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Anarchism and Social Movements in Brazil (1903–2013)

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“Ever since anarchism has been anarchism, it has preached nothing but the direct action of the masses against the bourgeoisie, by association, by the collaboration of the syndicates, by strikes, by sabotage, by every imaginable process” — José Oiticica

Introduction

We are very grateful for this opportunity to give continuity to the effort we have undertaken in the sense of recuperating the history of anarchism in Brazil, especially when this is done with a focus on social movements. Something similar to what happens in other countries occurs in Brazil: despite the historical relevance of anarchism and its fundamental role in the social and popular struggles of workers, it continues – even though there are valuable efforts to the contrary – to be ignored, defamed and mistreated, both in historiography and in other fields of knowledge and politics. Enemies, adversaries and even people with an affinity with anarchism have contributed to this.¹

When we speak of *anarchism and social movements in Brazil*, we understand, in the first place, that anarchism is an ideology, a political doctrine, a kind of libertarian and revolutionary socialism which appeared in Europe in the second half of the 19th century, and which was consolidated between the end of the 1860s and the beginning of the 1880s on different continents. The core of its ideological and doctrinal foundations are found in three aspects: 1) a radical critique of capitalism, of the State and of all forms of domination; 2) the uncompromising defence of a self-organising project, which implies the generalised socialisation of property, political power and knowledge; 3) a class strategy, in which workers and the oppressed in general convert their capacity for achievement

¹ Corrêa, Felipe; Silva, Rafael. “Anarchism, Theory and History.” In Corrêa, Felipe; Silva, Rafael; Silva, Alessandro, eds. Theory and History of Anarchism (Curitiba: Prismas, 2015).

into a social force, through a confrontation marked by coherence between means and ends, promote a social revolution and build a society of full equality and freedom.²

We also understand, secondly, that terms such as “anarchist movement”³ or “anarchist social movement”⁴ – even if they have been used by quite respectable researchers, and also by militants from the anarchist ranks who often recognise themselves as part of a common movement – are not the most adequate, especially when referring to broad contexts. This is because, even with the great conceptual plurality in the literature dealing with popular movements and revolutionary syndicalism – or what we might call, in a more generalised way, *social movements* – when we conceptualise the theme we usually take into account people in constant relations, more or less durable and sustained articulations in time and space, as well as more or less organised collective actions of the oppressed against the oppressors.⁵

And it is not possible to say that the anarchists have acted, globally, in their 150 years of existence, as a movement. This cannot even be affirmed when it comes to a national reality, as in the case of Brazil, especially when long periods are taken into account. It is true that, at various moments, anarchism converted itself into broad and massive social movements, in particular when it built revolutionary syndicalism and anarcho-syndicalism. In the Brazilian case, there seems to be no doubt that this happened mainly

² Corrêa, Felipe. *Bandeira Negra: discutindo o anarquismo* (Curitiba: Prismas, 2015). p. 115–202.

³ Van der walt, Lucien. “Back to the Future: the revival and relevance of anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary syndicalism for the left and workers’ movements in the 21st century.” *Institute for Anarchist Theory and History*, 2019. p. 14–15

⁴ Bookhin, Murray. “Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: an unbridgeable gulf.” *In Anarchism, Critique and Self-Criticism* (São Paulo: Hedra, 2011). p.118.

⁵ For example: McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 1996; Antunes, 2003; Corrêa, 2011; Van der Walt, 2019a, 2019b.

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during the first decades of the 20th century, when most anarchists invested in the construction of revolutionary syndicalism, the hegemonic form of social movement of workers at that time.

In any case, we do not consider it appropriate to refer to anarchism as an anarchist movement or anarchist social movement. It seems more accurate to say that, in different contexts, anarchism – through anarchists – articulated and organised itself in order to create and strengthen social movements, sometimes taking the lead and constituting the hegemonic political force, and other times participating as a minority political force or as opposition in these movements. Therefore, we think it is more appropriate to emphasise that anarchists have historically invested in the construction of different social movements, which were linked to different agendas and involved other political forces.

This is exactly what we intend to portray – in a very brief and concise manner, it is true, thanks to the restricted space at our disposal – in the following pages. In them we will discuss anarchism and social movements in Brazil, through a broad approach, which seeks to apprehend the major aspects that have marked the 110-year long period between 1903 and 2013.

The choice of this temporal focus is justified, on the one hand, because it takes as its initial mark the year 1903 – when, from this perspective of social movements, anarchism starts to have a concrete existence in Brazil, through revolutionary syndicalism – and proceeds to the most commonly studied period, between 1900 and 1930. On the other hand, this text also addresses the later, much less studied period – in which anarchism, despite having lost a lot of strength, was far from disappearing from the political and social scene – and extends until very recently, in the year 2013, when a new conjuncture is inaugurated in Brazil.

We undertake this discussion by dividing the text into five parts, at the same time temporal and thematic. The first two – one about revolutionary syndicalism and the other about educational and cultural initiatives – deal with the *golden period of anarchism*

in the country, the First Republic, when the anarchists, in a context of republican development, rapid industrialisation and great immigration, were hegemonic in the union movement and in the educational-cultural movement of the working class. The third part discusses anarchist work in education, culture and unionism during the Vargas Era and Re-democratisation. This is a *period of crisis of revolutionary syndicalism and anarchism* which, in a moment of economic development and between periods of dictatorship (1937–1945) and political openness (1946–1964), anarchists, even if under reflux, continued to develop activities more or less linked to the camp of social movements.

