

Volume I
Number 6
June 2015

 **workersoftheworld**

International Journal
on Strikes and
Social Conflicts

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

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Letter from the editor

This sixth issue of *Workers of the World – International Journal on Strikes and Social Conflicts* is being published in June instead of the beginning of 2015 mostly because of the difficulties its dossier, “Resisting War in the Twentieth Century”, has experienced. Themes as peacekeeping, ‘nation building’ or even post-war reconciliation can hardly be considered as ways of resisting war. Some of our invitations regarding resistance to war in Portugal and its former colonies, the former Yugoslavia or Israel could not be met, at least now, and finally some of the submitted articles were not considered fit to print, at least as they were when submitted. In the end only three articles have ‘survived’ the scrutiny of our evaluators. These are Fernando Mendiola’s article on war experience and antimilitarism during the Spanish Civil War, one by Carlos Ángel Ordás about conscientious objection and resistance to compulsory military service in France, Italy and Spain (a comparative analysis, from the First World War until the 1980s) and Lon Strauss’s «Fear of Infectious Dissent: First World War Military Intelligence, Labor, and the Conscientious Objection of Erling Lunde».

Besides the dossier, we publish Christer Thörnqvist and Susanne Fransson’s article on unofficial women’s strikes in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s and a study by Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez on the formation of a fraction of the Argentinian working class in Northeast Chubut, Patagonia.

For the first time we publish a forum discussing Bryan D. Palmer’s book *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934*. The discussants are Sean Purdy, Sándor John, Marcelo Badaró Mattos and Bryan Palmer, who makes a final comment.

Workers of the World is the journal of the International Association Strikes and Social Conflicts (<http://www.iassc-mshdijon.fr/>). This issue is being published when the III International Conference of the IASSC is being held in Barcelona, from 16 to 19 June. Good work!

Articles for *Workers of the World* should be sent to the executive editor at workersoftheworld2012@yahoo.co.uk.

António Simões do Paço
Executive Editor

Cogs in the military machine? War experience and antimilitarism during the Spanish Civil War¹

Fernando Mendiola

Introduction: the antimilitarist perspective(s)

The civil war of 1936 marked the arrival of modern war in the Spanish state, the industrial war that had devastated Europe between 1914 and 1918. With its own nuances and characteristics, Spanish society was now also affected by the processes of social transformation that the continent had previously experienced. Not without controversy, these processes have in part been described in the historiography as “brutalization” and the spread of a “war culture”.² Besides these processes, the Great War also shook European

¹ This paper was originally presented in 2014 at the International Conference entitled “Resisting War in the 20th Century” at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and is the fruit of long discussions with several friends working in social movements, especially related to antimilitarism and historical memory. I also want to thank Robert Curwen for his help with the English version of the text.

² The concept of brutalization was proposed years ago by the German historian Mosse to describe the changes that took place in German society as a consequence of the experience of World War I. MOSSE, G.L. *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp.159-181. Many years later, in 1938, the anarchist and anti-militarist thinker Emma Goldman, whose position we shall be analysing over the course of this article, also pointed to the pernicious ethical consequences derived from the experience of war, from which thousands of youths had returned brutalized and degraded. See PORTER, David, ed. *Vision on Fire. Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution*. Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006, p.237. The spread of “war culture” in the frame of the “European civil war” has been widely explained by TRAVERSO, Enzo. *A sangre y fuego. De la guerra civil europea*. Valencia: PUV, 2009 and for contemporary Spain by GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E., “La cultura de guerra como propuesta historiográfica: una reflexión general desde el contemporaneísmo español”.

conscience and politics in another direction, giving rise to the spread of an anti-war sentiment that had been uncommon until then. This was reflected in the birth of the War Resisters' International (WRI)³ in 1921.

In the Spanish case there is no doubt that it was the civil war that unleashed brutalization and the spread of a war culture, although it is possible to find certain precedents in social conflict and the policies of public order prior to the war as well as in the colonial experience. Only five years after including the renunciation of war in its constitution, in line with the resolution of the Brand-Kellogg Treaty,⁴ the country became immersed in a three-year war as a consequence of the attempted *coup d'état* of July 1936.

In light of this situation, this article aims to analyse the reactions to the logic of war and militarization of those on the anti-fascist side who had previously defended a discourse clearly opposed to them. The article focuses on two traditions of thought, both of which saw the need for a specific social movement in opposition to the army and militarism: one

Historia Social, 61, 2008. For his part, Ledesma provides an interesting reflection on the usefulness of the concept in the 1930s and the dangers of its uncritical use and makes an interesting historiographical critique of the supposed "escalation of violence" in Spain during the spring of 1936. See LEDESMA, José Luis. "Qué violencia para qué retaguardia, o la República en Guerra de 1936". *Ayer*, 76, pp.92-93 and LEDESMA, José Luis. "La 'primavera trágica' trágica de 1936 y la pendiente hacia la guerra civil". In: SANCHEZ PÉREAZ, F. (coord.) *Los mitos del 18 de julio*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2013.

³ For the birth of the WRI, which was initially named Paco (Peace in Esperanto), see the study by PRASAD, D. *War is a crime against humanity: The Story of War Resisters' International*. London: War Resisters' International, 2005, pp.87-100. A global survey of the rise of pacifism following World War I can be found in the works of Prasad, D. *Ibid.*, pp.101-190 and CASTAÑAR, Jesús. *Teoría e Historia de la Revolución Noviolenta*. Barcelona: Virus, 2012, pp.119-214. Also interesting is the collection edited by Brock and Socknat with several studies on pacifism in the interwar period. BROCK, P. and SOCKNAT, T. (eds.) *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Zahn provides a survey of German pacifism and the repression it suffered under Nazism. ZAHN, Gordon C. "Pacifist during the Third Reich". In: BERENBAUM, Michael, (ed.) *A mosaic of victims. Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*. New York and London: New York University Press, 1990.

⁴ While a large part of the legislative work of the II Republic can clearly be described as having a demilitarizing character, with article 6 of the constitution itself and the reforms of Azaña, there are authors who note continuity between the political and military policies of Republican Spain and the later unleashing of bellicose and repressive dynamics. GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E., "Experiencia en combate. Continuidad y cambios en la violencia represiva (1931 – 1939)". *Ayer*, 76, 2009. The continuity between the colonial war and the tactics of the insurgent army has been analysed by NERÍN, G. *La guerra que vino de África*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2005. For a critical review of the treatment of violence in the history of the II Republic, see GONZÁLEZ CALLEJA, E. "La historiografía sobre la violencia política en la Segunda República española: una reconsideración". *Hispania Nova, Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 11, 2013.

tradition was explicitly pacifist and non-violent while the other was explicitly anti-militarist, but considered the use of revolutionary violence.⁵

On the one hand, we find initiatives that echo the positions of the WRI, such as the *Orden del Olivo* (Order of the Olive Branch), created in 1932 by some trade union adhesions to the WRI and the Spanish League of War Resisters that was created in 1936 and was affiliated to the WRI. The majority of the men and women who participated in it were close to the libertarian milieu, presided over by the libertarian doctor Amparo Poch.⁶ From this milieu a critique emerged of the role of violence in revolutionary processes, such as the revolution of October 1934, for example, as well as of the limited interest shown by the revolutionary currents in defusing the pre-war climate, which had been increasing since that year.⁷

On the other hand, we find the majority of the anarcho-sindicalist movement, grouped around the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI – *Federación Anarquista Ibérica*) and the National Confederation of Labour (CNT – *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*), which was much more concerned with the anti-militarist critique, without that meaning, as we shall see, a renunciation of violent means for political action.⁸

⁵ This is an approach that is based on the political identity of the subjects themselves. I therefore rule out describing the pre-war republican regime as “anti-militarist”, as was done by the journalist and man of letters Chaves Nogales in his interesting chronicle *La Defensa de Madrid of 1938*. Sevilla: Espuela de Plata, 2011 [1938], p.25.

⁶ A. Rodrigo has written an interesting biography of this Spanish pacifist and also compiled her writings on feminism and naturism. Consult, respectively, RODRIGO, A. *Una mujer libre. Amparo Poch y Gascón, médica y anarquista*. Madrid: Flor del Viento, 2002 and *Amparo Poch y Gascón, textos de una médica libertaria*. Zaragoza: Alcaraván Ediciones, 2002.

⁷ AGIRRE, Xabier. “Los insumisos del 36: El movimiento antimilitarista y la guerra civil española”. In: Movimiento de Objeción de Conciencia. *En legítima desobediencia. Tres décadas de objeción, insumisión y antimilitarismo*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2002, pp.28-31; RODRIGO. *Una mujer libre. Op.Cit.*, p.78 and DE LIGHT, Bartholomeus. *The conquest of violence. An Essay on War and Revolution*. London, Pluto Press, 1989 [1937], p.191.

⁸ A global view of anarchist politics during the II Republic and the Civil War is provided by CASANOVA, J. *De la calle al frente: el anarcosindicalismo en España (1931-1939)*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1997. Ortega Pérez reviews the antimilitarist principles of anarcho-sindicalism and its different currents, some of which argued that a strong antimilitarist position was compatible with the incorporation of armed practice in political action and even with the existence of structures close to military ones. ORTEGA PÉREZ, J., “Durruti y las tradiciones del antimilitarismo”. In: MORALES TORO, A. and ORTEGA PÉREZ, J. (eds.), *El lenguaje de los hechos. Ocho ensayos en torno a Buenaventura Durruti*. Madrid: La Catarata, 1996. Regarding this, Chris Ealham even writes about “militarized trade unions” during CNTs insurrectional strategy in the first half of the 1930s. See his *La lucha por Barcelona. Clase, cultura y conflicto 1898 - 1937*. Madrid: Alianza, 2005, pp.227-230. In fact, a large part of the arguments at the Zaragoza Congress in May 1936 and at the plenary of the FAI of June that year focused on the proposals of the *Nosotros* group to

In spite of their differences, both traditions were situated in the social orbit of anarchist or libertarian culture, and might have become closer had the war not begun, if we consider that in January the FAI began a discussion on the proposals of non-violent struggle made by Bartholomeus De Ligt, an activist of the WRI, and published the De Ligt Plan.⁹ Other examples of this proximity were the campaign of disobedience to military service¹⁰ and the meeting that the Libertarian Youth planned to hold in Barcelona on 18 July 1936, cancelled following the *coup d'état*, at which leaders of the WRI and the anarchist movement would have participated together.¹¹ Perhaps, all this was a sign of a break with the earlier position of limited receptiveness to the spread of disobedience and non-violent struggle, in the framework of anarcho-syndicalism's change of course in the first half of 1936.¹²

We know that both traditions were devastated by the dynamics of war. However, their perspective is especially useful for understanding the dynamics of militarization that emerged not only at the battle front, but also

create the embryo of a revolutionary army based on the Defence Cadre of Barcelona, a proposal that was rejected by the majority. On this, see GUILLAMÓN, Agustín. *Los Comités de Defensa de la CNT en Barcelona (1933 – 1938)*. Barcelona: Aldarull Edicions, 2011, pp. 27-51. At the Zaragoza Congress, Cipriano Mera opposed the creation of armed militias, and even rebuked the defenders of this position: "Ascaso and García Oliver will tell us what colour they want for the braids and shoulder patches". See OLAYA MORALES, Francisco. "Preámbulo". In: MERA, Cipriano. *Guerra, exilio y cárcel de un anarcosindicalista*. Madrid: La Malatesta, 2011, p.17. At the same congress it was decided to implement a campaign "to foment aversion to bellicose action and a refusal to do military service". Cited in RICHARDS, Vernon. *Enseñanzas de la Revolución Española*. Madrid: Campo Abierto Ediciones, 1977, p.134. For an evaluation of the rich historiography on anarcho-syndicalism in the 1930s, see MARTÍN NIETO, I. "De la clase obrera a la acción colectiva. La historiografía sobre el movimiento libertario durante la Segunda República y la Guerra Civil", *Historia Social*, 73, 2012.

⁹ In the preface to the edition, the anarchist editor of *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Freedom) underlines that De Ligt's ideas were to be put in practice by the Spanish proletariat, and mainly by the CNT and the FAI, who were "the first ones to do it". See DE LIGT, Bartholomeus. *Movilización contra toda Guerra*. Barcelona: Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1936, pp.7-8. For more on the thought and career of this Dutch pacifist, see his own work, *The conquest of violence*. *Op.Cit.*, and the study by NOORDEGRAAF, Herman. "The anarchopacifism of Bart de Ligt". In: BROCK and SOCKNAT (eds.) *Challenge to Mars*. *Op.Cit.*

¹⁰ Shortly before the start of the war, the WRI's publication, *The War Resister*, reported on the implementation of "an intense campaign of propaganda in favour of the principles and tactics of resistance to war, (...) with the most favourable reception being found amongst anarchist organizations and the CNT". Cited in AGIRRE. "Los insumisos del 36...". *Op.Cit.*, p.31.

¹¹ A. Rodrigo gives details on the program of the meeting, at which texts by De Ligt were to have been read. *Una mujer libre*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 105-106.

¹² De Ligt was critical of Spanish anarchists for their limited receptiveness to the spread of nonviolent struggle in the years prior to the war. See DE LIGT. *The conquest of violence*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 198-199. The change of course in 1936 is explained by CASANOVA. *De la calle al frente*. *Op.Cit.*, pp.132-152.

in the rearguard. In this respect it is worth noting the proposal of one of these antimilitarists, Simone Weil, who stated that:

The very essence of the materialist method is that, in its examination of any human event whatever, it attaches much less importance to the ends pursued than to the consequences necessarily implied by the working out of the means employed. One can neither solve nor even state a problem relating to war without having first of all taken apart the mechanism of the military struggle, that is, without having analysed the social relations it implies under given technical, economic, and social conditions.¹³

Thus, based on this antimilitarist perspective, or better put, these antimilitarist perspectives, namely the writings left to us by these men and women, I will now analyse how they experienced and adapted to a context that collided frontally with their ideals. My analysis is based above all on personal documents (letters and memoirs), in which the protagonists often clearly set out the contradictions they were experiencing. Starting from this documentation, which can be enriched by new research, I attempt to provide a global explanation – one going beyond the existing fragmented historiography in this respect – of the analyses and experiences of these people who identified themselves as antimilitarists. My analysis is arranged around four of the main aspects of the process of militarization that began after 18 July 1936: the acceptance of the need for war; the militarization of the armed resistance; the recruitment and disciplining of soldiers; and the repression of political dissidence.

II. War and violence: necessary evils?

The start of the Spanish Civil War brought about a *de facto* fracture in the international pacifist movement, divided between those who continued to reject violence as a method of opposition to fascism and those who, facing the gravity of the situation, decided to choose the armed option, supporting the republican side in different ways.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the nonviolent

¹³ Article titled “Sobre la Guerra [Reflections on War]”, published in *La Critique Sociale*, n° 10, November 1933, reproduced in WEIL, Simone. *Formative Writings*. New York: Routledge, 2010, p.174. In the same article, and based on the analysis of different internal dynamics generated in the war process, she concluded that “revolutionary war is the tomb of the revolution” (p.166).

¹⁴ There was a strong discrepancy between those whose position changed to one of calling for armed support for the republican side (Einstein, Brockway...), and the position of those, like Bart de Ligt, who tried to uphold disobedience, passive resistance or boycott the main tools of opposition to fascism. See AGIRRE. “Los insumisos del 36...”. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 31-33 and CASTAÑAR. *Teoría e Historia de la Revolución Noviolenta*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 203-214. The

argument remained the official position of the WRI, although it supported the implementation of mechanisms of solidarity with republican Spain, on the line defended by De Ligt. This Dutch pacifist held that, “Considering the ideological traditions and the social, political and moral conditions (...) the Spanish anti-militarists could do nothing else than resort to arms before the military invaders”.¹⁵ De Ligt stressed that in his opinion the most coherent position would have been to organize a non-violent popular defence on a massive scale, with broad international solidarity, as well as trying to disarm the army and weaken militarist attitudes prior to the war.¹⁶

A similar position was adopted by one of the most representative leaders of the Spanish pacifist movement at the time, Julio Brocca. In a letter to R. Brown, the honorary secretary of the WRI, Brocca declared that,

In the circumstances in which the fascist insurgency has taken place, the people had no other alternative than to face violence with violence (...) From the first moment, I placed myself without reserve at the service of freedom, without renouncing, however, my principles of absolute resistance to war; that is, I have done, and continue to do, as much as I can by word and deed for the anti-fascist cause, but without participating in violent actions.¹⁷

Another of these pacifist militants, Amparo Poch, acted in a similar way. This doctor and anarchist militant worked as a doctor in a libertarian battalion in the first months of the war; she later went on to manage children’s homes under the control of the Ministry of Health, directed at the time by the anarchist Federica Montseny.¹⁸ Following her dismissal in June

case of the American section of the WRI, the War Resisters’ League, has been studied in depth by BENNET, S. H., “Pacifismo socialista y revolución social no violenta: la War Resisters League y la Guerra Civil Española”. In: JULÍA, S. (ed.) *La Guerra Civil española 1936-1939. Actas del Congreso Internacional La Guerra Civil española 1936-39, celebrado en Madrid los días 27, 28 y 29 de noviembre de 2006*. Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones, 2008. An account of the split in the Dutch movement can be found in NOORDEGRAAF. “The anarchopacifism of Bart de Ligt”. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 97-98. Cyril Joad, another of the proponents of British pacifism, also underscores that facing bombings like that of Guernica and bearing in mind the impossibility of promoting revolutionary initiatives from the grass roots up, feeding the military escalation would take Europe over the edge of the precipice, and he thus preferred to opt for a policy of continental demilitarization and boycott of the German armaments industry. JOAD, Cyril Edwin Mitchinson. *Why War?* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1939, p.35.

¹⁵ DE LIGT. *The conquest of violence. Op.Cit.*, p. 198.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 198-200.

¹⁷ Cited in AGIRRE. “Los insumisos del 36...”. *Op.Cit.* pp. 31-33.

¹⁸ RODRIGO. *Una mujer libre. Op.Cit.*, pp.149-171. The social activity of Amparo Poch during the war is also recounted in this study.

1937, she subsequently worked in Barcelona in the *Casal de la Dona Treballadora* [House of the Working Woman], belonging to the organization *Mujeres Libres* [Free Women], of which she was a co-founder.¹⁹ Like Brocca, she managed to combine her social work and her support for the anti-fascist side with a critical position in regards to “this repugnant war that shames us”.²⁰

While we have documentary accounts of the experience of pacifist leaders, there were certainly many other unknown individuals who found themselves involved in the war in spite of their anti-war sentiment. One of them was Celestino García, a young man who, in the shadow of the chimneys and smoke of the *Altos Hornos de Vizcaya* [Biscay Blast Furnaces], was a naturalist and vegetarian. He associated with anarchist circles although he kept apart from politics and was more concerned with health and spiritual questions, above all with the work of the Hindu thinker Krishnamurti. García and a companion of his from the town of Sestao tried to avoid going to war so as not to have to bear arms; when recruitment became imminent, they spoke to friends from the CNT to enlist in the Bakunin battalion, where they obtained positions as adjutants and couriers, often exposed to enemy fire, but in which they did not have to carry weapons.²¹

As noted above, the war produced a rupture in the pacifist movement at the international level, with many of its members going to Spain to take part in it. One of them was Simone Weil, who explained her decision as follows:

I don't like war; but I found the position of those outside the war far more horrifying than war itself. When I understood that, as much as I tried to believe otherwise, I couldn't ethically refuse to participate in the war – that's to say, I couldn't wish every day, every hour, victory for some and defeat for others while doing nothing myself, I told myself that I must put Paris behind me and I caught a train to Barcelona with the intention of enlisting.²²

¹⁹ ACKELSBERG, Martha. *Mujeres Libres. El anarquismo y la lucha por la emancipación de las mujeres*. Barcelona: Virus, 2006, pp. 153-161.

²⁰ An expression found in her article “Todos juntos. Impresiones del mitin de las juventudes revolucionarias”, published in *Tierra y Libertad*, 20 February 1937 cited in RODRIGO. *Una mujer libre. Op.Cit.*, p. 176.

²¹ Interview conducted in Santurzi, Biscay (Bizkaia), March 2005. More information on this Biscayan pacifist can be found in MENDIOLA, Fernando and BEAUMONT, Ederne. *Esclavos del franquismo en el Pirineo*. Tafalla: Txalaparta, 2006, p. 112.

²² Letter to George Bernanos. In: WEIL, Simone. *Escritos históricos y políticos*. Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2007, p. 509.

While in the explicitly pacifist world the war caused a split in many collectives, the anarchist movement was in no doubt about the need for an armed response to the attempted *coup d'état*, a response that was in fact decisive for stopping the coup in many cities like Barcelona, Madrid or San Sebastián/Donostia. Once the war was underway, therefore, it is possible to find a whole series of writings and statements in the anarchist world that clearly express a rejection of more diplomatic options and, above all, the logic of non-intervention as an excuse for isolating the Republic. This can be appreciated in the following citation from an article by Camillo Berneri:

Nobody hates war more than us, but we believe that the moment has come for verifying the formula that was spelt out on another occasion by Léon Blum himself: 'It is necessary to accept the eventuality of war, in order to save peace' (...) Pacifism follows a road paved, like the road to hell, with good intentions, but this road leads to the abysm.²³

Another militant who clearly expressed herself in this respect was Emma Goldman, who, facing the importance of the moment not only for Spain but for the world, declared that, "I consider, therefore, that I must set aside the inner aversion that the cruelty of war produces in me".²⁴

Furthermore, in the letters that Goldman sent to several of her comrades from other countries, she clearly posed the insufficiency of the methods based on civil disobedience or passive resistance for confronting fascism. She also made a critique of Gandhi's proposals and asserts that nonviolence could not achieve significant social transformations, something that was especially verifiable in the framework of a civil war: "Most important of all is that mechanized warfare and violence used by the state make non-resistance utterly futile. What do you think non-resistance could do during bombardment from the air – a daily occurrence in Spanish cities and towns?"²⁵ In another of her letters, moreover, she mentioned the posture of Dutch pacifism, in reference to De Ligt's group, and stated that, "It is really

²³ "Entre la guerra y la revolución", article published 16 December 1936 and reproduced in BERNERI, Camillo. *Entre la revolución y las trincheras: recopilación de nueve artículos de Camillo Berneri [en] Guerra di classe, Barcelona, 1936-1937*. París: Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, 1946, pp.13-14.

²⁴ Letter to the Irishwoman Sheehy-Skeffington, 12 November 1936, cited in PORTER. *Vision on Fire. Op.Cit.*, p. 223.

²⁵ Letter to Hall, a North American anarchist, 27 May 1938, cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 237-241. There are also references to the insufficiency of passive resistance in her letter to Cassius Cook, 8 February 1937 cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 223-224.

expecting too much to expect our gallant comrades to abide by the kind of pacifism entertained by comrades in Holland”.²⁶

Now, in spite of these antimilitarists having no doubt about the need to take part in the war, in many of them we find an evident bitterness about its consequences. Weil, for example, expressed scepticism about the way in which the atmosphere of war smothered revolutionary sentiment. She had no doubt about the good faith of

our anarchist comrades in Catalonia. Yet what do we see over there? Alas, there also we see forms of compulsion and instances of inhumanity that are directly contrary to the libertarian and humanitarian ideal of the anarchists. The necessities and the atmosphere of civil war are sweeping away the aspirations that we are seeking to defend by means of civil war.²⁷

These concerns were even shared by some who did not reject violence as a political tool, such as the case of Durruti, who stated at the War Committee: “If this situation [of war] is prolonged, it will put an end to the revolution, because the man who emerges from it will be more of a beast than a human”.²⁸

In a similar take, Emma Goldman also posed the problem of violence in her reflections in a complex and multifaceted way, transmitting her constant concern about its consequences while defending its need, both facing revolution and in the case of the war in Spain. She stated that, “The function of Anarchism in a revolutionary period is to minimize the violence of revolution and replace it by constructive efforts. This has been done in Spain”.²⁹

This statement was, however, accompanied by a certain disappointment in this period, the spring of 1938, concerning the consequences derived from involvement in the war and the use of violence:

²⁶ Letter to the Dutch anarchist William Jong cited in *Ibid.*, p. 225. In this letter, moreover, she alludes to the practice of nonviolence, observing that “passivity is pre-eminently an Eastern characteristic” (p.224).

²⁷ Draft for an article titled “Reflections That No One Is Going to Like”, October 1936 cited in WEIL. *Formative Writings. Op.Cit.*, p. 185.

²⁸ Statement by Durruti during conversations at the War Committee of the CNT, reproduced in PAZ, A. *Durruti en la Revolución española*. Madrid: Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, p. 549.

²⁹ Letter to Hall, a North American anarchist, 27 May 1938, cited in PORTER. *Vision on Fire. Op.Cit.* p. 238.

