied to the Ministry of Labour.

The Integralist movement had its origins in the Vatican and in fascism. In Brazil, what for many years was described as Integralism was a programme drawn up by D'Annunzio, Bertolotti and Papini and others with this as its 'philosophy': 'All power, absolutely all! The only love is power, power is the sole aim, the ultimate dream!'

The Brazilian leader Plinio Salgado and his high command attracted the cream of the thugs ready to do all that they could in order to bring down the government and take power: it was a case of Plinio Salgado the would-be dictator in a competition with the would-be dictator Getúlio Vargas.

Salgado welcomed decrees No 19433 (26 November 1930), No 19770 (19 March 1931) and No 22969 (11 April 1933), because they required workers to take out membership in the 'trade union affiliates of the Labour Ministry, turning them into electors with trades representatives in the National Constituent Assembly, 18 of the total figure of 40 members of which represented employees and 17 represented employers, 2 being public officials and the remaining 3 from the liberal professions'. They wanted to imitate Mussolini completely.

To win round any waverers, Vargas could rely upon the police expertise of Batista Luzardo, Felinto Müller, Emilio Romano, Serafim Braga and other professional skull-breakers. In 1933, in Rio de Janeiro, the newspaper *O Primeiro de Maio* complained: 'in one single police dungeon, 50 workers are held captive without a single charge sheet. Many of them endure corporal punishment for mounting a hunger strike in protest at food that one would not even put before dogs.'

In Porto Alegre, the 1 May 1933 edition of *Aktion* under the aegis of the anarchist Frederico Kniestedt, was speaking in German about Nazi designs on Brazil. On 19 May 1933 an armed gang burst into the premises of the São Paulo Workers' Federation premises, kicked down the doors to the offices of the Bakery Workers Union, the Construction Workers' League, the Mill and Warehouse Operatives, Stonemasons' Union and Union of Cafe Employees, destroyed their assets and hauled away their prisoners to Police Headquarters where they were held for 24 hours. When the chief of police and 'political and social order' delegate turned up, they gave the order for them to be freed and it transpired that the arrest orders had not come from the police department.

Throughout 1933, the newspapers *A Lanterna*, *A Plebe* and *O Trabalhador*, the Workers' Federation, Social Culture Centre and Anti-Clerical Leagues remained in a state of readiness lest they be taken unawares by Integralist marches.

In some districts of São Paulo, the envoys of the 'Duce' were pulling out all the stops to recruit *squadristi* to wear their olive green shirts and get down to the killing, arson and destruction in a 20th century re-enactment of the invasions by the barbarian enemies of science and civilisation. In August 1933 the Libertarian Antifascist Committee sounded the alert.

The line-up of the commanders of Brazilian Integralism in 1933-1934 was as follows:

'Plinio Salgado (national commander), Gustavo Barroso (vice-commander and president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters), Ribeiro Couto and 130 journalists from the Federal District who "put their signatures to the fascist manifesto addressed to Brazil's intellectuals."

In Rio de Janeiro a Student Alliance for Freedom of Thought was set up with very definite aims and with no political sponsorship. Its initial manifesto was published in *A Lanterna*, an anti-clerical libertarian São Paulo weekly stated on 9 November 1933:



'Comrades. The clergy of Rome who have always been in close alliance with those in government are presently hatching further strikes against the right to think, act and pray, even though Article 72 of the 1891 Constitution enshrines freedom of thought in this country.'

As 1933 was drawing to an end, *A Plebe* warned antifascists: 'Like fascism, Integralism means to enslave and fetter the people. Let us now defend our liberty like men, lest we be forced to weep like madmen hereafter.'

'The clarion call of human redemption is already sounding! Let us unite against all wars, against all tyranny, against all the palliatives we are being offered. Our happiness, our fraternity and our liberty lie in our own hands, in a cohesive force that must triumph.' In an act of homage to the Integralists' thuggery, the writer Menotti del Picchia, a would-be 'Duce' himself, laid the groundwork for the São Paulo fascio of the White Shirts.

In Niteroi (*A Plebe* 2 December 1933), the president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Gustavo Barroso, an Integralist leader, used his walking stick on the 16 year old girl worker Nair Coelho as she was making a speech against fascist thuggery from the top of a park bench and broke her arm, and in Belo Horizonte, language teacher Casale was forced to take to his heels to escape from the Municipal Theatre. The crowd listening to the ranting of this Integralist thug decided to stop him and drove him out of the place.

Anarcho-syndicalist workers resisted compliance with the Labour Ministry's conditions. They were opposed by the communists who, from early on, had supported the change, by the bosses, the police, the Integralist raiders of trade union premises who, according to a substantial declaration from the São Paulo Glass Plant Workers' Union in February 1934 'were at that time lobbying in the Constituent Assembly for the introduction of the death penalty in Brazil.'

In March 1934 the São Paulo Workers' Federation based at 80, Rua Quintino Bocaiuva, issued three highly significant manifestos. One against the Monstro Law, one opposed to war and the third criticising 'the workers' organisations, labour legislation, the law on unionisation, the work record-book, the new holiday law and the new constitution' and reporting talks given by Edgard Leuenroth, Germinal Soler and Herminio Marcos.

In São Paulo, following the defeat they had sustained in the Salon Celso Garcia, 'Plinio Salgado's gang organised a show of strength for 24 December that would involve attacking unions and murdering the most active trade unionists' (*Nossa Voz*, 1 December 1933). 18 centuries (companies) would march through the centre of São Paulo ready to exterminate, cannibal-fashion, any anarchists or other leftists blocking their path.'

'Five hundred green-shirted stewards' – assault troops trained to crush the opposition arrived in the Praça da Sé from Rio de Janeiro under the command of academician Gustavo Barroso. The police also set up machine-guns at strategic points to deter potential attacks on the Integralists who still enjoyed the 'favour' of the government. In addition to a large contingent of police, Colonel Arlindo de Oliveira had 400 men at his disposal from the 1st, 2nd and 6th Infantry Battalions, the Fire Brigade and the local Cavalry Regiment.

Large crowds of onlookers of every persuasion were gathering near the Praça da Sé. As the marchers arrived at the cathedral, cries were heard of 'death to the fascists' 'Down with the Green-shirts' and shots rang out. It is said that a machine-gun set up by the mounted Civil Guard across from the Rua Senador fired when it was nudged accidentally. Others insist that the shots were fired by communists waiting in the crowd for the marchers to arrive. The fact is the shooting broke out earlier than the time the libertarians had scheduled for an attack on the Integralists and all hell broke loose. People were running and screaming, others fell down mortally wounded and the parade and pledge of loyalty to the Integralist chief, Dr Plinio Salgado never took place.

Availing of the 'breaches' opened by the Integralists with the aid of the PCB's communists and the leaders of Cardinal Sebastião Leme's Brazilian Catholic Party, advised by '50 jurists', Getúlio Vargas met with no great difficulty in establishing his *Estado Novo* (New State) which lasted until 1945.

Below is a catalogue of some achievements of Brazil's anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists:

The First Brazilian Labour Congress – held at the Galician Club at 30-32 Rua da Constituição in Rio de Janeiro from 15 to 20 April 1906 over 12 sessions. They discussed 23 prearranged items plus a supplementary point. Delegates attended from 23 bodies from 5 states in Brazil. One of those attending was the Italian engineer and founder of the Cecilia Colony, Giovanni Rossi.

The Second Brazilian Labour Congress – held in the Cosmopolitan Club at 215 Rua do Senado in Rio de Janeiro from 8 to 13 September 1913. Anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist workers held 12 sessions, debating 24 items in the presence of 117 delegates from 8 states, 2 state federations, 5 local federations, 52 unions and 4 libertarian newspapers.

The Third Brazilian Labour Congress – in the local of the Textile Factory Workers' Union at 19 Rua do Acre in Rio de Janeiro from 23 to 30 April 1920. 23 sessions were held in the presence of 39 bodies from 11 states in Brazil.

The First São Paulo State Congress – in the Excelsior Hall at 20 Rua Florêncio do Abreu. In all they discussed 3 main items between 6 and 8 December 1906.

The First São Paulo State Conference – held in 1907 to draft and decide the agenda for the 2nd State Congress, it discussed a total of 22 items.

The Second São Paulo State Congress – held on 7 and 8 April 1908, involving 22 workers' organisations committed to anarcho-syndicalism.

The First Rio Grande do Sul State Congress – held on 1 and 2 January 1898 in the presence of delegates from 10 associations, 1 newspaper and 1 anarchist group. This was the first get-together in Brazil of workers with socialist leanings.

The Second Rio Grande do Sul State Labour Congress – held at 30 Rua Comendador Azevedo from 21 to 25 March 1920. Delegates attended from 30 associations, all committed to revolutionary syndicalism.

The Third Rio Grande do Sul Labour Congress – 27 September to 2 October 1925. 12 sessions in all in the presence of 23 workers' associations, the Social Prisoners' Aid Committee and 2 newspapers. A Declaration of Principles from the IWA was endorsed and an International Anarchist Solidarity Pact was established.

The Fourth Rio Grande do Sul Labour Congress – held clandestinely on a date unspecified. 3 sessions over 2 days in the presence of 16 workers' associations, 2 newspapers, 6 anarchist groups and several São Paulo militants who had fled to Rio Grande do Sul (Florentino de Carvalho, Domingos Passos and others) and delegates from Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina.

The First Minas Gerais State Labour Federation Congress – held in Belo Horizonte in June 1912. A total of 7 items were debated and approved.

The Paraná Labour Congress – held in 1907. Present were the Workers' Federation, established by Italian survivors of the Cecilia Colony, together with the Drama-lovers' Group, 12 labour associations and a delegate from the paper *O Despertar*, founded and run by the Italian anarchist Gigi Damiani who was deported from Brazil in 1919.

Other congresses – Brazilian anarcho-syndicalist workers took part in or were present at the South American Hatmakers' Congress held in Argentina and Uruguay in July 1920. Research has established that anarchists were to the fore in every anarcho-syndicalist congress as well as holding their own congresses.



The São Paulo Libertarian Conference – held at 39-2n Rua José Bonifácio. In all, it sat on the Sundays 14, 21 and 28 June, 5, 12 and 26 July 1914. Its main aim was to prepare and choose two delegates to represent Brazil at the London Anarchist Congress which was never held because of the outbreak of war.

The South American Anarchist Congress – held in Rio de Janeiro from 18 to 20 October 1915 on the premises of the Workers' Federation at 71 Praça Tiradentes in the presence of delegates from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay.

The International Peace Congress – held from 14 to 16 October 1915. The proceedings took place in the Workers' Federation local at 71, Praça Tiradentes, Rio de Janeiro in the presence of delegates from the Argentinean FORA and delegates from Chile and Uruguay.

The Brazilian Anarchist Congress – held in Nossa Chácara in the Itaim district of São Paulo from 17 to 19 December 1948. It signalled the resurgence of the anarchist movement in Brazil after the collapse of the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship. It drew anarchists from several places in Brazil and a number of veteran Italian, Spanish and Portuguese anarchist militants living in Brazil or passing through.