The fourth part deals with the times of military dictatorship, the period of *greatest crisis and least activity (semi-clandestine) of the anarchists*, who suffered with the repression, authoritarianism and nationalism of the military, but kept the flame of their ideals burning, resuming their activities to the extent that the reactionary storm lost strength. The fifth discusses the reopening of the New Republic, *a period of resurgence and national re-articulation of anarchism*, which has strengthened mainly since the 1990s in a context marked by neoliberalism. Since then, some social movements have been created by anarchists and several of them have counted on their participation, majority or minority, depending on the moment.

In these 110 years, the contribution of anarchism to the camp of social movements is significant, both in the field of practice and theory. Anarchists have sought to build what can be called a “counter-power” and a “revolutionary counterculture,”⁶ by means of union, educational-cultural and other movements. And with this, they developed, in consonance with other localities, a theoretical accumulation of how these movements should be carried out to promote a socialist and libertarian revolution.

⁶ Van der Walt, “Back to the Future,” p.15.

Another anarchist current, headed by the Anarchist Popular Union (União Popular Anarquista – UNIPA), had decisive participation, throughout the 2000s, when it separated from the Forum of Organised Anarchism (Fórum do Anarquismo Organizado – FAO), in the foundation of the Class and Combative Student Network (Rede Estudantil Classista e Combativa – RECC) and in the construction of the Forum of Base Oppositions (Fórum de Oposições de Base – FOB) – today the Federation of Revolutionary Syndicalist Organizations of Brazil. To a large extent, this student and union alternative was built through the oppositions of CONLUTE and CONLUTAS, consolidating from 2010.⁴⁶

Furthermore, anarchists of different currents all over Brazil, with greater or lesser organisation, took part in various other initiatives in the field of social movements: they integrated, in various states, the Free Pass Movement (Movimento Passe Livre – MPL), as well as black and feminist, indigenous and LGBT movements; they built trade union and student movements and oppositions, as well as movements in favelas; they drove cooperative initiatives, occupations, cultural centres and popular education.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ UNIPA (Anarchist Popular Union). “10 ano de Sindicalismo e Luta Estudantil.” In: *Causa do Povo*, 67:1, 2013. p.1.

⁴⁷ Rocha, Bruno; Santos, Kauan; Penna, Mariana; Silva, Rafael. “Ou se Vota com os de Cima ou se Luta com os de Baixo”, p.445–447.

400 groups in the process of formalisation and a base of 39,000 collectors, 70% of whom were women. Anarchists from Goiás also played an important role in the movement between 2004 and 2009 and states such as Distrito Federal, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo contributed with some participation.

In the pre-2013 period, the participation of these anarchists in the construction of community struggles and spaces also stands out: of struggles and community spaces, such as the Committees of Resistance in Rio Grande do Sul, in the early 2000s, and the Centre for Social Culture in Rio de Janeiro, founded in 2004 and active to the present day; of feminist collectives such as Mulheres Resistem in Alagoas and Mato Grosso; of university and secondary student movements, in different regions of the country, including the north and northeast – which also stood out in the construction of other movements, mainly in the states of Pará, Bahia, Ceará and Alagoas.

Although a very minority force in most cases, these anarchists have also participated in broader social movements, such as the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra – MST), the Homeless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Teto – MTST), the Movement of Dam-Threatened People (Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens – MAB) and the Unemployed Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Desempregados – MTD), as well as in different unions and syndicates and INTERSINDICAL in São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Grosso and Alagoas. They composed the national articulation of the Latin American Meeting of Autonomous Popular Organizations (Encontro Latino-Americano de Organizações Populares Autônomas – ELAOPA), which began in 2003 and in 2013 was in its 10th edition.⁴⁵

Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis). "Princípios e Objetivos do MNCR". MNCR website, 2008.

⁴⁵ Rocha, Bruno; Santos, Kauan; Penna, Mariana; Silva, Rafael. "Ou se Vota com os de Cima ou se Luta com os de Baixo", p.445.

In this field, the achievements of the anarchists in Brazil were remarkable: they were directly involved in the creation of the first "unions of resistance"; they built, at the beginning of the 20th century, a powerful and revolutionary union and educational-cultural movement, rising to become its hegemonic political force. In those years, they even led revolutionary insurrections and general strikes. Throughout the years, they published countless newspapers, books and a huge amount of information and propaganda material; they founded and became decisively involved with popular schools and universities, where they developed projects of formal and political education. They created and participated, as a majority or minority force, depending on the context, not only in union and educational-cultural movements, but also in student, community, homeless, landless, unemployed, countercultural and other movements. They built cultural centres, ateneums and, among workers and young people, promoted initiatives linked to theatre, libraries and leisure in general. They became involved in more and less widespread strikes, protests and street demonstrations.

In very general lines and without great homogeneity, this was the tactical tool used to promote the anarchist strategy in social movements. Referring to historical anarchist principles, anarchists sought to reinforce the independence and autonomy of movements in relation to the institutions of capital and the State, as well as to combat their bureaucratisation; they emphasised the need for combative movements, supported by direct action and by protagonism at the base; they promoted processes of direct democracy, self-management and federalism for decision-making; they confronted reformism and tried to reconcile resistance struggles or struggles for immediate gains with revolutionary positions.

