

passports, segregation and indenture. Free Coloured and Indian workers likewise were subject to discriminatory practices in accordance with the racist ideal of white supremacy elaborated under the post-1910 state. The white working class, restive and distrustful of big companies who might replace them with unfree black labour, organised along segregationist lines in bodies like SAIF.

Anarchists and syndicalists in South Africa, however, as van der Walt demonstrates, were distinguished by a commitment to interracial labour unity, and “the abolition of all forms of native indenture, compound and passport systems; and the lifting of the native worker to the political and industrial status of the white”. Most favoured an IWW-style One Big Union as the means to sweep away such “tyrant laws”, uniting the working class in the struggle for the social revolution. The syndicalist unions it formed amongst Africans, Coloureds and Indians were seen as stepping stones to this great goal.

*Internationalism, anti-colonialism, and national liberation*

It is ironic that the English language literature on anarchism and syndicalism provides nothing comparable to the rich scholarship on Marxist approaches to anti-imperialist struggles. Even nationalist narratives concede anarchists and syndicalists played a key role in 19th and 20th century struggles. Flores Magón lies buried alongside generals and presidents in the Rotunda of Illustrious Men in the National Pantheon at Chapultepec Park, Mexico City, “part of the nationalistic myth of the ‘institutionalised Mexican revolution’”.<sup>97</sup> In the Republic of Korea, anarchists Yu Rim (1894–1961), Bak Yeol (1902–1972) and Yu ha-myōng (1891–1985) are commemorated as “independence activists”, and Kim Jwa-Jin’s birthplace is a national monument.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, Shin Chacho (1880–1936)—the most famous Korean anarchist—features in school textbooks. The 110th anniversary of Makhno’s birth received official celebrations in Gulyai-Polye, stressing

<sup>97</sup> Colin M. MacLachlan, *Anarchism and the Mexican Revolution: the political trials of Ricardo Flores Magón in the United States*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991, 109.

<sup>98</sup> Seo Dong-shin, 2007, “Korean Anarchists Pursuing Third Way”, *Korea Times*, 26 January 2007; Hongseong Portal, “Commemorative Festival for Admiral Kim Jwa-Jin’s Victory” online at [http://hongseong.go.kr/english/festival/festival\\_05\\_01.html](http://hongseong.go.kr/english/festival/festival_05_01.html), accessed on 6 June 2008.

his role as an independence activist.<sup>99</sup> In Dublin, Ireland, the name of the De Leonist syndicalist James Connolly (1868–1916, executed after the failed Easter Rising), adorns train stations and a hospital; like Kim, he has a statue, although this one was sponsored by the unions.<sup>100</sup> The National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa (allied to the ruling nationalist African National Congress, or ANC), is investigating establishing a “workers’ monument” to the “worker hero” Thibedi.<sup>101</sup>

The papers in this collection are, then, of the utmost importance in opening up a serious examination of anarchist and syndicalist responses to imperialism. By the late 19th century, imperialist economic and political penetration had evoked various political and cultural responses across the colonial and postcolonial world. Collaboration and accommodation with empire were always important currents. However, there were major independence struggles across the Spanish empire in the 1890s, followed by colonial Europe in the 1910s. The late 1910s saw protests sweep the African and Asian colonies, and the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans, along with rising demands for more economic independence in Latin America and Southern Africa. By the late 1920s, mass independence movements were becoming important in Africa and Asia. From the 1940s, the remnants of formal imperial rule were collapsing across the world (at least outside of the rapidly expanding Soviet realm).

It is important to stress that nationalism was one—but *only one*—current in these national liberation struggles; the two are all too often conflated. Nationalism is a definite doctrine, which views the world as comprised of discrete nations, each requiring its own nation-state to express its general will. Nationalist movements therefore centre on uniting all sections of the nation, regardless of class, towards that end. This outlook differs radically from the anarchists and syndicalists’ insistence on class-based internationalism and anti-statism, and generally also (as we will show below) to their own visions of decolonisation and self-determination.

<sup>99</sup> Sergey Shevchenko, 12 January 1999, “‘Makhno is our Tsar, Makhno is our God’”, online at <http://www.hartford-hw.com/archives/63/354.html>, accessed on 10 December 2007.