The Anarchist Encounter in A Urca – a national convention. Held on 9 to 11 February 1953 São Paulo 67, Rua Osório de Almeida in Rio de Janeiro, in the presence of more than 30 anarchists. It proved a very productive get-together.

Brazilian Anarchist Congress – held in Nossa Chácara, Itaim, São Paulo from 26 to 29 March 1959. Large turn out by militants from all parts of the country including Spanish exiles and some Italians. It was agreed that the Social Culture Centres be reactivated and the *Mundo Livre* publishing imprint was launched in Rio de Janeiro. In all, a 10-item agenda was discussed.

Encounter of Spanish Libertarian Exiles – at the Social Culture Center at 85 Rua Rubino da Oliveira in São Paulo on 7 and 8 October 1961. Attended by Brazilian anarchists and exiles from the CNT and FIJJL.

Anarchist Encounter – held in São Paulo from 20 to 22 April 1962. 100 anarchist militants from all over Brazil gathered in Nossa Chácara, including some foreign comrades. Five very productive sessions were held.

The Tenth Anarchist Encounter – held from 15 to 17 November 1963. Over 100 militants met to discuss the course of the anarchist movement in Brazil. The proceedings were broken up into six main points.

May 1964 – clandestine meeting of the anarchists of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in Nosso Sítio plot a course with regard to the military dictatorship installed on 1 April 1964. A number of resolutions concerning the safeguarding of anarchists' resources came out of this meeting.

Encounter in Nosso Sítio – held clandestinely in 1968 in Mogi das Cruzes, São Paulo.

Encounter of Pro-COB Groups – held at 85, Rua Rubino de Oliveira in May 1986.

Brazil's libertarian movement also took part in the El Ferrol (Spain) congress in 1915, to which it sent three delegates. In 1928 it sent an indirect delegate and after 1945 it sent Joseph Tibogue as its delegate to France plus messages of support to other congresses.

In its history, anarchism in Brazil has enjoyed the support of one confederation, several federations, upwards of 100 specifically libertarian groups, six publishing houses, three bookshops, more than ten rationalist schools, two people's universities and intensive propaganda through anarchist theatre and since 1939 it has had modest premises of its own bought by anarchists and its own archives. It was a seed that germinated and these days it feeds research and doctoral theses and several commercial publishers are coming around to publishing these.

With the death of José Oiticica in 1957, three libertarian militants in Rio de Janeiro came up with the idea of setting up the Professor José Oiticica Studies Centre in the room where their mentor had lectured at 6, Avenida Almirante Barroso, Room 1101. In the days that followed the trio held a meeting in Room 922, 23 Avenida 13 de Maio and decided to seek out comrades who had, for whatever reason, drifted away from the movement, and get them to help out with the centre and it was registered on 2 July 1960. (The centre was in operation from 1958). In 1969 a 'handful' of air force officers kicked down the doors and carried off some of its cultural resources, the typewriter, mimeograph machine and other 'subversive' items before moving on to the homes of the centre's directors to 'confiscate books etc.', arresting us and bringing charges against 16 people. Some of those arrested were tortured and eventually they brought us to a trial that lingered until 1972.

During its (12 year) existence, the Professor José Oiticica Studies Centre launched the *Mundo Livre* imprint on the basis of subscriptions, publishing five books, running courses on Anarchism in the Carioca Theatre, welcoming anarchists from Europe and the Americas, ran a number of protest and support campaigns, offered more than a hundred lectures and talks and part of its activities was reported in the press. The military dictatorship put paid to that.

Sight should not be lost of the importance of daily newspapers like *A Plebe* (São Paulo 1919), *A Hora Social* (Recife 1919), *A Voz do Povo* (Rio de Janeiro 1920), *A Vanguarda* (São Paulo 1921-1923), *A Lanterna* (São Paulo 1901-1934), weeklies like *O Amigo do Povo* (São Paulo 1903), *A Terra Livre* (São Paulo-Rio de Janeiro 1907-1910), *La Battaglia* (São Paulo 1904-1913), *Remodelações* (Rio de Janeiro 1945-1947), *Ação Direta* (Rio de Janeiro 1946-1959), and reviews such as *Remodelações* (Rio de Janeiro 1921-1922), *Renascença* (São Paulo 1923), *A Vida* (Rio de Janeiro 1914-1915), *Revista Liberal* (Porto Alegre 1921-1924) and hundreds of other publications.

A team of academic researchers in anarchism sponsored a course at the ABI (Brazilian Press Association). On 9, 16, 23 and 30 July 1987, the José Oiticica Anarchist Group, made up of new libertarian militants put on a course at the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences at the Rio de Janeiro Federal University, covering topics like 'Current Issues in Socialism,' 'Anarchism Today and Alternative Movements,' 'The Trade Union Movement and Anarcho-syndicalism,' and 'The State Today.' It had the support of the São Paulo Social Culture Centre, Sub-Rector 5, the Student Organisation Commission and the IFCS Cultural Commission and attendance was good with the lecture room literally packed, even though there was a charge for admission.

In Rio Grande do Sul, groups of libertarians and sympathisers marked the centenary of the Chicago Martyrs, the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Revolution and the 67th anniversary of the shooting of Francisco Ferrer and there were other events too.

In the Brazilian capital anarchists held a Libertarian Symposium and launched the Editora Novos Tempos publishing house which has published several books of genuine literary merit and anarchist tenor.

In São Paulo the universities of Campinas, São Carlos and Brasília have set up useful Social History collections in which anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist publications predominate and from time to time they run courses on anarchism, with the involvement of members of the Social Culture Centre who have a long record of activity and consistently run libertarian discussion groups at their premises at 85-2n Rua Rubino de Oliveira in O Brás. Enjoying support from the Pro-COB (Brazilian Labour Confederation) groups and the IWA, based in Spain, the São Paulo Social Culture Centre continues to sponsor ecology meetings, anti-nuclear rallies (on the anniversary of Hiroshima), marked the 70th anniversary of the 1917 Libertarian Insurrectionary Strike in São Paulo and debates on self-management in the social struggle and trade union methods of struggle.



It has mounted seminars on 'Feminism and Reappropriation of the Body', 'Feminism: Reinventing the Feminine and the Masculine', 'Feminism, Issues Arising', 'Recovering the Memory' and 'Caverns of São Paulo State'. University extra-mural courses have been offered on 'What is Anarchism?', 'Origins: From the French Revolution to Proudhon', 'The First International: Marx, Bakunin and the Paris Commune', 'Anarcho-syndicalism: Kropotkin and Malatesta', 'Anarchism in Brazil' and 'Anarchism Today, Freedom and Self-management'. These ventures have had the support of São Paulo's School of Sociology and Politics.

As part of its educational endeavours, the São Paulo Social Culture Centre recently ran a Libertarian Education Course focusing on the following themes: 'The Anarchist Movement and Rationalist Schooling in São Paulo, 1912-1919', 'Schooling and Work in Today's Brazil', 'Popular Education from Libertarian Education to Liberating Education', 'Organisation and Power: The State, The School, The Firm', 'Education for Work through the Freinet Method', 'Autonomous Struggles and Pedagogical Self-Management' and 'An Anarchist Therapy'.

This ideological effort finds an outlet in the review *Autogestão*, the Social Studies Centre's own Bulletin, prospectuses, posters and advertisement of courses in the commercial press. These days nobody in Brazil is scared of anarchism. A word long feared and held up to ridicule, anarchism these days is a philosophy of life that has stood the test of time and is finding itself the stuff of doctoral theses, plays, novels adapted for TV and short and full length films.

The anarchists of Brazil – with the exception of those who purport to be so but are ideologically unsound – agree with Kropotkin's dictum: 'Anybody who expects an institution that has evolved over time to serve as a tool for removing the privileges that it has itself bestowed thereby demonstrates that he does not understand the life of a society and historical evolution. He has failed to grasp the essential law of all organic development, to wit, that new functions require new organs and that these must be free to emerge.'

Some of those who have helped to shape anarchism in Brazil include – Fabio Luz, João Gonçalves da Silva, Avelino Foscolo, Ricardo Gonçalves, Benjamin Mota, José Martins Fontes, Ricardo Cipola, Rozendo dos Santos, Reinaldo Frederico Greyer, Pedro Augusto Mota, Moacir Caminha, José Ramon, Domingos Passos, João Perdigão Gutierrez, Florentino de Carvalho, Domingos Ribeiro Filho, Lima Bareto, Orlando Corea Lopes, Manuel Marques Bastos, José Puicegur, Diamantino Augusto, José Oiticica, José Romero, Edgard Leuenroth, Felipe Gil Sousa Passos, Pedro Catalo, João Penteado, Neno Vasco, Adelino Pinho, Giovanni Rossi, Gigi Damiani, Artur Campagnoli, José Marques da Costa, Rodolfo Felipe, Isabel Cerrutti, João Perez, Antonino Dominguez, Manuel Perez, Romualdo de Figueiredo, Juan Puig Elias, Maria Lacerda de Moura, Rafael Fernandes, Angelina Soares, Paula Soares, Elias Iltchenco, Frederico Kniestedt, Jesús Ribas, Cecilio Vilar, Oreste Ristori, Maria Lopes, Manuel Moscoso, Polidoro Santos, Amilcar dos Santos, Pedro Carneiro, Atitio Pecagna, Rudosindo Colmenero, Maria Silva, Maria Rodrigues, Pietro Ferrua, Pedro Ferreira da Silva, Camara Pires, Ramiro de Nobrega, Maria Valverde, João Simões, Manuel Lopes, Vitorino Trigo, Mariano Ferrer, Luiso Magrassi, Sofia Garrido, Joaquim Leal Junior, Lino de Resende, Jaime Cubero – and countless other intellectuals and workers.

Edgar Rodrigues From *Universo Acrata* (Editora Insular, Florianopolis 1999) [adapted].

### Chronology 1823 – 1937

1823 The Ypiranga Declaration declares Brazil independent of Portugal and the former Portuguese Regent becomes Pedro I of Brazil.

1840 The French engineer Louis Léger Vauthier arrives in Recife, Brazil to work. He spreads the ideas of Fourier, influencing intellectuals such as Antonio Pedro Figueiredo.

1841 An attempt is made to establish a phalanstery [community] in the Saí region (São Francisco in Santa Catarina state) by a French group led by the Fourierist doctor Benoît Jules Mure.

1845 In Rio de Janeiro, Benoît Jules Mure, after the frustration of the phalanstery in Saí, launches one of the first socialist newspapers, *O Socialista da Provincia do Rio de Janeiro*.

1848 Intellectuals influenced by utopian socialism take part in the Praiera Revolution in Recife.

1865 In a report to the London IWMA Conference, Charles Limousin and Ribourg write that 'steps are being taken to establish correspondence with Rio de Janeiro and with the French colonies in Guadeloupe and Martinique.'

1874 A Portuguese edition of Proudhon's *On the Federative Principle* appears in Portugal.

1886 Kropotkin's *Anarchy in Socialist Evolution* is published in Portugal, the first of his books to appear in Portuguese.

1888 Arrival in São Paulo of Artur Campagnoli who establishes a commune in Guararema. Slavery abolished in Brazil.

1889 In Santos, Silverio Fontes sets up the Socialist Centre, one of the first groups dedicated to the spread of socialist ideas in Brazil. Fontes's son, Martins Fontes will be an anarchist militant. Pedro II deposed and republic introduced.