Revolutionary Syndicalism in the First Republic (1903–1930)

The conformation of anarchism in Brazil took place between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a result of distinct experiences of struggle and resistance by the oppressed, which included strikes, popular uprisings, agricultural/experimental colonies, artistic/cultural productions. Its history involves not only European immigrants – in particular Italians, Spaniards and Portuguese, who had a marked presence in Brazil⁷ – but is also intertwined with the struggles of black workers that took place before the abolition of slavery, amidst the founding of resistance societies, mutual aid associations and charitable societies.⁸

This process occurred in deep connection with the emergence of the Brazilian revolutionary syndicalist movement. In general, it can be affirmed that in Brazil, since the end of the 19th century, the anarchists contributed decisively to promoting this form of syndicalism, although it should be noted that, in its concrete expression during the First Republic, the strategy of revolutionary syndicalism cannot be considered the exclusive work of the anarchists. In terms of organisational experience, and with the focus on social movements, the reference of this initial moment was the foundation in 1903, in Rio de Janeiro, of the Federação das Associações de Classe (Federation of Class Associations), inspired – thanks to epistolary and face-to-face contacts abroad, as well as the immigration of workers – by the syndicalism of the French Confédération Générale du Travail (General Confederation of Labour – CGT).

⁷ Godoy, Clayton. “1 Senza Patria”: padrões de difusão transnacional do movimento anarquista e sua recepção em São Paulo.” In: Santos, Kauan; SILVA, Rafael, eds. História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: Novas Perspectivas (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018). p. 84.

⁸ Mattos, Marcelo. “Experiências Comuns: escravizados e livres no processo de formação da classe trabalhadora no Brasil.” In Associação Nacional de História – ANPUH, XXIV Simpósio Nacional de História, 2007. p. 1–5.

in contact with each other and with other libertarian and anarchist currents, enabling a strengthening of other initiatives of the anarchist camp after that.

But there were also other social movements which counted, in this period, on the more or less decisive participation of anarchists.

Militants from organisations linked to the *especificista* current of anarchism played a considerable part in this work. They acted directly or through other groupings, such as the Popular Resistance tendency, in existence since 1999, in the construction of distinct social movements.

Among them, there are homeless movements, such as the one that took place in São Paulo in the early 2000s, with the Anita Garibaldi (Guarulhos) and Carlos Lamarca (Osasco) occupations, which together reached almost 7,000 families; and also the one that took place in Rio de Janeiro around the International Homeless Front, which, between 2004 and 2008, organised a few hundred families from 11 occupations.⁴³ From the 1990s until 2013, there was participation by anarchists of this current in other homeless movements, in these and other states, such as Rio Grande do Sul, Ceará, Santa Catarina and Minas Gerais.

There is also the National Movement of Collectors of Recyclable Material (Movimento Nacional dos Catadores de Material Reciclável – MNCR), in which the *especificists* anarchists of Rio Grande do Sul played an outstanding role – the impacts of their political practice were felt nationally. (MNCR, 2008) The anarchists from Rio Grande do Sul contributed to the development of the movement since the mid-1990s and participated in its founding congress, in 2001, which had 1700 delegates from 18 states of Brazil; such contribution occurred until 2011, reaching its peak in the mid-2000s.⁴⁴ A former anarchist leader of the movement reports that, in 2009, it had 730 cooperatives and associations,

⁴³ Idem. p.422.

⁴⁴ FAG (Anarchist Federation of Rio Grande do Sul). “10 Anos de Socialismo Libertário (1995–2005)”. FAG, 2005. p.22 and MNCR (Movimento Nacional dos

Among the most important achievements of the movement are, firstly, the articulation of the global days of action themselves. There were almost a dozen demonstrations between 2000 and 2003, mainly in São Paulo, with an average presence of 2,000 people on the streets, and also a few hundred people in other places like Belo Horizonte and Fortaleza, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador and Curitiba. People mobilised against the bodies promoting neo-liberalism worldwide (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation, the Inter-American Development Bank), against the great agents of world power, such as the G8, and also against the imperialist wars of the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. It was in these demonstrations that *black blocs* appeared for the first time in Brazil.⁴¹

Besides these actions, also very important was the network of independent communication that was arose, as a result of this movement, in the Centre for Independent Media (CMI) or Indymedia, also with a significant anarchist presence. This initiative was part of the global network Indymedia, founded in 1999 in the United States and which provided, through a website, the means to publish texts and photos by the demonstrators themselves. In Brazil, between 2001 and 2005, CMI was present in 14 cities and involved 16 others in its activities, conforming, on and off the internet, a national milestone in breaking with the exclusivity of the mainstream press when reporting the facts – something that would become widespread years later with social networks.⁴² Also relevant was the network of contacts and the environment provided by this movement, which ended up putting its members

⁴¹ Ryoki, André; Ortellado, Pablo, eds. *Estamos Vencendo: resistência global no Brasil*. (São Paulo: Conrad, 2004). p.31 – 56.

⁴² See Rocha, Bruno; Santos, Kauan; Penna, Mariana; Silva, Rafael. “Ou se Vota com os de Cima ou se Luta com os de Baixo”: presença e (re)organização do anarquismo em tempos neoliberais no Brasil (1980–2013).” In SANTOS, Kauan; SILVA, Rafael (orgs) *História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: novas perspectivas*. (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018).

