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David Berry and Constance Bantman (eds.), *New Perspectives on Anarchism, Labour and Syndicalism: the Individual, the National and the Transnational*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010, 228pp.
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This fine collection draws together studies of anarchism and syndicalism, mainly covering the 1890s to the 1940s in Europe. These underline the important role of anarchism in labour movement history, and, conversely, demonstrate anarchism's and syndicalism's commitment to a libertarian, revolutionary class struggle politics. The individual chapters are remarkably interesting and solidly re-

searched; the editors' introduction is insightful; and the volume is cohesive, as important synergies make the whole greater than the sum of the parts.

Berry and Bantman make a case for the importance of global – especially transnational – approaches to labour and left history. They argue for the utility of biography, network analysis, comparative analysis and attention to political languages, in shifting from the 'methodological nationalism' (p.6) that has long shaped these fields. Bert Altena's stimulating survey picks up these analytical issues. He argues against approaches that treat syndicalism as something 'abnormal', a 'Pavlovian reaction' triggered by external structural conditions such as the second industrial revolution, social democratic failure etc. Inc problem is that mass syndicalism existed where many of these conditions did not apply (e.g. Spain, 1870s, France, 1890s), and was conversely absent (e.g. Belgium) or only a minority current (e.g. Germany) where they did apply. Second, structuralist arguments fail to examine syndicalism on its own terms, as a revolutionary movement with its own political culture, driven by the ideas and aspirations of working class people in particular communities and contexts.

The editors apologise for their 'Eurocentrism', but this is surely unnecessary. The methodological problems of Eurocentrism reside not in a focus on Europe as such, but in a conflation of world history with (West) European history, with other regions ignored or caricatured. This is certainly not the approach of Berry and Bantman, who are keenly aware that European anarchism/syndicalism was but part of a global movement. Levy's fine discussion of anarchist 'global labour organiser' Errico Malatesta's role in anti-colonial risings in Bosnia and Egypt, and in activism and networks in North Africa, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Latin America, makes this clear. Besides, this important collection also breaks with the literature's traditional focus on the North Atlantic seaboard and

Spain, wherein the Spanish movement is presented as a mysterious, unique case of mass anarchist influence.[1]

Most chapters are framed transnationally, and ex amine how movements operated across state borders and within borderlands, as ideas and debates, activists and struggle repertoires flowed across the European space.

At one level, this transnational constitution of the anarchist/syndicalist movement centred upon what Bantman calls the 'informal internationalism' of cross-border networks, periodicals and migrants. Bantman's fascinating chapter shows, for example, that many key themes in the archetypal syndicalist CGT of France were 'ideological imports' from Britain, where anarchism was itself deeply influenced by exiles like Pyotr Kropotin and Malatesta. As Davide Turcato and Wayne Thorpe note in their rich contributions, London ('headquarters of continental anarchism') and Paris ('Mecca of syndicalism') were key hubs in these European networks (ppo20, 112). Within these spaces, Yann Betiard shows in his wonderful study of the worker Gustav Schmidt/Gus Smith – a German immigrant active in British circles -that there were also elements of intermingling, with anarchism and social democracy co-existing, overlapping, even fusing.

At another level, anarchist internationalism also included formal cross-border organising. After the anarchist majority wing of the First International (spanning three continents) closed in 1877, the movement entered the 'Second' International. Here syndicalism (Altena notes) was very important, and here (Turcato shows) anarchists and syndicalists campaigned to participate and shape the International, notably in the 1896 London congress, Their 'congressional battle' failed, and their influence in the International waned for years – less because of Marxists than

[1] See Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, *Black Flame: the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism* (San Francisco: AK Press, 2009), ch.1.

due to anarchist failings, notably the debilitating influence of 'anti-organisationism'. The 1896 'battle' however laid a firm basis for the pro-syndicalist, 1907 anarchist Amsterdam Congress: again,however, Altena shows, 'anti-organisationists' prevented a real International emerging.

Meanwhile, Thorpe notes, syndicalism repeatedly re-emerged in the Second International, including in its German, Italian and Swedish parties, and in the International Secretariat of National Trade Union Centres (ISNTUC), where the French CGT was active. Facing ongoing frustrations, many anarchists and syndicalists turned their efforts to building a new, specifically anarchist/ syndicalist, international.

This led some to engage with the new Communist International – the subject of Reiner Tosstorff's evocative piece. Anarchists/ syndicalists were a massive force, leading the Bolsheviks to make overtures; the Spanish CNT and Italian USI briefly affiliated. However, Bolshevik authoritarianism reinforced the rejection of classical Marxism, leading to the syndicalist International Workingmens' Association (IWA/AIT) in 1922.

Secondly, it is important to stress (regarding Eurocentrism) that the volume also engages with Eastern Europe. Thorpe provides useful material on the diffusion of syndicalism into Hungary, Poland and Russia. Rafal Chwedoruk provides an important discussion of the Polish anarchist/ syndicalist movement, which eventually led the ZZZ unions. This movement was shaped by the 'national question' generated by the country's history of coioniai subjugation and its brief independence (1918–39). This impact on ZZZ syndicalists is also noted by Dieter Nelles, whose compelling chapter examines German and Polish militants (often linked Co the syndicalist FAUD) in Upper Silesia. Interestingly, Nelles notes, like the FAUD and the Spanish CNT, the ZZZ organised armed militias – something contrary to Marxist claims

that the Libertarian movement refused to organise militarily for revolution.[2]

Contrary to the tired cliché that anarchism/syndicalism collapsed with Bolshevism, the German movement peaked in the 1920s, as Altena notes, while the Polish (and Spanish) movements peaked in the 1930s. By the end of the decade, however, partly due to fascism and Bolshevism, significant legal syndicalist unions apparently only existed in Chile, Bolivia, Sweden and Uruguay. Thus the 1940s saw the Bulgarian, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, Spanish, Ukrainian and other [syndicalist] movements focus on under ground resistance.[3]

Then followed the post-war rebirth. In France, the anarchist / syndicalist movement soon rallied tens of thousands. As Guillaume Davranche's excellent chapter shows, some worked in the new CGT-FO unions, others sought to regroup unions around the syndicalist CNT; others worked within the (now Communist-led) CGT. The strategic choice between forming new organisations or working within non-anarchist/syndicalist formations – previously faced by local unions (Britain, Beliard), national centres (Poland, Chwedoruk), or international bodies like the Second International (Turcato), the ISNTUC (Thorpe) and Comintern (Tosstorff) – again faced France. Eventually efforts to form a powerful new syndicalist centre failed: this Davranche suggests, was partly because the CNT sank into 'a spiral of sectarian self-destruction' (p.177).

In conclusion, this is an excellent collection, and highly recommended. As a source of bibliographical data alone, it is worthwhile and it is far more than that. I have provided but an indication of its richness.

[2] E.g. Paul Blackledge, 'Marxism and Anarchism,' *International Socialism*, no. 125 (2010).

[3] See Vadim Damier, *Anarcho-Syndicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Edmonton: Black Cat Press, 2009).