More and more I come to the conclusion that there can be no Anarchist revolution. By its very violent nature Revolution denies everything Anarchism stands for. (...) Whatever the reason it is certain, as Spain has again proven, that nothing remains of Anarchism when one is forced to make concessions that undermine the ideal one has struggled for all one's life. You see, my dear, I do not feel very happy in my shoes.³⁰

III: Debates on militarization

One of the main questions that surfaced on 18 July 1936 concerned the tools for confronting the *coup d'état*. The weak and slow government response was very quickly overtaken by rapid grass-roots action, principally by the trade union organizations UGT and CNT. This rapid process quickly resulted in the formation of armed structures in the framework of the political and trade union organizations: the militias.³¹

Leaving aside the importance of having armed bodies of their own in order to obtain quotas of power in the rearguard, the organization of militias in the libertarian world made it possible to temporarily resolve a dilemma, that of creating large armed organizations with a logic different from that of the army. In this respect, there are numerous testimonies that describe the militias as having a form of internal organization with a very low level of militarization, as well as its characteristic war-like spirit. The latter was expressed at a meeting where the march of volunteers towards Zaragoza was organized in the early days of the war, "we want to be militiamen of freedom, not soldiers with a uniform".³²

However, the rapid advance of the insurgent troops in the southwest directly drew attention to the problems of this type of militia units, which had been formed without any type of training or military instruction. Several voices were raised that criticized their efficacy using different arguments (dispersion of authority, degree of tactical preparation and women's

³⁰ Letter to Mark Mratchny, 4 March 1938, cited in *Ibid.*, pp.236-237. In fact, this critical position towards the war became more pronounced in Goldman during 1939 in the period leading up to World War II, when she thought that the anarchist movement should call for non-participation and rebellion. *Ibid.*, pp. 242-247.

³¹ For a global view of the formation of militias and their characteristics, see ALPERT, Michael. *El ejército popular de la República, 1936 – 1939*. Barcelona, Crítica, 2007, pp. 35-66.

³² Cited in SEMPRUM-MAURA, Carlos. *Revolución y contrarevolución en Cataluña*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 1978, p.193.

participation in war, for instance).³³ At the same time, and in the framework of that debate, the idea gradually took hold that a regular army was needed, within which the militias should be integrated and militarized; a series of steps were taken to this end, culminating in the creation of the Popular Army in October 1936.³⁴

This process was carried out with important debates, mainly in the libertarian milieu,³⁵ since militarization ran directly counter to the latent

³³ A good summary of this debate, with abundant testimonies, can be found in BOLLOTEN, Burnett. *La guerra civil española: revolución y contrarrevolución*. Alianza: Madrid, 1989, pp. 411 – 423 and MATTHEWS, James. *Soldados a la fuerza. Reclutamiento obligatorio durante la Guerra Civil 1936 – 1939*. Madrid: Alianza, 2013, pp. 47-54. In fact, in the libertarian world critical voices were also raised on the lack of military preparation of the militias, like those of MERA. *Guerra, exilio y cárcel de un anarcosindicalista. Op.Cit.*, pp. 49-50 or several of the testimonies of militiamen from the CNT that can be found in FRASER, Ronald. *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a los otros. Historia oral de la Guerra Civil Española* (2 vols.), Barcelona: Gijalbo Montadori, 1997, vol.I, pp.179-180 and vol.II, pp. 47-49. On the other hand, as the question of efficacy was at the centre of the debates, there was a clear attempt to improve it, but without accepting militarization. A concrete example of this is provided by Albert Minnig, a Swiss brigade member with libertarian leanings, who describes the effort to fortify their column on the Aragón front and the congratulations received from Soviet officers who visited them. He remarked with satisfaction that, “We are pleased, as it is a good answer to the militarization which has been instilled in the sappers and officers at the barracks of Barcelona, Valencia and Albacete since six months ago”. MINNIG, Albert. *Por el bien de la revolución. Crónica de un anarquista suizo en el Frente de Aragón*. Barcelona: Alikornio Ediciones, 2005, p. 48.

³⁴ There has also been historiographical controversy over the creation of this army. The process is described in ALPERT. *El ejército popular de la República. Op.Cit.* With respect to the reasons for this process, this author attributes more importance to the problems of the militias (which were generally recognized) and the criteria of the professional officers than to the strength of the Communist Party of Spain (PCE – *Partido Comunista de España*). In fact, and this is a key idea, the rise of the communists is not only explained by Soviet influence, which was also present, but by its clear support for a “militarized” solution, in the sense of organizing a strong and disciplined army. In fact, according to Alpert, the PCE was the party that most clearly understood the transformations of modern war and the importance of a centralized and disciplined military body.

³⁵ In reality, the tradition of the left was one of disaffection with military questions, and the process was in fact full of explanations, visits to the fronts and orders that dedicated more paragraphs to giving justifications than to detailing what needed doing, all of which illustrates the difficulties of the process. *Ibid*, pp.75-77. The debate in the libertarian world has been analysed by several authors such as BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española. Op.Cit.*, pp.511-535; RUIZ GIMÉNEZ, A. “Las milicias confederales: de la columna a la división”. In: MORALES TORO and ORTEGA PÉREZ (eds.), *El lenguaje de los hechos. Op.Cit.*, SEMPRUM-MAURA, Carlos. *Revolución y contrarrevolución en Cataluña. Op.Cit.*, pp.207-220 and MAINAR, Eladi. *De milicians a soldats. Les columnes valencianes en la Guerra Civil espanyola (1936 – 1937)*. València: Universitat de Valencia, 1998, pp.85-104. Paz analyses the opposition of the Iron Column [*Columna de Hierro*] which was the last to accept militarization. He reproduces the minutes of the assembly of militiamen held on 9 March 1937 in which foreign volunteers took part and that debated the process of militarization. PAZ, A. *Crónica de la Columna de Hierro*. Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2001, pp.151-157. Fraser, for his part, also reproduces the arguments of CNT militiamen in both respects. FRASER. *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a los otros. Op.Cit.* vol.I, pp. 179-180 and vol.II, pp. 47-49.

antimilitarist spirit, above all in the anarchist columns, where it was still thought that “the army is chains, the symbol of tyranny”.³⁶ Another good example of this is the following article in the anarchist newspaper *Nosotros*:

When this word [militarization] is pronounced – why not say it? –we feel uneasy, we get anxious, we shudder, because it brings to mind constant attacks on dignity and on the human personality. Up until yesterday to militarize meant – and there are still many who wish for the same thing today – to regiment men in such a way that their wills are annulled by breaking their personalities in the cogwheels of the barracks.³⁷

Another of the components of the debate was the possibility of organizing guerrilla groups, an option that was also initially proposed by some of those who were later to defend militarization, such as Cipriano Mera. This option was subsequently defended by another anarchist who shared military responsibilities with him, Abraham Guillén, who made a strong critique of republican military strategy, defending a guerrilla war in the Francoist rearguard. Guillén based his arguments on the contrast between the militarized model of war he attributed to the Communist Party (in which the conquest of territory would lead to control of the population) and a more demilitarized model, in which the power of the population, combining armed resistance with non-collaboration, would ensure a subsequent victory, even at the cost of losing territory at first.³⁸

Now, in spite of the reticence encountered, militarization was accepted largely on the basis of technical and pragmatic arguments about the need for having a well-organized army to win the war. In the end, in the case of the CNT, some authors speak of a “two-phase militarization”: first, maintaining a certain autonomy (in fact, the general-secretary of the CNT went as far as to say that, “this transformation does not imply a fundamental change, since command in the brigades will be exercised by the same men who exercised it in the columns”)³⁹ and later, following the events of May 1937, becoming increasingly integrated in the brigades of the Popular Army.

³⁶ *Frente Libertario*, 27 October 1936, cited in BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española. Op.Cit.*, p. 511.

³⁷ *Nosotros*, 11 February 1937, cited by BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española. Op.Cit.*, p.511.

³⁸ GUILLÉN, Abraham. *El error militar de la República. La pérdida de la guerra civil*. Madrid / Valle de Arán: Queimada Ediciones, 2012.

³⁹ Interview published in the newspaper *Nosotros*, 11 February 1937, reproduced in MAINAR. *De milicians a soldats. Les columnes valencianes en la Guerra Civil espanyola (1936 – 1937)*. *Op.Cit.*, pp.162-163.

In fact, the process was accepted by the principal leaders, including those who before the war had deeply disagreed on the formation of armed groups, like García Oliver or Cipriano Mera. The former declared in a speech of March 1937:

Today, while still being a convinced antimilitarist, in face of the fascist oppression... (...) I affirm that the Spanish proletariat – anarchist, syndicalist, socialist or communist – will never be independent and free and will never be able to analyse any of its ideological positions, if it does not have (...) a suitable instrument for war, namely military technique and the army placed at the service of the revolution.⁴⁰

For his part, Cipriano Mera wrote that “We have to wage war as it is presented to us by a regular army, equipped with all the modern means of combat”.⁴¹

Nonetheless, in many cases such acceptance was given in full awareness of the contradiction it involved for antimilitarist ideals and of the dangers implicit in the new method of organization, with the result that, insofar as they could, some individuals made small gestures of resistance, even symbolic ones. An example of this is Manuel Carabaño, an anarchist militiaman who described his experience as follows:

In the end we accepted [militarization] with considerable enthusiasm. What we never accepted was the normal discipline of the army. I refused to wear a uniform, I took my officer’s insignia and sewed them onto a leather jacket I used for going hunting (...) We never gave military salutes.⁴²

A similar experience was that of Félix Padín, a young member of the CNT from Bilbao, who was named a sergeant in the Durruti Battalion, and who explained in his memoirs that although sometimes they had to ensure some

⁴⁰ Talk at the *Coliseo* of Barcelona in January 1937, organized by the Propaganda Commission of the Regional Committee of Catalonia. GARCÍA OLIVER, Juan. *El Eco de los Pasos*. Barcelona: Ibérica de Ediciones y Publicaciones, 1978, p. 409.

⁴¹ Article in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 23 March 1937, reproduced in SEMPRUM-MAURA, Carlos. *Revolución y contrarevolución en Cataluña*. *Op.Cit.*, p.214. In his prologue of the book by Guillén, Vadillo underlines that some antimilitarist union leaders, such as Mera, had surprisingly very good aptitudes as army officers. GUILLÉN. *El error militar de la República. La pérdida de la guerra civil*. *Op.Cit.*, p.14.

⁴² Oral testimony in FRASER. *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a los otros. Historia oral de la Guerra Civil Española*. *Op.Cit.* Vol.11, p.50.

kind of discipline with the soldiers, he “did not like to wear military insignias”.⁴³

Emma Goldman provides another example of this contradictory experience. She showed understanding for her Spanish comrades and came to accept militarization as a necessary incoherence, but at the same time she was aware of what it signified. She made this clear in a very eloquent speech in Paris in mid-September 1937 at the conference of the IWMA (International Working Men’s Association), in which she recognized the contradiction that acceptance of war and militarization meant for Spanish anarchism, while at the same time expressing her confidence that: “For the present there is no danger that they will become cogs in the military wheel”.⁴⁴ As we shall see in the next section, that confidence was not always confirmed in the experiences of her antimilitarist comrades.

IV. Recruitment and discipline

Parallel to the formation of a regular army was the need to have a multitude of soldiers available, willing and trained to form part of it. This leads us to consider the mechanism for recruiting and disciplining a large part of the young, male population of the zone under republican control, irrespective of the opinion they might have held about the war.⁴⁵

The imposition of conscription also resulted in an increase in desertion⁴⁶ as a response. This could be in order to avoid enlistment, for which purpose

⁴³ PADÌN, Félix. *Memorias*. Iruñea-Pamplona: Memoriaren Bideak/Gerónimo de Uztariz, 2009, p.41.(www.esclavitudbajoelfranquismo.org)

⁴⁴ PORTER. *Vision on Fire*. *Op.Cit.* p.234.

⁴⁵ According to Alpert, the militias as a mechanism of generalized recruitment were not sufficient for meeting the demands of the war. In fact, the number of those recruited in this way was around 92,000, while the number of men in the Popular Army rose to 500,000 in June 1937. ALPERT. *El ejército popular de la República*. *Op.Cit.* p.90; p.67. Seidman speaks of some 120,000 volunteers enrolled in the militias out of a total of over one million men mobilized by the republican army. The proportion is similar on the insurgent side, with 100,000 volunteers out of some 1,200,000 recruits. SEIDMAN, Michael. *A ras de suelo. Historia social de la República durante la Guerra Civil*. Madrid: Alianza, 2003, p.67.

⁴⁶ Although traditionally ignored by historians, in recent years desertion has drawn the attention of historians, not only in broader works on attitudes to the war, such as Seidman or Matthews on recruitment, but also in monographic studies like those of Corral or McLaughlin. SEIDMAN, *Ibid.*; MATTHEWS. *Soldados a la fuerza. Reclutamiento obligatorio durante la Guerra Civil 1936 – 1939*. *Op.Cit.*; CORRAL, Pedro. *Desertores. La Guerra Civil que nadie quiere contar*. Barcelona: Debate, 2006; McLAUCHLIN, T., *Desertion, Control and Collective Action in Civil Wars*. PhD Thesis, Department of Political Science McGill University, Montreal, 2012; McLAUCHLIN, T., “Desertion, Terrain and Control of the Home Front in Civil Wars”. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*,

courses of action like flight to mountainous areas, self-mutilation or exile were chosen,⁴⁷ or it could involve taking advantage of the situation on the front to change sides and continue fighting in accordance with one's own ideology, which in its turn brought a growing concern by the authorities on both sides to repress such practices.

Nonetheless, the repression of desertion also raised critical voices in the libertarian camp, such as those of Emma Goldman or Simone Weil, who stated:

We loathe military constraint (...) Well, in Spain there is military constraint. In spite of the influx of volunteers, mobilization has been ordered. The defence council of the Generalitat, in which our FAI comrades hold some of the leading posts, has just decreed that the old military code is to be applied in the militias.⁴⁸

This controversy not only arose with the soldiers who were mobilized, but also with those volunteers who at a certain moment decided to withdraw from the front, with the argument that their enlistment had been completely voluntary. This was initially confronted by some anarchist leaders, like Durruti, using the power of persuasion and upholding the principle of each person's freedom of action, as reflected in his testimony in the Madrid press: "Concerning the person who wants to go home claiming that he leaves voluntarily, since he came as a volunteer: after putting a few ideas to him, I send him home on foot. I've hardly ever reached that extreme".⁴⁹ In his memoirs, Cipriano Mera also referred to some of his men abandoning the front, in this case civil guardsmen.⁵⁰ He reproached them for their

2014, published on-line (doi: 10.1177/0022002714547901). McLauchlin (2012 and 2014), includes solid empirical research on the case of the province of Santander in a broader analysis of desertion in the context of civil wars. An analysis of the policies for repressing and punishing desertion can be found in the abovementioned research by Seidman, Matthews (pp.267- 317), Corral and McLauchlin (2012, pp.123-149).

⁴⁷ The importance of the characteristics of the terrain in the rear-guard has been confirmed in the statistical analysis of desertion in the province of Santander. Consult McLAUHLIN. "Desertion, Control and Collective Action in Civil Wars". *Op.Cit.* Siedman, for his part, has stressed the importance of exile as a course of escape. SEIDMAN. *A ras de suelo. Historia social de la República durante la Guerra Civil. Op.Cit.*, p.181.

⁴⁸ The text by Weil is from her draft article "Reflections That No One Is Going to Like", October 1936 WEIL. *Formative Writings. Op.Cit.*, pp.184-185. Goldman's complaints on forced recruitment are included in her letter to Rudolf Rocker, 5 June 1938, cited in PORTER. *Vision on Fire. Op.Cit.* p.130.

⁴⁹ PEIRATS, José. *La CNT en la Revolución Española*. París: Ruedo Ibérico, 1971. Vol.I, p.209.

⁵⁰ The Guardia Civil was (and is) a Spanish police corps, with the peculiarity of being militarized.

conduct and left them free to choose: “If you were not from the CNT, it could be said that it was revenge taken against former civil guardsmen; I should shoot all of you. Leave your weapons in a stack and get going to Madrid”. Although a little later Mera stated that, “the majority of the guardsmen reacted well and re-joined the battalion,” he also concluded those pages by including his own reflections on the need for greater discipline to avoid such situations: “so I started to realize that self-discipline was something very complicated and that, during war, the instinct of self-preservation turns out to be stronger in men than fulfilling their duty”.⁵¹

In fact, the reality of war resulted in a gradual hardening of discipline in the army.⁵² A good example of this change of attitude is provided by the anarchist García Oliver. When in September 1936 the lieutenant A. Bayo suggested to him the need for greater discipline and even the use of the death penalty to improve the performance of his troops, who had just failed in their attempt to take Mallorca, García Oliver, at the time head of the War Committee of Barcelona, replied as follows:

Don't think of those methods of coercion and punishment. A comrade who slips up should be corrected affectionately, making him understand his mistake, but never depriving him of his life. The worker has actively entered into a revolutionary period where he is the boss and master instead of the slave. And he can no longer be treated as in earlier times and you military leaders must convince yourselves of that.⁵³

Months later, in March 1937, however, these are the words he used to address the students at one of the military schools: “Officers of the Popular Army, you must observe an iron discipline and impose it on your men, who, once they have joined the ranks, must cease to be your comrades and become cogs in our army's military machine”⁵⁴ in an expression that breached the trust that Goldman would express some months later.

⁵¹ MERA. *Guerra, exilio y cárcel de un anarcosindicalista*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 59-60.

⁵² It is thus increasingly frequent to find appeals to discipline, both by specific leaders like Cipriano Mera (*Ibid.*, p.47), and in the libertarian press. Even in the CNT newspaper, military conduct was praised and the need of fostering obedience was noted, under threat of death for those who did not carry out orders. See BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 520. Within this notion of strengthening of discipline, there was also an obsession with putting a stop to expressions of fraternization or the exchange of products on fronts where there was little activity, such as the Extremadura front. SEIDMAN. *A ras de suelo. Historia social de la República durante la Guerra Civil*. *Op.Cit.*

⁵³ Cited in BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española*. *Op.Cit.*, pp.426-427.

⁵⁴ Reported in *L'Espagne Nouvelle*, 14-15, 31 July 1937, cited by SEMPRUM-MAURA. *Revolución y contrarevolución en Cataluña*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 213.

Moreover, it closely resembled the type of soldier sought by other republican forces, like the “automaton soldier” referred to by the ERC (Republican Left of Catalonia) leader Pedro Puig Subinyá.⁵⁵

In this case we also find expressions criticizing this type of soldier, as in the article published by *Solidaridad Obrera* subsequent to the discourse of García Oliver cited above:

In recent days we have witnessed events that have destroyed our soul and even made us a little pessimistic (...) When our chests are heaving with ideas of freedom, with libertarian conceptions and rebel thoughts in perfect consonance with our permanent activity, it is incomprehensible that comrade ministers should express themselves in such terms.⁵⁶

Beyond the question of whether or not these measures were necessary, the effect on some anarchist leaders of this strengthening of discipline can also be appreciated, such as the case of Peirats who stated in his memoirs that, “As militarization was imposed on the militias, disciplinary measures were stepped up and the nascent military caste really took its role to heart. Its members had quickly assimilated all the defects of the former soldiers and none of their virtues”.⁵⁷

In fact, from 1937 onwards, in the framework of militarization and following the rise of the communists, some voices were raised in the libertarian milieu that were more understanding of the practices of desertion, like that of one of the few anarchist military commissars, Ángel González Gil-Roldán. According to Peirats, who summarizes and also quotes from one of his reports, desertions were due to a combination of factors linked to the military situation, hardship and political tensions. He even notes that

⁵⁵ Report by Pedro Puig Subinyá, Brigade Commissar of the 62 Division, promoted to the Permanent Committee of his party, *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Catalonian Republican Left), in December 1938: “And the best soldier is not the one who obeys because he understands that the order is a correct one, but the one who obeys without thinking why he does so, without knowing whether the order he has received is correct or incorrect. However inebriated, inhuman or repulsive it might seem, it is time for us all to realize that we cannot make war (and, above all, we cannot win it) if we persist in the absurd idea of creating citizen-soldiers, with an exact understanding of what they are doing and why they are doing it. The soldier that is essential today is the one who knows nothing, who comprehends nothing, who understands nothing: the automaton soldier, the machine soldier (...).” Cited in PEIRATS. *La CNT en la Revolución Española. Op.Cit.*, vol.III, p.183.

⁵⁶ Máximo Llorca, in *Ideas*, 29 April 1937, cited in BOLLOTEN. *La guerra civil española. Op.Cit.*, p.520.

⁵⁷ Cited in PEIRATS. *La CNT en la Revolución Española. Op.Cit.*, vol.III, p.170.

many deserters were from the communist brigades, where they ran the risk of death because of their political ideas, or where life was made morally impossible. When dealing with affiliates and militants of the CNT, desertion often consisted in a clandestine reintegration in the confederal units.⁵⁸

V. Repression of political dissidence

Finally, we must also consider how the pacifist and antimilitarist tradition fit in with the implementation of repressive dynamics against political and religious dissidence in the republican rearguard. While occurring on a lesser scale than on the insurgent side, repression was unleashed above all in the early months, and an important role was played in it by militants of antifascist political organizations, which, in the absence of a state apparatus, began to take justice into their own hands in different ways. The participation of anarchist groups, which were therefore immersed in the antimilitarist tradition, is confirmed in these events, in which they shared responsibility with other organizations.⁵⁹

Criticism of these events could also be found in all the antifascist political traditions,⁶⁰ both at the time and *a posteriori*, so it makes no sense to mechanically equate denunciation of the repression with the existence of pacifist or antimilitarist postulates. For this reason, I will leave aside criticism proceeding from other political forces and concentrate on postures where criticism of the repression was made from a tradition that included

⁵⁸ Ibid., vol. III, pp. 169-170.

⁵⁹ For a comparative analysis of the repression on both sides, in which greater intensity and planning by the Francoist insurgents is clear, see the compilation by ESPINOSA, F. (ed.) *Violencia Roja y Azul. España, 1936 – 1950*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2010. The responsibility of the different antifascist forces in repression has been the subject of historiographical and political debate, and it is clear that it was not the responsibility of any one specific force. In his analysis of the province of Zaragoza, Ledesma concludes that the importance of such conduct varied according to locality, without the composition of the local committees being a factor. In fact, Ledesma points out that “it doesn’t seem bad advice to look for the reasons for these [repressive] attitudes in other more significant places than the acronyms on the political or trade union membership cards of those who held them”. LEDESMA, José Luis. *Los días de llamas de la revolución. Violencia y política en la retaguardia republicana de Zaragoza durante la Guerra Civil*. Zaragoza: Institución Fernando el Católico, 2003, pp.243-244. For his part, Oliver frames the repression unleashed in both rear-guards in the context of the evolution of the death penalty in contemporary Spain. OLIVER, Pedro. *La pena de muerte en España*. Madrid: Síntesis, 2008, pp.123-153.

⁶⁰ A synthesis of the most significant ones is provided by LEDESMA, José Luis. “Una retaguardia al rojo. Las violencias en la zona republicana”. In: ESPINOSA. (ed.) *Violencia Roja y Azul. España, 1936 – 1950. Op.Cit.*, pp.202-209.

antimilitarism in its theoretical principles, namely anarchism. I will consider such criticism in relation to the capture of prisoners of war, repression in the rearguard or the repression set in motion following the events of May 1937, following which members of left-wing groups also began to suffer political persecution, basically those close to the POUM (The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification) and also anarchists. Hence, what follows is an analysis of the critical voices that were raised from an openly antimilitarist stance, both on the military frontline and in the rear guard.

One of these voices was that of Cipriano Mera, who openly opposed reprisals in the early months of the war, when the atmosphere was clearly favourable to them. In his memoirs, he recounted how on more than one occasion he opposed these reprisals, such as the case of Sigüenza, when he prevented the shooting of the town's bishop: "with rifle in hand I told the comrades that we had come to Sigüenza to fight against those who had risen against the people, and not to commit crimes or take reprisals against the vanquished".⁶¹

Indeed, ideological repression was an important concern for many antimilitarists, such as Emma Goldman, who reflected that, "the idea that while an armed attack on the Revolution calls for an armed defence, it doesn't also, to my mind, necessitate the shooting of people whose only crime is their difference of opinion".⁶²

Surely, Simone Weil was one of those who posed this problem in a more dramatic mode, for example, in her letter to the French writer Georges Bernanos:

In Barcelona, on average 50 men were killed every night in punishment expeditions (...) But maybe figures are not the essential on this matter. The essential is the attitude regarding killing someone. (...) Seemingly brave men told each other with a brotherly smile how they had killed priests or 'fascists'.⁶³

⁶¹ MERA. *Guerra, exilio y cárcel de un anarcosindicalista*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 42. He also cites other similar situations (p.33), including his encounter with one of his former guards from Burgos prison, where he had been subjected to beatings. The encounter took place during the capture of Guadalajara prison, where the anarchists freed all the prisoners; Mero refused to take any type of revenge, saying that his gesture was "characteristic of the anarchists", and he advised his former jailer to lose himself quickly in the crowd (p.37).