<sup>100</sup> 1916 Rebellion Walking Tour, “The History: Statue of James Connolly”, [http://www.1916rising.com/pic\\_connollystatue.html](http://www.1916rising.com/pic_connollystatue.html), accessed on 15 September 2008.

<sup>101</sup> Resolutions of the 2006 congress of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, online at <http://www.cosatu.org.za/cong2006/congress06/resolu.pdf>, section 1.12, accessed 15 September 2008.

Indebted to European revolutionary thinking, colonial nationalist movements were a reaction against European (and other) imperialism,<sup>102</sup> usually launched by frustrated native elites. In practice, colonial nationalists vacillated between accommodation with empire, and demands for more radical autonomy, even statehood. Only from around 1919 did the latter demands begin, fitfully, to dominate colonial nationalism.<sup>103</sup> Even then, however, nationalism often struggled to assume leadership of national liberation movements, because religious- and class-based currents were also important forces.

*Three major anarchist and syndicalist approaches to  
independence struggles*

The notion that anarchism and syndicalism ignored anti-imperialist struggles is indefensible. Anarchism and syndicalism were doctrinally opposed to imperialism, and thus, in principle, *always* supported some notion of national freedom. Support for national freedom followed from the anarchist opposition to hierarchy, and stress on voluntary cooperation and self-management. “The right of freely uniting and separating”, Bakunin wrote, “is the first and most important of all political rights”.<sup>104</sup> In place of state centralism and nationalism, he advocated a “future social organisation” that was “carried out from the bottom up, by free association, with unions and localities federated by communes, regions, nations, and, finally, a great universal and international federation”.<sup>105</sup> National self-determination itself would, in short, be premised on individual freedom through cooperation, and classlessness as well as *statelessness*.

The difficulty was, however, that many of the national liberation struggles in the colonial and postcolonial world were influenced by *nationalism*, or at least, the nationalist dream of independent statehood. The question was therefore posed: how should anarchists and syndicalists relate to nationalism, and to struggles for independence

<sup>102</sup> Bocjun, 132–133.

<sup>103</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: self-determination and the international origins of anti-colonial nationalism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 5–6

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Paul Eltzbacher, *Anarchism: exponents of the anarchist philosophy*, London: Freedom Press, [1900] 1960, 81.

<sup>105</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, “The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State”, in Dolgoff (ed.), [1871] 1971, 270.

that stopped short of the social revolution for “a great universal and international federation” and a new “social organisation”?

Anarchists and syndicalists seemed to have adopted three main approaches.<sup>106</sup> The first of the anarchist and syndicalist responses was that current independence struggles were futile, inasmuch as they were viewed as simply replacing foreign with local oppressors. There were, for instance, substantial tensions between Cuba’s early anarchist-led unions, stressing class struggle, and the separatist movement, stressing the national unity across class, which is touched upon in Shaffer’s chapter.<sup>107</sup> Key anarchists like Enrique Roig de San Martín (1843–1889) suggested that any change short of full-blown social revolution (delivering national freedom) was futile, and sought to distance the unions from the separatists.<sup>108</sup> This position effectively maintained that national liberation struggles were basically *nationalist*, and would thus inevitably generate narrowly nationalist outcomes: a new state, and the persistence of a class system. This left these anarchists and syndicalists outside of national liberation movements; notwithstanding their principled opposition to imperialism and colonialism, it often meant they sidestepped these issues for an ostensible focus on class struggle.

The second modal approach was quite the opposite: it actively and uncritically embraced nationalism. Like Roig de San Martín, it tended to conflate nationalism and national liberation, except that it saw this relationship as *positive* and necessary. In his pioneering work on Korean anarchism, John Crump drew attention to a tendency that was so deeply imbued with nationalism that it “flouted the basic principles of anarchism”.<sup>109</sup> Yu ha-myōng and Yu Rim served in the Korean Provisional Government in exile, and with Ha formed an Independent Workers and Peasants Party (IWFP) to run in the first post-independence elections. Yu Rim stated that “We Korean Anarchists are not literal non-governmentists” but “want to establish an independent and democratic unified government”.<sup>110</sup> In China, likewise, the anarchists Li Shizeng (1881–1973) and Wu Zhihui (1865–1953) were closely

<sup>106</sup> This draws on ideas that previously appeared in Lucien van der Walt, “Pour Une Histoire De L’anti-impérialisme Anarchiste: ‘Dans Cette Lutte, Seuls Les Ouvriers Et Les Paysans Iront Jusqu’au Bout’”, *Refractions*, 8, 2002: 27–37, and van der Walt and Schmidt, 297–321.