1890 The first group of anarchists sails for Brazil to found the Cecilia Colony in Paraná.

1892 Italian immigrants publish *Gli Schiavi Bianchi*, one of the first Brazilian anarchist newspapers. Brazil's first workers' congress held in Rio de Janeiro. The majority of delegates are anarchists.

1893 In Italy, Giovanni Rossi, a vet and anarchist behind the Cecilia Colony publishes *Cecilia, An Experimental Anarchist Community*. Publication begins in São Paulo of the anarchist paper *Il Risveglio*, which survives until 1899.

1896 In Portugal, Silva Mendes publishes his book, *Libertarian Socialism or Anarchism*.

1897 Foundation of the International Workers' League (LOI), co-founded by the 'Homens Livres' anarchist group in Rio Grande do Sul.

1898 The first congress of workers' organisations at state level takes place in Rio Grande do Sul. Publication of Rio de Janeiro's first ever anarcho-communist paper *O Despertar* (October to December) published by the 'Grupo Angiolillo' and under the supervision of hat-maker José Sarmiento Marques. After that ceases publication, *O Protesto* is published under the supervision of the Portuguese worker J. Mota Assunção.

1899 In Pernambuco, *O Almanaque* publishes 'The Anarchists' Ten Commandments'.

1900 Publication in Rio de Janeiro of the book *The United States of Brazil* (the chapter of Elisée Reclus's *Universal Geography* dealing with Brazil). Formation in Santos of the 'First of May Society'.

1901 The lawyer and anarchist militant Neno Vasco (real name Dr Gregorio Nanianzeno Queiroz de Vasconcelos) arrives in São Paulo from Portugal.

1903 The writer and anarchist militant Fabio Luz publishes *O Ideólogo*, the first Brazilian novel with a libertarian inspiration. Neno Vasco begins publication of *O Amigo do Povo*. The 'Revolutionary Syndicalist Movement' promotes the setting up of hundreds of workers' clubs.



1904 In March, the libertarian review *Kultur* is launched. The team behind it helps to launch the People's University from the local of the Rio de Janeiro Painters' Union.

1905 The so-called Adolfo Gordo Law empowers the government to deport 'foreign agitators.' Foundation in Rio de Janeiro of the 'Novo Rumo' libertarian group.

1906 In São Paulo, the first Brazilian Workers' Congress endorses an anarcho-syndicalist line and launches the Brazilian Workers' Confederation (COB). Publication in Campinas of *A Voz Operária*, the organ of the Printworkers' Union: under the supervision of the anarchist Virgilio Pessagne, it will last until 13 January 1920.

1907 General strike in São Paulo. In Campinas, the 'Workers' League' sets up a Free School under Renato Salles. Foundation in São Paulo of the 'Germinal' libertarian group.

1908 The COB mouthpiece *A Voz do Trabalho*, Brazil's leading anarcho-syndicalist paper, begins publication in Rio de Janeiro.

1910 Republican revolution in Portugal, involving workers and anarchist militants. Brazilian anarchists set up a Revolutionary Support Committee in solidarity with the victimised Argentinian anarchists. They also throw their weight behind a revolt in the Brazilian navy against brutal discipline.

1911 The anarchist activist and journalist Neno Vasco leaves for Portugal to carry on with his activities there. His departure deals a death blow to his paper *A Terra Livre*, of which 62 issues have been published since 1905.

1913 Second Brazilian Workers' Congress, held in Rio de Janeiro, confirms the revolutionary syndicalist policy. In Lisbon, the Brazilian-Portuguese Pinto Quartim launches the newspaper *Terra Livre*. In Santos, a dock strike is put down with violence.

1914 In Rio de Janeiro *A Vida*, the leading Brazilian 20th century anarchist review, begins publication with a campaign against the war. In Porto Alegre, anarchists launch the 'Anti-War League'. A get-together of anarchist groups is held in São Paulo.

1915 Representatives from several Brazilian states attend the International Peace Congress in Rio de Janeiro. A South American Anarchist Congress attracting delegates from Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay meets in Rio de Janeiro. The Modern University is launched in São Paulo at the instigation of Spanish-born anarchist Florentino de Carvalho.

1917 *A Plebe*, the main Brazilian anarchist newspaper, begins publication. In October Brazil declares war on Germany and begins to round up, jail or deport agitators. A general strike in São Paulo and Santos is broken by the army. Edgard Leuenroth is charged with promoting it.

1918 Revolutionary general strike in Rio de Janeiro. It comes to be known as the Anarchist Uprising of Rio de Janeiro. Anarchists throughout Brazil set up People's Committees to protest against the cost of living.

1919 In Portugal, the anarchist Manuel Ribeiro launches the Portuguese Maximalist Federation, the first organisation in Portugal to champion Leninism and midwife to the Communist Party of Portugal. In Rio de Janeiro a so-called Communist Party is established by anarchists; it is a blend of anarchism and maximalism and does not have Comintern approval. Edgard Leuenroth and Hélio Negro (Antônio Candeias Duarte) publish *What is Maximalism or Bolshevism?*

1920 Untimely death in Portugal of Neno Vasco. The Third Brazilian Workers' Congress is held in Rio de Janeiro, with representatives from 11 states of Brazil. Publication of the daily *A Voz do Povo*, organ of the Rio de Janeiro Workers' Federation. José Oiticica sets out his objections to the Bolshevik revolution in a series in the paper entitled 'The Wrong Road'.

1921 Edgard Leuenroth is approached by Comintern representative 'Renison Soubiroff' (in reality the Swiss former pastor Jules Humbert-Droz) to form the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB).

Leuenroth declines but refers 'Soubiroff' to Astrojildo Pereira, another anarchist. While Leuenroth is hospitalised, João da Costa Pimento, a leninist supporter, seizes the assets of *A Vanguarda* (Leuenroth's paper), presses and all. In Rio Grande do Sul *A Revista Liberal* begins publication under Polidoro Santos as a 'champion of anarchism and the Modern School.'

1922 Death of the leading writer Lima Barreto, a regular contributor to the labour press and an anarchist sympathiser. In March, Astrojildo Pereira launches the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB) with eleven ex-anarchists and one socialist. The PCB launches its own paper, *Movimento Comunista*. The São Paulo anarchist paper *A Plebe* publishes a manifesto attacking 'State communism'.

1923 Publication of Neno Vasco's *The Anarchist Conception of Syndicalism*, one of the most important Portuguese-language anarchist books.

1924 Demonstrations in Brazil on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. Anarchist support for a military revolt in São Paulo draws down repression upon their heads when it fails. The government deports some 'foreign agitator' anarchists and sends others to their death in the Oiapoque concentration camp. The Colombian anarchist Biófilo Panclasta (real name Vicente R. Lizcano) is arrested while promoting a coffee workers' strike in São Paulo and sent to the Oiapoque concentration camp but escapes to Cayenne and Martinique.

1927 The 4th Rio Grande do Sul congress is anarcho-syndicalism's final labour congress. Anarcho-syndicalists are increasingly squeezed between the Communist Party line (centralised organisation, alliances across the class barrier and participation in politics) and growing state meddling in union affairs.

1929 A Brazilian General Labour Confederation (CGT) is established with PCB support. Brazil's anarcho-syndicalists rally round the CNT which is affiliated to the revolutionary syndicalist ACAT (American Continental Workers' Association).

1930 A coup by the Liberal Alliance in Brazil paves the way for Getúlio Vargas's dictatorship. Anarcho-syndicalists from the São Paulo Workers' Federation promote a long textile strike and many are jailed as a result.

1931 Vargas introduces labour regulations based on Mussolini's Labour Charter. Industrial unions are banned, 2/3 of the union membership must be native-born or naturalised Brazilians and union officers have to have been resident in Brazil for 10 years (if naturalised) or 30 years (if foreign-born). This decree removes most of the class-conscious workers from positions of influence. Corporatist legislation and deportations do the rest.

1935 Libertarians lose their last remaining stronghold, the premises of the Anti-Clerical League in Rio de Janeiro. Communists (including Francisco Mangabeira) sent to disrupt a talk given there by José Oiticica call the police when they fail in the attempt. Eight anarchists are arrested and the centre is closed down along with its newspaper *A Lanterna*.

1937 Establishment of a dictatorship under the *Estado Novo* of Getúlio Vargas who introduces a fascist-style constitution and unleashes a crackdown on labour autonomy and the anarchists.

### **Russians Looking for a Brazilian El Dorado**

Labour contract agencies were publishing notices in Europe offering not-to-be-missed benefits for farm-workers and craftsmen. The object of the exercise was to attract skilled tradesmen to clear the land and promote growth in Brazil. The advertisements held out the offer of free passage and land grants for anyone willing to set up farming communities in Brazil.

Some of those advertisements made it as far as Russia and the realm of the Romanovs and on 31 December 1878 1,366 hopeful Ukrainian peasants disembarked in Paraná, keen to find their very own Brazilian El Dorado. The invitations issued to European workers to lend a hand with the



development of Brazil had carried the endorsement of Pedro II, but, for all the Brazilian monarch's 'fine intentions', the contents had been very vague. Laziness and lack of commitment on the part of their partners caused serious suffering to these 1,366 Ukrainians.

Writing about these Russian workers, Lamenha Linds notes 'the abuses practised' and the 'complaints inspired by such abuses' and concludes: 'Dumped in Vila Palmeira and stranded there, in that they were denied all transport facilities, the Russians finally revolted and insisted that they be repatriated, since the land allotted to them was of the poorest quality, as they had verified through the use of drilling equipment and chemical tests.'

The 'rebellion' put Pedro II on notice and he travelled out to Paraná to examine the lands refused by the Russians and saw for himself the huge numbers of stones that rendered the land unproductive. In view of this and to defuse the scandal created by his subordinates, Pedro II proposed to 'feed the 928 families out of his own pocket for a two month period', whilst ensuring that land of proven fertility, arable land would be granted to any who might want to remain in Brazil. The Brazilian government would see to it that the others were transported home to Russia.

About 200 families decided to stay. The majority, however, sailed for Hamburg and thence to the USA where they founded a settlement in Nevada. Others opted instead to try their luck in the settlements around Coronel Suárez in Argentina.

Of those who stayed in Brazil, a few set to work in the 'Lago de Quero-Quero' settlement between Ponte Grossa and Palmeira, and others headed off to Mariental, near Lapa.

Following studies by Professor Fiebig-Gerst establishing that 'there were 62 grams of chlorophyll in every 1,000 grams of maté', yerba maté production had been stepped up. Then there was the problem of getting the maté tea to other parts of the country. The Russian immigrants – most of them Ukrainian-born – wasted no time: they began to make maté shipments in huge covered wagons drawn by six or eight mules or horses. Only a few of them stuck with farming once they had recovered.

Years later, in an effort to ease their resentment, Pedro II made land grants in the area to immigrants from other countries, including the Italian Giovanni Rossi, an anarchist who came to Brazil to set up the Cecilia Colony.