⁶² Letter to Mark Mratchny, 8 February 1938, cited in PORTER. *Vision on Fire*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 224. She also expressed her concern on this question in a letter to Tom Bell dated 8 March 1937, cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

⁶³ Letter to George Bernanos, 1938 in WEIL. *Formative Writings*. *Op.Cit.*, p.525. This letter was published in France through the initiative of Albert Camus in the antimilitarist and

And in the rearguard, Joan Peiró was surely the person who most radically criticized this dynamic in a series of articles dating from the start of the war.⁶⁴ Peiró thought that repression was needed for fighting fascism and for the triumph of the revolution, but he expressed his criticism against “the modern vampires, those irresponsible who shed blood for the very pleasure of shedding it, as if their only aim were dishonouring revolution”.⁶⁵

The concern was collective, and in fact in the first weeks of the war we find several calls, besides Peiró’s, in the anarchist press appealing for this dynamic to be stopped. A good example of this is the manifesto published by the FAI on 30 August, which stated that, “we are the enemies of all violence, every imposition. We are sickened by all blood that is not the blood spilt by the people in its great endeavours for justice”.⁶⁶

However, this stance did not only reflect the position of the elite, but was also found in many local committees and leaders of the republican rearguard. In the case of Catalonia, Izard provides an interesting collection based on monographic studies, many of them local ones, which collect numerous cases where these local authorities stopped repressive dynamics or hid right-wingers and churchmen to save their lives.⁶⁷ We also find similar cases in the collectives of Aragón, where the local leaders put a stop to the repression unleashed by groups that were going from village to village or returning from the front, as in the case of Más de las Matas (Teruel), where the militiamen who had taken the village decided that there would be no reprisals. Ernesto Margeli, a militant of the CNT, explained that this was the stance of the local authorities, who had occasion to confront itinerant patrols that said they were also acting in the name of the anarchist trade union: “murder was a form of conduct that was absolutely anti-anarchist. Unfortunately, not all the comrades had enough education to understand it like that”.⁶⁸

libertarian magazine *Témoins*, in 1955, and was a source of an important debate amongst its readers. See CAMUS, Albert. *Escritos libertarios*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 2014, pp.167-172.

⁶⁴ Peiró, who was later Industry Minister in Largo Caballero’s government, received criticisms because of his writings, which in 1936 he gathered together in the book. PEIRÓ, Joan. *Perill a la reraguarda*. Mataró: Edicions llibertat, 1936.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁶⁶ Collected in PEIRATS. *La CNT en la Revolución Española*. *Op.Cit.* vol. I, p.175 who also reproduces several articles from the anarchist press, vol.I, pp. 173-175.

⁶⁷ IZARD, Miquel. *Que lo sepan ellos y no lo olvidemos nosotros. El inverosímil verano del 36 en Cataluña*. Barcelona: Virus, 2012, pp.283-302.

⁶⁸ Testimony in FRASER. *Recuérdalo tú y recuérdalo a los otros*. *Op.Cit.* vol.11, pp. 68-71. This historian also provides similar testimonies, like that of Saturnino Carod, leader of the CNT column that captured Calaceite (Teruel) (vol.1, pp. 178-179).

One of the main references when it came to stopping repression in the rearguard was Melchor Rodríguez, an anarchist from Seville, who from the outset played a prominent role in curbing the antifascist repression in Madrid. Following an initial four-day period in the post in November 1936, he was Delegate of Prisons for several months between 4 December 1936 and March 1937. He was under the orders of the Minister of Justice, García Oliver, also from the CNT, with whom he had a tense relationship. During this period he implemented radical measures to guarantee the basic rights of prisoners, which saved the lives of hundreds of them and gave rise to numerous tensions with those in charge of public order on the Madrid Defence Board,⁶⁹ close to the Communist Party. While in this case, moreover, propaganda gave a clear humanist colour to the work of Melchor Rodríguez, who was nicknamed “the Red Angel”, on more than one occasion the activist himself stressed that his conduct responded to a political conception of anarchism, where there was no room for the extermination of the political enemy. In his speech accepting a small gift from several prison functionaries when he had been relieved of his post, he insisted that his work involved putting into practice “the socialist-libertarian idea”.⁷⁰

This critical posture upheld by the anarchist tradition against violations of human rights became more evident from May 1937 onwards, when the repression in the rearguard also started to be directed against the left-wing opposition on the republican side, and especially against the POUM. In fact, the murder of the anarchists Berneri and Barbieri during the May Events, and the subsequent trial of the POUM, were accompanied by the creation of the Military Intelligence Service (SIM – *Servicio de Inteligencia Militar*), which largely drew on Stalinist practices imported by soviet agents; a number of voices from the libertarian world were raised against this situation.⁷¹

⁶⁹ His activity during those months is recounted in the book by DOMINGO, A. *El ángel rojo. La historia del anarquista Melchor Rodríguez*. Córdoba: Almuzara Domingo, 2009, pp. 167-227 who in spite of the detailed descriptions does not provide such full details on the sources of information (grouped at the end), so it is difficult to distinguish each of the cases. In his memoirs, the Basque nationalist J. Galíndez cited the work of Rodríguez in defending a large number of prisoners, and stressed the important role he played in curbing summary executions. GALÍNDEZ, J. *Los vascos en el Madrid sitiado*. Tafalla: Txalaparta, 2005, p.89.

⁷⁰ Speech by Melchor Rodríguez, 17 April 1937, on the occasion of the tribute in his honour organized by the teams of prison functionaries. A facsimile edition of the texts of this event may be found in DOMINGO, A. and GUTIÉRREZ MOLINA, J.L. (2009) *Melchor Rodríguez, el “Ángel Rojo”. Reconocimiento a una figura olvidada*. Valdemoro (Madrid): Organismo Autónomo Trabajo Penitenciario y Formación para el Empleo, 2009.

⁷¹ For the May Events, see the synthesis by GALLEGO, F. *Barcelona, mayo de 1937. La*

Paradoxically, however, the alternative put forward by those who in the final year of the war criticized the centralization of power and the growing weight of the communists in the Negrín government, amongst whom a large part of the anarchist forces was found, was to organize a *coup d'état*. This was Colonel Casado's *coup*, in which the antimilitarist Mera played a key role, and with which the logic of militarism once again inundated the republican rearguard on the eve of defeat.⁷²

VI. By way of conclusion

As we have been able to see in the course of these pages, the same thing happened to international pacifism and antimilitarism as occurred in Spain: the hurricane of war ended up carrying away a large part of the experiences promoted in earlier years, with the result that the majority of those opposed to the logics of war and militarism ended up accepting them, more or less willingly and with greater or less conviction. In fact, in Spain the war put an end to an incipient and potentially fruitful – we will never know – collaboration between the anarcho-syndicalist movement and the WRI.

From then onwards, the option of arms was adopted by the great majority of antimilitarists, and was, in part, understood by those who rejected it, so the logic of war facilitated their militarization and integration in the modern disciplined army, in which dissidence and desertion were harshly punished. At the same time, the rearguard was also the setting of a cruel repression that was debated and discussed in antimilitarist terms.

crisis del antifascismo en Cataluña. Barcelona: Debate, 2007. Peirats denounces the practices of political cleansing in the army on the basis of reports by the SIM, involving the murder of non-communists on the accusation of wanting to cross over to the enemy zone. PEIRATS. *La CNT en la Revolución Española*. *Op.Cit.*, vol.III, pp.221-226. He also denounces that the words pronounced by Irujo as the new Minister of Justice on putting an end to the “uncontrolled elements” gave rise to an internal repression against anarchists, with the excuse that they had participated in repressive acts at the start of the war, while nothing was done against those from the communist or socialist ranks who had done the same (vol. III, pp.234-235). There is still a lack of studies on the repressive process during the Negrín government, but the reality of the work camps of the SIM is well known. See BADIA, Francesc. *Els camps de treball a Catalunya durant la Guerra Civil (1936–1939)*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 2001.

⁷² In his memoirs, Mera even described the clashes, which he justified by the need to curb communist hegemony. Mera. *Guerra, exilio y cárcel de un anarcosindicalista*. *Op.Cit.* A detailed analysis of the final period of the Republic has recently been made by VIÑAS, Ángel and HERNÁNDEZ SANCHEZ, Fernando. *El desplome de la República*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2009.

The aim of these lines has not been to raise the question of who was more coherent or practical at that time, but to make a contribution that helps us to better understand the process of militarization on the republican side. This process was understood very lucidly, more often with bitterness and internal contradictions, by those who described themselves as pacifists or antimilitarists. It was in this scenario where, irrespective of the stance taken, these militants put into practice the challenge posed by Simone Weil, that is, analysing “the social relations implied in military struggle”.

This approach enables us to observe how the logic of war and the new hierarchies favoured by the use of violence and its centralization overrode those who proposed different ways of resolving conflicts and social organization. These women and men in no sense questioned the need for a military victory over the insurgents, but they observed patterns of conduct based on militarism and authoritarianism, such as accepting the logic of war, militarization, conscription and ideological repression; at times they denounced these patterns of conduct, and at others they promoted them against their own principles.

Returning to these questions today should help us not only to improve our analysis of the social dynamics developed in the framework of war, but also to enrich certain discourses on anti-Francoist, democratic memory that have focused above all – due to the weakness of institutional initiatives – on revealing the human and social consequences of the Francoist repression. However, we would be doing a disservice to the historical knowledge of the ideas of those repressed by Francoism if we were to close our eyes to certain processes of militarization that also strongly affected those who experienced and suffered from them. In fact, those who clearly defined themselves as being opposed to military logic and values tried, if only in part, to curb or mitigate them in the context of the war.

From resisting military service to the anti-militarist movement: Conscientious objection and resistance to compulsory military service in France, Italy and Spain. A comparative analysis, from the First World War until the 1980s

Carlos Ángel Ordás

Introduction

In the twentieth century, armed defence of the nation was an unavoidable duty for citizens in France, Spain and Italy, as in many other countries. This duty, sometimes considered sacred, was not only compulsory during wartime, but also in peacetime in the form of compulsory military service (CMS). This service was present in most countries in the twentieth century, consisting of military training for young men for a determined period of time which varied according to the historical and national context.

Over the course of the century, many men ended up in prison for refusing to carry out this task. This defiance first arose as an individual means of action stemming from moral, religious or political issues, but it did not take long to become a collective movement. The resistance to bear arms grew and matured continually throughout the century, becoming a widespread and heterogeneous social movement. Many people, ranging from the purest of pacifists to the most radical anti-militarists, discovered that CMS was a common enemy against which to fight and protest. Resistance to this service took on the shape of conscientious objection (CO) and draft-dodging, the expressions of which were both very valuable to the development of the anti-militarist and pacifist movement: they provided the structure for a continuous line of action, a tradition of protest and a meeting point for

people who believed in a non-violent society or who simply opposed the militarism their countries promoted in different ways.

The objective of this article is to compare resistance to armed service in France, Spain and Italy. The choice of these three countries stems mainly from their similarities as well as the need to limit the subject studied for reasons of space.

The origin and basis of compulsory military service

The political, social and economic changes which took place in the nineteenth century had a big impact on the way warfare was carried out and the configuration of armies. This meant that the twentieth century brought forth an attitude of individual and collective resistance towards military service, first, and the creation and spread of anti-militarist movements, later.

The changes in warfare were impacted by the industrial revolution which gave rise to a new era in the history of armed conflict with a growing tendency toward “total war”. War became a mobilization and deterioration issue, and all of the warring country’s resources were allocated to the war effort to an unprecedented extent. The railway played an essential role in transporting troops and necessary material resources from the most remote areas of the country to the battle front. The reach and power of new artillery exceeded anything known until then. The end result of a war would be influenced as much, if not more, by industrial power as it was by the mass conscription which was essential to the conflict.¹

Mass conscription came with the change in armies. The French Revolution greatly influenced this process as it was the chapter of history that determined that the nation belonged to the people, giving rise to the concept of a “nation in arms” which implied the duty – in reality, the obligation – of defending the nation when it was under threat.² The end result was the implementation of a new mass and “egalitarian” recruitment system. However, the possibilities of redemption via payment, soldier substitution, etc. were progressively implemented, meaning that the only people enlisted

¹ STRACHAM, Hew. *European Armies and the conduct of war*. London: Academic Division of Unwin Hyman, 1983; and BEST, Geoffrey. *Guerra y sociedad en la Europa revolucionaria: 1770-1870*. Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 1990.

² CLIFFORD-VAUGHAN, Michalina. “Changing Attitudes to the Army’s Role in French Society”. *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 15, n. 4, 1964, pp. 338-349 and VON FREYTAG-LORIENGHOVEN, Barón. *A Nation Trained in Arms or a Militia?*. London: Constable, 1918.

were those who could not pay for their redemption or substitution.³ On the other hand, the “defensive” role of the army was simply a designation and not always the most important aspect, as demonstrated by Napoleonic expansionism.

The lower classes started to display their resistance to military conscription when it was first implemented and would try all kinds of trickery to avoid being enlisted. But as time wore on, these lower classes began to attain “class consciousness”, providing them with the awareness that behind the wars there were interests which concerned not only the nation, but also the benefits for other “classes” who determined the contours of the hostilities, but who generally did not form part of the troops. Moreover, the army began to be regarded as the state’s weapon – not the nation’s – used to subdue a labour movement which was becoming more organized and militant. Those who resisted military service were considered deserters, imprisoned and sometimes executed.⁴

Military service to the nation, meaning individuals’ duty to the state, became very common in Italy and Spain, no doubt favoured by fascism’s influence and its distinct militarist character. In both countries citizens were bombarded with patriotic rhetoric, glorifying the army.⁵ Moreover, in Spain as in Italy, militarism had the blessing of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, at least up to the time of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s.⁶

The two world wars: the first resistance

Although there were a series of organizations, mostly Marxists and anarchists, which had displayed their rejection towards war since the beginning of the twentieth century, war itself as a historical event was what most influenced the appearance of individuals resisting the use of weapons. That is how the first meaningful cases of public resistance to war arose in the context of the First World War. Figures like the Frenchman Louis

³ GOOCH, John. *Armies in Europe*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

⁴ OSTERGAARD, Geoffrey. *Resisting the Nation State. The Pacifist and Anarchist Tradition*. London: The Peace Pledge Union, Studies in Nonviolence, n.11, 1982.

⁵ GUSTARELLI, A. *Elementi di cultura e dottrina fascista*. Milan, 1940, p. 24; BUSQUETS, Julio and LOSADA, Juan Carlos. *Ruido de sables: las conspiraciones militares en la España del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2003, p. 71; and OLMEDA GÓMEZ, J.A. *Las Fuerzas Armadas en el estado franquista: participación política, influencia presupuestaria y profesionalización, 1939-1975*. Madrid: El Arquero, 1988.

⁶ COLETTI, Alessandro. *L’obiezione di coscienza*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973, pp. 18-20 and CASANOVA, Julián. *La Iglesia de Franco*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2001.

Lecoin or the Italian Luigi Lué di San Colombano are examples of this personal resistance. Both of them ended up in prison after refusing to bear arms during the conflict. Louis Lecoin's reasons were libertarian and San Colombano's responded to his inspiration in the life of Christ and Tolstoy's pacifist works.⁷ Their cases were not exceptions as there were other men who were imprisoned because of their anti-belligerent beliefs, which tended to be of anarchist, Christian or socialist inspiration. These incentives arose in many other countries and inspired many important international pacifist and anti-militarist organisations such as the War Resisters International (WRI) or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).

These types of organizations also appeared in the inter-war period in France: the *Comité de Défense de l'Objection de Conscience* was created in 1920, the *Ligue pour la Reconnaissance Légale de l'Objection de Conscience* in 1924 and the *Ligue Scolaire pour la Paix* in 1932, which adhered to the WRI in 1939. The conscientious objectors who resisted doing CMS ended up being imprisoned. The number of them was quite low, ranging from 1 in 1928 to 7 in 1949.⁸ Nevertheless, as in other countries, many men managed to avoid MS by going into exile, deserting or managing to be designated "invalid" for armed services, but it is difficult to know if this stemmed from their anti-belligerent beliefs, as this can only be known in the cases of those who expressed their motivations publicly, like Claudio Baglietto, a young Italian who went into exile in 1932 to avoid being recruited.⁹

The Italian context proved to be more difficult for this cause due to the rise of fascism to power in 1922. No alternative could put conscience ahead of duty to the state; however, despite this difficult context, there were young men who left proof of their resistance to CMS and to violence. As well as Baglietto, Aldo Capitini, who had been excluded from CMS due to physical problems, published *Elementi de un'esperienza religiosa*, a book inspired in Gandhi's ideas where he speaks about non-violence and refusal to

⁷ On Lué consult ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Treviso: Santi Quaranta, 1993, pp. 21-22; ZEPPONI, Cristiano. "Obiezione di coscienza. Spunti laici", in http://www.instoria.it/home/obiezione_coscienza_laicit%C3%A0.htm; MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. Roma: Donzelli, 2006, pp. 12-22. In the case of Lecoin, see his own publications: LECOIN, Louis. *De prison en prison*. Paris: Self published, 1946; *Le cours d'une vie*. Paris: Self-published, 1965; and *Écrits de Louis Lecoin*. Paris: Union Pacifiste, 1974.

⁸ Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (hereafter IISG), Amsterdam, WRI Archives, folder 455, Letter from Jean Nussbaum of the Association International pour la Defense de la Liberte Religieuse: "Military Service Regulation, France" (6 January 6 1953).

⁹ MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 39-40.

collaborate.¹⁰ Capitini was an inspiration and a backing for the resistance of individuals who arose later.

The 1930s were difficult for international pacifism on the other side of the Alps as well as in Italy. Fighting fascism or defending peace at any price was a generalized debate within the international pacifist movement.¹¹ The Spanish Civil War was an important episode in this conflict, where the emerging Spanish pacifist movement, established around professor José Brocca and the *Orden del Olivo*, was dissolved when the conflict ended.¹² In fact, many pacifists from all over the world decided to put their anti-belligerent beliefs to the side and defend the anti-fascist cause so that, once this objective had been attained, they could finally abandon arms definitively. Others kept resisting the use of violence and when the Second World War was declared they hid, went into exile or ended up in prison.

Against compulsory military service

In the second half of the twentieth century resistance to war continued through opposition to CMS. This opposition had different timing and rhythms in France, Italy and Spain, but there were many similarities between the three countries. On the one hand, the reasons tended to be quite similar, mostly religious or political. In all three cases the resisting individuals had to face very punitive, and occasionally very militarist, laws in each of their countries. On the other hand, personal resistance to CMS provided the backbone for the development of a resistance movement with very similar stages and traits in all three countries, impregnated with a tough anti-militarist criticism.

The reasons for those who resisted comprised religious, philosophical, libertarian and political issues in a broad sense and more specifically arguments against imperialism, militarism, the capitalist system, etc. They depended on the objector and on the context they developed in. For Catholics, the interpretation of the life of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount

¹⁰ CAPITINI, Aldo. *Elementi di un'esperienza religiosa*. Bari: Laterza, 1947 (2nd edition).

¹¹ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 3 Triennial Conferences, 1934-1937, *Le Résistant à la Guerre. Quatre Jours au Danemark. Conférence Triennale 1937*, Bulletin WRI, 1937; BROCK, Peter. *Twentieth-Century Pacifism*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970, pp. 130-137; and RUNHAM BROWN, Herbert. *Spain – A Challenge to Pacifism*. London: WRI, 1938.

¹² PRASAD, Devi. *War is a crime against humanity: The Story of War Resisters' International*. London: WRI, 2005, pp. 167-171 and ROMEU, Fernanda. "Memoria en sombra. Los pacifistas en la Guerra Civil española", *El Viejo Topo*, n. 287, 2011, pp. 46-53.

through which he expressed love for the neighbour, the “Thou shalt not kill” commandment and the consideration of God’s law as above man’s law had great influence. However, the Catholic objection did not have a presence until the Second Vatican Council took place, wherewith the church changed its stance in regards to CO, especially with the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical and the *Gaudium et Spes* pastoral, where those who refused to bear arms for conscience-related reasons were attended to. Many Catholic objectors did not claim religious reasons up until that point: Prieto Pinna, for example, claimed philosophical reasons for his objection in Italy in 1948 in spite of his strong religious inspiration. This was the case for many Italian objectors, until Giuseppe Gozzini, a member of the *Mouvement International de Réconciliation* (MIR), appeared in 1962. His action brought forth an international debate within the Christian community where different positions on the subject surfaced, and ended up with Ernesto Baducci being imprisoned for supporting Gozzini.¹³

In Spain, the first Catholic objector was José Luis Beunza, who had been very influenced by French Catholic objectors, especially by the members of the *Communauté de l’Arche*. What differentiated the Spanish case was that CO appeared in the 1970s, when the Vatican Council had long ended, legitimizing the more open sectors of the church. In Spain this appeared in some sectors of Catholicism deeply committed to individual rights and freedom, amongst which was the right to CO.¹⁴ It also seems logical to think that Catholic motivations were the only ones which could be displayed and beheld in certain consideration with Spain being under Franco’s regime, although it is true that CO was a way of understanding religion which opposed the dictatorship’s national Catholicism.¹⁵

As well as the Catholic objectors, Jehovah’s Witnesses were also very present in the three countries, refusing to carry out armed service as this would oblige them to excessively neglect their evangelical labour. Despite the fact that their cause was neither a pacifist nor an anti-militarist one, it was important in countries such as Spain, because of how many of them

¹³ ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell’Obiezione di coscienza in Italia* ., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 68-75; COLETTI, Alessandro. *L’Obiezione di Coscienza*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 46-47; and GOZZINI, Giovanni. “Perché sono obiettore di coscienza”. *Servitium*. n. 16, 1970, p. 756.

¹⁴ ORDÁS, Carlos Ángel. “La soledad de los primeros pacifistas”. In: *VIII Trobada Internacional d’Investigadors del Franquisme*. Barcelona: CEFID-UAB and Fundación Cipriano García, 2013.

¹⁵ OLIVER OLMO, Pedro. “Los iniciadores del movimiento de objetores de conciencia (1971-1977)”. In: *Culturas políticas del nacionalismo español: del franquismo a la transición*. Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, 2009, p. 221.

were imprisoned, jeopardizing Franco's dictatorship and its intention of seeming tolerant towards religion in the international community.¹⁶

On the other hand, for the anarchists the army was the antithesis of libertarian ideas. Denial of individuality, absolute obedience and forced discipline made CMS a difficult task for anarchists to carry out, and they also rejected the state's authority to impose anything upon them. After Pinna's case in Italy, many war-resister anarchists made their rejection of CMS public, such as Elvoine Santi, Pietro Ferrua, Mario Barbani or Angelo Nurra, all of whom, with the exception of Santi, belonged to the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana*. They carried out their resistance between 1949 and 1951 as before that the libertarian option was to emigrate to Belgium or Switzerland, and less frequently, to England, France or the United States.¹⁷ Exile was an individual solution, which is why collective, official, open rejection started to be seriously considered in groups located mostly in the north of Italy, in San Remo, Turin, Milan, etc. In the case of Spain, the anarchists' dangerous situation throughout the dictatorship meant that there was no public opposition to CMS until well into the 1960s. Up to that point the solution had been desertion or exile.¹⁸

In France, the Catholic Church proclaimed obedience to the state when a citizen was called upon to fulfil his "national obligations". However, from 1948 onwards there were sectors within French Catholicism that supported the recognition of CO as had occurred in other Protestant countries. Regarding libertarian resistance, France had early models like Lecoin although most French anarchists who resisted opted to go into exile, only beginning to make their opposition public after the Second World War.

As far as authors who served as inspiration for CMS resistance, Leo Tolstoy's works must be mentioned, especially *The Kingdom of God is within you*. The Russian author was an influence for many of those resisting, including Christians and anarchists. With his radical Christianity serving him as a base, he defended turning one's back on the state and acting as if it

¹⁶ JIMÉNEZ, Jesús. *La objeción de conciencia en España*. Madrid: Cuadernos para el Diálogo, 1973.

¹⁷ FERRUUA, Pietro. *L'Obiezione di Coscienza anarchica in Italia*. Guasila: Archivi-Biblioteca T. Serra, 1997; ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Op.Cit., pp. 46-51; and MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. Op.Cit., pp. 95-100.

¹⁸ In the mid-seventies there was the *Perpignan el Grupo de Insumisos y Desertores Españoles*, composed mostly of anarchists who refused to make any kind of compulsory service for the state. IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 467, II, Letter from Ramón Bielsa.

did not exist, that way obeying and carrying out the rule of love on earth dictated by the Gospel.