As a sequence of this process – and shaping what would be the great landmark of the emergence of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism in Brazil – the First Workers Congress took place in April 1906, in the Centro Galego, also in Rio de Janeiro. This congress received 43 delegates from 28 associations from various parts of the country, including not only Rio de Janeiro, but also São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul and Alagoas. Initially convened by reformist workers’ sectors, this congress had a massive presence of anarchists, such that their theses concerning revolutionary syndicalism became hegemonic.⁹

Among its various deliberations, the congress advised ‘the proletariat to organise itself into societies of economic resistance [...], without abandoning the defence, by direct action, of the rudimentary political rights needed by economic organisations’, and also, ‘to put outside the union the special political struggle of a party and the rivalries which would result from the adoption, by the resistance association, of a political or religious doctrine, or of an electoral programme’; it established as an organisational principle the ‘federative method.’¹⁰

It also decided to advocate for a Brazilian Workers Confederation (Confederação Operária Brasileira – COB) – which would be founded in 1908, and would come to gather, in the following years, more than 50 articulated unions, especially in the “Workers Federation of Rio de Janeiro (Federação Operária do Rio de Janeiro –

⁹ Samis, Alexandre. “Pavilhão negro sobre pátria oliva.” In COLOMBO, Eduardo, ed. *História do Movimento Operário Revolucionário* (São Paulo: Imaginário, 2004). p. 134–135; Oliveira, Tiago. “Anarquismo e Revolução”: militância anarquista e a estratégia do sindicalismo revolucionário no Brasil durante a Primeira República.” In Santos, Kauan; SILVA, Rafael. (orgs.) *História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: novas perspectivas* (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018). p. 215; Antunes, Ricardo. *O que é sindicalismo* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 2003).p. 41

¹⁰ COB (Confederação Operária Brasileira). “Resoluções do Primeiro Congresso Operário do Brasil. In RODRIGUES, Edgar. *Socialism and Syndicalism in Brazil* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1969).

FORJ), in the Workers Federation of São Paulo (Federação Operária de São Paulo – FOSP) and in the Workers Federation of Rio Grande do Sul (Federação Operária do Rio Grande do Sul – FORGS),” which conformed the “main bases of support of the confederation, but also in the Bahia Socialist Federation (Federação Socialista Baiana), in the Santos Federation, among others.”¹¹

The influences of the anarchists on the syndicalist movement can be seen in the positions of *A Voz do Trabalhador* (*The Worker’s Voice*), the newspaper of the COB:

“What we desire, and will achieve, cost what it may – is the emancipation of the workers from capitalist tyranny and exploitation, by transforming the present economic regime of wages and bosses into a regime which will permit the development of producer-consumer organisations, whose initial cell is in the present syndicalist of resistance to the bosses. As a practical means, as a method of struggle to achieve such *denderatum*, it will adopt and use *revolutionary syndicalism*.”¹²

Some of the foundations of the anarchist conception of syndicalism are summarised in these positions and in the resolutions of the first congress that have been quoted: opposition to capitalism, the defence of class struggle, direct action by workers’ unions, the political and religious independence of these unions, and immediate demands that could point to a revolutionary rupture. It was through this strategy, revolutionary syndicalism, that the rise of the workers’ movement in Brazil occurred between 1905 and 1908, with an increase in mobilisations and organisational work and with the outbreak of strikes in Santos (1905 and 1908), of the railwaymen of the Paulista Company (1906), of the shoemakers in

¹¹ Toledo, Edilene. “Para a União do Proletariado Brasileiro: a Confederação Operária Brasileira, o sindicalismo e a defesa da autonomia dos trabalhadores no Brasil da Primeira República.” In *Perseu: história, memória e política*, 10:7, p.11–31, 2013. p.14.

¹² “A Voz do Trabalhador.” In *The Voice of the Worker*. Rio de Janeiro, July 1, 1908. Arquivo Edgard Leuenroth, Campinas- São Paulo. p.1.

tance or “Anti-globalisation” Movement, which was largely articulated in the Global Peoples’ Action (AGP), which became known for the organisation of the “global days of action.” This movement, initially arising in Europe and the United States in the second half of the 1990s, proposed confronting the rise of neoliberalism in the world, whose negative effects on people and the environment were becoming increasingly evident. And, to this end, it aimed to mobilise several countries in these days of global action; it was one of these days, known as N30 – a huge protest against the World Trade Organisation that took place on November 30, 1999, in Seattle – that made the movement known worldwide.³⁹

In this context, under the inspiration of this global “movement of movements,” an analogous social movement was formed in Brazil. Its first initiative occurred in Santos, on that same November 30, 1999, in a modest protest called by ecologists, libertarians and anarchists; later, the movement spread to São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza, Rio de Janeiro and other localities. Important in this diffusion was the formation, in São Paulo, in May 2000, of the “coalition of groups and individuals inspired by the AGP.” In Brazil, the movement lasted along these lines until 2003, and had the decisive participation of anarchists.

Although these did not constitute the totality of the movement – there were localities, such as Fortaleza, for example, in which libertarian currents of Marxism played a quite significant role – there seems to be no doubt that the anarchists, in their less or more organised expressions, not only had a decisive participation in the movement, but even had a hegemonic role in defining its trajectory.⁴⁰

³⁹ Corrêa, Felipe. *Bandeira Negra*, p.289–290.

⁴⁰ See Vinicius, Leo. *Antes de Junho: rebeldia, poder e fazer da juventude autonomista*. (Florianópolis: Em Debate – UFSC, 2014). p.221–270 and Ryoki, André; Ortellado, Pablo, eds. *Estamos Vencendo: resistência global no Brasil*. (São Paulo: Conrad, 2004).

The newspaper ran until 1982 and, after a long break, resumed between 1987 and 1988.