Pedro II was deposed and a republic installed, so he was unable to check on the success or failure of the settlers, but as an exile in Europe he would certainly have known that his successors were still trawling for farmers. The republicans' pleas reached the Ukraine and since, by the time that 1909 rolled around, everybody had forgotten the sordid trickery practised on the local farm workers by Brazilian politicians back in 1878, they fell for the propaganda about 'a life of paradise' in Brazil. 'Twenty Ukrainian peasant families sold up all they had and sailed for London. The voyage from southern Russia to Santos, Brazil, was a long one and then there was the next stage – on to São Paulo. The republic's immigration agents – just like Pedro II's subordinates before them – took the peasants out to the Colonia Paricuera-açu and gave them some land to work, ignoring the fact that these folk were from a cold climate and were suddenly assailed by the powerful heat which left them soaking with sweat ... and drained them of the physical strength they needed for farm-work.'

One of the victims, Elias Iltchenko, recalls how, after two years' sickness, with several of their number suffering without treatment and all of them feeling the effects of hunger, they decided to pool what roubles they had and sell everything that they could to buy passage for everyone as far as the port of Iguapé, where they contacted the Russian consul who travelled up from Rio de Janeiro to listen to his compatriots. The immigrants asked to be repatriated: they were all feeling let down and betrayed and declared that they were ready to expose their plight to the European press.

The rebellion caught the Brazilian authorities on the hop, calling to mind the scandal surrounding the repatriation forced upon the monarchist government in the 19th century. To snuff out the revolt, the Brazilian authorities offered them land in Rio Grande do Sul (where the climate was more bearable for the Ukrainians), plus monetary assistance in launching their 'new settlement'. Tired and hungry, with their children sick, and convinced that this offered the best way out of their suffering, they agreed.

They were then loaded on board a cargo ship bound for Porto Alegre where they lived for three weeks, sleeping in a huddle with only the meagrest rations and medical treatment. Later they were taken out to Erechin (since renamed Getúlio Vargas) and they spent several weeks living in cramped immigration barracks until their settlement permits finally arrived and they were allocated their land with a resentment that the then teenaged Elias Iltchenko could plainly detect. A few families ventured further, only to return after some weeks. They finally came back to collect the others and each family was allocated one or two 25-hectare lots, depending of the number of able-bodied members.

Transported on army carts drawn by mules, the 20 Ukrainian families set about 'clearing' the undergrowth; they had no tools and no idea how they were going to get out of there.

#### **Mutual Aid And Anarchism**

The lands granted held nothing but forest, streams and small, bare clearings. Apart from the land, every family was granted 500 *milreis* in vouchers, ploughs and one axe and one saw between every two families. But there were no access routes, no vehicles or other forms of transportation. They had to do it all on foot over untamed terrain. Nor were they given seed, livestock, poultry or guidance as to what might usefully be planted or how to go about it.

Bereft of rations, with no housing to shelter them from the weather and the wild animals, no medical facilities at all and no advice as to how to protect themselves from the mosquitoes that carried tropical diseases, the Ukrainian settlers started to fight for survival, relying upon one another out of sheer necessity and human solidarity.

Their numbers included farmers, teachers, physicians, nurses, magistrates, midwives and grave-diggers: everyone mucked in and there was no leadership or authority. Each family worked its own parcel or parcels of land, planting or harvesting the fruits of their labours, whilst, at the level of the settlement as a whole, they helped one another out in respect of felling and sawing up trees, building homes, streets, bridges over rivers, during planting and harvesting and they rallied round each other in the face of illness, births, deaths, accidents, drought, floods, during storms, etc. The same thing was true of the exchange of food and seeds, ferrying produce into town for sale and the proceeds of these sales were used to buy clothing, seeds, new tools and medicines.

With no help or guidance from outsiders, the settlers had to shift for themselves, working around the area in order to raise money and learning from those who knew how to deal with the soil. The women, children and elderly collected or grew a few things to eat. For three long years (1911-1914) they endured hunger, deprivation and regrets and the notion of returning to Russia surfaced again, mainly during the first few months after the popular revolution that toppled the Tsar in February 1917.

But then the libertarian newspaper *Golos Truda* (organ of the Argentina-based Russian Workers' Federation) began to reach the settlement and revealed facts about Russia that were a far cry from what these emigrants had imagined. The Bolsheviks did not think twice about arresting workers, many of whom had helped them overthrow the Romanovs.

Out in the fields, they learned from one another. In the tilling of the land they were all teachers and pupils, gradually mastering the task. At night, by the light of candles they learned and taught



Portuguese, Spanish and (in the case of the youngest ones) Russian and Esperanto, through newspapers, reviews and anarchist books regularly dispatched to Brazil by the Argentina-based Russian Workers' Federation.

In 1919, Russian libertarians were obliged to retreat into Uruguay for a time to escape harassment by Argentinean police. In Montevideo they published a newspaper entitled *Rabotchaya Myssl*, but it was not long before they were back in Buenos Aires and *Golos Truda* resurfaced as the mouthpiece of a South American Russian Labour Federation. From 1918 on it appeared as a weekly: it eventually switched to fortnightly publication until 1930 when the police of the coup-maker General Uriburu burst into the *Golos Truda* premises, arresting its officers and seizing more than 10,000 books from a library in Berisso and burning them. Russian-language anarchist publications published in Argentina and others published in Canada and the United States were circulated in Rio Grande do Sul. Teams formed by the peasants of Erebangó saw to it that everything got through to the Russian immigrants all over Brazil.

Some of the peasants arriving in São Paulo in 1907 had books by Tolstoy and other, revolutionary, writers and they used these in teaching their children to read. There were also books around by Alexander Berkman, Voline and, above all, Emma Goldman and indeed of *Mother Earth*, literature that was circulated from hand to hand among the Russian peasants in Brazil. Like good Ukrainians, in Erebangó they employed some of the methods of Nestor Makhno prior to his betrayal by Trotsky in the Ukraine.

By 1918 the Russian workers based in Getúlio Vargas (formerly, Erechin) were in complete control of the land and had the economic, psychological and vehicular resources to get together on a monthly basis and set up cohesive, active libertarian groups.

#### **Precious Testimony On The History Of Anarchism In Brazil**

According to Elias Iltchenko, the group that he belonged to along with his family had 40 members scattered through the area covered by Floresta, Erechin and Erebangó.

In 1918 the following libertarian bodies were formed:

- a) A Union of Russian Workers in Brazil branch in Getúlio Vargas, with a membership of 40. Its best known leaders were (chairman) Sergio Iltchenko, (secretary) Paulo Uchakov and (treasurer) Simon Poluboyarinov. It covered a 4- 5- square kilometre area.
- b) A Union of Russian Workers branch in Porto Alegre. Its chairman was Nikita Jakobchenko [Iltchenko.]
- c) A Union of Russian Workers branch in Guarani, Campinas and Santo Angelo. Its leaders were Jono Tatarchenko, Gregorio Tatarchenko and others.
- d) The Porto Lucena branch of the Union of Russian Workers. Elias could not recollect any names.

One of the most active militants in Rio Grande do Sul and distributor of the Argentina-based *Golos Truda* and anarchist reviews and book published in North America over the years between 1911 and 1963 was Demetrio Cirotenko. For over 20 years he was the main person liaising between and holding together the Workers' Unions in Erechin and Erebangó among other places. He died young as a result of a beating. His loss was sorely felt but propaganda activity carried on.

Someone else who left his mark on his travels through Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná) was the writer, journalist, theatre critic, teacher and public speaker Casev Stefanovetchi, a native of the Ukraine who wore a full beard like Kropotkin's.

In the course of an interview with Elias Iltchenko we picked up other details such as, 'My father used the alias Nikita Jacobchenko and was secretary of the Union of Russian Workers several times over.'

'In those days, all of the founders of the settlement in Erebangó subscribed through the South American Russian Workers' Union to the newspaper *Golos Truda*. Consideration was given to setting up a Libertarian Farm Workers' Youth group in Getúlio Vargas but the plan fell through and youngsters like myself joined the already existing groups.

'The newspaper *Amerikanskye Izvestia* and the review *Volna* reached our community and the Unions from the United States. From 1925 on we also took *Dyelo Truda* from Paris. This review started to publish out of Chicago in 1930 after its publishers moved there. From 1921 on we got *Probuzhdeniye* from Detroit and in 1940 the publishers behind *Dyelo Truda* and *Probuzhdeniye* joined forces to issue a single review called *Dyelo Truda-Probuzhdeniye* that last until 1963.

'Books by Russian anarchists published in Argentina, Canada and the USA reached Brazil and were distributed around like-minded peasant groups. Initially many of the Russian farm workers in Brazil were illiterate but then they started to learn Portuguese. Others of us who were of school age learnt Russian, Esperanto and Spanish.

'In 1922 we learned that the Bolshevik government has expelled G. Maximov, P. Arshinov, E. Yartchuk, A. Gorelik and other anarchist militants from Russia and from exile they started to publish the 80-page *Anarkhichesky Vestnik*. We were outraged by the whole business and realised that the Bolshevik government was worse than the Tsar's. Before Lenin, one could publish libertarian newspapers and meet clandestinely but that all stopped when he came to power. The Bolshevik police and informing upon its followers made any opposition to the government impossible.

'We received the Portuguese-language press, *La Voz do Trabalhador* (Rio de Janeiro), *A Plebe* (São Paulo), and later *Ação Directa*, *A Plebe*, *O Libertario*, *Dealbar* and *O Protesto*. In Spanish, there was *Voluntad*, *La Protesta*, *Tierra y Libertad*, *Acción Libertaria*, *Reconstruir*, *El Sol* and *Simiente Libertaria* and so on.

'I learned to read through Russian. With my old brother I learned from the books that my father had brought from Russia, books by Pushkin, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Leskov, Chukovsky, Shevchenko and other classics which I read over and over again.

'Later from the United States, Canada and Argentina, I received books by Kropotkin, Bakunin, Emma Goldman, Tolstoy, Bukharin, Nettlau, Malatesta, Jean Grave, A. Karelin, Makhno, Arshinov and other anarchists – all in Russian. For upwards of 50 years we received and circulated the Russian-language libertarian press published without interruption in Europe and America, building up a pretty good library.'

Edgar Rodrigues, Adapted from *Tierra y Libertad - Inquietudes* (Mexico) No 459, May 1987.

#### **Edgard Leuenroth, 1881-1968**

Brazilian typesetter, journalist and anarchist. The son of a German doctor and a Brazilian mother, Edgard Leuenroth (1881-1968) spent 70 of his 87 years committed to the workers' and anarchist movement.

He was serving his apprenticeship as a typesetter, rubbing shoulders with the workers and publishing an unassuming little paper and had run up against the class struggle arising out of the widening social inequality in São Paulo when the Portuguese anarchist Neno Vasco arrived there in 1901. Edgard Leuenroth was involved in and infected by the libertarian movement and started to read the anarchist classics, making the acquaintance of Neno Vasco, associating with him and, with his help, rounding off his grasp of sociology and Portuguese.