<sup>107</sup> Also see Casanovas, “Labour and Colonialism in Cuba”, 309–321.

<sup>108</sup> Casanovas, “Labour and Colonialism in Cuba”, 361–363.

<sup>109</sup> Crump, 46.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Ha, 144.

associated with what Dirlik labels the anti-Communist “nationalistically obsessed *Guomindang* Right”. In practice, they saw the nationalist programme as a necessary step towards a future transition toward anarcho-communism.<sup>111</sup> In other words, this approach saw the formation of independent nation-states as a partial break with imperialism, and, indeed, a *precondition* for a future anarchist society. From this stages approach followed a willingness to set aside differences with the nationalists, downplaying anti-statism and class struggle—at least until independent statehood was achieved.

The third anarchist and syndicalist position on independence struggles was the most sophisticated, and arguably the most important historically: a project of critical engagement and radicalisation. National liberation struggles were seen as a crucial part of the libertarian programme, and of the class struggle. While current independence struggles could be captured by bourgeois and other elite forces, this was not inevitable. Nationalist and elitist forces could be displaced, with the intervention of anarchists and syndicalists pushing national liberation struggles directly towards internationalist and anti-statist social revolution. Success would *merge* class and national struggles, rather than somewhat artificially separate the two.

From 1892, as Shaffer indicates, Cuban anarchism largely committed itself to the separatist struggle. It declared unequivocal support for “the collective liberty of a people, even though the collective liberty desired is that of emancipation from the tutelage of another people”, but added the struggle must lead to the predominance of the interests of the popular classes.<sup>112</sup> Many joined José Martí’s Cuban Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Cubano*, or PRC). When the War of Independence started in 1895, anarchists made a “huge” contribution, providing soldiers, resources, propaganda and subversion—and martyrs.<sup>113</sup> The anarchists retained their own agenda throughout, and, after formal independence, were relentless critics of the postcolonial elite and its United States backers.

This position, in short, centred on *contesting* the national liberation struggle *within* a larger movement that included nationalists. At its heart was a conceptual distinction between *nationalism* (merely aim-

<sup>111</sup> Crump, 47–48; Dirlik, *Anarchism in the Chinese Revolution*, Ch. 11.

<sup>112</sup> Fernandez, 15–38; also see Casanovas, “Labour and Colonialism in Cuba”, 413–423, 433–442.

<sup>113</sup> Casanovas, “Labour and Colonialism in Cuba”, 424.

ing at a new state) and *national liberation in general* (potentially able to move to social revolution); and, from this, a determination to achieve leadership of the national liberation struggle. From this perspective, anarchists and syndicalists must participate in national liberation struggles, while remaining sceptical of the nationalists and their plans for statehood. Genuine national liberation did not mean independent statehood, but the satisfaction of the demands of the masses for social and economic equality via a libertarian socialist society.

For example, Connolly—as O'Connor notes—was well known for the dictum that since “the Irish national struggle was also a social struggle, only the working class could complete the struggle, and only socialism could guarantee real economic independence”. The other key figure in Irish syndicalism, Jim Larkin (1874–1947) held a similar position. Both men gave to socialist republicanism a distinctly syndicalist edge. The syndicalists in South Africa in the late 1910s—admirers of Connolly—similarly rejected African (and Afrikaner) nationalism in favour of national liberation through an interracial One Big Union. In South Africa, according to van der Walt, syndicalist formations like the International Socialist League viewed the revolutionary One Big Union as proletarian forge in which a common society embracing all, regardless of colour, would be created. Rather than create a nation-state, they sought to establish a self-managed libertarian socialist “Industrial Republic”, as “an integral part of the International Industrial Republic”.

In Puerto Rico, Shaffer notes, anarchists challenged the mainstream independence groups, insisting that real independence had to involve an anarchist and communist restructuring of society. In Mexico, the PLM's work provides a clear example of an anarchist current aiming to push struggles against Western domination and local elites in a revolutionary direction. At the same time, PLM experience shows the difficult questions that participation in such struggles can pose. Most notable is the PLM's attempt to radicalise the Plan of San Diego (PSD), a 1915 separatist revolt in southern Texas by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans that had overtones of racial warfare.