In this same period occurred the first attempts at a resumption of anarchist work in the unions. They occurred after a strong strike wave in Brazil, which involved more than 40,000 workers, and questioned the bureaucratised union structure, which already marked the so-called new unionism. In São Paulo, the *Coletivo Libertário de Oposição Sindical (COLOPS)* was created, which was close to the ideas of the *Oposição Operária Metalúrgica*. COLOPS was organised during the First National Meeting of Workers in Opposition to the Trade Union Structure (*ENTOES*), which brought together in September of 1980, in Niterói, trade union oppositions from 16 states of the country. The *Coletivo Libertário do Funcionalismo* also functioned in São Paulo, which, after making a critical balance of the struggles of the functionalism in the 1980s, expressed in the banking and education sectors.³⁸

Resistance Against Neoliberalism, Popular Movements and Syndicalism in the New Republic (1985–2013)

The context of the reopening, the establishment of the New Republic and the rise of neoliberalism in Brazil saw the presence of numerous social movements. In this context, especially from the 1990s onwards, anarchists not only fostered the creation of some of these movements, but also integrated into others, seeking to promote their principles and strategies.

Among the movements that, in Brazil, had a fundamental role of anarchists in their creation and development is the Global Resis-

³⁸ Silva, Rafael. “Ideias, Críticas e Combate: o anarquismo na Ditadura Militar Brasileira (1964–1985).” In Santos, Kauan.; Silva, Rafael, eds. *História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: Novas Perspectivas*. (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018). p.351–373.

Rio de Janeiro (1906) and of the workers of São Paulo for the eight hour day (1907). Between 1909 and mid-1912, the movement experienced an ebb, with little organisational and mobilisation work. From mid-1912 to mid-1913, there was a resumption of the movement, with a strike in São Paulo, in May 1912, and with the holding, in September 1913, in Rio de Janeiro, of the Second Workers Congress, which again confirmed the anarchist hegemony in the syndicalism movement and reinforced the theses of revolutionary syndicalism.¹³

Until 1916, the Brazilian labour movement faced another ebb, thanks to the economic conjuncture and to the effects of the First World War, despite the emergence in this context of organisations such as the *Federação Operária de Alagoas*, in 1913, and the *Federação de Resistência dos Trabalhadores Pernambucanos*, in 1914. From 1917 to 1920 was the period of greatest mobilisation of the working class in the First Republic, with episodes like the general strike in São Paulo (1917) – which involved 70 thousand workers –, the general strike in Rio de Janeiro (1917) the general strike in Curitiba (1917) the strike of the workers of the *Companhia Cantareira and Viação Fluminense* (1918) and the *Anarchist Insurrection* (1918), which add to a huge number of strikes, demonstrations and massive protests, advance in unionisation, growth of the workers’ press and the increase in the belief that a radical social transformation was possible. In 1919, the mobilisation of the *Union of Workers in Civil Construction (União dos Operários em Construção Civil – UOCC)* and the conquest of the eight hour day for the whole category deserves to be highlighted; in 1920 the birth of the *Mineira Workers’ Federation* and the holding of the *Third Workers’ Congress* were relevant. Between 1917 and 1922, there were numerous protests in Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio Grande do Sul. In many cases, the workers’ demands were won:

¹³ Addor, Carlos. *A Insurreição Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Achiamé, 2002).p. 85–86.

eight-hour working days, equalisation of wages between men and women, the end of child labour among others.¹⁴

The 1920s and 1930s would mark a crisis of anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism; at least four factors contributed to it.

First, the repression, operated by deportation, supported by the laws of expulsion of immigrants, by arbitrary arrests and even by sending militants to a forced labour camp in Clevelândia, in Oiapoque. Second, the growing state interference in unionism, through organs such as the Confederação Sindicalista Cooperativista do Brasil, and also the complete harnessing of the unions to the State, imposed between 1930 and 1932 by the Vargas government. Third, by the creation of the Brazilian Communist Party in 1922, with a strong presence of former anarchists, and that started to challenge more decisively influence within the union movement with the anarchists, defending demands such as the party and state linkage of the syndicates. Finally, the difficulty in articulating a political camp proper of the anarchists, on a more or less national level.¹⁵

¹⁴ Addor, Carlos, *A Insurreição Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro*, p.91–114; Toledo, Edilene; Biondi, Luigi. “Constructing Syndicalism and Anarchism Globally: the transnational making of the syndicalist movement in São Paulo, Brazil 1895–1935.” In: Hirsh, Steven; Van der walt, Lucien, eds. *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Postcolonial World, 1870- 1940: the praxis of national liberation, internationalism and social revolution*. (Leiden: Brill, 2014).p.363–393.

¹⁵ SANTOS, Kauan. “A disseminação do Anarquismo e suas estratégias políticas e sindicais entre os trabalhadores em São Paulo — Brasil (1890- 1920).” In Camarero, Hernán; Mangiantini, Martín, eds. *El Movimiento Obrero y las Izquierdas en América Latina: experiencias de lucha, inserción y organización* (vol. 1) (Raleigh: A Contracorriente, 2018). p.89–92; Oliveira, Tiago, “Anarquismo e Revolução,” p.231–239; Romani, Carlo. Romani, Carlo. “Clevelândia, Oiapoque — Aqui começa o Brasil!” *Trânsitos e confinamentos com a Guiana Francesa (1900 — 1927)*. Campinas: UNICAMP (doctorate in History), 2003. p.133 — 204.

class and ideological struggles, marking out directions more in accordance with federalist principles, which should govern the life of every class organisation.”³⁶ It also intended to intervene in the National Union of Students and build another political, student and libertarian reference.