In 1903, in his capacity as a printing worker, he set up the São Paulo Typographical Centre and by the following year was helping to convert it into the Printworkers' Union. From that point in he was a constant presence in the printers' and journalists' unions and played an active part in all the



journalists' congresses – in Rio de Janeiro in 1918, in Washington in 1926, in São Paulo in 1933, in São Paulo again in 1942 (to mention but a few). In labour and anarchist circles he never missed the state (São Paulo) and national congresses. He was to the fore in campaigns to secure the release of the great martyrs of bourgeois capitalism and the state: Ferrer, the 'Idalina Affair', Durruti, Nicolau, Mateu, Nestor Makhno, Sacco and Vanzetti, to name only a few, and he resisted the deportation from Brazil of foreign-born anarchists. He was involved in numerous strikes, notably the 1917 strike when he was arrested and tried before the São Paulo Courts as the mastermind behind a strike that resulted in one of the biggest working class uprisings hitherto recorded in São Paulo and in Brazil, with businesses coming under attack, barricades erected in the streets and fighting with the state government's armed forces and the deaths of two strikers. At that trial he was defended by lawyers Evaristo de Moraes (senior) and Marrey Júnior and the defence argument was released as a pamphlet in Rio de Janeiro in 1918. Edgard Leuenroth was one of the most prolific activists on the labour and anarchist press scene and signed articles using the noms de plume Frederico Brito, Routh, Palmeiro Leal, Len, Leão Vermelho and Siffleur as well as under his own name and was also an outstandingly fluent public speaker and street agitator. There was nowhere he would not go, nor did he ever miss a chance to spread his ideas.

He helped launch, edit and contribute to the following newspapers and reviews: *O Boi* (1897-1899), *Folha do Bras*, *O Alfa* (1901) in Rio Claro and *O Trabalhador Gráfico* (1904). From 1905 to 1911 he started out contributing to the anarchist weekly *A Terra Livre*, launched and run by Neno Vasco: in 1906 he was on the staff of the anarcho-syndicalist *Luta Operária*, the organ of the São Paulo Workers' Federation. That paper played a big part in the 1906 São Paulo Railroad Company strike which made a national impact. He founded *A Folha do Povo* as a periodical and later daily paper and was its editor-in-chief. From 1909 to 1935 he directed *A Lanterna*, the anti-clerical libertarian paper launched by Dr Benjamín Mota in 1901: he did so in two stints that won him lots of friends and earned him some terrible enemies. He was arrested at the time that the Church was exposed in connection with the Idalina Affair. In 1912 he launched *A Guerra Social*, the São Paulo newspaper, acting as its main editor and at the end of 1915 he was actively contributing to the daily *O Combate*.

In 1916-1917 he was editor and secretary of the review *Eclética* in São Paulo. In 1917 he launched the anarchist paper *A Plebe* which was a weekly that became a daily in 1919. With a number of interruptions, *A Plebe* was published up until 1954 (?) and it had Rodolfo Felipe, Pedro Augusto Mota, Florentino de Carvalho and other anarchists as its managing directors. He wrote for *Spartacus* (1918) in Rio de Janeiro, for the anarchist daily *Voz do Povo* (1920) in Rio de Janeiro, for the anarchist daily *Ação Directa* in Rio de Janeiro (he was its last director) and, in the last years of his life, for *O Libertario* of São Paulo

Edgar Rodrigues

### Edgard Leuenroth And The 1917 Strike

Whenever Edgard Leuenroth's activities as either a working class militant or anarchist were invoked, reference is always made to the general strike in São Paulo in 1917 which brought all trade and industry in the city to a halt. Whenever that general strike is mentioned, Edgard Leuenroth's name is always closely linked with those events. The reason for the close association is that he was regarded as solely responsible for that strike which struck panic into the employers and the State itself. In reply to one such allusion, Edgard Leuenroth sent the following letter to the *Estado de São Paulo* newspaper:

'Having been mentioned by name in your Notes and Information section on the 2nd of this month apropos my participation in the 1917 general strike, I find myself obliged to go public in order to offer some clarification for the sake of the historical truth regarding the incident alluded to. (...)

Let me say, before anything else that the 1917 general strike cannot in any wise, no matter how it is viewed, be compared with other movements that transpired as manifestations of the proletariat.

Absolutely not! The general strike of 1917 was a spontaneous movement of the proletariat without direct or indirect interference by anyone. It was an explosive demonstration befitting the prolonged period of tortured existence experienced by the working class at that time.

The rising costs to the working people of basic necessities were matched by the inadequacy of wages; the usual chances for pressing home legitimate claims for vital improvements to the situation were curtailed by the systematic police backlash; workers' organisations were relentlessly attacked and obstructed in their work; police stations were stuffed to overflowing with workers whose homes had been raided and ransacked; the slightest attempt at assembly by workers drew down brutal provocation by the police. The reaction's most hateful procedures were let loose. The climate among workers was one of uncertainty, turmoil and anxiety. The position was becoming unsustainable.

The news that a worker had been murdered near a textile factory in O Bras was taken as an affront to the dignity of the proletariat. It made a violent emotional impact that shook everyone into action. The funeral of this victim of the repression was one of the most impressive ever witnessed in São Paulo. Starting from the Rua Castano Pinto in the O Bras district the cortege snaked like a human sea down the length of the Avenida Rangel Pestana as far as what was then the Ladeira de Carmo towards the city, in the midst of an imposing silence which had all the features of a warning. The main city streets were packed. The police tried in vain to seal off the street intersections. The crowds forced a passage through their lines and carried on their determined way to the graveyard. The graveside orations heard the speakers railing indignantly against the reaction.

On the way back from the cemetery, part of the crowd held a rally in the Praça da Sé; the remainder made its way through O Bras, as far as the Rua Caetano Pinto, where, outside the family home of the murdered worker, another rally was held. The precise details are vague but excitement swept through the crowd near the Avenida Rangel Pestana. A bread cart was attacked. This incident was the spark that triggered the powder-keg. It seems to have served as an example and as an incitement for the same thing to happen in many parts of the city. This happened with a lightning speed as if some extraordinarily effective message was being relayed around every section of the population of São Paulo. Factories and offices emptied as the streets filled with people who spread out excitedly in every direction. There was further intense reenactment of the bread van raids, with grocery stores, food stores and warehouses, etc. coming under attack.

Work in São Paulo ground to a halt, giving way to a popular upheaval without precedent in the city's history. Then the police stepped in. Clashes with the crowd began. There were casualties on both sides.

The workers could not gather together to arrive at resolutions. Each union issued its schedule of demands. Most of them overlapped one with another. But concerted joint action to agree some common objective proved impossible at the time due to the impossibility of holding union meetings.

It was at this point that the Proletarian Defence Committee was established as the result of a clandestine meeting of militants from a variety of trade unions. It was not set up as a leadership body issuing instructions. Its task would be to serve as a liaison body coordinating the demands of



excited workers bereft of their trade unions and their federal organs. In keeping with this, its first move was to consolidate the demands common to all trades (spelled out in their bulletins) into a single schedule; those demands had been scrutinised by the workers' organisations prior to their prohibition. Among other things, these common demands included an 8-hour day, pay increases, rent reductions, regulation of female and child labour and improvements to workplaces. At the head of these demands were the demand that the right to organise and the right of assembly be observed and that jailed workers be freed immediately. To these would be added the demands specific to each particular trade. Although police surveillance was being enforced most rigorously, this schedule from the Proletarian Defence Committee received maximum distribution among the striking workers.

The situation was becoming increasingly grave with the clashes between police and workers. The Proletarian Defence Committee managed to surmount all sorts of difficulties and held hurried meetings in various locations around the city, sometimes within earshot of gunfire nearby. A meeting of the workers was becoming vital if any definitive resolution was to be arrived at. So the question arose of a general meeting. But how? And where? How would they get around the problem of the police cordons? The increasing gravity of the situation made one essential however. The risks that the workers were running was turning into the bloody reality of police raids on every district in the city, with countless workers (whose only offence was that they had demanded their right to survive) falling victim to the reaction.

That meeting went ahead. The most appropriate location was the O Bras district of the city where the strike had begun and it was held within the huge confines of the old Moóca horse-racing track. The spectacle of the populace of São Paulo gathered there and fretting about the serious turn of events defies description. From every part of the city streams of people made their way in masses towards the venue which had long been used for displays of conspicuous wastefulness, in a part of the city swathed in the smoke from factories that just then were empty of the workers now assembling there to assert their incontrovertible right to a better standard of living. This is not the place to go into a description of how that meeting proceeded. It is regarded as one of the biggest recorded demonstrations in the history of the Brazilian proletariat. Suffice to say that the enormous crowds resolved the strike would end only when their demands, as encapsulated in the schedule from the Proletarian Defence Committee, were met. The end of the meeting displayed much the same features as its beginnings. The crowds lined up in a number of columns that made their way through the city streets back to their home districts. The most prominent militants kept to the inside of the spontaneously formed processions. It was discovered later that a number of arrests had been made in locations far from where the meeting had been held.

At this point word reached the Proletarian Defence Committee that some journalists had come up with the proposal for a meeting between a journalists' delegation and the Committee. The invitation was passed on by the managing editor of *O Combate*, Nereu Rangel Pestana. A meeting was arranged. Committee members arrived for the meeting with assurances that they would not be arrested, assurances given to the journalists by the state president. The premises selected were the editorial offices of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, located at that time in the Praça Antonio Prado. The journalists' panel was made up of representatives from the city's daily newspapers and the Proletarian Defence Committee was made up of the following: Antonio Candeias Duarte (shopkeeper), Francisco Cianci (lithographer), Rodolfo Felipe (sawyer), Gigi Damiani (painter and director of the libertarian *La Battaglia* newspaper), Teodoro Municeli (director of the socialist *Avanti* newspaper) and Edgard Leuenroth (director of the anarchist newspaper *A Plebe* and secretary to the Committee).

Their first meeting looked at the schedule of workers' demands tabled by the Proletarian Defence Committee, which the journalists' panel was charged with passing on to the state government. The second meeting got off to a delayed start because of the arrest of two of the members of the Proletarian Defence Committee as they were leaving the editorial offices after the first get-together. There would be no accommodation if those two were not immediately released. This decision was passed on to the state president. This was granted and the pair were brought to the editorial offices and a short meeting went ahead, the government not having delivered its own resolution yet.

The decision to grant the workers' demands was passed on through the Journalists' Commission, with the rider that workers arrested during the strike were already being set free. Workers' rallies were held in several districts around the city and decided upon an immediate return to work which began the following day. Work resumed in São Paulo. The city returned to normal, with just a lingering memory of the victims who had left homes in mourning.

Not long after that, I was jailed. So began my odyssey through the police stations, the object being to dodge the 'habeas corpus' orders presented when I was moved to the Public Jail, today's House of Detention. After six months I was brought for jury trial, on the nonsensical charge of having been the psychic-intellectual author of the July 1917 general strike. I was unanimously found not guilty, after two adjournments, partly because I had as my defence counsel, not just Dr Marrey Júnior but also the great criminal lawyer Dr Evaristo de Moraes. After a while the news broke that some working class militants had been deported to countries abroad.

From *Dealbar* (São Paulo) 17 December 1968. On the web-site of the Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, University of Campinas, Brazil.

#### **Maria Lacerda de Moura, 1887-1944**

Maria Lacerda de Moura was a teacher, journalist, writer, lecturer and poet and in everything she did her anarchist beliefs in human emancipation shone through, even when she never explicitly used the word 'anarchism'.