Other important examples were Henry David Thoreau, who defended disobedience to the state as a duty when it demanded the fulfilment of an unjust act and Jean-Maria Muller, who provided conscientious objection with the virtue of being an individual's moral responsibility. Mohandas Gandhi was especially influential with his non-cooperation campaign, which brought forth a questioning of the social order in which the law developed. This point needs to be emphasized, as from the start resistance to CMS produced a deep political, social and economic questioning: "War is not an accident but the result of certain social and political conditions that need to be weighed to ensure peace. The challenge to the military in particular implies a questioning of industry, and the whole economic system depends in part on national defense".¹⁹

CMS objectors therefore criticized not only the army, but the whole capitalist social order. Lanza de Vasto, Gandhi's Christian disciple, organiser of the *Communauté de l'Arche* and one of the main CO mentors in France and Spain stated that:

It is useless, ultimately, to refuse military service if, on the other hand, one accepts to be an accomplice of injustice and unrest which, besides military service, are also due to wars. The desire to oppose violence by non-violent means cannot bring the conscientious objector to question the whole political and economic organization which almost always relies on violence and generates violence (...) What should be objected above all are the root causes of evil that should be exposed and removed (...) the real conscientious objector objects both in peace and in war the abuses, the excesses, the lies covered by the law, oppression and exploitation, the industrial and commercial system, politics, police and judiciary.²⁰

Resistance and repression

Resisting CMS implied, for most of the twentieth century, strong repression from the state. Those who resisted were accused of disobedience, subject to a military penal code and judged by the military tribunal of their countries, resulting in a variable number of years in a military penal institution. But

¹⁹ CATTELAINE, Jean-Pierre. *L'Objection de Conscience*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973.

²⁰ LANZA DE VASTO, Giuseppe. *Approchede la vie intériur*. Paris: Denoël, 1962, p. 276, cited in "Què és l'Objecció de Consciència?". *Pax*, n.3, Barcelona, 1977, p. 11.

this was not the end: when they served their sentence they were again summoned to the ranks as they had not yet fulfilled their duty to the nation. Refusing again meant going through the same process and this could be repeated until the maximum age of military service which ranged from 38 to 55 years of age, depending on the country and the year.²¹ Usually this series of sentences did not go on until that age: after being sentenced a number of times to a variable number of years in prison, the young resister received a pardon.

In France, for example, there were 82 objectors imprisoned in 1955; for 36 of them this was their first sentence; for 31 it was the second; for 11 it was the third; for 3 it was the fourth; and there was one individual who had been imprisoned for eight years, having been sentenced five times. By 1970, over 400 young men had been imprisoned in Italy since the end of the Second World War for refusing to carry out armed service, while in Spain there had been 268 people resisting CMS by 1973, out of which 264 were Jehovah's Witnesses. 72 of them had been in prison for over five years and some of them since 1962.²² It was not unusual for these individuals to end up in psychiatry wards or even to be considered "invalid" when the case started to get too much public attention as happened with Pinna the second time he was summoned to conscript.

From objection to the anti-militarist movement

The path to recognising the right to CO followed very similar stages in the three countries during which there was a constant dialogue between the state and the people resisting CMS. In this dialogue the state was not prepared to completely satisfy the resisters' demands and these resistance groups were not satisfied with what was proposed, prolonging and deepening the conflict.

In the beginning it was the objectors and their sympathizers who demanded recognition of an alternative civil service (CS) for those who objected for religious, philosophical and moral reasons. They were willing to accept this even though it was more difficult: it was longer time-wise and as dangerous or more than CMS. After some years, countries ended up legalizing this

²¹ Repression was also used in other European countries such as Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Switzerland. IISG, WRI Archives, folders 453, 457, 458 and 460 respectively.

²² IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 455, Peace Pledge Union, "Memorandum re Conscientious Objection in France", 16 and 17 April 1955; and JIMÉNEZ, Jesús. *La objeción de conciencia en España. Op.Cit.*

alternative, but accentuating its restrictiveness: it included a tribunal that judged who was an objector and who was not; it only recognised CO for religious reasons; it penalised propaganda that favoured CO, etc. This late recognition came when the objectors' demands had become broader and asked for the same conditions as the rest of conscripted young men and recognition of political objection, as well as the demand to not have a jury to "judge the objectors' conscience". The last stage involved rejection of any kind of CMS or CS, emphasizing the negative repercussions CS had on unemployment, refusing the authority of state to impose any kind of compulsory service and radicalizing criticism towards a global anti-militarist stance.

The fact that governments always presented very limited and limiting proposals influenced this radicalization process. They did this only when the extent of the conflict did not leave them any other alternative than giving in to some concessions. The delay in this regard tended to coincide with the radicalization of the movements, making the demands that the government conceded already outdated in regards to the resistance organizations.

It can be said that overall the three countries went through similar stages. Nevertheless, there was different timing of developments between them. France was the country that went through them quickest, especially throughout the upheaval of the Algerian war. Italy did not go through a similar episode; the process was more linear, although it was influenced by the French conflict, the international echo created by the Vietnam War and the flaring up of the Cold War. In Spain the dictatorship conditioned the appearance of resistance to CMS and it taking the form of a social movement, something that did not happen until the transition process began in the mid-1970s. Yet in the Spanish case the dictatorship's strong militarism influenced the quick development of an anti-militarist movement that brought forth the quantitatively largest European resistance of the twentieth century. Spain's entering NATO and the debate created around this issue was also an influence.

In these three countries the CO issue started with the appearance of young men who refused to do CMS and managed to make their actions gain the attention of the public. In Italy it started with the aforementioned Prietto Pinna in 1948 who began his action having been influenced by one of Aldo Capitini's conferences that same year. Pinna refused to put on the uniform and to obey, claiming philosophical convictions.²³ He carried out his action

²³ CAPITINI, Aldo. *L'obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Manduria: Lacaita, 1959; FABBRINI, Fabrizio. *Tu non ucciderai. I cattolici e l'obiezione di coscienza in Italia*.

without any political support and without having looked for a support group previously. He and his lawyer, Bruno Segre, aimed to provoke public debate around the issue of CO as much as possible to generate recognition of the opposition to military service. This debate also appeared in France in 1948 with the appearance of Jean-Bernard Moreau, a young objector who refused due to his Christianity and offered to carry out an alternative CS. His action got the attention of publications such as *Figaro* and *Franc-Tireu*,²⁴ and other libertarian pacifist groups and human rights defence associations who began to demand recognition of CO. He also had the support of Abad Pierre, a member of parliament for the Christian Democrat party, *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*. In Spain resistance to CMS came out publicly in 1971 with young Beunza's CO. In the same way that Monreau did, Beunza claimed Christianity-related reasons and also offered to carry out an alternative CS that worked for the benefit of society. Before his action, Beunza had contacted different national and international groups, therefore gaining an important support group which came into action the moment he was imprisoned.²⁵

These young men's actions hugely influenced the appearance of the first legislative proposals to tackle the issue, most of which were very restrictive: they did not recognise CO as a right; instead they simply offered the possibility of an alternative to CMS. They were only recognized if it was for religious or sometimes ethical reasons. As well as the possibility of doing a CS the objector needed to be recognized as such by a tribunal which was totally or partially military. Finally, the CS tended to last a longer amount of time and the work was at least as hard as or harder than the one in CMS.

That was the nature of the proposals presented in 1949 by Umberto Calosso (PSDI) and Igino Giordani (DC) in Italy and by the abbot Pierre and Paul Bonet with the support of other SFIO and MRP politicians in France.²⁶ More initiatives sprung up in the 1950s in both these countries, and although

Florença: Cultura Editrice, 1966; and PINNA, Prieto. *La mia obiezione di coscienza: scritti 1950-1993*. Verno: Movimento Nonviolento, 1994.

²⁴ IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455, Marc Nez: "Legal Recognition of Conscientious Objection" (October 1949).

²⁵ OLIVER OLMO, Pedro. *La utopía insumisa de Pepe Beunza. Una objeción subversiva durante el franquismo*. Barcelona: Virus, 2002; and ORTEGA, Pere. *La societat noviolenta. Converses amb Pepe Beunza*. Barcelona: Icaria-ICIP, 2012.

²⁶ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 456, "Proposta di Legge d'iniziativa dei Deputati Calosso e Giordani" 3 October 1949, in the case of Italy and; IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455; André Philip, Jean Binot, Paul Boulet, Albert Gau, Pierre Grouès, Eugène Reeb; y Paul Rivet: "Military Service Regulations. Draft Law n° 8568" (1 dicembre 1949), in the case of France.

they were quite restrictive, they faced political apathy in the best of cases and a strong political opposition in the majority of cases. In Spain, the resistance to the 1970 and 1971 initiatives was notorious: they were both very restrictive and had been presented by a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been carrying out sentence after sentence since 1958. Franco's procurators called CO a "soviet manoeuvre" and tackled the concept as if it meant "a direct attack on the political and social system's fundamental ideology". They did not have any consideration for the objectors either, who were designated "psychopaths" and "traitors to the nation".²⁷ The only thing that was resolved was the regulation of the crime of refusing to do CMS in 1973 so as to end the frequent occurrence of having prisoners sentenced again and again.

In the years following the appearance of these pioneers, resistance to CMS kept growing thanks to the number of objectors refusing to carry out armed service and ending up in prison, the spread of pacifist ideas and of non-violence amongst the population, the development of groups starting to combine these theories and practices, and finally, the support of international organisations such as WRI, IFOR, MIR, etc.

France's case and the impact of the Algerian war proved to be very influential for the budding movement in Italy and Spain. The number of objectors and deserters between 1954 and 1962 came to around 500 young men. The French government stopped cycle-sentences, limiting the maximum number of years in prison for refusing to carry out CMS: it went from five years in 1958 to three years in 1962.²⁸ Simultaneously, resistance groups inspired by pacifist and non-violence ideas and using the models of Gandhi, Luther King, Thoreau or Tolstoy, among others, arose. *Action Civique Non-Violente* appeared in 1958, founded by Roland Marin and Joseph Pyronnet; that same year *Secours aux Objecteurs de Conscience* appeared as one of Lecoin's initiatives; in 1959 *Jeune Résistance* was founded, a group which was openly disobedient to the state. The war ended in 1962, but the groups' activities did not nor did the growing tendency of resistance to CMS with a large number of people in exile or in prison for

²⁷ *Diarios de las Sesiones de Comisiones*, 9 July 1970 and 2,6,7 July 1971.

²⁸ AUVRAY, Michel. *Objecteurs, insoumis, déserteurs: Histoire des réfractaires en France*. Paris: Stock, 1983, pp. 215-242 and CATTELAINE, Jean-Pierre. *L'Objection de Conscience*. *Op.Cit.*, p.54.

this reason. The first legal initiative to recognise CO was settled in 1963;²⁹ the hostility felt by many politicians was reflected in the amount of modifications carried out to the original text, resulting in a distorted legal language where CO was recognized only to a very limited extent.

Italy's situation was not accelerated by a colonial war context, but CO and the pacifist and non-violence debate started to get more public attention from the 1960s onwards with the appearance of organizations based on non-violence and against CMS. WRI and IFOR sections were created as well as the *Centro per la Nonviolenza de Perugia*, led by Capitini, which centred around non-violence and CO. Italian anti-militarism and resistance to CMS was supported by the *Partito Radicale*, founded in 1955 which had an important presence in the anti-militarist context from the 1960s onwards. In 1963 the *Gruppo di Azione Nonviolenta* was created under Pinna's initiative, spreading to various Italian cities and promoting civil disobedience and anti-militarist mobilizations for recognition of CO. In addition, in 1962 and with the help of the Gozzini case, Catholic CO started to become more and more frequent, impacting the creation of groups all over Italy who defended CO. In the end, in December 1972 the first law allowing an alternative CS was passed. Although it was as precarious as the first proposals presented in the 1950s, the government publicized it claiming it was a step forward for democracy and a civil conquest. The resistance groups attacked it directly with a campaign called *legge-truffa* [fraudulent law].³⁰

In Spain, the few objectors to appear after Beunza were supported by Christian pacifist groups like *Justicia y Paz* and *Pax Christi*, and received international solidarity from the WRI, IFOR and French and Belgian non-violence and objectors groups. Collective objection started to develop with the launching of self-managed civil services that the objectors installed in areas suffering a strong lack of resources, such as the Can Cerra area in the *L'Hospitalet del Llobregat* in Barcelona and other places like Bilbao, Madrid, Málaga, Reus, Tarragona and Vic. These initiatives were launched between 1975 and 1976, as the political transition process was barely beginning. In January 1977, many of these objectors met in Madrid to

²⁹ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 455, Letter from Yvette Naal "A statute for conscientious objectors in France", Paris, 12 decembre 1963.

³⁰ ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 76-77; COLETTI, Alessandro. *L'obiezione di coscienza*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 29-40; and IISG, WRI Archives, folder 456: Movimento Nonviolento per la Pace, "The campaign for CO in Italy", Perugia, 29 novembre 1965; and Gruppi Nonviolenti Bolognesi, "Legge Truffa", 9 settembre 1971.

publicly and unitedly reject the December 1976 law for religious reasons. As a result of that meeting, they then formed the *Movimiento de Objetores de Conciencia* (MOC) which turned in to one of the most important resisters' groups; they had an anti-militarist nature and a non-violent strategy. CMS resistance began to spread as a social movement. Non-violence, pacifist and anti-militarist ideas had given rise to more groups with the same basis in many areas of the country. The case of Catalonia was notorious for the *Casal de la Pau* foundation (inspired by the Belgian *Maison de la Paix*), where different groups dedicated to pacifism and anti-militarism came together. The way that the objection phenomenon was growing at a national and international scale no doubt influenced the half-hearted recognition given to CO in the constitution in 1978 although its legislative regulation was not installed until 1984 under the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) government. The socialist legislative project, which was also very limited, recognized the possibility of an alternative social service for the objectors who were recognised as such.³¹

None of the legal initiatives that were presented managed to solve the problem in any of the countries. The young resistance groups, who by this time were organized, made their demands public through a series of different types of actions. Resistance to CMS had taken on the shape of a social movement and had enlarged its base and its political models. The discourse comprised a strong anti-militarist stance and was more and more openly disobedient and defiant to the state. When the state tried to react to this, the young rebels were prepared to take another step and proposed disobedience to the law in spite of the fact that this would mean going back to prison. CS was considered free labour and therefore an attack on the working class.

In France, CS was launched in 1964 and showed signs of complications from the very year of its launch. These complications became graver after May 1968 when many of the objectors ended up in prison for refusing to do a job they considered strike-breaking.³² In 1972, as a reaction to the repression, the *Comités de Soutien aux Objecteurs* (CSOC) were created in Lyon and rapidly spread across all of France. The objectors started to abandon their posts in the civil services and objection took on a strong

³¹ LEDERACH, John Paul. *Els anomenats pacifistes. La noviolència a l'estat espanyol*. Barcelona: La Magrana, 1983; MOVIMIENTO DE OBJECCIÓN DE CONCIENCIA. *En legítima desobediencia. Tres décadas de objeción, insumisión y antimilitarismo*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2002; and SAMPEDRO BLANCO, Víctor. *Movimientos sociales: debates sin mordaza. Desobediencia civil y servicio militar (1970-1996)*. Madrid: BOE, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997.

³² IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455, Henry Martin: "The situation in France" (1970).

politicized dynamic with numerous groups in favour of draft-dodging springing up: the first *Groupe d'Insoumission Totale* was created in Lyon in 1972; simultaneously, objectors in Rouen, Caen, Paris and Dreux created *Groupes d'Insoumission Collective*. The following year, many French groups were considering combined action and created the *Comité de Lutte des Objecteurs* which were federated independent committees against militarization, and whose members gradually became more radical and started to defend total insubordination more decisively. At an international level, there was a collective international draft-dodging campaign carried out by twelve rebels from Belgium, France, Holland and Sweden.³³

In Italy the *Lega Obiettori di Coscienza* (LOC) was founded in 1973 against the *legge-truffa*. It started in Rome and in little time spread across all of Italy, organizing mobilizations against the law. In their first conference in 1974, they determined to display disobedience towards CS, preparing to go to prison for it. The LOC was made up of people from the radical left, libertarians and *Partito Radicale* militants. From the 1960s on, arguments for CO became critical of the social system in general and militarism in particular, and this was made evident in the CO collective declarations signed by people resisting from all over Italy.³⁴ On the other hand, the far left created an anti-militarist combat front based on struggle in the barracks, highlighting the fight against hierarchy and promoting insubordination. For this to be carried out, the *Lotta Continua* group was created and its publication, *Proletari in Divisa*.³⁵

In Spain, resistance to CMS was joined by the inertia of the movement against Spain entering NATO. Anti-militarist groups like the *Grup Antimilitarista de Barcelona* promoted the political debate around militarism. Other groups with a number of “revolutionary left” and libertarian militants also appeared: *Mili KK* (*Kakitzat* in the Basque Country) or the *Colectivo Antimilitarista Pro Insumisión*. It was not possible to apply the 1984 law until 1987, and by the time the government tried to launch it, all these groups, with the MCO, had a new strategy: draft-dodging. This strategy was made public in February 1989 through a collective action when 57 draft-dodging objectors publicly surrendered

³³ COMITES DE LUTTE DES OBJECTEURS. “Guide de l’objecteur de conscience”. Supplément à *Objection*, n.23. Toulouse, 1975, pp. 54-55; and AUVRAY, Michel. *Objecteurs, insoumis, déserteurs : Histoire des réfractaires en France. Op.Cit.*, p. 284.

³⁴ IISG, WRI Archives, folder 456, VV.AA., “Dichiarazione di Obiezione di Coscienza di:”, 1971 and 1972 and ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell’Obiezione di coscienza in Italia. Op.Cit.*, pp. 138-139.

³⁵ DI BANDINELLI, Angiolo. “Antimilitaristi: cronache di venti anni”. *La Prova Radicale*, October 1971, n.1.

themselves to the military authorities to reassert their refusal to perform CMS and CS.³⁶

Conclusion

At the end of the twentieth century, the state ended CMS. The wars of the past century definitively awoke youth's resistance to participate in war. If armed conflict was the spark, the blaze of the conflict was maintained alive in times of peace through opposition to CMS. Personal resistance to participate in war or in training for it was the core concept of a social movement that spread throughout the second half of the twentieth century based on anti-militarist political content against war and its causes. The extent of this movement was so broad that in the last decade of the century the three countries studied decided to eliminate this obligation. Anti-militarism developed by the young resister generation was extremely uncomfortable for the three states since governments were not prepared to give up conscription, because of the open disobedience towards the state which the resister groups defended and, finally, because the resistance movement questioned every aspect of the countries' defence policies: weapon production, the belligerent episodes resulting from military alliances, the capitalism which accompanied war, etc. It ended up becoming easier for governments to professionalize the armed forces so as to put a stop to an unending source of conflict that dissuasive and repressive policies had not managed to terminate.

Overall, objection and draft-dodging were mostly subdued, except in the case of Spain, where almost one million individuals were registered as objectors in the 1990s, out of an annual contingent of between 200,000 and 250,000. To that one must add about 20,000 individuals resisting CMS and CS. However, in other countries there were rarely over a few hundred draft-dodgers.³⁷ However, since the armed forces were professionalized in all three countries the anti-militarist and pacifist movement has not had a similar level of public impact, except when there have been outbreaks of armed conflict. However, their main objective was not just to put a stop to

³⁶ MOVIMIENTO DE OBJECCIÓN DE CONCIENCIA. *En legítima desobediencia. Tres décadas de objeción, insumisión y antimilitarismo*. Op.Cit.; SAMPEDRO BLANCO, Víctor. *Movimientos sociales: debates sin mordaza. Desobediencia civil y servicio militar (1970-1996)*. Op.Cit.; and PRAT, Enric. *Moviéndose por la Paz. De Paz Christi a las movilizaciones contra la guerra*. Barcelona: Hacer, 2006.

³⁷ AJANGIZ, Rafael. "Objeción de conciencia, insumisión y movimiento antimilitarista". *Mientras Tanto*, n. 91-92, 2004.

CMS, but also to oppose “war and its causes”, something they have not yet fully succeeded in.

Fear of Infectious Dissent: First World War Military Intelligence, Labor, and the Conscientious Objection of Erling Lunde

Lon Strauss

About a month after the United States entered the First World War in April 1917, Congress agreed that the nation would raise a large American army through conscription. For the first time in US history, the nation would utilize conscription without bounties or other ways for citizens to purchase their way out. There were also very few exemptions. In fact, the only clear exemption was for divinity students. The drafters of the Selective Service Act neglected to address what many peace activists at the turn of the century already knew, that individuals could genuinely abhor violence without the necessity of religious tenets supporting their belief.

Erling Hjorthoj Lunde was one those Americans caught up in Selective Service, but conscientiously objected to war. Born in April 13, 1891, Lunde grew up in Chicago, Illinois. He earned a Bachelor's of Philosophy from the University of Chicago in 1914. Lunde has a prominent legacy as an absolute conscientious objector because the National Civil Liberties Bureau published a pamphlet on his court-martial in October 1918 and he married a well-known activist – Laura Hughes. Yet, very little else about his case and the investigation into him prior to his court-martial is known. His case is not simply of interest to scholars of conscientious objection, pacifism, and dissent in America during the First World War, but also as an example of the role military intelligence played in such cases. Their investigation of him highlights Lunde's conscientious objection, but also how there is another side to this narrative. Intelligence records hold a treasure trove of documentation into the investigations and intelligence agents' perceptions, as well as documents they obtained through surveillance. Additionally, they offer insights into the case, such as how they uncovered Lunde's willingness

to work as a civilian in an industry important to the war effort – the railroads – contrary to his later arguments against supporting the war effort in any form.

Though Lunde, like many others, struggled with what it meant to be an objector, military intelligence officers did not struggle with defining him as a dissenter. For these investigators, anyone who spoke out against the war or whom they perceived as impeding the war effort was a threat. They understood that words could have a powerful inspiration on people's decisions. Erling Lunde's investigation portrays the influences on intelligence officers' decisions to target objectors like Lunde. Through their investigation they displayed political paranoid tendencies that were exemplary of the majority of the Military Intelligence Division's wartime domestic surveillance. Intelligence officers were suspicious of Lunde's sincerity as a conscientious objector, and, more importantly, they perceived his associations, especially his wife and father, with radical elements at odds with his stated beliefs and subversive to the war effort. Ultimately, intelligence officers influenced decision makers in the exemption process against him.¹

The First World War created “a world pacifist movement.” Though, Congress declared war on Germany in 1917, not all Americans had given up on the debate whether the US should join in the deadly combat in Europe. However, pacifist objection could vary immensely among different religious or sectarian pacifist groups. Americans altered the connotation of the term pacifism in the First World War. Prior to the war, it referred to someone working toward international peace. Pacifism was a noble endeavor. During the war, patriotic pressures altered its meaning, identifying pacifists with draft evaders, socialists, Bolsheviks, and radicals. In the aftermath of American participation in the Great War, the word encompassed much of its prewar meaning again, but for parts of society, it never lost its vile connotations. Thus, those who adhered to a strict definition of pacifism during the war, i.e. refused to participate under any circumstances, the word gained a new narrower definition. Some American pacifists “combined vigorous social action with absolute rejection of violence.” Whereas in the prewar years intellectuals led the pacifist—or peace—movement, during the war, “it acquired a socialist base.” Hence, it incorporated, and some government agents perceived it as embodying, a more radical element. The

¹ This article utilizes the concept of political paranoia described by Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). A little further on this will be appear in more detail.

movement stopped short of revolutionary support. Since patriotism and violence bombarded them from all sides, members of the peace movement associated physical aggression with an authoritarian state and social conformity. Thus, they opted to link their ideals for social equality with peace. The intellectual peace movement did not ponder conscientious objection prior to the war. They focused their energies more on the decision making process which led to war, emphasizing arbitration and rationality.²

Additionally, between 1914 and 1917, the peace movement splintered. Many of the older peace societies, such as the American Peace Society, joined in the nationalistic aim of peace along American ideals. This also meant that they supported an American peace through force, since their rhetoric joined that of the war hawks by arguing that Prussianism prevented peace. Those left in the movement in 1917 were “a progressive coalition, to which antiwar Socialists were added.” They created organizations such as the People’s Council of America for Peace and Democracy, a group that military intelligence officers perceived as infested with socialists and whose aim was to stop conscription and the war effort at all costs.³

Thus, the concept of individual conscience as a legitimate justification for an exemption from conscription was especially problematic for military planners. The US army had to rapidly expand. The military drastically needed enlisted men and officers, a task that called for nothing short of inducting as many eligible men as possible into the ranks. However, swift expansion was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, from the military’s perspective, the “dissenting rabble,” those socialists, anarchists, and others that the upper echelons of society viewed as harmful to the American way of life, would be caught up in the net of inductees. On the other hand, the Army’s need for manpower overrode any and all concerns. For officers of the Military Intelligence Division (MID), vigilance was of the utmost importance. However, MID grew slowly. Neither the men who joined the intelligence ranks nor the commanders of the training camps and infantry divisions understood what the primary aim of garnering domestic or

² Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), 4; Charles Chatfield, “World War I and the Liberal Pacifist in the United States,” In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 7 (Dec., 1970), 1921-2; Peter Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 471; Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States: From the Colonial Era to the First World War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 18, 866, 918-9.

³ Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice*, 10-1, 15.

negative intelligence was. Plus, the MID leadership did not establish a coherent training program for their officers until near the war's end.⁴

In lieu of a comprehensive training program, intelligence officers were left relying on their own perceptions of what qualified as a threat and how to deal with it. Additionally, though intelligence officers were convinced that a nefarious German spy ring was working in America, but could not find evidence of it. They convinced themselves that anyone who did not support the war must be under German influence, or at the very least naively supporting them. The evidence never proved that a masterminded spy network existed. They, of course, could not be one-hundred percent certain of that. However, they were confident that pre-war undesirables, such as socialists, with prominent emigrated German and German-Americans, and now including pacifists whose dissent could infect other Americans were undermining the war effort due to German propaganda, at German direction, or because they were simply naïve. Intelligence officers portrayed political paranoid tendencies throughout their investigations. They applied “top-down reasoning,” instead of listening to the evidence at hand. Even though many of their targets were sincere in their conscientious objection and pacifism, and did not want to intentionally interfere with the war effort but simply be left alone, the intelligence officers convinced themselves, as did many draft boards, that this was not the case. Thus, instead of following the evidence, the lack of evidence convinced them that their targets were simply that good at hiding the truth. Additionally, another aspect of political paranoia that intelligence officers exhibited was centrality. They believed without a doubt that disrupting the war effort, specifically the draft, was at the central goal of dissenters to the war. Intelligence officers were also certain that if dissention was allowed to ferment then the government, and especially the organizations working toward a successful war effort, would lose their autonomy. The Bolshevik Revolution began in early 1917, and there were large segments of the middle and upper class in the United States could face a similar threat. Lastly, intelligence officers projected these fears onto the individuals and groups they investigated, regardless of whether the evidence supported it.⁵

⁴ MID History, 497-501, 517, 1162-6; Bidwell, 122-3, 125.

⁵ Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 8-12. For more on the class assumptions presented here see Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); and *Who We Are: A History of Popular Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Robert H. Zeiger, *Organized Labor in the Twentieth Century South* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991).

The Wilson administration and more powerful socio-economic groups took advantage of the war-induced anxieties to eliminate major socialist and radical groups, such as the Wobblies. Thus, without the political paranoia that was pervasive among American elites and the middle-class those extreme actions may not have been successful. As historian John Whiteclay Chambers wrote, repression “was entwined with the fabric of American society as well as with wartime nationalism and mobilization which encouraged it.” The class and status derived paranoia was so pervasive that it affected important sections of the government, including the federal courts, Congress, and the military. This is evident from Congress members’ overwhelming passage of the Espionage Act of 1917, along with the harsher provisions of the Sedition Act of 1918. Federal judges upheld the strictest interpretations of these Acts, as did the military intelligence agents conducting the investigations. They deemed any interpretation other than their own as disloyal and evidence of a “nefarious” plot.⁶

Yet intelligence officers had to investigate everything brought to their attention--from the anonymous tip that one of the soldiers in “X” unit was a German spy to the auxiliary female chauffeurs who drove convalescing soldiers around the embarkation points. Ralph Van Deman, Chief of MID, and his staff organized both positive and negative intelligence sections. They defined positive intelligence as “the study of the military, political, economic, and social situation abroad.” Negative intelligence referred to enemy activities on the home front. They described the importance of negative intelligence as:

The man or woman of foreign sympathy in the United States, who prevented the enlistment of one soldier, impaired his loyalty, prevented or delayed his arrival in France, hampered the supplies he required, or in any other of a thousand ways canceled that one man’s usefulness to this nation, did as much

⁶ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50, 55, 68, 79-83; John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 208. Ronald Schaffer’s book, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) is another influential work that utilizes war hysteria, and so too does the more recent work by Christopher Cappozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

for the Kaiser as the German soldier who killed an American in battle.⁷

Intelligence officers worried about the “ruthlessness” of Germany and that nation’s mastery of espionage. Due to the diverse ethnic composition of American society and the nation’s geographic vastness, MID officers feared that the United States was an easy target for German subterfuge. In addition, they charged that German agents were sabotaging the American people long before the neutral nation entertained thoughts of war. These alleged covert agents tainted American opinion of preparedness. They instituted a propaganda campaign of peacefulness “to persuade the country to inaction.” Such accusations portray intelligence officers’ perceptions of pacifism. They saw German subterfuge in citizens’ opposition to conscription, in lenient exemption boards, and in pacifist or anti-war organizations. They thought that rumors and actions which affected productivity or morale at home had the same effect as a “defeat on the battlefield.” Thus, “the activities of many elements in the pacifist movements, the extremists among the socialists and the IWW, were as proper subjects for investigation and repression as mutinous soldiers, deserters or traitors in the ranks;” by extension, MID officers included conscientious objectors in this list. Similar to a large proportion of society, military officers viewed conscientious objectors as slackers, men who were purposefully avoiding their duty to the nation. In addition, objectors could negatively influence other soldiers.⁸

Erling Lunde was one of those pacifists and draft dissenters. He sought an exemption from conscription based on his status as a married man and a conscientious objector. However, Lunde ran into problems. First, military authorities were already aware of him and his father, Theodore Lunde, who they thought of as “rabid” pacifists. Second, Erling Lunde’s wife was Laura Hughes, an outspoken Canadian pacifist. After Europe went to war, Hughes traveled around Canada speaking out against conscription laws. When the United States joined the war, she came south and did the same with organizations such as the American Liberty Defense League and People’s Peace Council—groups MID considered disloyal. Third, Lunde did not claim an exemption on religious grounds. He was not a member of one of the recognized pacifist religious denominations prior to passage of the Selective Service Act. Draft boards did not recognize other forms of

⁷ “History of Military Intelligence Division,” Unpublished Manuscript, In RG 319, Entry 270, Box 21A (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II), 9. Hereafter referred to as MID History.

⁸ Ibid, 3, 9, 13.

conscientious objection. Lastly, his marriage occurred in December 1917, six months after the Selective Service Act went into effect.⁹

The Selective Service Act had several provisions regarding marriage as a justification for exemption. Legislators were clear that they did not intend the law to interfere with citizens' right to marry. However, the law stated:

Boards should scrutinize marriages since May 18, 1917, and especially those hastily effected since that time, to determine whether the marriage relation was entered into with a primary view of evading military service, and unless such is found not to be the case boards are hereby authorized to disregard the relationship so established as a condition of dependency requiring deferred classification under these regulations.¹⁰

Lunde argued that his marriage was sincere and not an attempt to escape military obligation. He related how he met Laura Hughes in July, 1917. They got engaged in August, made a public announcement in September, and married on December 29, 1917. In February, 1918, the local draft board sent Lunde notice that they had placed him in Class 1, denying his claim for exemption as a conscientious objector. He appealed, providing three affidavits from friends familiar with his long-standing commitment to pacifism. The appeals board denied his reclassification.¹¹

He changed tack in late May. According to Lunde, the piano manufacturing company he worked for sent him to take classes in mechanical engineering due to a slump in business. During a class at the Armour Institute in Chicago, the professor asked for volunteers on behalf of H. B. MacFarland to become inspectors for the U.S. Railway Administration. Lunde immediately volunteered. That same day, he received his military notice to

⁹ Marlborough Churchill, "Subject Erling H. Lunde", 1 August 1918, In RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, Folder 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II). For more on Laura Hughes see: Frances H. Early, *A World Without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997); Irene Howard, *The Struggle for Social Justice in British Columbia: Helena Gutteridge, the Unknown Reformer* (UBC Press, 1992); Janice Newton, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918* (McGill-Queen's Press, 1995); Barbara Roberts, "Women Against War, 1914-1918: Francis Benyon and Laura Hughes," in *Up and Doing: Canadian Women and Peace*, ed. Janice Williamson and Deborah Gorham (Toronto: Women's Press, 1989): 48-65;

¹⁰ *Selective Service Regulations: Prescribed by the President Under the Authority Vested in Him by the Terms of the Selective Service Law* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 36.

¹¹ Erling H. Lunde, Letter to Newton D. Baker, 1 June 1918, In RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, Folder 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

entrain for a training camp between May 29 and June 2. Two days later, MacFarland offered Lunde a position as a material inspector of cars and locomotives. Lunde immediately contacted his local draft board to reconsider his case as an industrial exemption. McFarland wrote on Lunde's behalf to the District Exemption board. He explained that the work involved required men with the proper technical training, which Lunde possessed. Such men were very hard to find. In addition, McFarland had learned at a meeting in Washington that men in this field would be exempt from the draft. Therefore, he argued that the board should reclassify Lunde. The exemption board and military authorities did not agree.¹²

Lunde also attempted to convince the draft board that his wife was dependent upon him because she suffered from a nervous disorder. He explained that Hughes's brother died in 1915 while serving the Canadian Army in France; consequently, she suffered a nervous breakdown. In addition, Hughes was pregnant. If the exemption board did not reclassify him, Lunde feared that Hughes's mental health would fail and endanger their unborn child. As with his other attempts, however, this one also failed.¹³

Why Lunde's renewed attempt for an exemption failed appears to lie with MID officers' concerns about his and his wife's loyalties. Though Hughes was not publicly speaking against the draft in 1918, she did so throughout the majority of 1917 as well as across Canada prior to that. During meetings of the American Liberty Defense League in 1917, undercover agents overheard her disparaging the military. According to Hughes, military men were brutes and war was obsolete. If fighting were the answer, then there was no need for the mass shedding of blood. "If we believed that we could settle all our civil wrongs by fighting we would take our prize fighters and put them in the ring to settle our disputes, but we have Judges on the bench for that." She urged pacifists and conscientious objectors to continue resisting participation in the war. Eventually, she believed, the militaristic ideology would waiver and the higher ideal of peace would triumph. Such a struggle, however, would be long and hard. Many advocates of peace would die by militarists' hands, but "it is better for you to die for your ideals than to submit." Hughes was outspoken against what she termed the military machine and overtly supportive of pacifist resistance. For MID officers, she

¹² Ibid; H. B. MacFarland, Letter to District Exemption Board, 28 May 1918, In RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, Folder 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

¹³ Ibid.

posed a dire threat. They described her as “a radical pacifist and member of the People’s Peace Council.” They feared she would undermine American men’s fighting spirit while further corrupting and strengthening those who were unsupportive, i.e. disloyal. In this scenario, cultural ideas of coverture, that a husband and wife shared the same ideals, may have reinforced intelligence officers’ views of Lunde.¹⁴

Hughes was not Erling Lunde’s only connection to overt pacifism. His father, Theodore Lunde, was a former treasurer of the People’s Peace Council. He resided in Chicago and was a purchasing agent or had some sort of business relation with the Norwegian government. In the middle of 1918, the elder Lunde contacted MID regarding why they were blocking a passport for Helen Sheehy-Skeffington, an Irishwoman who was known to the authorities. Skeffington was the widow of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, a participant in the Easter Rebellion in 1916. British authorities executed him. Helen Skeffington was a member of Sinn Fein, a movement that MID considered extremely radical and obviously anti-British. They deduced that Theodore Lunde’s interest in Mrs. Skeffington clearly indicated his political leanings.¹⁵

In addition to the influence of his questionable relations, MID officers did not believe the younger Lunde was a sincere pacifist. “It is the opinion of this office,” one officer stated, “that neither son nor father are conscientious objectors at heart, and that it is merely a cloak, for Theodore Lunde has too often shown symptoms of belligerency.” They projected the father’s belligerence onto the son, disbelieving either man’s sincere commitment to pacifism. Captain Charles Daniel Frey, the National Director of the American Protective League, discovered the elder Lunde was out on \$25,000 bail awaiting an appearance before a grand jury to answer charges under the Espionage Act. Needless to say, these reports did not endear Theodore or Erling Lunde to MID.¹⁶

¹⁴ Hinton G. Clabaugh, report on American Defense League, 30 July 1917, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242-19 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II); W. R. Benham, “Earling Lunde: Conscientious Objector,” 14 June 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 36-57 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

¹⁵ Ibid; Carl Reichmann, “Conscientious Objectors,” 9 September 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II) Charles Daniel Frey, Letter to Marlborough Churchill, 26 June 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 36-57 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

¹⁶ Ibid.

In October 1917, Erling Lunde attended a meeting of the American Liberty Defense League chaired by a candidate for county judge in Chicago who was running on the Socialist ticket. Intelligence officers convinced themselves even before U.S. entry into the war that pacifists and socialists were in bed together and influenced by German subterfuge. Officers perceived meetings like this as proof of that connection. They determined that radicals and socialists were threats to the government's autonomy. Interestingly, though, anarchists did not top this list of menaces. Military officers admitted that though anarchists were "theoretically the most radical element in our midst, and from a local police point of view the most dangerous, it has been of minor importance to Military Intelligence." Apparently, MID officers concluded that anarchist propaganda had little to no influence on Americans; anarchists were a "very small group," which was never pro-German nor a target for German influences. In addition, the movement's leadership in the United States, specifically Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, went to prison in mid-June 1917. This left other "radicals," especially what MID officers defined as "right wing," or "German socialism" as the top concern. The official, unpublished history of MID states that "in itself socialism is not subversive of the interests of the State and a political party endeavoring by ballot to bring it about may be just as loyal as any other political party either in or out of power." Thus, intelligence officers begrudgingly acknowledged that even socialism, if it sought change through the ballot, was a legitimate political system. However, they feared that ethnic Germans dominated the Socialist Party in America. In addition, at its core, they feared the Socialist Party was not a political apparatus, but "rather a protest party which gathered unto itself all the discontented." Lastly, American socialists professed to be international, and thus "anti-national" and against patriotism. Their anti-capitalist stance meant that socialists blamed individualistic Wall Street interests for pushing the United States to war. Therefore, intelligence officers argued that socialists disseminated propaganda against the war. By expressing their opinion, socialists bolstered the dissatisfied in the nation. "The baneful effect of this propaganda among persons inclined to be discontented, or averse for any reason to serve in the war, was soon apparent." Regardless of how unlikely it would be to redeem people who were already reluctant to support the war in any way; MID officers saw this anti-capitalist line of reasoning as a threat. Intelligence records list anti-draft, registration propaganda, and violating the Espionage Act as the primary reasons for imprisonment in all of the important socialist cases.¹⁷

¹⁷ Charles Daniel Frey, "Theodore Lunde," 5 October 1917, In Record Group RG165, Entry
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Yet, intelligence officers displayed a discerning understanding of certain aspects of the socialist movement while simultaneously exhibiting political paranoid tendencies. On the one hand, they appeared to recognize the Socialist Party's right to exist in America as another political entity as long as it worked within the prevailing political system. On the other hand, they condemned the socialists for "mustering the forces of discontent at the polls." They feared evidence of a "slight increase" in votes for socialists in the ethnic German population; though, they admitted, "it was hardly enough to affect the war time elections." MID officers even recognized that the infamous Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies), failed on several occasions to create enough support for nation-wide strikes, even when utilizing popular appeals such as the trials of Eugene V. Debs and Thomas Mooney. Thus, there was no real threat that the Wobblies, or socialists, could succeed in halting the country's day-to-day business on a local level, let alone a national one. However, this rationalization in no way appeared to have halted intelligence officers' fears that socialists could influence Americans, especially draft-age men who were vital to the war effort.¹⁸

To have a man like Erling Lunde in uniform, whom intelligence officers were extremely suspicious of, was hardly appealing. Intelligence officers did not trust his sincerity as a conscientious objector. More important, a man such as Lunde, active in organizations MID suspected of disloyalty, with a wife and father playing prominent roles in those organizations, might well prove a negative influence among other men in uniform. On June 1, 1918, Lunde wrote to the Secretary of War promising that he would not propagandize in the training camp if his appeals were denied. However, his father and wife continued to send him pamphlets, bulletins, newsletters, etc. from the suspected organizations. Other soldiers could easily happen upon this literature and thereby—MID argued—convert them to the pacifist cause. It would seem that the military should do its best to keep a man such as Lunde out of uniform; on the other hand, that would reward those who held un-American views. The Army inducted Lunde on June 2, 1918. He went to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis, Missouri, where he refused to don a uniform or otherwise cooperate with authorities. He also declined to accept non-combatant service, claiming he did not want to do any work that aided the military. He maintained this position even while he sought an exemption

65, Box 2763, 10110-242 1-35 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II). W. H. Jones, "Lincoln Steffens Meeting," 5 October 1917, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 1-35 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II); MID History, 1984-5.

¹⁸ Ibid, 1986, 1990.

to work as an inspector on the railroads that would, by the nature of the work, support the war effort. Interrogated by an officer, Lunde explained he believed wars were unchristian, as was all killing. War did “not accomplish the ends that it was supposed to,” meaning that those who took part in wars sowed death and violence instead of peace. He thought international disputes should be settled diplomatically and without violence. Therefore, he would not help the military machine do its horrible work. Lunde stated that he did not belong to any church and based his objection to war upon his conscience alone. The officer asked the question authorities always posed to conscientious objectors: whether they would do anything if their loved one, specifically their female companion, was threatened. Lunde answered that he would adhere to his principles and do nothing. He subsequently answered the same question before the exemption board with his wife, Laura Hughes, standing beside him.¹⁹

Theodore Lunde and H. B. MacFarland continued to try to get Lunde released from military service. The elder Lunde went to Washington, D.C. to speak with a War Department representative about his son’s situation. He also met with Congressman Niel Juul, the Representative from Erling Lunde’s district. Juul agreed to see what he could do and contacted the Adjutant General Henry Pinckney McCain. The Congressman told McCain that Lunde would benefit the government more as a rail equipment inspector than as a draftee. McCain replied that if General Director William McAdoo of the Railroad Administration asked to have Lunde indefinitely furloughed for work in that field, he would consider the request, but emphasized that it had to go through the proper bureaucratic channels. Privately however, McCain told one of his aides, Captain Daniel Frey, to discover whether McAdoo was contemplating granting Lunde’s request. Frey should convey what sort of man MID believed Lunde was; and to “convince him (McAdoo) that Lunde should not be transferred, and that he (The Adjutant General) would then refuse the transfer, but that he did not want to make any move that could conflict with the Railway Administration, without our first straightening the matter out.” McAdoo’s response was that he would first have to discuss the matter with MID.²⁰

¹⁹ K. B. Edmunds, “Interrogation of Erling Lunde,” 5 June 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

²⁰ Charles Daniel Frey, “Earling Lunde: Conscientious Objector”, 15 June 1918. In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 36-57 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

Meanwhile, H. B. MacFarland sent a request to William G. McAdoo to have Lunde furloughed. Although Erling Lunde had made it clear that he would not accept any work under military authority, he desperately sought a position as an inspector for the U.S. Railroad Administration, which was an extremely vital industry for prosecuting the war. Anything having to do with the rails in the U.S. was of interest to the military. In fact, in March 1918, President Wilson nationalized the railroads, establishing McAdoo as the Director General to unravel the enormous log-jam preventing materiel from being transported and unloaded rapidly for shipment to Europe. Over the winter of 1917- 1918, a national railroad crisis led to a paralysis of rail movement. A critical result was that coal went undelivered to the majority of Americans, leaving them shivering in their homes. Therefore, MacFarland argued that it was too difficult to find men who were qualified to do this type of work. He needed Lunde and the only way to get him was for McAdoo to approve the request. Lunde stated that the work related to relieving the coal shortage during the winter was consistent with his pacifist beliefs. Yet, MacFarland's plea had no effect. A letter from the office of the Adjutant General sent on July 3 stated: "Under no circumstances will an indefinite furlough be granted in the case of this soldier, for the purpose of engaging in industry essential to the prosecution of the war."²¹

Both the military establishment and patriotic citizens argued that every American should do their part to support the war. This obligation included conscientious objectors. In Lunde's case, he did not start out as an absolute conscientious objector. He was willing to accept work with the U.S. Railroad Administration, though under civilian —rather than military— leadership. High ranking officers, as well as the local draft board, rejected his appeals. Ironically, agencies such as MID were doing all they could to assign Lunde to some form of military service, despite worries that he could prove a negative influence upon other soldiers. Lunde was honest about his conscientious objection to war in general and to U.S. involvement in this conflict in particular, however, military officers ignored him.

²¹ H. B. MacFarland, Letter to William McAdoo, 15 June 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 36-57 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II); J. A. Barry, "Indefinite furlough for Erling H. Lunde," 3 July 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II); Erling H. Lunde, *Defense of Erling H. Lunde: Conscientious Objector to War: Made Before a Court Martial at Camp Funston, Kansas, October 15, 1918* (Chicago: American Industrial Co., 1918), 7-8; Ronald Schaffer, *America in the Great War: The Rise of the War Welfare State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 37-8.

Following a doctor's examination that determined Lunde was mentally healthy, he was inducted into the Army. Three weeks later, the military sent him to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, the place where--at the behest of the Adjutant General of the Army—they sent all conscientious objectors. At some point in July, military authorities transferred Lunde and the other objectors to Fort Riley, Kansas. In a letter to Hughes, Lunde explained that at first he was willing to do some kitchen duty and at least make a show of cooperating. Lunde and some others believed that if they did not overtly resist they would still get a square deal from the government. They were waiting to see what reforms the Wilson administration would enact. Lunde did the aforementioned work before arriving at Fort Riley, "merely as a good fellow to allow time for a definite policy to crystallize." However, he acknowledged that his earlier assumptions were naïve and proved false.

As this is military service, and since I have refused to all committees (sic) that have quizzed me, to take any part in the military machine either non-combatant or combatant, I must now take my stand absolutely, and take the consequences. I harbor no ill feelings toward the officers or the government. They are merely going at this systematically to weed out men who claim to be C.O.'s, and can't differentiate between military and civil service.²²

The officers called upon the conscientious objectors to dig latrines for themselves, do kitchen duty, clean up the camp grounds, and perform other demeaning tasks. Lunde's understanding of President Wilson's policy was that they were responsible for keeping themselves and their quarters clean, as well as preparing their own food, and nothing more. He felt that he and the others were at the military camp involuntarily and the least the government could do was provide cooked food and basic sanitary conditions. He did not think poorly of the soldiers—mostly non-commissioned officers—who watched over them. He felt he got along amicably with the military men with whom he came into contact. In fact, they were friendly to him because of his disposition and the fact that he had some influence among the other conscientious objectors. Intelligence officers perceived his influence and charisma as evidence that he posed a threat to the army and national security.²³

²² Erling H. Lunde, Letter to Laura Hughes Lunde, 28 July 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

²³ Ibid.

The Adjutant General had decided that he would never authorize an indefinite furlough for Lunde. In late August, 1918, Lunde went on a twelve day hunger strike in protest. On October 15, a military tribunal court-martialed him. Lunde explained that this situation came about when, on September 17, military authorities sent Colonel J. C. Waterman to order Lunde and the others to do “camp police” work, which was non-combatant in nature. As Lunde described it, he made explicit his position about any combatant or non-combatant work. After meeting with the Board of Inquiry—that interviewed objectors around the nation to review their cases and determine their sincerity—while at Fort Leavenworth, the board proclaimed Lunde to be a legitimate conscientious objector. Even so, the military did not discharge him. Lunde continued to refuse any non-combatant work, even a job with the Corps of Engineers that was similar to the one he sought with the U.S. Railroad Administration.²⁴

Upon his arrival, Colonel Waterman offered Lunde and other “absolute” objectors various non-combatant positions. When they refused, he ordered them to do “camp police” work, which would have entailed cutting the grass around the camp and picking up trash. When Lunde refused, Waterman ordered him solitary confinement and fed only bread and water for three days. Soon after, he was court-martialed. Erling Lunde’s case provides an example of an absolute conscientious objector whose rejection of draftee status posed a threat to the military establishment and, because he was influential among his peers and had associated with “radical pacifists,” intelligence officers deemed him a national threat as a civilian, as well.²⁵

MID officers’ obsessive and contradictory attitudes led them to be deeply concerned about uniformed soldiers attending meetings with civilians who they considered to be less than loyal. In September 1918, Sergeant B. F. Hargrove infiltrated the Young People’s Socialist League in St. Louis. He became convinced that the League was “not one percent loyal” and that the Socialist Party platform represented a repudiation of true American values. “They have indorsed (sic) the Bolsheviki form of government, up-hold the IWW, oppose conscription, advocate a revolution and are otherwise anti-war in their activities.” Hargrove listed at least seven soldiers and sailors he had discovered were members of the organization. In addition, he learned that one of these individuals “is actively engaged in spreading Socialist Propaganda in his respective camp and has been successful in interesting

²⁴ Barry, 3 July 1918; Lunde, *Defense of Erling H. Lunde*, 5.