But repression, which deepened and was refined over time, prevented further fruits from being reaped from these initiatives. After the assassination of the student Edson Luis, in Rio de Janeiro, and the promulgation of AI-5, the MEL as well as CCS and CEPJO were harshly persecuted. Members of MEL and of CEPJO — which had its headquarters invaded, in October 1969, by agents of the Air Force, resulting in 18 detained and prosecuted — were arrested and tortured, among whom was Ideal Peres, who spent one month in detention. Between 1972 and 1977, thanks to this complicated context, anarchists were only able to meet in small groups and sustain an almost clandestine existence; it was certainly, in organisational terms, the worst moment for anarchism in Brazil.³⁷

This situation only changed in 1977, when the dictatorship was losing strength, with the publication of the anarchist periodical *O Inimigo do Rei*, in Bahia. Student and union militants participated in the editorial group, not only from Bahia, but also from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraíba and Pará; contributing, not without internal conflicts and doctrinal divergences, to the reorganisation of anarchism, and discussed, among other subjects and under the strong influence of counterculture, themes such as revolutionary unionism, anarcho- syndicalism, the student movement, and also relating to gender, sexuality and political theory.

³⁶ ENEL (National Meeting of Libertarian Students). “Encontro Nacional de Estudantes Libertários”. In: *O Protesto* num. 3, Rio Grande do Sul, December 1967. Arquivo Edgard Leuroth, São Paulo- Campinas. p.5–6.

³⁷ See Rodrigues, Edgar. *Anarquismo no Banco dos Réus (1969–1972)*. (Florianópolis: VJR, 1993) and Silva, Rafael. *Um anarquismo latino-americano: um estudo comparativo e transnacional das experiências da Argentina, Brasil e Uruguai (1959–1985)*. Seropédica: UFRRJ (doctorate in History), 2018.

living through a dictatorship strong enough to repress social and political movements, but tactically moderate enough to allow the defeated left in politics to appear to triumph in culture.”³³ Outstanding initiatives in this field were: the anarchist publishing house *Germinal*, from Rio de Janeiro, and the newspaper *Dealbar*, from São Paulo – which had 17 issues published, between 1965 and 1968 and, through an innovative language, addressed issues such as culture, racism, health, psychology and the cold war.

Before AI-5 (Ato Institucional Número Cinco: Institutional Act Number Five), CCS, in São Paulo, and CEPJO, in Rio de Janeiro, were kept in operation, bringing together and developing young people interested in anarchism. Later, at the end of the 1960s, with the great increase of repression and the closing of these centres by the dictatorship, these young people – like Milton Lopes, from Rio de Janeiro, at the time a student – took place in the homes of militants like doctor Ideal Peres and his companion Esther Redes. There they were received, studied and oriented by older anarchists.³⁴

Many of these young people were students, who enjoyed the great expansion of higher education that had occurred in previous decades.³⁵ Something that had direct impact on the strengthening and the disputes of the student movement. Together with the action of old anarchist militants, the publication of the libertarian newspaper *O Protesto* caused, in December 1967, the Libertarian Student Movement (MEL) to be founded, gathering some dozens of militants from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. The movement was founded with the intention of “fixing a position and fighting back,” as well as “having an active presence in

³³ Napolitano, Marcos. *História do Regime Militar do Brasil*. (São Paulo: Context, 2014). p.97–98.

³⁴ Silva, Rafael. *Um anarquismo latino-americano: um estudo comparativo e transnacional das experiências da Argentina, Brasil e Uruguai (1959–1985)*. Seropédica: UFRRJ (doctorate in History), 2018.

³⁵ Toledo and Biondi. “Constructing Syndicalism and Anarchism Globally”, p.97.

Education and Popular Culture in the First Republic (1903–1930)

Together with revolutionary syndicalism, and in great measure as its complement, there developed in the Brazil of the First Republic a true educational-cultural movement, which found support in periodicals, books, popular universities, schools, cultural centres, ateneums, theatre groups, libraries, workers’ parties and festivals. Such tools were common for the diffusion of the anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist ideology in the country, and contributed both to the literacy and formal education of workers, many illiterate, and to instructing them politically and creating a libertarian political culture.¹⁶

Even before anarchist influenced syndicalism, there was a set of measures in this educational-cultural field that deserve to be highlighted. On the one hand, the resolution of the Socialist Congress of 1894 to officially commemorate, from then on, the First of May in Brazil.¹⁷ On the other, and in a much more decisive way, the publication of newspapers. The pioneers were: *Gli Schiavi Bianchi* (1892), *L’Asino Umano* (1893) and *L’Avvenire* (1894), published by Italian immigrants. In Rio de Janeiro, the first anarchist periodicals were *O Despertar* (1898) and *O Protesto* (1899).¹⁸

From 1903 to the end of the 1920s, a huge range of periodicals was published. Among the most important were: *O Amigo do Povo* (founded in 1902 in São Paulo), *La Battaglia* (founded in 1904 in São Paulo), *A Luta* (founded in 1906 in Rio Grande do Sul), *A Voz do Trabalhador* (founded in 1908 in Rio de Janeiro), *A Plebe* (founded in

¹⁶ See Castro, Rogério. *Nem Prêmio, Nem Castigo! Educação, Anarquismo e Sindicalismo em São Paulo (1909–1919)* (Curitiba: Prismas, 2017). p.17–42.

¹⁷ Lopes, Milton. “Anarquismo e Primeiro de Maio no Brasil.” In Corrêa, Felipe; Silva, Rafael; Silva, Alessandro, eds. *Teoria e História do Anarquismo*. (Curitiba: Prismas: 2015). p.219.