She was born on the Monte Alverne farm in Manhuaçu in Minas Gerais state, Brazil on 16 May 1887. She was the daughter of Modesto de Araújo Lacerda and Amélia de Araújo Lacerda, freethinkers and educated folk from whom she certainly inherited her strong anticlerical outlook.

Five years after she was born they moved to Barbacena, the town where she started her schooling and by the age of 16 she was training as a primary teacher, the profession to which she was deeply committed. One year later she married Carlos Ferreira de Moura, the companion who always supported her – even after their relationship had ended.

In 1915 the couple adopted two orphans, a girl and one of Maria's own nephews. At that point, she was so committed to her profession as an educator that she set up the League Against Illiteracy and gave free classes. From that valuable experience she came to the conclusion that the purpose of the educational system was to shape people's personalities, forcing them to abdicate their own individual identities in order to tailor their behaviour to what suited the interests of the established order. Furthermore she realised that it was not enough just to fight illiteracy if they were to achieve a fairer world. That would require a more profound change, a real social revolution!

So she embarked upon her study and investigation of libertarian education as well as delving into the social question. In 1918 she began her career as a writer, issuing her first book *On Education*. Such was the impact it made that the following year she published two follow-ups *Why Does the Future Triumph?* and *Renewal*.



In 1921 she and the family moved to the city of São Paulo where she started work as a private tutor. At that time of great social upheaval she started to give lectures (some in the city of Santos) to trade unions, cultural centres, anarchist theatre groups and labour associations and the likes of the Printing Workers' Union, the Anticlerical League and the Union of Footwear Crafts. She also started to write for the anarchist press, among it the newspaper *A Plebe* where she wrote about 'the underlying and ancillary sciences of education and educational psychology' carrying on and adding to the work done in that field by Neno Vasco with the weekly newspaper *A Terra Livre* in 1906.

At around the same time she helped to found the International Women's Federation and the Women's Anti-war Committee, based in São Paulo. The object of both organisations was to organise the women of Santos and São Paulo into a movement for human emancipation that would look beyond simple electoral goals, since in those days many women saw the most important goal as winning female suffrage.

In February 1923 she launched the monthly review *Renascença* which made no bones about spreading libertarian feminist ideas and dealing with other social issues. This review was circulated in nine states of Brazil as well as in Argentina and Portugal. The following year she issued her most famous book *Is Woman Degenerate?* by way of an outraged retort to the thesis 'Epilepsy and pseudo-epilepsy' written by the psychiatrist Miguel Bombarda in which he tried to show through pseudo-scientific case studies that woman was man's biological inferior. In 1926 she issued another class work: *The Religion of Love and Beauty*.

In 1927 she parted from her husband Carlos once and for all, although they remained on very amicable terms. Due to her great popularity in countries such as Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Mexico she was invited to give talks in Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Santiago. On her return she carried on with her activities as a libertarian propagandist in São Paulo until she moved in 1928 to Guararema in the interior of São Paulo state where she lived on a farm belonging to a commune that included the Italian anarchist Artur Campagnoli. The commune was made up of Italian, Spanish and French conscientious objectors to the Great War who intended to live together in harmony in an egalitarian libertarian arrangement whilst offering peaceful resistance to all forms of violence. During Maria's time on the farm, she set up a school for the commune's peasants and after that bought some land nearby where she built a modest home and schoolroom. All without giving up on her writing activity: in 1931 she issued two more books, *Clergy and State* and *Civilisation – Body of Slaves*. In 1932 she published yet another outstanding book, *Love ... and Do Not Multiply*.

In 1934 suffering from severe rheumatism he was forced to quit her home in Guararema to move into Rio de Janeiro where, although greatly weakened, she carried on writing for the local press and giving talks to labour circles. In 1935, under pressure from the repression emanating from the dictatorial Getúlio Vargas government she returned to Barbacena with the intention of ending her days there with her mother. But she was barred from teaching in the public school system by the authorities who regarded her as a 'dangerous communist'. So, in 1937, she returned to Rio de Janeiro where she was obliged to work hard just to survive. In 1938 she moved to the Ilha do Governador meaning to give more lectures on education and libertarian subjects. In 1940 she published her last book, a handbook entitled *Portuguese for Commercial Courses*, in which, among other things, she included an essay by José Oiticica on 'Style'.

In September 1944 her mother died and in December she moved back to Rio de Janeiro once and for all. Maria Lacerda de Moura died on 20 March 1944, aged not quite 58. Her funeral was a modest affair with no wreaths and only a few flowers. Among the labour papers she wrote for were *O Culinário Paulista*, *A Patrulha Operária*, *A Plebe*, *A Lanterna* and *O Trabalhador Gráfico*.

Among her closest friends were the anarchists Rodolfo Felipe, Angelo Guido, José Oiticica, Osvaldo José Sagueiro and Diamantino Augusto. Maria Lacerda de Moura led an intense life questing after genuine social equality: she was the first Brazilian feminist to express her thoughts in newspaper, review and book form. In Brazil she pioneered the spread of a stand against fascism and campaigned against experiments on animals. Her work reached out to the continents of America and Europe and yet her output and her story are glossed over and maliciously ignored by contemporary historians. All because in her life pride of place was given to honesty in that she had no interest in the party political game. Maria Lacerda de Moura was a real revolutionary in the full sense of the word. An exemplary woman whom today's reformist feminists would rather forget.

From *Singularidades* (Lisbon, No 16, November 2000)

### **Domingos Passos – the Brazilian Bakunin**

'I woke at 5.00 am. Passos, who had been up and about for hours, was sitting on his bed reading *Determinism and Responsibility* by Hamon. I grabbed a towel and went downstairs to wash my face. When I came back from the yard, after drying off, I saw two individuals. It was a moment or two before I realised who they were. With revolvers drawn they spoke to me and asked me harshly:

- Where's Domingos Passos?

Anticipating another of the attacks that our comrade had been through so often before, I was keen to cover for him and said that he was not around. I told them:

- There's no Domingos Passos living here!'

This brief extract from a 16 March 1923 declaration by the workman Orlando Simoneck, carried in the newspaper *A Patria*, clearly reflects a few features of the situation sampled by the black youngster, carpenter by trade, anarchist and active member of the Civil Construction Workers' Union (UOCC): by 1923 'Comrade Passos' had become a special target for the Rio police as well as one of the best loved and respected worker militants in the (then) Federal District. Another feature of this comrade, rightly identified by Simoneck, was his relentless self-educational drive, his thirst for learning and culture, which found him spending his mornings poring over books in the little collection belonging to Florentino de Carvalho who lived in the same house in the Rua Barão in São Félix, only a couple of paces from the union local.

We do not know the precise year of Passos's birth (it was probably towards the end of the 19th century), but, from the books of Edgar Rodrigues, we know that he was born in Rio de Janeiro state. We find his first appearance in social struggles of the time as a UOCC delegate at the 3rd Brazilian Workers' Congress (1920) at which he was elected as travel secretary for the Brazilian Workers' Confederation (COB). Passos had been selected for that post because he stood out in the ranks of the organised proletariat on account of his intellect and oratorical gifts which he had honed in the day to day struggles of his trade. In 1920 Passos worked with the Rio de Janeiro Workers' Federation (FORJ) which had a daily newspaper in *A Voz do Povo*. Under the Epitácio Pessoa government, there was a severe crackdown with countless anarchist militants being jailed, tortured and murdered, trades unions shut down and labour newspapers pulped. In October 1920, the police dispersed a workers' parade down the Avenida Rio Branco with gunfire and, not content with that, stormed the UOCC headquarters, wounding 5 workers and rounding up a further 30.

The labour movement was reeling from the onslaught and went into a decline from 1921 on. The 'yellow' unions expanded rapidly and came to contest hegemony in several trades with the revolutionary unions. Among anarchists, the high hopes vested in the Russian revolution were evaporating as news percolated through of the Bolsheviks' repressiveness.



On 16 March 1922, nine days ahead of the launching of the Communist Party of Brazil, the UOCC carried a document entitled 'Refuting the False Claims of the Communist Group' and declaring its repudiation of the state communists, the 'Bolshevists'. It was assuredly written by Domingos Passos. Throughout the 1920s, Civil Construction workers were the steeliest and least compromising opponents of the Bolshevik doctrine. They were the very embodiment of critical awareness and in a number of regards took their toll of the communist cadres.

In July 1922, in the wake of the failure of the revolt by the lieutenants from the Copacabana Fort, the repression slapped a ban on the UOCC paper *O Trabalho*, to which Passos was a regular contributor. A new anarchist bastion in the press was under the charge of another UOCC militant, Marques da Costa, editor of the Labour Section with the newspaper *A Patria*.

In 1923, with the police crackdown hot on his heels, Domingos Passos stepped down from the UOCC Executive Commission and turned his attention to propaganda and union organising, travelling twice to Paraná to assist the local organisations. Like the intellectuals José Oiticica, Carlos Dias and Fabio Luz, Passos was frequently invited to give talks at union locals. He was also actively involved with workers' festivals, acting in plays, giving poetry-readings and talks on social themes. Such events certainly accounted for some of the few moments of pleasure that Passos enjoyed during his life as a labourer and political activist.

During the first half of 1923 he was one of the driving forces behind the relaunching of the Rio de Janeiro Workers' Federation (FORJ), the rival FTRJ organisation having been set up under communist control. When the FORJ resurfaced on 19 August 1923, Passos was elected on to its Federal Committee. Refloated by 6 unions (civil construction, the shoemakers, the coopers, the ships' carpenters, the 'gastronomics' and the Marechal Hermes General Trades Union) by mid-1924 the FORJ had recruited a further 5 significant trades: foundry-workers, brickworkers, ironworkers, steelworkers and stone-workers. In spite of state repression and underhanded communist tricks, revolutionary syndicalism grew in strength under the auspices of the FORJ which was at that time working on the organisation of an inter-union conference in Rio and planning the 4th Brazilian Workers' Congress. In July 1924, all of this organisation effort was wiped out by the crackdown following a junior officers' revolt, in São Paulo this time. Union locals were attacked and shut down, and hundreds of anarchists were jailed. Domingos Passos was one of the first to be arrested and after 20 days of suffering at Police Headquarters he was held in the prison ship 'Campos' in Guanabara Bay. The months that he served on board were characterised by severe privation and restrictions. With other anarchists and hundreds of 'outlaws', he was to be moved to the 'Green Hell' of Oiapoque, the 'Siberia of the Tropics,' where ill-treatment and disease claimed over a thousand lives. Passos managed to escape to Saint-Georges in French Guyana. Meanwhile, fever drove him to seek medical treatment in Cayenne where he received a warm welcome from a Creole who helped him regain his strength. From Guyana he moved on to Belém where he remained for a time as a guest of the organised proletariat in the city.

Domingos Passos was one of those who returned to the Federal District after the state of siege enforced by the Artur Bernardes government for nearly four full years (1922-1926). On reaching Rio de Janeiro at the start of 1927, he returned to union activity, but he was dogged by the after-effects of malaria. That year he moved to São Paulo, where he helped reorganise the local Workers' Federation (FOSP). He took part in the 4th Rio Grande do Sul Workers' Congress held in Porto Alegre. He was to the fore in the organising of several pro-Sacco and Vanzetti meetings and rallies organised by the FOSP and its affiliates. In August he was jailed in the feared 'Cambuci Bastille' where he spent three months, subject to all manner of ill-treatment.