In China, too, collaboration with the nationalist party, the *Goumindang*, was a controversial issue, with some anarchists seeking to tactically use *Guomindang* resources for their own, distinct, purposes: Dirlik's and Hwang's chapters deal with some of the complexities this entailed. The revolutionary outlook on national liberation was also very influential among Korean anarchists. Militants like Yi Jeonggyu

and Bak aimed at social revolution, rather than simply a political revolution that aimed merely at independence. Hwang challenges Crump's emphasis on the nationalist inclination of the Korean movement, arguing that while anarchism was "re-read" to stress independence, independence was often rethought as part of a larger set of transnational and universal problems and concerns. Shin's 1923 "Declaration of the Korean Revolution" fits well: besides independence from Japan, it stressed the abolition of class rule and exploitation in "an ideal Korea".<sup>114</sup>

In Egypt, Gorman shows, the anarchists disagreed with the nationalists, but engaged in several *de facto* alliances. One was the participation of the Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta in the 1882 revolt led by Ahmad 'Urabi, and this convergence was also in evidence in the 1919 Revolution, marked by countrywide agitation against British rule, and syndicalist activity between foreign and Egyptian labour. For its part, the Military Revolutionary Soviet of the *Makhnovischna* declared,

When speaking of Ukrainian independence, we do not mean national independence in Petliura's [Symon Petliura, head of the nationalist Directory] sense, but the social independence of workers and peasants. We declare that Ukrainian, and all other, working people have the right to self-determination not as an 'independent nation', but as 'independent workers'.

To the extent that the activities of *Makhnovischna* and Korean People's Association in Manchuria constituted social revolutions, they would exemplify a successful drive to push national liberation well beyond the bounds of narrow nationalism.

The third anarchist and syndicalist position on independence struggles was very much in line with Bakunin's support for independence movements on the basis that national liberation had to be fought "as much in the economic as in the political interests of the masses". A movement dominated by "ambitious intent to set up a powerful State", and the agenda of "a privileged class" would end up a "retrogressive, disastrous, counter-revolutionary movement".<sup>115</sup> He believed that:<sup>116</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Shin Chaeho, "Declaration of the Korean Revolution", in Robert Graham (ed.), *Anarchism: a documentary history of libertarian ideas, volume 1: from anarchy to anarchism, 300 CE to 1939*, Montréal: Black Rose, [1923] 2005, 373–376.

<sup>115</sup> Bakunin, quoted in Guérin, 68.

<sup>116</sup> Bakunin, "Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism", 99.

Every exclusively political revolution—be it in defence of national independence or for internal change...—that does not aim at the immediate and real political and economic emancipation of people will be a false revolution. Its objectives will be unattainable and its consequences reactionary.

The “statist path involving the establishment of separate...States” was “entirely ruinous for the great masses of the people”, because it did not abolish class power but simply changed the nationality of the ruling class.<sup>117</sup>

*A Note on the Volume's Organisation and Scope*

This volume is divided into two parts. The first part consists of studies that examine anarchism and syndicalism in the context of European and Japanese colonialism. We define colonialism in a straight-forward manner to refer to peoples and regions of the world subject to direct foreign political and economic control. Some may find controversial the designation of China as part of the colonial world. Although it was never completely colonized, it *was* systematically subjected to an expanding range of formal concessions of territory and rights from the 19th century, and then to a protracted colonial conquest from the 1930s. The case can thus be made for its inclusion in the colonial section given its colonial and “semi-colonial” status by the early 20th century.

The second part groups studies that probe the experience of anarchism and syndicalism in the context of postcolonial situations, which, given the period covered by this volume, necessarily means primarily Latin American cases. For the purposes of this book, “postcolonial” denotes ex-colonies that, despite independent polities, remain profoundly influenced by the legacies of colonialism. In particular, it refers to countries subject to a clear (but widely varying and contested) degree of indirect external control and of relative economic dependence within the world capitalist economy's division of labour. These external constraints condition, but do not determine, internal systems of domination by class, race, culture, and gender.

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<sup>117</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, “Statism and Anarchy”, in Sam Dolgoff (ed.), *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works by the Activist-Founder of World Anarchism*, London: George Allen and Unwin, [1873] 1971, 343.