¹⁸ Batalha, Claudio. *O Movimento Operário na Primeira República*. (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2000). p.23; Santos, Kauan. “A disseminação do anarquismo,” p.175.

1917 in São Paulo), *A Hora Social* (founded in 1919 in Pernambuco). Such editorial production involved a complex network of editors, authors and readers, generally formed by self-taught workers, who wrote, translated, produced and distributed content with the intention of internalising and spreading ideas, as well as propagating political and social strategies.¹⁹

Still in the camp of editorial production, another relevant aspect was the publication, at the beginning of the 20th century, of markedly doctrinal works of anarchism: translated books by Élisée Reclus, Errico Malatesta, Jean Grave, Saverio Merlino, Peter Kropotkin, Carlo Cafiero and, less frequently, of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Michael Bakunin. Another type of production united literature with ideological aims. A milestone of this experience was the 1903 book *O Ideólogo* (*The Ideologist*), written by the anarchist doctor Fábio Luz, which inaugurated the genre of the social novel in the country. Between 1903 and 1925, Fábio Luz, Avelino Fóscolo, Manuel Curvello de Mendonça and Domingos Ribeiro Filho – the main references, in this style, of the libertarian literary universe – published 25 novels, short stories and novellas.²⁰

The First Workers Congress, of 1906, at the same time, contributed to the development of educational and cultural initiatives, forwarding the creation of popular universities and lay schools, which should be linked to the workers associations.²¹ The first workers' school that emerged from anarchist influence was the Escola União Operária, in Rio Grande do Sul, in 1895. But, after the

¹⁹ Toledo and Biondi, "Constructing Syndicalism and Anarchism Globally," p.375, 388, 441.

²⁰ Luizetto, Flávio. "O Recurso da Ficção: um capítulo da história do anarquismo no Brasil." In: Prado, Antonio, eds.. *Libertários no Brasil: memórias, lutas, cultura*. (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986.). p.134–135, 142.

²¹ Machado, Antonio. *Forjas da Liberdade: Educação Operária, Anarquismo e Sindicalismo Revolucionário na Niterói da Primeira República*. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ (Masters in History), 2017. p.53–56.

of S. Paulo and in other cities."³² In Rio de Janeiro, a similar space was founded in 1958 and remained functioning until 1968: the Centro de Estudos Professor José Oiticica (CEPJO), who, in the same way, organised courses, lectures and debating activities; he also helped found, in 1961, an anarchist publishing house: Mundo Livre.

The re-democratisation was characterised by a slow resumption of anarchist activities. In the labour movement, sometimes in alliance with other sectors of the left, the anarchists broke the inactivity of the dictatorial period of the Vargas Era, although they encountered difficulties in disputes with corporatism, the PCB (Communist Party of Brazil) and the PTB (Brazilian Labour Party). In the educational and cultural field, there was a great limitation of militants and financial resources, which was explained, as in a vicious circle, by the difficulty of guaranteeing a more massive presence and influence in the social movements. However, this resumption was hindered by the military coup of 1964, which placed militancy in a state of uncertainty and, a little further on, under strong repression.

Education, Culture, Student Movement and Syndicalism in the Military Dictatorship (1964–1985)

If, before 1964, anarchism was weakened, it was trying to restore its social bases and to grow in a period of polarisations and doubts, with the coup and the beginning of the military dictatorship, things became even more complicated. The anarchists then decided to operate with caution, prioritising their spaces of education and culture, more discreet in the face of repression. "We were

³² CCS (Centre for Social Culture). "Centro de Cultura Social. 1945 Statutes, DEOPS-SP file, num. 5 – Anarchism. p.2–3.

Taking advantage of a wave of union mobilisations between 1945 and 1946, which placed the workers' base and the labour leaderships in growing conflict, the anarchists began to concentrate on the formation of union opposition groups. The first initiative was the formation, in São Paulo, of the Union of Proletarian Syndicalists, which was short-lived. In the Light workers' category, in Rio de Janeiro, the anarchists formed, with other workers, a Group of Union Orientation of the Light Workers, which edited a specific newspaper for the questions of the sector, UNIR. This newspaper, according to the reports of the militants themselves in the pages of *Ação Direta*, had been "spreading in that transport company the principles of revolutionary unionism and direct action, in face of the demagogues of the political parties and of the Ministry of Labour."

Massive union strike waves broke out in the mid-1950s; in São Paulo, they involved 300,000 workers in 1953, and 400,000 in 1957. Taking advantage of this flow of mobilisation, the anarchists formed, together with the independent socialists, in 1953 in São Paulo, the Syndicalist Orientation Movement (Movimento de Orientação Sindical –MOS), which proposed to "fight for the complete autonomy and freedom of Workers' unions" and which contested a slate in the graphics sector, in 1957.³¹

The post-1945 period also allowed the development of educational and cultural initiatives. In São Paulo, the Centro de Cultura Social (CCS) – which had been founded in 1933 and closed by repression in 1937 – reopened in mid-1945, linking itself to attempts to reorganise anarchist union action and holding conferences, lectures and theatrical performances. It promoted literary soirees, edited books, organised artistic exhibitions and courses, helping "the foundation of centres with the same purpose in the suburbs

História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: Novas Perspectivas. (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018). p.301- 303.