According to Pedro Catallo, his cell-mate, Passos left prison with his body covered in ulcers and half-naked and was sent to the jungles of Sengés in the still untamed interior of São Paulo state, to die. A short while later he managed to write to some comrades, asking for money, which he received through an go-between. So ended the career of a man who had been one of the most influential and respected of the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist activists of his day. Nothing more was ever heard of him, aside from the occasional, unconfirmed rumour. Not for nothing was Domingos Passos known to his contemporaries as the 'Brazilian Bakunin.' Few were as committed as he was to his ideals and suffered so much as a result. He put his all into the fight to emancipate men and women. He spent nearly a decade in prison and in tropical jungle conditions. Passos became a great beacon for libertarian and social activists in his day and in our own!

Renato Ramos and Alexandre Samis, Rio de Janeiro, 2001.

### Frederico Kniestedt

German-born anarchist brush-maker who moved to Brazil and settled in Rio Grande do Sul before joining the workers' and anarchist movement in Porto Alegre. In the memoirs of João Perdiggão Gutierrez (in the possession of Edgar Rodrigues) it is stated that in Europe, Kniestedt was active alongside Kropotkin, Malatesta and other world-famous anarchists. A very learned intellectual, he fled Germany to escape the death sentence passed on him for his revolutionary beliefs. In Porto Alegre he became a brush-maker and campaigner and died on 12 October 1947. The news of his death was carried simultaneously by the newspapers *A Plebe* (São Paulo) and *Ação Direta* (Rio de Janeiro) and the former commented:

'From a terse note dated the 12th of last month and sent by a comrade from Porto Alegre, we learn of the death of one of our movement's most dedicated militants, Frederico Kniestedt was born in Germany and waged a determined and uncompromising struggle there in favour of anarchism. Moving to Brazil he settled in Porto Alegre where he lived for many a long year, carrying on his fight for our cause.

'Over many years Frederico Kniestedt published a German-language libertarian newspaper and latterly was regularly issuing a mimeographed, many-paged bulletin in German, in which he campaigned tirelessly against the noxious influence of reactionary elements and championed libertarian principles.'

Rio de Janeiro's anarchist *Ação Direta* carried a 'letter' from Kniestedt in the form of an article telling the dramatic story of anarchists tortured and killed in Nazi concentration camps.

He outlined the tragedy of the German anarchists murdered by the Gestapo, with extracts from letters from some survivors whom he tracked down at the end of the war. These were Leopold Spitzegger, H. Bergammen from Westphalia, Willi Paul and other comrades with whom he had been active prior to his departure for Brazil. From them he learned of the death of Gerhardt Wartenberg, director of *Der Syndikalist* newspaper; of the death of the anarchist poet Erich Mühsam, the libertarian writer Rudolf Grossmann and dozens of others after their long odysseys through the Nazi death camps.

In 1989, after he was dead, a religious publisher in Rio Grande do Sul published (in Portuguese) a splendid work, Kniestedt's 167-page *Memoirs of an Anarchist Emigrant*, translated and edited by René E. Gertz.

Kniestedt towards the end of World War II talked of sending 53 food parcels totalling 400 kilos via Switzerland. He managed to set aside 8,000 for this purpose. The parcels offered a little assistance to the handful of our comrades or to the 'wives and children of the fallen'.



'Unfortunately, there is no way of getting help through to comrades living in the Russian-occupied zone. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' forbids such aid. I have sent food parcels to every other zone, including to Vienna.'

That act of international solidarity sponsored by the anarchist Frederico Kniestedt from Porto Alegre was undoubtedly a noble gesture. After residing for over 30 years in Rio Grande do Sul, his citizenship having been withdrawn by Hitler, when some Brazilian Nazis began to co-operate with the Axis forces he responded by launching the Movement of German Anti-Nazis based on the following principles: (...)

2. The object of the Movement of German Anti-Nazis is to use every lawful means to combat any gesture in favour of Nazis.

3. The bearer of this certificate must at no time have been a member of the German National Socialist Party.

4. The bearer of this certificate is named on the list maintained by the Public and Social Order Department of the Central Police Bureau as an anti-Nazi.

5. Whatever may be required in respect of the fight against Nazism or to assist the Brazilian Red Cross is to be provided by the free, spontaneous generosity of each member, each of them acting in accordance with the dictates of his convictions.

6. Members of the Movement of German Anti-Nazis consider themselves citizens of a land that is allied to Brazil.'

Frederico Kniestedt was also a member – along with Anastácio Gago, Francisco Greco, Daniel Conde, Jesus Ribas, Francisco Diz, Angel Veja, Antonio Campana and Antonio Manna – of the anarchist group that published the newspaper *A Luta*.

According to a letter from Rafael Fernandez (in the possession of Edgar Rodrigues) while Kniestedt was addressing some strikers on the streets a police platoon arrived with orders to use violence to disperse them. Contrary to the usual practice in such cases, Kniestedt used his powers of persuasion on the police. 'We are workers of mattock, spade and hoe and you are workers under arms! You cannot kill your fellow wage-slaves just for seeking better pay and a little more bread!' According to an affidavit of 1984 to Edgar Rodrigues by Maria Silva, the police backed off and the meeting was allowed to proceed.

Kniestedt took part in the labour congresses held in Rio Grande do Sul as representative of the Workers' Federation and wrote for the newspapers *O Sindicalista* and *Der Freie Arbeiter* and helped out on the Social Prisoners' Aid Committee, making a name for himself with the motions he tabled and his fidelity to the principles of the International Working-Men's Association.

Edgar Rodrigues

### **Antonino Dominguez**

Spanish-born shoemaker, revolutionary syndicalist and anarchist. His career as a militant started off in São Paulo with the Union of Footwear and Allied Trades Operatives. He had a thorough command of the ideas that he advocated and impressed younger people joining the class struggle with his stance and oratorical powers. Pedro Catalo – another shoemaker by trade – recorded the following impressions of him after attending the first shoemakers' meeting in 1921:

'Antonino Dominguez, a Spanish national, was an intelligent man of slim and delicate build, whom one would never have taken for a shoemaker. His speech, with that heavy Galician accent, although he spoke clearly, in a measured and readily comprehensible way, was underpinned by a profound knowledge of the social question. He was what might be termed the complete anarchist militant.'

As an activist, Antonino Dominguez spoke at protest rallies, union meetings and during strikes. He became a target for the police and was forced to leave São Paulo. He could not find work. He then gave Rio de Janeiro a try, joining the Alliance of Shoemakers and the libertarian group opposed to its affiliation to the Profintern (for which the Kremlin had ordered Brazilian CP supporters to press). In spite of his friendly manner, he found himself confronted by two main enemies: the police and the 'Cheka boys'. He tried to leave Rio after two months but could not find work and went back.

Shortly after that, controversy flared up again over Joaquim Barbosa's denunciatory letter of resignation from the PCB, and the Worker-Peasant Bloc's campaign to have Octávio Brandão and Minervino de Oliveira, two ex-anarchists who had converted to Bolshevism, elected as councillors. The campaign attracted the opportunistic Dr Azevedo Lima who joined the Worker-Peasant Bloc (the political arm of the PCB) to help get its representatives elected to the city and federal governments. Azevedo Lima was elected deputy in 1927, but by 1929 had defected to the side of the Washington Luiz government. Prior to that, however, he gave speeches to unions and talked down workers who took exception to his meddling. He operated as a cowardly slanderer in the service of the PCB that he would later abandon once he had spread discord in the ranks of labour in his attempt to induce workers to affiliate to the Profintern.

His dirty, slanderous campaign kicked off at the Seamen's Union local in the Praça de Harmonia before moving on to the Textile workers' local at 19, Rua do Acre, finishing up at the Printworkers' local on the ground floor of 2, Rua Frei Caneca, where two lives were lost and several people were wounded. Azevedo was advised by Octávio Brandão, João da Costa Pimenta, Roberto Morena and the master-mind behind the strife – Astrojildo Pereira, the PCB general secretary (who would years later find himself expelled from the party). The armed goons of the PCB were Pedro Bastos and Eusébio Manjon, two of the Brazilian 'Cheka boys'.

In his memoirs, Pedro Catalo recalls the murder:

'Just as we were leaving a meeting on 14 January 1928, we received the first reports of the death of our comrade Antonino Dominguez who had been gunned down a few days before by a communist by the name of Galileu Sanchez – better known as Pedro Bastos – in Rio de Janeiro at a meeting at which Antonino had tried to expose communist intrigue within the union. The murderer fled to São Paulo and lived there quietly, strolling along the Avenida Rangel Pestana, whilst the PCB press accused the police and the anarchists of having started the conflict.'

After a meeting under the chairmanship of the communist Roberto Morena and at which the PCB agent Dr Azevedo Lima was the speaker, the textile worker Pereira de Oliveira, slandered by the latter, asked permission to speak in order to rebut the accusations made against him. Voices were raised and the 'Cheka boys' opened fire. Then the lights were turned off so that the criminals could make their getaway. By the time they came on again, 12 workers lay wounded and the killers had fled.

At the time, José Oiticica, writing about the fact that he too might have been murdered, had he not been tipped off and absented himself, offered this account of the incident.

'This was an excellent opportunity for them to give vent to their hatred for two anarchists who had been an obstacle to their making deceitful headway among the shoemakers and building workers: Antonino Dominguez and José Leite.

'So, as soon as Pereira de Oliveira sought to speak, the communists kicked up a row and then one Bolshevik fired the shots at Antonino Dominguez while another communist, who fled, opened fire on Leite. Leite dropped to the floor and the shot struck the printworker Damião.'



At the graveyard, José Leite, one of the intended murder victims, speaking on behalf of the Building Workers' Union, emphasised Antonino's commitment to defending the proletariat in Pará, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and closed his funeral oration like this:

'Like other comrades, Antonino resisted the Bolsheviks' attempts to win the upper hand in the Alliance, thereby inspiring in these fanatics a hatred for this unselfish militant and an itch to be rid of him. He outlined the meeting set up to facilitate the criminal attack upon Antonino and others in order to show that the communists mean to succeed through slander and terror.' On the same occasion – as Antonino was being laid to rest – the shoemaker Sylvan Borges stated:

'This is the first time that the ambition of a half dozen individuals set worker against worker, the first time in Brazil that ideology has been used as a pretext to eliminate by murder workers who will not submit to the dictatorship of a band of ex-comrades: the first time that a bourgeois politician set foot in a labour union in order to accuse workers of working for the police, as if workers did not have it in us to look after our own affairs and needed the guiding hand of such politicians.' 'No! Conscious workers reject any emancipation that starts with fratricide and must surely end with Mr Azevedo Lima pulling the wool over the toiling masses in the name of those same masses.'