²⁵ Ibid; Theodore Lunde, Letter to J. J. Manning, 24 August 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2763, 10110-242 58-108 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II); Carl Reichmann, 23 August 1918.

about 25 fellow men. If his line of propaganda is similar to that preached at the meetings of the league, which is revolutionary in character,” he warned that, “it may have some influence on other soldiers.”²⁶

The military needed manpower and their chief source was obviously the working class. But the view persisted that many among the working class had a different agenda than loyally serving the United States. Their allegiance was in question. There had been several financial panics in the preceding decades that influenced hiring rates, wages, and cost of living. According to Carroll D. Wright, the United States Commissioner of Labor, 1880 marked a significant shift in labor unrest from all previous years in American history. In that year, there were 618 strikes, whereas the largest number of strikes recorded prior to then was 51 in 1879. Between 1881 and 1900, there were approximately 22,793 recorded strikes. Considering that 1880 had witnessed the largest number of strikes up to that year, the explosion of strikes in the following decade clearly indicated massive labor unrest. In addition, there were major strike waves in 1910, 1912, and 1913, as well as an increase in labor disputes in 1916 and 1917. Unemployment peaked in 1900 at 1,420,000, then again in 1904 at 1,490,000. In 1906, the economy was more stable, with only 280,000 unemployed; just two years—and another recession—later, those figures jumped to 2,960,000. Over the next five years, unemployment hovered around 2 million; then, in 1914, increased to 3,110,000 and jumped another 730,000 in 1915. During this volatile period for workers, membership in unions and the Socialist Party rose. Eugene Debs, running on the Socialist ticket, received 900,000 votes in the Presidential election of 1912. He gained six percent of the overall vote. In 1914, there were 1,200 socialist incumbents in municipal positions. Fourteen states elected thirty-three legislators from the Socialist Party. Some called it the “golden age of American socialism.” In addition, the more radical Industrial Workers of the World had a membership of about 100,000 by 1914 and probably gained another 50,000 before 1917.²⁷

²⁶ B. F. Hargrove, “Young People’s Socialist League,” 25 September 1918, In Record Group RG165, Entry 65, Box 2756 (College Park, MD: National Archives and Research Administration II).

²⁷ Melvyn Dubofsky, “Labor Unrest in the United States, 1906-90,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Labor Unrest in the World Economy, 1870-1990 (Winter, 1995), 126; Carroll D. Wright, “Strikes in the United States,” *The North American Review*, Vol. 174, No. 547 (Jun., 1902), 763; Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research, *The Measurement and Behavior of Unemployment: A Conference of the Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 215; Nick Salvatore, *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 264; Ira Katznelson and Aristide R.

While the labor unrest and pro-labor organizations grew, the business community stigmatized strikers and unions as disloyal. Addressing a crowd in New York City on Columbus Day 1915, Theodore Roosevelt emphasized 100 percent Americanism and that “labor troubles are not American.” He announced that even though the United States was neutral, German agents were stirring up labor discontent in munitions factories. Even worse, though, were “the labor troubles here not caused by foreign agents. These must cease if we were to have the true American spirit.” William C. Durant, President of General Motors, likened the labor unrest in the United States to a volcano. He told Colonel Edward House, President Wilson’s adviser, that America’s entrance into the Great War could “cause an eruption.” Historian David Kennedy explains in *Over Here* that the Wilson administration feared the pacifistic appeal of the Socialist Party could derail the American war effort. Businessmen, he stated, reveled at the opportunity to legitimately brand all labor unrest as disloyal, something they did not shy away from doing before.²⁸

Military intelligence officers feared socialist or labor unrest would disrupt governmental authority in war time. They only had to look at recent history, such as the Lawrence, Massachusetts strike of 1912, to see how the IWW and socialists worked together toward a common goal—disrupting capitalism. Intelligence officers were watching men in uniform very closely for fear that some were themselves “seditious propagandists” and others were being overly influenced by them. Their political paranoid tendencies led them to block exemptions for men they considered subversive, like Erling Lunde. At the same time that they were making examples of “slackers,” they were also concerned about their dissident influences within the military. During Lunde’s defense in the court martial hearing, he explained that he had always had a history of pacifism, teaching universal respect and avoiding militarism. His father, Theodore, kept poor company as far as military intelligence officers were concerned. Laura Hughes, especially, was of concern. She was very outspoken in Canada prior to

Zolberg, *Working-class Formation: Nineteenth-century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 398, 427; William Preston, Jr, *Aliens & Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 38.

²⁸ Melvyn Dubofsky argues that businesses and business friendly presses labeled strikers as “un-American’, seditious, even criminal organizations.” Melvyn Dubofsky, “The Radicalism of the Dispossessed: William Haywood and the IWW,” In *Dissent: History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (Dekalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968), 186; “Roosevelt Bars the Hyphenated,” 13 October 1915, *New York Times* (1857-1922), <http://www.proquest.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048> (accessed 19 March 2012); David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 69-71.

American entrance in the war. During 1917, she was seditious in the US, as well, speaking at socialist, anti-war gatherings. Therefore, intelligence officers deemed Erling Lunde a clear threat and an insincere conscientious objector. The way they saw it, they had to do everything in their power to block not only his exemption from the draft, but also any possibility of him gaining access to vital national security-related work, such as with the railroads. The evidence against Lunde was scant, at best. The Board of Inquiry—established by the Secretary of War in 1918 to review objector cases—determined Lunde was sincere. Yet, military officers’ political paranoid tendencies influenced their decision to ignore such information and instead engineer grounds for a court martial. Erling Lunde’s case highlights larger societal, political paranoid tendencies toward socialism and pacifism, as well as the murky waters that American citizens had to navigate between expected obligations to the state and their conscience.²⁹

²⁹ Lunde, *Defense of Erling H. Lunde*, 6.

Women and Wildcats: Unofficial Women's Strikes in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s

Christer Thörnqvist and Susanne Fransson

Introuduction

For about two and a half decades, there has been a move towards tertiarization and feminization of industrial conflict in Western societies. While the strike propensity in manufacturing declined in the 1980s and 1990s, it remained high, in fact even increased, in the tertiary sector (services, health care, education and so on).¹ The growing portion of tertiary sector employment has further moved the focus from men to women, as the demographic transformation in work has promoted a feminization of strikes.² But is a “feminization” of strikes just a move of strike activities from male-dominated occupations to female-dominated ones?

It is clear that the dividing line goes between occupations and industries, not between men and women *per se*. Yet, occupational differences are themselves gendered. In the words of Linda Briskin, this is crucial for understanding women's strikes: “As a system of social power, gender structures social organization, and produces and reproduces hierarchies and inequalities, and men's privilege. Via institutions, policies, laws, ideologies and everyday practices, it structures work (as does class relations)”.³

¹ BORDOGNA, Lorenzo and CELLA, Gian Primo. “Decline or Transformation? Change in Industrial Conflict and its Challenges”. *Transfer*, vol. 8 (4), 2002.

² VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak. “Introduction”. In: VAN DER VELDEN, Sjaak; DRIBBUSCH, Heiner; LYDDON, Dave and VANDAELE, Kurt. *Strikes Around the World: Case-Studies of 15 Countries*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2007, p. 18; BRISKIN, Linda. “Nurse Militancy and Strike Action”. *Workers of the World – International Journal on Strikes and Social Conflict*. vol.1, n.2, January 2013, pp. 212-15.

³ BRISKIN. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

Briskin's primary concern was Canadian nurses' strikes, but her view is both international and cross-sectoral. However, what if we go back in history, to when strikes and industrial conflict was still mainly men's concern? Did women go on strike at all, and if so, how did their strikes differ from the overall pattern?

Our aim is therefore to explore women's strikes in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1970s was the decade of the "resurgence of class conflict" in Western societies, with an outstanding upsurge of strikes in many countries.⁴ There is an affluence of studies of both the 1970s strike waves and single strikes in this "rebellious" decade, but few of them make any distinctions between male- and female-dominated strikes. The strike was still in the 1970s and 1980s a "male" conflict weapon, employed by blue-collar workers in manufacturing, mines, harbours and so on. In the early 1990s, the Finnish scholars Raija Julkunen and Liisa Rantalaiho provokingly asked if there really were no women on strike, or if they were just "silenced" in labour history and sociology: "The tacit presumption that the history of the working class is the history of male workers has been preserved intact", they claimed, and "a woman on strike is an anomaly, a silenced and deviant case".⁵

In the following article we shall therefore highlight those less known women's strikes in the 1970s and 1980s. We limit the study to strikes in our home country, Sweden. Yet we believe that the results will be of general interest, as Sweden fits very well into the international strike wave pattern in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶ We will also relate the female-dominated strikes we discuss to the male-dominated ones in the same period. Swedish legislation makes a sharp distinction between official, legal strikes and unofficial "wildcat" strikes. The increase in the 1970s was solely due to the upswing of unofficial actions, and most female-dominated strikes were also wildcats. We therefore pay special attention to the treatment of women's strikes in the Swedish Labour Court, following Briskin's advice that "institutions, policies, laws, ideologies" are crucial to understand how the gender system affects gender differences in the labour market in general and industrial

⁴ CROUCH, Colin and PIZZORNO, Alessandro (eds.) *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe Since 1968: Volume I, National Studies*. London: Macmillan, 1978.

⁵ JULKUNEN, Raija and RANTALAIHO, Liisa. "Women On Strike – Nonexistent or Silenced?" In: KETTUNEN, Pauli (ed.) *Strike and Social Change*. Turku: Turun Maakuntamuseo, 1993, pp. 97.

⁶ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Göteborg: Avhandlingar från historiska institutionen i Göteborg 9, 1994, pp. 47-58.

conflict in particular. Consequently, besides material from labour market organizations, mass media and interviews, we draw heavily on the Swedish Labour Court as an important source.

The next section gives an overview of the judicial framework. It is followed by a section dealing with the most prominent women's strikes during the period, and thereafter a section dedicated to the treatment in the Labour Court. The final section summarizes the findings and presents our conclusions.

The legal framework

Up to the late 1920s, there was no legal right to strike in Sweden. On the other hand, no legislation forbade it either. Both the government and organized capital saw strikes as potential threats to society though, and strikers could be met by police or even military forces. There was also a law from 1899 forbidding workers to encourage other workers to strike or to try to prevent them from strikebreaking. Moreover, strike participants violated individual employment contracts and could therefore be fired, blacklisted or even evicted from their homes.

In 1928, after protests from the labour movement, the right-wing government passed two new laws, the Collective Agreement Act and the Labour Court Act. Striking was now declared legal if a trade union had given due notice, but with the limitation that the previous collective agreement had expired; the conclusion of a collective agreement immediately led to a ban on strikes and lockouts. If this ban were broken, the new Labour Court could sentence the individual participant to pay damages up to 200 Swedish Kronor (SEK), a sum that was about equal to a month's pay for a blue-collar worker at the time. There was also a considerable risk of getting fired.⁷

The Collective Agreement Act was still in force when the first post-war strike-wave hit Sweden in 1969-70. New labour market legislation was introduced in the mid-1970s that was to a large extent a result of the strong grass-root uprising; the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the social democratic government was more or less forced to introduce new laws. The outcome was, however, not exactly what the grass roots had

⁷ GÖRANSSON, Håkan. *Kollektivavtalet som fredspliktsinstrument: De grundläggande förbuden mot stridsåtgärder i historisk och internationell belysning*. Stockholm: Juristförlaget, 1988, pp. 103, 207-09.

expected. To strike was a democratic right guaranteed by the Governmental Act, one of the fundamental laws in Sweden. But, according to the new law, the 1976 Codetermination Act, it was not up to the individual to employ that right; a strike had to be launched by a trade union and only on the condition that it did not violate any collective agreement.⁸ Furthermore, the damages one could have to pay for taking part in unofficial strikes increased about ten times, although the main stress was on the trade union, not on the individual; trade unions were obliged to act to prevent or stop wildcat strikes.⁹

The new legislation in the 1970s touched another sore spot in labour market regulation. Already in the so-called December Compromise of 1906, the LO had recognized the “freedom of work”, that is, the employers’ exclusive right to hire and fire, and to freely manage and distribute work. In return the Swedish Employers’ Confederation (SAF), formally recognized workers’ right to join unions and for unions to negotiate wages and working conditions on behalf of their members.¹⁰ In 1974, however, the social democratic government introduced the Employment Security Act, which stated that firing could be legally challenged. Firings could not be reversed, but if the Court found them unjustified, the employer had to pay expensive damages. Taking part in unofficial strikes was at the same time declared a reason for firing, but that was just a codification of an existing practice. The Codetermination Act slightly modified the right, but brought no radical change.¹¹ The first precedent of the right to fire workers due to participation in a wildcat strike according to the new legislation was actually one of the women’s strikes we will discuss below.

⁸ FAHLBECK, Reinhold. “Industrial Relations and Collective Labour Law: Characteristics, Principles and Basic Features”. In: WAHLGREN, Peter (ed.) *Stability and Change in Nordic Labour Law*. Stockholm: Stockholm Institute for Scandinavian Law, 2002, p. 125.

⁹ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. ”Hur trivialiteter blir ideologi: Vilda strejker i arbetsdomstolen under 20 år”. *Arkiv för studier i arbetarrörelsens historia*. no. 72, 1998, pp. 46-47, 58-59. When the Social Democrats got back into office in 1985, the 200 SEK limit was reintroduced in Swedish law. The sum was then only symbolic, though; the damages should ideologically underline that strike actions not sanctioned by a trade union were not acceptable, but it should not threaten the strikers’ personal economy (ibid. pp. 46-56, 61-63). The 200 SEK ceiling was once again lifted by the next centre-right government in 1992, and the “normal” sum has since been 2,000 SEK. Yet, on top of the damages, the strikers are normally sentenced to pay the struck company’s court costs.

¹⁰ FRANSSON, Susanne. *Lönediskriminering: En arbetsrättslig studie av könsdiskriminerande löneskillnader och konflikter mellan kollektivavtal och lag*. Uppsala: Iustus, 2000, p. 406.

¹¹ Government Bill 1975/76: 105, appendix 1, p. 294.

Women on strike in the 1970s and 1980s

Women's share of the strike waves was only a small fraction of the total upsurge. An in-depth study of strikes in Sweden from 1975-79 shows that only 14 out of a total of more than 200 strikes, that is, 7 per cent, were organized by women. None of them were sanctioned by a trade union and thus were not protected by law.¹² Most wildcats were reactions against poor outcomes of firm-level negotiations, but some were protests against insulting behaviour from management, bad work environments, or piecework systems.¹³ For a longer wildcat to be successful, financial support and media publicity were often crucial. As we will see, women's wildcats had a problem with this.¹⁴

The Cleaners' strike, ASAB 1974-75

The Swedish strike-wave took off with the large, three months long, unofficial and much publicized miners' strike against the company LKAB in the very north of Sweden in December 1969. This certainly was a great upheaval that made a lasting impact on the Swedish labour market. Yet, miners were one of the most male-dominated occupational groups of all, and women were only noticed as miners' wives, supporting their husbands and taking care of the households during the austerity the lack of income caused. The first strike with women protagonists came almost exactly five years after. In the early 1970s, the company ASAB had grown to be Sweden's largest cleaning entrepreneur with some 8,000 employees. About 7,000 of them were hired on part-time contracts, 80 per cent were women and 30 per cent had non-Swedish citizenship. Furthermore, it was a common opinion among the cleaners that ASAB's take over lead to a higher work pace and lower pay.¹⁵ In the fall of 1974, ASAB introduced a new piecework system in all its operations. The new system increased the work pace without any pay compensation, and was thus the straw that broke the cleaning ladies' back. The Real Estate Workers' Union (*Fastighets*), had accepted the new pay system, but its members did not. Wildcat strikes broke

¹² THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Göteborg: Avhandlingar från historiska institutionen i Göteborg. N.9, 1994, p. 175.

¹³ *Ibid.* pp. 143-51.

¹⁴ FRANSSON, Susanne and THÖRNQVIST, Christer. "Gender-specific Strategies for Industrial Action: The Swedish Case in Historical Perspective". In: FLEMING, Daniel and THÖRNQVIST, Christer (eds.) *Nordic Management-Labour Relations and Internationalization – Converging and Diverging Tendencies*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2003, pp. 201-03.

¹⁵ SCHMITZ, Eva. "Kan de strejka i Norge kan väl vi också": ASAB-städerskornas strejker under 1974 och 1975". *Arbetshistoria*. No. 138-139, 2011, p. 18.

out in five different places. It started at the ironworks Domnarvet in Borlänge, mid-Sweden, and spread to the ore fields in north Sweden, to hotels and stores in Umeå, also in the north of Sweden, to Arlanda airport outside Stockholm and to a hotel, Billingen, in Skövde in western Sweden. Roughly 350 cleaners – all of them women – were on strike.¹⁶

Domnarvet, Borlänge

The uprising started at Domnarvet in Borlänge with a strike that lasted about one week. Although the strike violated the existing agreement, it led to a considerable wage increase.¹⁷ The cleaners had recently formed a local trade union branch and when the strike emerged, all union representatives withdrew from their positions of trust to be able to join the non-sanctioned action without risking serious reprisals. This was at the time a rather common way for trade union representatives to act during wildcat actions in order to show solidarity with the workers at their own workplace rather than with the trade union's official policy.¹⁸

The ore fields in northern Sweden

Another struck company was LKAB, where the strike lasted about a month. "Cleaners are humans too", a strikers' slogan declared, with a clear reference to the great miners' strike five years earlier in the same ore fields. The wages were gendered: former miners, who due to bad health or occupational injuries been transferred to cleaning, gained about twice the pay of female cleaners.¹⁹ The trade union, *Fastighets*, took a hostile stand towards the strike, stating that the claim to maintain the former wage-setting system was "beyond reason". The strikers therefore elected a special strike committee to represent them. Besides the lack of support from their union, the cleaners had problems with strike breakers. According to the Work Environment Act, employers must always prevent health dangers and hazardous situations for people not taking part in a conflict. Hence, LKAB and ASAB could bring in personnel from other LKAB sites. The safety ombudsman took the side of the striking women and wanted to close parts

¹⁶ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Op.Cit., pp. 125-26.

¹⁷ JÄRHULT, Ragnar. *Nu eller aldrig! En bok om "den nya strejkrörelsen"*. Stockholm: Liber, 1982, p. 138.

¹⁸ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Op. Cit., pp. 143-55.

¹⁹ JOHANSSON, Klas and GRAHM, Jessica. *Vi är ju ändå bara städerskor*. Göteborg: Barrikaden, 1975.

of the workplace, but he had no legal means to prevent other cleaners doing the strikers' normal work tasks.²⁰

Most of the striking women were married to miners and got strong support from the people in the area. Money remaining from a strike fund from the miners' strike in 1969-70 helped them financially. The outcome was that the strike did not stop the introduction of the new pay system, but the cleaners won a considerable wage raise as compensation. But also, the strike ended in the Labour Court and the participants were sentenced to pay damages for breaking the peace obligation. The damages were almost symbolic and nobody was fired, but the Labour Court made a clear ideological statement: one of the cleaners escaped the damages because she had wished to work, but was too afraid of harassment from the other workers to dare. Since she had notified the employer in writing before the strike, she was freed from all damages.²¹

Hotell Billingen, Skövde

The strikes at Domnarvet and LKAB were rather successful. In Skövde, though, the strike ended in a disaster – and in the Labour Court. When ASAB took over all cleaning business at Hotell Billingen in 1973, it shortened the average working day from eight to six-and-a-half hours, but instead extended the working week to six days and the limit for a performance bonus was raised.²² Of a total of 20 cleaners, eight were hired by demand, meaning that they had a formal employment contract, but no regulated working hours, and accordingly only got paid for hours worked. Such employment contracts were later found unacceptable by the Labour Court.²³ There were further eight MTM managers following the 20 women, which they found highly provoking. Most of the women were members of *Fastighets*, but the protests against the new work organization got no union support. The cleaners therefore dissolved the local union branch and unanimously decided to go on a wildcat strike. Besides the claim to get back their former working contracts, the strike was a sympathetic strike for the conflicts in Borlänge and the mine-fields, and also to pressure a wage claim that had not been satisfied in the recent local negotiations. But already on the second day of the strike, two cleaners were fired as “strike leaders”;

²⁰ JÄRHULT, Ragnar. *Nu eller aldrig! En bok om "den nya strejkrörelsen"*. Op. Cit., pp. 146-47.

²¹ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975 no. 16.

²² JOHANSSON, P. O. and HELLMARK, Ann-Britt. *Från LKAB till ASAB: Strejker och lockouter på den svenska arbetsmarknaden 1970–74*. Stockholm: Arbetslivscentrum, 1981, p. 58.

²³ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975 no. 24 and no. 31.

thereafter the main demand was to revoke their dismissal.²⁴ The remaining workers maintained the strike for 17 days, when, after a provisional decision by the Labour Court, they too got fired for “refusal to work”.²⁵

The Skövde wildcat was better organized than the strikes in Borlänge and the ore fields. It was also more militant: the strikers literally occupied the workplace to prevent strike breaking. Thus, Skövde was more dangerous than the other two strikes in the eyes of ASAB. Another difference, and a disadvantage to the cleaners, was that the hotel’s guests were in general hostile to the strike. On the other hand, the cleaners got strong support from people all over Sweden and local support groups in different communities together collected 200,000 SEK to help them, a very high sum at the time.²⁶

Arlanda airport and Umeå

For sympathetic reasons, cleaners at Arlanda airport outside Stockholm carried out a four-day wildcat strike, demanding that the fired Skövde cleaners be re-hired and get “fair” treatment in the Labour Court. After promises from ASAB to treat the Skövde cleaners “fairly”, the strike was discontinued.²⁷ The strike in Umeå, located on the north-east coast of Sweden, was also largely a sympathetic action. About 70 cleaners employed by ASAB and working at hotels, offices, and supermarkets, started a wildcat strike in support of their colleagues in Skövde, but also to press for wage increases. Some strikers returned to work after eight days, while others continued the strike for up to five weeks. Several of the strikers were sentenced to pay damages by the Labour Court.²⁸

The sewers’ strike at Brason, Gällivare 1975

In February 1975, when the ASAB cases were in progress in the Labour Court, a new all-women’s strike broke out in Gällivare, a municipality in the north of Sweden, merged with the ore-field municipality Malmberget. 38

²⁴ SCHMITZ, Eva. “Kan de strejka i Norge kan väl vi också”: ASAB-städerskornas strejker under 1974 och 1975”. *Op. Cit.*, p. 22. It is worth noticing that one of the “strike leaders” was born in 1955, accordingly only 19 years old at the time of the strike. JÄRHULT, Ragnar. *Nu eller aldrig! En bok om ”den nya strejkrörelsen”*. *Op. Cit.*, p. 150.

²⁵ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975 no. 31.

²⁶ JÄRHULT, Ragnar. *Nu eller aldrig! En bok om ”den nya strejkrörelsen”*. *Op. Cit.*, p. 130.

²⁷ JOHANSSON, P. O. and HELLMARK, Ann-Britt. *Från LKAB till ASAB: Strejker och lockouter på den svenska arbetsmarknaden 1970–74*. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 58-59; SCHMITZ, Eva. “Kan de strejka i Norge kan väl vi också”: ASAB-städerskornas strejker under 1974 och 1975”. *Op. Cit.*, p. 23.

²⁸ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975, no. 24.

sewers at the garment company Brason lay down their work, primarily in protest against a new, performance-based piecework system, but also to demand a wage raise. The conflict was immediately deadlocked, as Brason refused to negotiate if the sewers did not first return to work. The sewers managed to hold out for two months, thanks to financial support from the LKAB miners' strike fund. Finally, the company presented an ultimatum: if the strikers did not immediately return to work, it would be considered voluntary resignation. 16 sewers returned, while 22 continued the strike. They lost much power though, and gave in a few weeks later. Brason, however, stuck to its claim that the workers had voluntarily left their employment and refused to take them back. Since the strike had lasted for more than two months, the sewers were not allowed to try their case in the Labour Court; the ASAB strikes had just set a precedent, which we will return to below.²⁹

IMA Uthyrningsservice, Sundsvall, 1977

In the autumn of 1977, the workers in the dry-cleaning firm IMA Uthyrningsservice in Sundsvall, a city in the mid-north of Sweden, went on a wildcat strike. The strike was started by men, but the majority of the participants were women. The primary purpose was to bring pressure to bear on the ongoing firm-level negotiations, but the strike was also a reaction against a bad work environment. All the firm's 50 workers joined the strike, but after a day's break to await a new negotiation offer from the employer, only 26 of them, mostly women, continued. The major reason why only half the workforce continued to strike was that they felt unfairly treated in the shop-floor negotiations. The wage increase seemed to be unequally distributed among the workers, and the 26 workers who continued the strike would gain less from the local agreement. Hence, the strike was in one way also a discontentment with the local trade union branch. The strikers organized a strike committee with only women spokespersons. The outcome of the strike was a new local agreement the workers were seemingly very happy with. According to the striking workers themselves, they would never have settled such a fortunate agreement without the strike. The local manager who negotiated on IVA's behalf on the other hand declared that the raise was just due to a redistribution of the performance bonus among the workers; the employees who should have benefitted the most from the former agreement had voluntarily given up their wage increases in favour of a general rise for all workers, which was "a very nice

²⁹ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Op. Cit., p. 126.

gesture”, in the words of the manager. Nor had the new agreement cost the company more than the first offer would have done.³⁰

But successful or not, the strike also ended up in court. The Codetermination Act came into effect on 1 January 1977. The IMA strike, occurring in September 1977, was therefore one of the first wildcats to be tried under the new law. As the maximum damage of 200 SEK for individuals violating the ban on strikes disappeared, SAF saw an opportunity for employers to claim higher damages, and to start a campaign against unofficial industrial action in general.³¹ Consequently, already after two days, IMA summoned the 26 workers who maintained the strike before the Labour Court. The court sentenced the strikers to pay damages, but, contrary to the employer’s claims, no higher than what was normal before the introduction of the new law.³²

Another complication was that IMA Uthyrningsservice was not an independent firm. It was a subcontractor to the larger dry-cleaning company Tvättmans, which in turn was affiliated to Electrolux, a multinational company with its main interests in producing vacuum cleaners and white goods, especially kitchen machines. IMA’s main customers were local industries that normally needed their laundry back promptly. Therefore the board of Tvättmans decided to send all laundry to Örebro, 437 kilometres south of Sundsvall. Many of the workers in Örebro refused to “handle the strike wash”, as they expressed it. Yet, the local trade union branches disagreed in Örebro as well as in Sundsvall. On the one hand, trade union representatives were obliged by the Codetermination Act to condemn wildcat strikes and urge the workers to go back to work; if they did not, the union risked high damages. On the other hand, the local representatives were *not* obliged to help the employer in any other ways, which they actually did in the IMA case. Trade union representatives from IMA in Sundsvall travelled all the way to Örebro to help with the laundry at the Tvättman plant there, and the local trade union branch prevented the workers in Örebro from maintaining contacts with the strikers in Sundsvall. The employees in Örebro were strictly forbidden to take any calls from Sundsvall and the switchboard at Tvättman refused to reveal their home numbers. The ban on calls from Sundsvall encompassed *all* calls; when a

³⁰ Material from the Swedish Mediation Institute’s archive, Riksarkivet, series H, September 1977.