³¹ Idem. p.311–314.

congress, the movement of founding schools spread throughout the country: the Eliseu Reclus School,²² in Porto Alegre; the Germinal School, in Ceará; the Workers Union School, in Franca; the Workers League School, in Sorocaba; the May 1st Workers School, in Rio de Janeiro; the Modern School, in Petrópolis; the Modern School No. 1, in 1912, and the Modern School No. 2, in 1913, both in São Paulo. Such schools functioned linked to the labour and revolutionary movement until 1919, when they had problems, among other things, with repression.²³

Another aspect to be mentioned was the anarchist pedagogical action that took place in the culture centres and *ateneums*, whose aim was to "complement the education of the workers," "create a bond with the workers" and "increase the number of militants sympathetic to libertarian thought." Courses on typing, languages, accounting, as well as parties, conferences, choirs and poetry recitations were also held in these spaces. Some of these initiatives aimed to raise funds to support the unions or even anarchist initiatives. There were also solidarity actions for militants who might be ill or in support of international magazines and initiatives.

In relation to workers' leisure, we can highlight two important experiences: *workers' parties* and *festivals*. These activities, which mixed playfulness with propagandistic objectives, took place in workers' halls or in the open air, and generally counted on the presentation of theatrical groups formed by the workers themselves. The workers' theatre of this period had as formats, in general, the melodrama and the play, and were linked to unions or workers' centres. The plays were also staged with the purpose of raising funds for some periodical or simply entertaining the workers, spreading the anarchist and syndicalist political perspective.²⁴ The

²² Being the Portuguese for Élisée Reclus (Black Flag)

²³ Castro, Rogério. "Nem Prêmio, Nem Castigo!" p.175–181.

²⁴ See Hipólido, Eduardo. O Teatro Anarquista Como Prática Social do Movimento Libertário (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro from 1901 to 1922): São Paulo: PUC (Masters in History), 2012.

period of greatest vigour of these festivals was the 1920s, standing out in the participation of the Grupo Arte e Instrução, the Grupo de Teatro Social, the Grupo Dramático Germinal among others. Such groups had orchestras (generally rented) and a troupe of actors, were constituted by workers and trade unionists, many of them anarchists, and usually staged plays translated from abroad.²⁵

The aforementioned crisis of the 1920s and 1930s which affected revolutionary syndicalism, and consequently anarchism, also affected these educational and cultural instruments.

Education, Culture and Syndicalism in the Vargas Era and Re-Democratisation (1930–1964)

This crisis ended up supporting the affirmation of some authors – as, for example, John Dulles²⁶ – that the 1930s would have marked the end of revolutionary syndicalism in Brazil, and even of the anarchist influence in the labour movement. However, this observation is not correct. And even the diagnosis that, “without spaces for insertion [...] the libertarians start to organise themselves in groups of culture and preservation of memory,” is quite questionable.²⁷

Although in a context of crisis and ebb, the 1930s saw the presence and influence of anarchists in the syndicates, something confirmed by the agents of repression themselves and by the actions of organisations like the Federação Operária de São Paulo (FOSP), which, in those years, still had hundreds of affiliates. Moreover, important periodicals such as *A Plebe*, *O Trabalhador* and *A Lanterna*

²⁵ Ramos, Renato. “Arte e Consciência: os festivais operários no Rio de Janeiro.” EMECE, 4: 13. Rio de Janeiro: NPMC, 2000.

²⁶ Dulles, John. *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil (1900- 1935)*. (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1977). p.159–169.

²⁷ Samis, Alexandre. “Pavilhão Negro sobre Pátria Oliva,” p.181.

continued to be published and, among other things, demonstrated the lively interest of the anarchists in the social movements.²⁸ Finally, the experiences of the subsequent decades still attest that syndicalism, even under strong crisis and reflux, continued to be a space sought by the anarchists, with some modest cases of presence and insertion having occurred.²⁹

After the critical period of the dictatorship of the Estado Novo, between 1937 and 1945 – in which the anarchists had to operate almost clandestinely, thanks to the enormous repression – militant activities were resumed. With re-democratisation, they began to republish their press; in São Paulo, the newspapers *A Plebe* (1947–1960, edited by Edgar Leuenroth) and *O Libertário*, which replaced it in the 1960s, stand out; in Rio de Janeiro, *Remodelações* (1945–1947, edited by the Ceará Moacir Caminha), *Ação Direta* (1946–1959, edited by José Oiticica) and *O Archote*.

Two objectives for that moment were pointed out in the pages of the anarchist periodicals. First, to undertake efforts for the formation of an anarchist political organisation of national scope – a task they understood to have been left aside in the past. In that context of the Cold War and of the alignment of the Dutra government with the USA, the anarchists sought to present a distinct way forward, beyond the polarisation between real “socialism” and capitalism. Second, to resume work in the unions; for this, it was necessary to devise adequate strategies to deal with the two adversaries that had hegemony over the Brazilian syndicalism movement: the pure-and-simple trade unionists (i.e. labourites etc.) and the communists.³⁰

²⁸ Silva, Rodrigo. “Anarquistas e Sindicalistas em São Paulo: repressão política e resistência nos anos 1930.” In: SANTOS, Kauan.; SILVA, Rafael, eds. *História do Anarquismo e do Sindicalismo de Intenção Revolucionária no Brasil: Novas Perspectivas*. (Curitiba: Prismas, 2018).

²⁹ See SILVA, Rafael. *Elementos Inflamáveis: organização anarquista e militância no Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo (1945- 1964)* (Curitiba: Prismas, 2017).

³⁰ SILVA, Rafael. “Sindicalismo Revolucionário e militância anarquista no Rio de Janeiro e São Paulo (1945–1964).” In SANTOS, Kauan.; SILVA, Rafael, eds.