The anarchist Antonino Dominguez was murdered in Bolshevism's name by an ex-anarchist who, three years earlier, had written under the title 'The Red Rats':

*'The history of the followers of the famous, scheming, treacherous poisoner Karl Marx is awash with monstrous acts of treachery carried out against unwary workers the world over.'*

*'We would say nothing more of such people, not even give them a tongue-lashing, were it not our purpose to expose to the proletariat the would-be dictators who seek to enthrone the mob despotism of Lenin, Trotsky, etc. here in Brazil over the heads of libertarians.'*

*'Of the individuals belonging to the Rio communist group, some were never anarchists whilst others have stopped being such in order to convert to marxism or authoritarian socialism.'*

That article, carried by *O Trabalho* (Rio de Janeiro) on 10 June 1922, was written by Pedro Bastos who went on to declare:

*'The José Elias-Astrogildo Pereira duo has the effrontery to claim that on the day they take power they will decapitate every libertarian they can lay their hands on.'*

Well! The writer concerned was the very same hot-head Pedro Bastos aka Galileu Sanchez who with Eusébio Manjon, three years on from that declaration got the jump on the 'José Elias-Astrogildo duo' by murdering the anarchist Antonino Dominguez and wounding 12 other workers.

Edgar Rodrigues

### Looking Back After 70 Years on the Rua Frel Caneca Incident

It all started, I suppose, in mid-1921 when the Soviet government envoy to South America, Ramison Soubiroff, showed up at the offices of the anarchist newspaper *A Vanguarda* in São Paulo. He had come to offer Edgard Leuenroth, the paper's editor, full powers to organise a Bolshevik party in Brazil. After an amiable meeting in the Palace Hotel, Edgard declined the invitation but suggested that the by then wavering anarchist Astrogildo Pereira who was living in Rio de Janeiro (then the Federal District) might be interested. A few days later, Astrogildo arrived in São Paulo and, through the good offices of his 'kindly' friend Leuenroth was received by Soubiroff at the same hotel where he agreed to take on the job of launching the Communist Party.

In the wake of countless strikes during the 'teen years of the 20th century, culminating in the big 1917 strike and attempted uprising in Rio de Janeiro in 1918, the anarchist movement was suffering ferocious harassment at the hands of the Epitácio Pessoa government. Between 1919 and 1920

hundreds of foreign-born libertarian activists were deported. The unions were under heavy police pressure, many being banned and their members jailed. But in spite of all this repression the 3rd Brazilian Labour Congress went ahead in Rio de Janeiro at the end of April 1920 at the Textile Worker Union's headquarters at 19, Rua do Acre.

In March 1922 Astrogildo Pereira and 11 other militants launched the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB). Initially most of Rio de Janeiro's anarchists were guarded, since most of the founding fathers of the CP had anarcho-syndicalist backgrounds. However, a few libertarians reacted angrily to what they saw as treachery. One of these was the shoemaker Galileu Sánchez, better known as Pedro Bastos, who described the members of the Brazilian section of the Third International as 'red cloaks'. It may well have been the last correct thing he ever said ...

It was not long before the activists of the two tendencies clashed. The anarchists were by far the larger number, enjoying hegemony in several unions, chiefly the Civil Construction Workers' Union (UOCC), the General Hotel, Restaurant, Cafe and Allied Workers (known simply as the 'gastronomics') and the Footwear and Allied Trades Workers' Alliance (the shoemakers). From 1921 onwards the libertarian press was carrying reports of the harassment, shooting and deportation of anarchists in the Soviet Union, as the illusions that many libertarians had entertained about the Russian revolution crumbled. By 1923 the Bolsheviks (as the anarchists termed them) were in control in two or three trade unions, especially the Tailors' Union. With characteristic lack of principle, they were resorting in provocation, calumny and slander against anarchist militants, even carrying out ambushes, as in the case of the attacks mounted on Marques da Costa and Izidoro Augusto in 1923. The anarchists, meanwhile, were more concerned with the harsh crackdown being mounted by the police under Marechal Cerneiro da Fontoura (known as 'Marechal Darkness'), with their militants being continually rounded up, their trade union premises invaded and their demonstrations banned. Even so, the Rio de Janeiro Labour Federation (FORJ) was reorganised after the second half of 1923 and by 1924 it included over ten organisations of anarcho-syndicalist persuasions.

In March 1924, the UOCC headquarters No 119, Rua Barão in São Felix was shut down. So the UOCC, the FORJ, the 'gastronomics', the shoemakers and coopers then moved into the 3rd floor at No 42, Praça da República. The jailing of anarchist activists continued and that month the São Paulo anarchist paper *A Plebe* was banned from using Brazilian postal services. On 5 July 1923 there was a revolt in São Paulo led by General Isidoro Dias Lopes against Artur Bernardes's dictatorial rule. A number of São Paulo libertarians passed a motion in support of the rebels and requested weapons so that they might set up an anarchist battalion, but this request was of course turned down. The rout of the rebels and the venom of the Bernardes government unleashed ferocious persecution of the anarchists, especially the ones who had signed the motion of support. The headquarters of libertarian organisations in Rio and São Paulo were ransacked and closed down by the police and hundreds of activists were committed to the state prisons or deported to the islands of Rasa, Das Dolores and Bom Jesus, or to the remote Clevelândia prison farm on the border with French Guyana, where a number of comrades met their deaths.

Meanwhile, the worthy Bolsheviks played dead, capitalising upon the dismantling of the libertarian movement in order to make new recruits and expand their influence in the trade unions. The influence of the collaborationist ('yellow') unions also grew and would furnish the basis for Getúlio Vargas's government-sponsored unionism in the 1930s.

With the ending of the Bernardes government and of the state of emergency at the beginning of 1927, many libertarian militants were freed and re-entered the fray inside the trade unions and the campaign on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. The movement bounced back again and relations with



the Bolsheviks deteriorated. In August that year, the anarchists were dealt another heavy blow when the great militant Domingos Passos, known as the 'Brazilian Bakunin', was jailed in São Paulo and died.

In 1928, Bolshevik militants in the country numbered around 1,250, according to Leoncio Basbaum: Edgar Rodrigues disputes this figure and cites a much lower one in his book *Novos Rumos*. The communist leaders Octavio Brandão and Minervino de Oliveira had offered themselves for election as town councillors on the Worker and Peasant Bloc ticket, and the year before, Dr Azevedo Lima had stood for election as a federal deputy. The battle between anarchists, Bolsheviks and 'yellows' for control of the unions was intense. With even greater intensity the Bolsheviks promoted acts of provocation during meetings of the trade unions under their control when they deliberately provoked brawling through their famous 'Cheka boys'. Even in those sectors where they were in the minority, libertarians attended, in order to make their voices heard and to expose the Stalinists' dictatorial methods.

At an election meeting for Azevedo Lima in the seamen's union premises, in Praia Harmonia, José Oiticica and other libertarians showed up to expose the Bolsheviks only to be threatened with violence by the 'red cloak' mob. Another meeting was scheduled for the weavers' union headquarters at 19, Rua do Acre where the anarchist v. Bolshevik argument took an uglier turn when the CP candidates defended their decision to run for election and put forward rationalisations for Stalin's crimes. Since the outcome was not favourable to them, they then accused the president of the Textile Factory Workers' Union, Joaquim Pereira de Oliveira (who had defeated a communist in the union elections) of being a police spy. Azevedo Lima claimed that he could substantiate this charge and he challenged Pereira and other opponents to a new debate at the union headquarters of the printers and cabinet-makers at 4, Rua Frei Caneca on 14 February. According to statements from elderly comrades who were present at the meeting (see Edgar Rodrigues, *Novos Rumos*, p. 296) the meeting was a blatant set-up designed to spark disorder so as to furnish a pretext for the murder of the anarchists José Oiticica, João Pérez, Albino de Barros, Joaquim Pereira de Oliveira, Antonino Dominguez and other targets. After Azevedo Lima put all the charges against Pereira de Oliveira, the latter, when he attempted to defend himself, was prevented from doing so by a mob led by Roberto Morena and Octavio Brandão. When mayhem broke out, in stepped Eusebio Manjón and Galileu Sánchez (aka Pedro Bastos) 'red cloak' leaders, to fire their revolvers into the audience in an attempt to kill the anarchists and their associates. The anarchist shoemaker and great social activist Antonino Dominguez was fatally wounded and, because of the assailants' lack of marksmanship, so was the communist printworker Damião José da Silva. Several other workers were wounded. Though bleeding, they were forced to flee the premises in order to avoid breeding to death in the cells of the Rio de Janeiro police.

During Carnival, a long funeral procession left the Praia da República to the São Francisco Xavier cemetery where family, friends and comrades laid to rest the worker Antonino Dominguez, murdered by the red goon squad.

Renato Ramos, Rio de Janeiro, 1998.

## Notes

### Clevelândia – The Green Hell

The Oiapoque is the river marking Brazil's northernmost border with French Guiana. There was a long tradition in Brazil of the government's using the interior and offshore islands to hold disruptive elements. Under the Epitácio Pessoa government there was an experimental agricultural station set up in the Oiapoque region. Under the Artur Bernardes government (1922-26) this station was converted for use as a camp for social misfits. The camp's official name was Clevelândia (after US president Grover Cleveland who said some nice things about Brazil).

The first batch of prisoners deported there arrived in December 1924 and was made up mostly of prisoners held by the Central Police of the Federal District and awaiting deportation on board the prison-ship '*Campos*', known to its inmates as the 'Ghost Ship'.

Malaria and amoebic dysentery thinned out the prisoners and the arrival of fresh batches placed a strain on deficient sanitary arrangements. Some of the difficulties may have arisen from the contention between the army and the government as to who should be footing the bills for the prisoners deported there.

The prisoners sent there included minors with no family to claim them, criminals, radicals and rebellious military. And anarchists. Rather suspect official figures state that of the 924 prisoners sent to Clevelândia, 52% succumbed to disease. The exact number of anarchist deportees is unknown but 14 definite syndicalists have been identified:

Domingos Passos, workman

Domingos Braz, workman

Thomaz Derlitz Borche, Uruguayan workman

Biófilo Panclasta, Colombian journalist and anarchist

Antonio A. da Costa, workman

Antônio Salgado da Cunha, workman

Pedro A, Carneiro, Portuguese workman

Manuel Ferreira Gomes, workman

José B. da Silva, workman

José Alves do Nascimento, shopkeeper

Nicolau Parada, Spanish waiter

Nino Martins, workman

Pedro A. Motta, workman

José María F. Varella, workman.

- The last five of these never returned from their banishment to Oiapoque.

### Luigi aka Gigi Damiani

Born in Rome on 18 May 1876. Jailed for the first time at 18. Met Oreste Ristori in prison and became fast friends. Fled to Brazil to escape persecution in Italy in 1899. In Brazil he worked as a theatrical set-designer and was involved with a number of anarchist papers (some in association with Ristori) including *A Plebe*, *Guerra Social*, *La Barricada*, *A Propaganda* etc and he was the director of *O Amigo do Povo* and *La Battaglia*. In 1919 he was deported from Brazil to Italy where he associated with Malatesta and became the director of *Umanità Nova* in 1920. After UN was wrecked by fascists Damiani launched a paper in Rome called *Fede!* He later fled the fascists and fled to France and thence to Belgium, on to Spain and Tunisia from where he returned after WW2 to take over the running of the revived *Umanità Nova* until he died on 16 November 1953 in Rome. His anarchism was of the largely individualist brand.



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