³¹ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. ”Hur trivialiteter blir ideologi: Vilda strejker i arbetsdomstolen under 20 år”. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 46-51.

³² *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1978, no. 19.

local newspaper tried to contact Örebro workers for interviews, it got the message that neither the workers themselves nor their phone numbers were available as long as the strike in Sundsvall was still going on.³³

Two important women's wildcats in the 1980s

A wildcat strike with several similarities to the IMA conflict took place in Helsingborg in the south of Sweden in 1981. The firm-level negotiations at Viggo AB, a manufacturer of sterile surgical appliances, had ended in a stalemate. Against the trade union's recommendations, the workers refused the employer's bid and went on a wildcat strike. The strike was also a protest against rationalizations, poor working conditions and the threat of layoffs. Literally it was not just one strike, but a series of short sit-downs in the span of four days. The first sit-down counted on more than 100 employees out of a total of 580 workers, while the following actions counted on roughly 50-60 people each. The strike was, however, poorly organized. A vast majority of the participants were young women without any experience of negotiations, trade union work or strikes. The claims were rather modest compared to many other wildcats in the same period, but to set an example, Viggo AB brought every participant in the sit-downs before the Labour Court, which sentenced them all to pay damages.³⁴

In 1985, Domnarvet in Borlänge was again struck by a wildcat cleaners' strike; as in 1974 it was directed against ASAB. The strike lasted for four weeks and encompassed 26 women, which was about half the total number of cleaners. Some of the other cleaners went on sick-leave to avoid taking sides in the conflict. Much like in 1974, the strike was directed against rationalization: 15 cleaners risked being fired according to ASAB's new organization plan. In a cynical way, the strike actually helped the company to downsize. ASAB fired 14 workers who had taken part in the strike, which meant that the company did not have to spend time or money on the normal procedures connected with firing. As in the 1974 strike, the cleaners had strong support from the male metal workers, who even threatened the firm with a legal sympathetic strike, which however only led to a judicial confusion.³⁵ The 14 fired workers did not just lose their jobs; together with their striking colleagues they were also sentenced by the Labour Court to

³³ Material from the Swedish Mediation Institute's archive, Riksarkivet, series H, September 1977; *Sundsvalls Tidning*, 23 September 1977.

³⁴ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1981, no. 19; Material from the Swedish Mediation Institute's archive, Riksarkivet, series H, September 1981.

³⁵ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1987, no. 5.

pay damages.³⁶ A year and a half later, a thorough – but slow – inquiry by the Labour Court found that the firing was not in accordance with existing legislation and therefore illegal. The workers' individual employment contracts had therefore neither been broken nor expired. The court argued that when threatened with firing, the workers had tried to go back to work several times, but had been refused entrance to the workplace by the company. Their claim for damages was denied, but ASAB had to pay for their economic losses, that is, more than one year's salary for each of them.³⁷

Public sector wildcats, 1979-1989

As in many industrialized countries, there are more women than men employed in the public sector in Sweden. In caring and nursing, it was already so in the 1970s. It is therefore not strange that some of the more noticeable women's strikes occurred in public services. One of them was a 1979 wildcat among the personnel at several children's and youth custody centres in Stockholm. The employees had demonstrated against poor working conditions, but without any result. Hence, after a general meeting, they decided on a wildcat strike. The strike only lasted one week, but meanwhile five young persons under juvenile custody managed to escape. The strikers had given notice of their strike in order to give it a similar design as a legal action, although they were not backed up by their union. The outcome was however a defeat for the striking women, who were sentenced to pay damages by the Labour Court. The strike was extraordinary serious, the court argued, since former juvenile delinquents in urgent need of help risked a relapse into drug abuse, criminality or prostitution.³⁸

Three other wildcat strikes in child/youth care occurred in 1986 and 1987. In one of them, eleven day care centres in Stockholm were closed down for one day. The children's parents had been warned of the action long before the outbreak; the personnel had explained to them that the strike was a reaction against a political decision to increase the number of children per centre beyond what the employees could handle. Many parents also joined the workers' rallies against the decision. The one-day demonstration had no

³⁶ Ibid., 1986, no. 20.

³⁷ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. "Hur trivialiteter blir ideologi: Vilda strejker i arbetsdomstolen under 20 år". *Op. Cit.*, pp. 53-54.

³⁸ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1979, no. 97.

union support, however, and was found illegal by the Labour Court which sentenced the participants to pay damages.³⁹

In another case, 350 recreational pedagogues, a vast majority of them women, took action against a political reform they claimed would worsen their working conditions. Eight of them, the elected strike committee, were charged for breaking the peace obligation by the employer, the city of Gothenburg, and got sentenced by the Labour Court to pay damages.⁴⁰ Also in Gothenburg, a decision by the Gothenburg Local Council to reduce supplies for the child care system was met by a one day long wildcat strike from 541 child care workers, most of them women. Despite the fact that the strike was short, 89 of the participants were summoned to the labour court. As in the case with the recreational pedagogues, the city of Gothenburg decided not to charge all the strikers. Yet, in this case the employer more openly stated the principles for the selection. The summoned people all had either particularly great responsibility, such as superintendents and union representatives, or had acted “especially irresponsible”, which in practice meant that they had also taken part in a strike one year earlier. The trade union refused to represent the strikers in the court, which was most unusual. The standard court procedure for handling unofficial actions was that a representative of the charged workers’ union would agree that the strike ban had been violated, but then would plead extenuating circumstances to minimize the damages. Instead the majority of the summoned workers were represented by a legal representative who was specialized in the law of procedure and with little skills in labour law. The representative even pleaded circumstances he thought were extenuatory, but in fact worsened the workers’ violation of the peace obligation in the eyes of the court. Accordingly, the court sentenced all 89 summoned employees to pay damages.⁴¹

The vast majority of wildcat strikes in Sweden in the 1970s-80s were “spontaneous” shop-floor outbursts. The three public sector wildcats we just discussed were, on the contrary, planned manifestations and the participants gave notice in advance in order to limit the problems for the so-called third party. The best prepared and organized wildcat strike of all was, however, a day long mobilization in Gothenburg in November 1988, carried out by 436 social welfare secretaries, all of them trained social workers and most of them women, in order to put pressure on the city in the ongoing local

³⁹ Ibid., 1986, no. 108.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1986, no. 127.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1987, no. 157.

bargaining with claims exceptionally high for local negotiations. The strikers had formed a special committee in advance, “Gothenburg social welfare secretaries for a decent salary”. The action was further backed up by other demonstrations: 300 employees rallied outside the bargaining hall in support of their negotiators; 200 of them registered as job applicants at the Gothenburg employment agency; and 67 people advertised in the local newspaper under the heading “Employers, look here!”. All but 15 of the 436 participants were brought before the Labour Court, but only 27 of the summoned employees were represented by their union. The plea for extenuating circumstances differed from the preceding women wildcats in the public sector in one important manner. The strikers argued that the claim for higher salaries was not based on “market value”, but on “utility value” and “fairness”. They argued that their job was depreciated, considering the high qualifications needed and the mental strains of the job. Yet the Labour Court was not moved by this: all 421 charged employees were sentenced to pay damages.⁴² And for the sake of completeness, in 1989, about 180 employees, mostly women, in child care in Stockholm carried out a wildcat strike very similar to the preceding ones. It was a protest against reductions of public expenditures; it was planned and lasted only for one day; and as in all other cases, the strikers were sentenced to pay damages by the Labour Court.

To conclude, the public sector strikes described here have more in common than being solely carried out by female employees. They were all planned in advance and directed against cutbacks in public expenditures. With the exception of the social welfare secretaries’ strike, they differed from the simultaneous wildcat strikes in the private sector through their planning, in some cases even strike notices, the predetermined length of the action, and the political demands instead of, or in combination with, pay claims. Moreover, they never actually achieved anything: all strikes ended up in the Labour Court which sentenced a vast majority of the participants to pay damages. Yet there were no very sharp distinctions between the public-sector strikes of women workers and the female-dominated strikes in the private sector, as many of them had legal consequences too. The next section thus looks deeper into how the Labour Court handled women’s wildcat strikes.

⁴² Ibid., 1989, no. 82.

Women's wildcat strikes in the Labour Court

As wildcat strikes by definition violate the peace obligation, one might wonder why not all of them are brought before the Labour Court. The answer is that there is no public prosecutor in the field of labour legislation in Sweden; it is up to the labour market parties to take violations of collective agreements or labour law clauses to court, where they are represented; there are normally two representatives for employers' associations and two for trade unions which together with three non-partisan solicitors appointed by the government constitute the Labour Court. Consequently, it is the struck firm that decides whether a strike action should be a matter for legal interference or not. In the aftermath of the great miners' strike in 1969-1970, the SAF urged its affiliates to bring all unofficial actions before court. In the eyes of individual employers, however, it was usually better to keep good relations with the employees, and only 3 per cent of the wildcats were brought to court. The will to take a strike to court grew the longer the action was going on, but still only about 50 per cent of the strikes that lasted for more than a week went all the way to the Labour Court.⁴³

In this light, the women-dominated strikes really stick out. As mentioned, only about 7 per cent of all unofficial strikes in Sweden 1975-79 were female-dominated. Yet, women's wildcats constituted roughly 25 per cent of all strikes that ended in the Labour Court. Why?

The public sector strikes we discussed in the previous section had a political target, which is likely one reason why they were brought before the court, even when they only lasted for a day. According to the Public Employment Act, which went into effect on 1 January 1977, industrial actions in the public sector may under no circumstances aim to "exert an influence on domestic political conditions".⁴⁴ An extra strong hostility from the employers was therefore not surprising. But the women's private sector wildcats were also met differently than men's. Most notably, three of the strikes presented above ended with firing. In Skövde 1974-75, ASAB fired two "strike leaders" directly, and later seven more cleaners; the sewers at Brason all lost their jobs in 1975; and so did the cleaners at Domnarvet ten years later. In the Domnarvet case the cleaners obtained redress from the Labour Court, but after a process so long that the redress was mostly symbolic. The Brason strike was never brought to court. The treatment of

⁴³ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. Op. Cit., pp. 261-64.

⁴⁴ The Public Employment Act (SFS 1994:260) 23§.

the ASAB case is, however, worth looking deeper into, not the least from a gender perspective.

Cleaning in court

As mentioned above, two of the Skövde cleaners were fired for being strike leaders already on the second day of the strike. In its final ruling, the Labour Court, nonetheless, established that there was no legal ground for the dismissals; the two workers were protected by the Employment Security Act that just had been made effective. On the other hand, the court made no objections against ASAB's firing of the remaining strikers at the end of the conflict. The seven fired women and their legal representatives claimed that the strike had been maintained only because the first two dismissals violated the Employment Security Act; consequently their action should be considered legal. The Labour Court thought otherwise, though. As the legitimacy of the first two dismissals could be tried in court, going on with the wildcat was instead found aggravating: the strikers had meddled in a dispute over rights. The distinction between disputes over rights and disputes over interests is very sharp in Swedish labour legislation. Interfering in disputes over rights has always been strictly forbidden and was thus an even stronger violation of the Collective Agreement Act than an "ordinary" wildcat strike.⁴⁵

It is further a standard part of the procedure for deciding the size of the damages that the strikes' legal representative pleads for adjustment due to some extenuating circumstances. Although they are rare, there are cases when the court has adjusted the sum downwards. When so it has been cases when the struck firm had violated or neglected its duty to negotiate, had behaved excessively provoking, had been hostile to trade union representatives or health and safety ombudsmen, or in other ways acted in a manner that could foment workplace dissatisfaction. In the Skövde case, a new, yet not successful, argument for adjustment was tried: the cleaners were low-paid, part-time employed, and accordingly a "weak" occupational group in general. The Labour Court has never, however, either before or after Skövde, taken any notice of general work standards. Yet, we have already seen one extenuatory circumstance in the ASAB conflict. In the ore fields, one of the cleaners notified the employer in writing before the strike that she did not dare to work because she was afraid to be harassed by the other workers. She therefore escaped all damages. On the other hand,

⁴⁵ GÖRANSSON, Håkan. *Kollektivavtalet som fredspliktsinstrument: De grundläggande förbuden mot stridsåtgärder i historisk och internationell belysning. Op. Cit.*, p. 343.

women on sick-leave or on leave during the same strike were sentenced to pay damages. They had not made clear that they were willing to work if they had not been absent for other reasons; hence the court saw their leave as a way to hit against ASAB, but dodge the responsibility for it.⁴⁶

It is worth noticing that when the Labour Court actually did find extenuating circumstances in some of the other women strikes we have analysed here, it was almost always related to the length of the strike. In the Domnarvet case of 1985-86, for example, some of the strikers were sentenced to pay twice the sum as the other participants, 300 SEK and 150 SEK respectively. The cleaners who got away the easiest were those who had returned to work before the strike was over.⁴⁷ The Labour Court described the seven Skövde cleaners as “extraordinary stubborn”, since they maintained the strike for as long as 17 days, and had not obeyed a provisional decision by the court to return to work. Consequently, the court unanimously agreed that the dismissals did not violate the Employment Security Act. On the other hand, a majority of the court members stated that the firing of the two “strike leaders” on day two of the strike was illegal and they had therefore never got dismissed in the eyes of the law. The two representatives for the employers’ association in the court, however, registered reservations against this decision. The cleaners had been defective in loyalty and obedience, and since ASAB had lost its trust in them, the obvious consequence was to sack them.⁴⁸

“Loyalty” was also on the agenda ten years later when the Labour Court found the dismissals of the Domnarvet cleaners illegal. By trying to return to work after being given notice of firing, the women had shown good intentions and loyalty to the company, and should thus be protected by the Employment Security Act, the court argued.⁴⁹ The fact that the Labour Court discussed “loyalty” at all in the Domnarvet verdict must be seen in the light of Skövde. The Skövde case had set a precedent: if a wildcat strike goes on without openings for several days, the firm has the right to fire the workers due to their lack of “loyalty”. Yet, although the 1974 Employment Security Act did not prevent companies from firing participants in wildcat strikes, all dismissals could now be tried in court. Before 1974 employers were in their sole right to “freely hire and fire”. That right did not disappear with the introduction of the Employment Security Act, but now they could

⁴⁶ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975, no. 16.

⁴⁷ *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1986 no. 20.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1975, no. 31.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1987, no. 5.

be urged to at least give arguments. For instance, when was a “long” wildcat strike so long that the struck firm could claim lack of loyalty?

But what about gender?

Drawing on the examples we saw in the previous section, we may conclude that participants in wildcat strikes had barely any chances at all to avoid legal punishment if the employer brought the strike to court. In most cases the punishment was just to pay damages of quite a symbolic magnitude, but – besides the stigma of being a “disloyal” person – strikers could actually lose their jobs if the strike went on for some time. Yet, justice is supposed to be blind: it should not make any difference between different kinds of strikers. Consequently justice should also be “gender-blind”.

But is it? First of all, is it possible to *regard* men and women equally, but not *talk* about them in the same way? In the written judgement from the ruling against the dry cleaners at IMA in Sundsvall, the Labour Court introduces men with title and surname, for instance, the local union branch’s “Chairman Höglin” and the “Ombudsmen Larsson, Ståhl and Gunnarsson”, while women are only introduced with their first and family names, for example, “Tyra Åsén”.⁵⁰ In the Skövde case, men got first names too besides their titles in the judgement, for example “Ombudsman Bo Svensson” and “District Superintendent Ingvar Eriksson”. Women were instead reduced to only first names in the description of the conflict. It was “Ragnhild and Britt-Marie” who got fired on the second day of the strike, and it was “Doris *et alii*” who continued the strike.⁵¹ In a preliminary inquiry to the trial, jointly undertaken by the employer’s and trade union’s representatives, the women were labelled as “the girls/lassies” (*flickorna*, in Swedish), as if they were disobedient schoolgirls. We have not found a single case where men have been called “the boys/lads” (*pojarna*) in the Labour Court or preparatory inquiries. Moreover, when pleading for adjustment of the damages, the women’s legal representatives appealed to the court members’ compassion, not to “fairness”: the cleaners were part-

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1978, no. 19.

⁵¹ It might be added that the files with the judgement were stolen (!) from the Labour Court. The patronizing prose is thus reconstructed from different people’s minutes which, however, does not make the language less demeaning. JOHANSSON, P. O. and HELLMARK, Ann-Britt. *Från LKAB till ASAB: Strejker och lockouter på den svenska arbetsmarknaden 1970–74. Op.Cit.*, p. 59.

time employees with low salaries and so on, therefore their strike was excusable.⁵²

The picture of the ASAB women as weak and helpless was further multiplied by media, in Skövde as well as in Borlänge and the ore fields. Newspapers found it acceptable that single women, in particular single mothers, were on strike, but what about the married ones? Could and should women already “provided for” by a husband really gain anything from a strike?⁵³ If we compare it with the overall strike pattern, wildcat strikes in male-dominated industries were by many accepted as a natural part of the so-called Swedish model in the two decades studied here. The central confederations, the SAF and the LO, both pointed out the wave of wildcats as a threat against the Swedish model. At the firm level, it was, nonetheless, usually more important to keep up good workplace relations; therefore wildcats were accepted as temporary outbursts that should be handled at the shop-floor level, not by the central associations or the Labour Court.⁵⁴ In other words, employers in general were more patient with “male” strikes than with women on strike; the latter violated a “tradition”. We have also seen three women’s strikes that ended with dismissals. During the whole period 1970–1990, only two strikes performed by male workers ended in firing, one in vehicle services in 1978 and one in concrete works in 1980.⁵⁵

Concluding discussion

So, finally, in what ways *did* women’s strikes differ from men’s during the 1970s and 1980s strike waves? First, male strikes in manufacturing were normally “offensive”, aiming to profit from wage drift by bringing pressure to bear on local wage negotiations. About three out of four strikes in all of Sweden during our period started in that way.⁵⁶ Yet, we barely find any women-dominated strikes of this kind. They were not totally absent, as we

⁵² *Arbetsdomstolens domar* [Rulings of the Labour Court] 1975, no. 31. Despite the lack of success, the same argument was used ten years later, in the case of the Domnarvet cleaners versus ASAB in Borlänge. *Ibid.*, 1986, no. 20).

⁵³ JÄRHULT, Ragnar. *Nu eller aldrig! En bok om "den nya strejkrörelsen"*. *Op. Cit.*, p. 153.

⁵⁴ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 297-99.

⁵⁵ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. "Hur trivialiteter blir ideologi: Vilda strejker i arbetsdomstolen under 20 år". *Op. Cit.*, pp. 52-53.

⁵⁶ THÖRNQVIST, Christer. *Arbetarna lämnar fabriken: Strejkrörelser i Sverige under efterkrigstiden, deras bakgrund, förlopp och följder*. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 143-45.

have discussed elsewhere,⁵⁷ but they only constituted a tiny minority. The only women's wildcat in manufacturing that lasted longer than just a few hours was the Brason sewers' strike, a primarily defensive strike with an extraordinary aftermath. Regarding length, strikes frequently have a better chance of success if they are short, if they hit hard from the outbreak and thus force the employer to make concessions before the strike gets "institutionalized". The longer a strike goes on, the more it saps organizational strength, both financially and "mentally".⁵⁸ Several strikes we have seen here failed on this point; in most of them the opposing positions immediately were deadlocked and the strikes then moved on without any openings until they ended up in the Labour Court. Women's strikes in the public sector, on the other hand, stuck out in the opposite direction; they were short, planned actions against political decisions to reduce public spending. Due to the political claims, however, they too ended up in the Labour Court.

But what do these obvious gender differences depend on? Maybe the strategy used by the striking women in the public sector tells us more than meets the eye. If so, what "meets the eye" should be taken rather literally: it is a matter of being seen. Despite their obvious failures, the striking women managed to draw public attention to both bad working conditions and the importance of their work. The same goes for other women's strikes discussed here, most notably the ASAB strikes, which shed public light on a low-valued job. As we hinted in the introduction, however, a pre-condition for any measures to make women's work seen is that it is in some respect "silenced". Men do not usually need to *make* their jobs visible. If men and women entered the labour market on equal terms, their conflict patterns would most likely not differ at all.

⁵⁷ FRANSSON, Susanne and THÖRNQVIST, Christer. "Gender-specific Strategies for Industrial Action: The Swedish Case in Historical Perspective". *Op. Cit.*, pp. 201-03.

⁵⁸ Cf. McCONNELL, Sheena. "Strikes, Wages, and Private Information". *American Economic Review*, 1989, vol. 79, no. 4.

The Workers of Northeast Chubut (Patagonia, Argentina): A Study of the Contextual Features that Shaped the Formation of a Working-Class Fraction

Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez

I. Topic, Problems and Sources

This article deals with the formation of one fraction of the Argentine working class in northeast Chubut (a province located in central Patagonia) during the 1970s and 1980s in the context of an industrialization project subsidized by the central government which aimed at peopling and developing Patagonia. In the Chubut region there are three cities: Trelew, Puerto Madryn and Rawson, which were formed as part of a model known as *polos de desarrollo* [development poles], a program promoted by the government for industries that settled south of the 42nd parallel. Chubut had, until then, a non-existent industrial sector: the only important economic activities were trade, limited agricultural activity and extensive sheep farming for wool production in its hinterland. For this reason, the working class was small compared to the south of the province (400km away), where there was an important oil industry.

Our starting hypothesis is that since the *polos de desarrollo* project was implemented, a new working class formed in the region as a result of the arrival of different groups of migrants coming from either other Argentine provinces, rural areas in Patagonia or neighboring countries. Following this hypothesis, we aim to understand how this class emerged and its main characteristics, paying special attention to the impact that this kind of subsidized industrialization had on the characteristics of this class and on its forms of resistance and organization.

The varied individuals that arrived at and settled in the region looking for a steady job started to form, through their organization and resistance, this

new working class. Having become a class, this group of workers found themselves in the context of full employment resulting from the frequent opening of factories, and enjoyed the concrete possibility of improving their living conditions.

Towards the mid-1980s, labour unions in the subsidized industrial projects were powerful organizations, capable of bargaining wages and intervening in the political life of these cities. However, these unions were not capable of categorically opposing the termination of benefits for the region, or the factory closings and layoffs that started towards the end of the 1980s and accelerated in the 1990s.

I have previously studied the process this working class went through from the hegemonic imposition of neoliberalism in the 1990s until 2005 when the socio-economic structure collapsed.¹ I observed that workers framed their struggle in the traditions and experiences gained during the period of growth in 1970s and 1980s.²

This article analyses the formation of this working class in the context of a subsidized industrialization process. My intention is to understand how this working class was formed, the nature of its first actions, how it organized itself, and the state it was in throughout the changes that began in the 1980s and continued through the 1990s. I believe that the regions where the subsidized industrialization projects were implemented may be understood as “social laboratories” to analyze the workers’ organizational processes and the way in which these processes varied in different contexts.

A key source of information for this project is a newspaper archive I have constructed through systematic recording of articles from the region for a 30-year period. I have also consulted government archives such as the provincial historical archive, the historical archive of the provincial

¹ PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ, Gonzalo. “Cambios en la estructura económica social y conflictos sociales en el noreste del Chubut 1990-2005”. Doctoral Thesis. La Plata, FHACE, UNLP, 2010.

² I use this concept of class in the sense proposed by E. P. Thompson where he states that “Class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms”. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966, pp. 9-10. I also make use of Hernán Camarero’s analysis, “Las concepciones de E. P. Thompson acerca de las clases sociales y la conciencia de clase en la historia”. *Espacios de crítica y producción*. FFyL-UBA, N° 40, Bs. As., mayo 2009, pp. 136-142.

legislature, and archives of the region's town halls. Aside from these sources, oral testimonies have also been paramount in my research. Written sources, controlled by political powers, tend to hide central aspects of the conflicts. Working exclusively with written sources would have led me to visualize just one part of this process. Such written sources do not reveal much about many forms of – necessarily underground – resistance. Neither do they cover the development process of organizations nor the emergence of working-class activists, their transformations and debates.

The emphasis on the deeds of individuals that built opposition to union leaderships and developed left-wing activism aims to recover the stories of those who are hidden by official history. This does not imply underestimating the role of the union leadership, such as its negotiating strategy,³ but understanding that the rank-and-file does not appear in conventional sources. For this reason, the process of recording oral sources focused on recovering missing information, balancing the contributions made by the different subjects involved in social relations. I particularly focus on recovering the contributions made by subordinate subjects, usually rendered invisible by traditional sources.

2. Subsidized Industrialization and the “New” Working Class

The *polos de desarrollo* policy was thought of as the creation of industrial centers that would radiate ‘progress’ towards nearby regions. In Argentina, Patagonia was the locus of this policy, and the Armed Forces, its main promoters. In the province of Chubut, industrial development programs were concentrated in the northeast where most of the job positions created by the provincial government were located.

In 1971, an industrial park was created in Trelew and by 1973, the Chubut textile industry ranked second place at a national level in several branches of this sector. It is estimated that there were 29 working plants in 1970,⁴ and by 1974, 43 different textile companies employing 4,300 workers.⁵

³ I believe it is possible to observe in social struggles as a whole, different goals, according to the different subjects involved. The distinction between forms of action, forms of organization, consciousness and spontaneity help us grasp a general understanding of the process. I call that sense ‘strategy’. See INÍGO CARRERA, Nicolás. *La estrategia de la clase obrera 1936*. Bs. As.: PIMSA–La Rosa Blindada, 2000.

⁴ ALTIMIR, Oscar. *Análisis de la economía del Chubut y de sus perspectivas de desarrollo*. Rawson, Chubut: Asesoría de Desarrollo, 1970.

⁵ BECCARIA, Luís (dir.) *El caso de la industria textil en Chubut*. Bs. As.: BANADE, 1983.

Moreover, in 1971 the ALUAR company (Aluminio Argentino SA) was granted the project of building a primary aluminum plant, which was installed in Puerto Madryn. In both cases, most of the investment was made by the state, leading to a significant transfer of public funds to private companies.

ALUAR was an important company with concentrated capital and high technology, whereas the textile park was formed by small and medium-sized companies with low capital investment, little technology and highly dependent on intensive labor. For this reason, the development of ALUAR would have its peculiarities: it is the only industrial plant from the *polos de desarrollo* model that continues to grow up to the present. Its monopolistic nature in Argentina (and, at the global level, oligopolistic) as a primary aluminum producer gives it the power to control prices and enjoy a privileged relationship with the state.⁶

Industrial development and job creation triggered the arrival of migrants to the region, which had a significant impact on the scarce urban population centres. Most of these migrants came from rural areas and were descendants of Patagonian indigenous peoples. Yet some people migrated from other Argentine provinces and neighboring countries as well. In the cities, rapid changes transformed social life in every aspect. For example, gender relations changed: the textile companies hired female workers, thus modifying the traditional role women had played in the province.

The development of these subsidized industries created a pressing need to attract people to the region to work in the new factories and associated activities that began to emerge. I consider that this important immigration constituted a group of workers which gradually, through different actions, became a working class that did not have strong bonds with the experiences and traditions of the groups of workers that already lived in the region. This does not imply that until then there had not been a history of conflicts or of workers' organizations;⁷ rather, it means that the emergent working class seemed to have forged no historical bonds with this older experience.

⁶ For further analysis on ALUAR, see ROUGIER, Marcelo. *Estado y empresarios de la industria del aluminio en la Argentina. El caso Aluar*. Bs. As.: Editorial UNQ, 2011 e PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ, Gonzalo. "Paternalismo, experiencia obrera y desarrollo del régimen de gran industria: la historia de ALUAR". *Revista Mundos do Trabalho*, vol. 3, n. 6, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil. julho-dezembro de 2011, pp. 130-150.

⁷ In fact, a colleague and I discovered conflicts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Consult GATICA and PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ. "No solamente pasaba el viento: sindicatos, huelgas, boicots, cortes de vías y lucha política en los primeros pasos del movimiento

The formation of new workers' groups triggered by new economic activities in a certain region has been the subject of study of several authors in different contexts which I will draw on. To study Patagonia, it is very important to analyze the literature on the development of the working class in southern Chubut at the beginning of the twentieth century related to the surge in the oil industry. In this context, there was a similar situation as in the 1970s: migrants from different backgrounds formed a heterogeneous working class with diverse experiences, which nevertheless, through the conflicts it underwent, was able to form a common class identity.

Research by Susana Torres,⁸ Daniel Cabral Marques,⁹ Gabriel Carrizo¹⁰ and Edda Crespo¹¹ has broadened our interpretations, forcing us to rethink some of our starting assumptions. Other authors who have either covered subsequent periods or worked on a long-term perspective and whose research has followed the same lines of analysis and interpretation have also contributed to my analysis such as Susana Vidoz, Gabriel Carrizo,¹² Ester

obrero en el noreste del Chubut (1917-1922)". In: BUCCIARELLI, Arias Mario (dir.) *Diez territorios Nacionales y catorce provincias, Argentina, 1860-1955*. Bs. As.: Edit. Prometeo, 2013. pp. 187-214.

⁸ See, among others, TORRES, Susana. "Huelgas petroleras en Patagonia: Inmigrantes europeos, clase y etnicidad (1917-1933)". *Actas V Jornadas sobre Colectividades*, IDES, Buenos Aires, 26 y 27 de Octubre de 1995. The author analyses in depth the relationship between class and ethnic background, aiming to find the connections between individual migrants and the formation of the working class. In these connections, the groups of each national or ethnic background play a major role.

⁹ CABRAL MARQUES, Daniel. "Hacia una relectura de las identidades y las configuraciones sociales en la historia petrolera de la ciudad de Comodoro Rivadavia y de la Cuenca del Golfo San Jorge". *Actas IV Jornadas de Historia Social de la Patagonia* Santa Rosa, 19 y 20 de mayo de 2011. In this and another publication, Cabral Marques analyses the specific problem of how a nationalist, social control policy in the oil industry implemented by the central government had an significant impact on the making and the characteristics of the working class of the region. The relationship between his starting questions and our own is evident, although they belong to different time periods. I will return to these issues later.

¹⁰ CARRIZO, Gabriel. "Trabajadores, salesianos y administradores. La disputa por el tiempo libre en las comunidades obreras de Comodoro Rivadavia durante las primeras décadas del siglo XX". *Actas de las I Jornadas de Historia Social de la Patagonia y II Jornadas de Historia de los Trabajadores de la Patagonia*, Neuquén, 26 y 27 de abril de 2007.

¹¹ CRESPO, Edda Lía. "De Germinal a Florentino Ameghino. Memoria, política y asociacionismo en Comodoro Rivadavia (1919-1923)". *Entrepasados*, Año X, N° 20/21, 2001.

¹² VIDOZ, Susana Laura. "Conflictos laborales y articulación política en el Territorio Nacional de Chubut (1930-1943)". *Actas VIII Congreso Nacional de Ciencia Política – S.A.A.P.* Universidad del Salvador; Buenos Aires, 7-9 de Noviembre de 2007; VIDOZ, Susana and CARRIZO, Gabriel. "El Yrigoyenismo y las identidades políticas territorianas en Chubut y Neuquen". *Actas Segundas Jornadas de Historia de la Patagonia, Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia*, 2, 3 y 4 de Noviembre de 2006.

Ceballos,¹³ Susana Torres and Graciela Ciselli,¹⁴ Edda Crespo and Daniel Cabral Marques,¹⁵ among others.

Without any intention to develop a thorough survey of the literature, I also mention other works that analyze the formation and transformation of the working class in other Patagonian regions, especially the province of Neuquén. The already well-known publications of Enrique Masés et al.¹⁶ have shown, through a long-term study, how the Neuquén working class was formed, and how it was modified and transformed through different projects implemented by central or local governments. Several works by Fernando Aiziczon¹⁷ are also relevant to my analysis. Finally, the research of Rodolfo Porrini Beracochea is also important. He has explored the formation of a new working class in Uruguay in the 1940s triggered by the development of an import substitution-oriented industrialization.¹⁸

Regarding the relationship between migrant groups and the formation of a new working class, I also use other contributions that analyze, in different frameworks and with different starting hypotheses, the influence of migration in the formation of class identity. The works by Trpin¹⁹ and

¹³ CEBALLOS, Ester. “El 1° de mayo en Comodoro Rivadavia durante el período 1901 – 1945”. *Actas X Jornadas Interescuelas de Historia*, Rosario, 20 al 23 de Septiembre de 2005.

¹⁴ TORRES, Susana and CISELLI, Graciela. “La Gobernación Militar de Comodoro Rivadavia 1944 – 1955. Problemáticas y fuentes”. *Actas VIII Jornadas Interescuelas de Historia*. Universidad Nacional de Salta. 2001.

¹⁵ CABRAL MARQUES, Daniel and CRESPO, Edda. “Entre el petróleo y el carbón: Empresas estatales, trabajadores e identidades sociolaborales en la Patagonia Austral (1907-1976)”. In: BANDIERI, Blanco y Varela (dir.), *Hecho en Patagonia. La historia en perspectiva regional*. Neuquén: Educo, 2006.

¹⁶ See MASÉS, Enrique et al. *El Mundo del trabajo: Neuquen (1884-1930)*. Neuquén: Universidad Nacional del Comahue; 1994; MASÉS, Enrique y otros. *El Mundo del Trabajo en Neuquén (1930-1970)*. Neuquén: Universidad Nacional del Comahue, 1998. MASÉS, Enrique and GALUCCI, Lisandro. (edit.) *Historia de los trabajadores en la Patagonia*. Neuquén: Educo, UNCo, 2007.

¹⁷ Particularly AIZICZON, Fernando. “Construyendo tradiciones en tiempos de transición: activistas en las luchas de los obreros de la construcción de Neuquén a fines de los años ’80”. *Actas del Primer Congreso Nacional Sobre Protesta Social, Acción Colectiva y Movimientos Sociales*, Marzo de 2009 where he analyses the manner in which workers of different background formed traditions in common in Neuquén in the 1980s.

¹⁸ PORRINI BERACOCHEA, Rodolfo. “Experiencia e identidad de la nueva clase obrera uruguaya: la huelga frigorífica (montevideana) de enero de 1943”. *História UNISINOS*. Sao Leopoldo, n.6, julio-diciembre 2002, pp.63-96; PORRINI BERACOCHEA, Rodolfo. *La nueva clase trabajadora uruguaya (1940-1950)*. Serie “Tesis de Maestría” de la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Educación, Montevideo, 2005.

¹⁹ TRPIN, Verónica. “Trabajadores migrantes: entre la clase y la etnicidad. Potencialidad de sus usos en la investigación socioantropológica”. *Actas ASET 7° Congreso Nacional de Estudios del Trabajo*, Agosto 2005; TRPIN, Verónica. “Migrantes chilenos que trabajan en

Perren²⁰ demonstrate how migration gradually modified the working class in Nuequén and Alto Valle del Río Negro. Mónica Gatica,²¹ on the other hand, shows the crucial influence of Chilean migration in the formation of a new working class in northeastern Chubut.

3. An Emergent Working Class

The development of subsidized industrialization triggered the arrival of workers to satisfy the increasing demand for labor power. The companies worked on promoting the arrival of these migrants. The most important factory in Patagonia, ALUAR, selected most of its initial personnel from rural workers. The company promised them housing, facilitated their move to Puerto Madryn and offered them well-paid jobs, thus ensuring the “fidelity” of these workers, who in general had no experience in unions or politics.

This is explained by one of our interviewees, Fernando:

ALUAR has always been characterized by hiring people from the countryside. At the beginning of the 1970s, when the company started, it didn't recruit skilled workers from Buenos Aires; it recruited people from the provinces: La Pampa, Mendoza... people with no union experience.²²

Another interviewee, Héctor, noted:

...the average laborer was from the country, most of them with no factory experience whatsoever, unlike those who had a special skill like an electrician or a mechanic, who did have experience from other factories. And to me, ALUAR—and this is something we always talk about—was looking for an inexperienced worker, so that they could mould them as they pleased. Those with a special skill, with some experience, were more reluctant, more prone to offer some resistance. Then we also gradually adapted to the circumstances and began to see

las chacras: la etnicidad ante una nueva ruralidad”. In: MASÉS, Enrique and GALUCCI, Lisandro. (edit.) *Historia de los trabajadores en la Patagonia*. Op.Cit.

²⁰ PERREN, Joaquín. “Hacer la América en la Patagonia. Los migrantes bajo la lupa de la comparación (Neuquén: 1980-1991)”. In: *Ibid.*

²¹ GATICA, Mónica. “¿Exilio, migración, destierro? Los trabajadores chilenos que se asentaron en el NE de Chubut a partir de septiembre de 1973; Memorias, historias e implicancias”. Tesis doctoral. FHACE. UNLP, La Plata, 2011.

²² Fernando, interview, 2 May 2008. He is a technical union member who arrived in the mid-1980s from La Plata with no prior political experience.

how things really work. Here some very important internal committees of delegates were formed...²³

Here we can see a significant difference between the working-class component and the way it was formed by the company: the personnel needed for unskilled tasks were selected from workers with no factory experience and, in many cases, with no urban life experience. Broadly speaking, these subjects knew little about unions or politics compared to those hired for more technically-skilled jobs. The latter did bring with them forms of resistance and organization which would be the base for the first internal workers' committees in the workplace.

In the case of the textile park, there was no homogeneous behavior given the presence of different companies. A significant fraction of the working class was constituted by migrants that generally did not have factory or urban life experience, something more common among workers in low-technology enterprises, who were not required to have a significant prior knowledge of the tasks to be performed. This happened in the context of an emergent working class, characterized by its heterogeneity, as Daniel points out: "Broadly speaking we had this idea that in the industrial park most people came from smallholdings and therefore had no proletarian tradition. But actually, taking a closer look, there were people from everywhere".²⁴

The "idea" Daniel refers to represents the views of his political party, the MAS (*Movimiento Al Socialismo*), which had sent him to the region to work in the industrial park in order to promote political activity. But as he points out, the reality was much more heterogeneous. The group with the rural background was just one of part of the whole workers' group. His own story is an example of this. He was from Buenos Aires and inexperienced in factory life since he had only worked in stores before: "I was 27 and had never worked in a factory. I was a political activist and came to work in whatever job I could get, but all my life I'd been a seller (...) I'd never worked in a factory so for me it was a whole new experience". One of his anecdotes illustrates the complexity of this workers' group:

...the first gathering for an *asado* [typical Argentine food] was around December 20, before the holidays. I was sitting next to

²³ Héctor, interview, 9 May 2008. He was part of a list —the "Rafael Uribe"— that opposed the leadership in UOM (*Unión Obrera Metalúrgica*, metal workers' union). He was a rural worker with no union experience and no political participation beyond the union.

²⁴ Daniel, interview, 4 April 2012 at a university in Trelew. He was a MAS member, an important Trotskyist party in Argentina in the 1980s. He arrived at the region at the beginning of that decade and was involved in politics in the industrial park.

the factory watchman, who was an indigenous descendant. Then, after the third wine, the guy stood up and started to sing a *lamento* [sad indigenous song]. I was deeply touched... When he finished, I stood up and hugged him, and told him, ‘So we start getting to know each other, Ancamil, you should know: the Argentine historical figure I despise the most is General Roca.’ Then another worker jumped in, ‘if it wasn’t for Roca, you wouldn’t be eating an *asado* in Patagonia’.

The contrast between the various stories and experiences is apparent. This heterogeneity was also visible in the different ideological positions. The matrix of the state project of occupying Patagonia was part of the process. This view, in our opinion held by most members of this young working class, was based on a supposed community of interests between workers and employers, whose aim was to assure the development of Patagonia. Such a view was strengthened by the idea that there was a need to maintain social peace, so as not to risk the industrial promotion program on which the emergent industrialization of the region depended. This view was very powerful because it was based on concrete elements. Subsidized industrialization depended on state funds, which the government began to cancel at the beginning of the 1980s. Workers were aware of this problem, and in many cases they developed their resistance strategy by allying with the bourgeoisie that had economic interests in the region and was in power. Such an alliance was aimed at “defending the region”, demanding to keep the benefits for the businessmen that invested in Patagonia.

Such a position was mentioned in several interviews. Miguel tells us: “...somehow I think we were – one way or another – coaxed to defend the interests of the employers. Whenever we raised our voices to demand industrial promotion we were defending the employers and not us”.²⁵ Daniel remembers one of the few occasions where his proposal did not get enough votes in an assembly in the factory where he worked:

...the management said that industrial promotion had been cancelled. Then there was an assembly, where we decided that a group of workmates should go fight by our employers’ side for industrial promotion (...) We always said that workers should never support the employers, but well, we lost.

²⁵ Miguel, interview, Touring Club café in Trelew, 6 June 2007. He was an important figure in the opposition slate in AOT (*Asociación Obrera Textil*, textile factory workers’ union) and a PI (*Partido Intransigente*, a moderate-left party) activist.

I consider that the characteristics of this process influenced the kind of confrontation and organization these workers developed. The identification of their interests with their employers, the alliances with these employers and the shared discourse on the need to stimulate Patagonian development were key elements of this history. I do not claim that these characteristics existed only in this region nor that there were no other regions with similar structural characteristics (such as in the province of Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost of Argentina²⁶) where resistance processes with different dynamics occurred. However, I think that it has been demonstrated that one of the goals of the *polos de desarrollo* projects —i.e. forming workers' groups with lower levels of conflict²⁷ than the levels of conflict in traditional factories— was successfully reached, at least partially, in this region of study. Neither does this mean that there were no struggles and conflicts. However these events had particular characteristics, which we need to take into account to understand the dynamics of the emergent working class and the type of confrontation that arose in this subsidized industrialization context.

4. First Years and the Dictatorship

This workers' group, structurally formed in the first half of the 1970s, began to make their first demands in a highly repressive context, forming as a class. These were not major conflicts: most of them were economic conflicts regarding working conditions and reducing daily working hours that the employers had imposed. I present here some features of the forms of resistance developed during the dictatorship. In these years, public demonstrations were obviously rare although if we analyze the situation against the grain we may find different forms of resistance. It is in this process of almost invisible resistance that we may observe some events that question the dominant discourse of social peace and the idea that the workers always followed their employers' lead.

The most evident of these initiatives was the refusal to work overtime. This behavior was expressed by the textile workers and those at ALUAR. The demand for better working conditions was made through this mechanism,

²⁶ See GRIGERA, Juan. "Promoción industrial en Argentina: el caso de Tierra del Fuego (1970-2007)". *Actas XIII Jornadas Interescuelas de Historia*, Catamarca, 2011.

²⁷ Particularly compared to what happened in the industrial centers in the country. See SCHVARZER. *Promoción industrial en Argentina. Características, evolución y resultados*. Bs. As.: CISEA, 1986. His hypothesis is that these projects aimed to obstruct industrial development in traditional industrial areas in order to alleviate existing frictions.

which made workers feel safe since it was not against the legislation in force. However, it was a demand that went against the “customs” of the region where, in the context of a developing industrialization, it was necessary to make intensive use of the still-scarce labor force available.

Gerardo related this ALUAR policy and the way the company dealt with the demand:

...in 1979, during the dictatorship, we had a conflict because we refused to work extra hours and demanded more personnel. So we were forced to go on strike. It wasn't actually a strike, we just refused to work overtime, but the company legally demanded us to go back to our routine. Then one of the senior managers —a former Fate²⁸ manager—came down, and in that meeting he subtly told us, ‘Don't you know this company is run by the Armed Forces?’²⁹

Héctor also remembered similar situations:

In a strike attempt, they came with guns looking for some workers from specific sectors, and they were taken away, this was during the dictatorship. We were at a demonstration in front of the aluminum plant – I remember it rained or drizzled – and two or three workmates were arrested, things like that happened... Times were tough.³⁰

The refusal to work extra hours was also the form of resistance in the textile park of Trelew during the dictatorship. As René explained:

...I started working in one of the most important factories in the park, and we worked many extra hours. This was at the beginning of 1977, we were already under the dictatorship and we weren't getting any pay raises. So, how could we handle this? The company was so used to us working overtime, 'cause we were in such great need (...) Our workmates had to be convinced that this wasn't a strike —'cause it wasn't actually (...) and there was always the unconfirmed, terrifying rumor, you know? There was a rumor that some guy and his entire

²⁸ Most of the share capital of ALUAR was the property of the Madaness family, also owners of FATE, the most important tire factory in the country.

²⁹ Gerardo, interview, 2 May 2008. He moved to Puerto Madryn in 1977 and had some knowledge of union activities since he had been a representative in Buenos Aires.

³⁰ In these testimonies, it is clear that the Armed Forces played a key role in ALUAR, a strategically important company in this industry.

family had been kicked out of the factory, left in the frontier, and beaten by the *pacos*.³¹

Furthermore, it was a demand related to these workers' possibility to enjoy life. As Miguel pointed out:

You were forced to work 12 hours. I got there in July... Imagine July in Trelew! You entered at 6 in the morning, and got out at 6 in the evening; you could do nothing else, you couldn't even see the sun.³² We even worked on Saturdays. My first confrontation with the company – without being a union representative, or anything – was because of the 8 hours thing.

Because of the repression, union actions were always within legal boundaries. However, it is evident that the region's young working class did put into practice several forms of protest during the dictatorship. When we make these forms visible, we can analyze the class characteristics and process of class formation in more depth. We consider it an open debate whether or not the working class was defeated during the dictatorship.³³ There is evidence to argue that it was not. In the region, there was no working-class tradition that the dictatorship may have aimed at destroying. However, the relationship between this young, local working class and the national working class forces us to reflect more in depth on, for example, how the ideas of terror and persecution helped contain and repress working-class protests as is demonstrated in the workers' testimonies.

5. 1983-1985: Before the Storm

During the dictatorship, workers began to acquire a collective experience. These workers arrived at the region in the context of subsidized industrialization, forming internal committees in some textile factories and at ALUAR. These experiences of self-organization generated an accumulation of power that first became manifest after the return to constitutional government. These workers had already acquired a common experience, constituted by their shared interests which, at least in part,

³¹ René Pérez, interview, Elvio Ángel Bel athenaeum in Trelew, 4 July 2009. René is Chilean like many workers of the region. The term 'pacos' refers to Chilean militarized police.

³² In the region under study, the sun sets at 6 pm in the winter.

³³ To reflect on this, I recommend GHIGLIANI, Pablo. "La noción de derrota en la historia reciente del movimiento obrero argentino". *V Jornadas de Sociología de la UNLP*. La Plata. 2008.

clashed with other subjects' interests. Yet this new working-class experience was strongly influenced by the production relations in which they were immersed, relations that pushed them into a collaboration policy with the employers in order to maintain the program of state-subsidized industrialization.

However, influence did not imply capitulation. Although there was a tendency towards collaboration, there was also an intention to forge some independent working-class politics. Both strategies were in opposition after the return to democracy, a time when this group of workers was already constituted as a class, with an ambivalent awareness.³⁴

The end of the dictatorship opened up new possibilities for this emergent class; restrictions were removed and they dared to set and advance new objectives. Fear began to dissipate. This is mentioned in Daniel's testimony about an assembly at the beginning of 1984, when the factory internal committee was formed:

...we were at the door when the foreman, the factory engineer and the manager came out to intimidate us, to prevent the assembly from happening. I said we must hold the assembly, workmates, we mustn't be afraid, we live in a democracy, blah-blah-blah. We gathered and held the assembly (...) and there we formed the internal committee...

³⁴ I follow Gramsci's ideas in *Note sul Machiavelli sulla politica e sullo stato moderno*. He holds that social group awareness is the result of the degree of homogeneity, self-awareness and organization achieved through the process of struggle and in the context of the relationship between objective forces. Gramsci considers that collective political awareness can reach different levels: the first and most elemental is the economic-corporative, the second is the awareness of the interest solidarity in the entire social group, but still at a merely economic level, and the third is when the group can see beyond corporative interests and develop political awareness. This ambivalence oscillates between the first and the second level; that is, between the defense of the small group (their interests being equal to their respective employers) and the defense of the larger social group, awareness that demands an independent strategy in the class, although not necessarily revolutionary. In fact, the third awareness level —political awareness— was not observed in my research. When this type of awareness is reached, the existing objective forces relations are deeply transformed. I also make use of Cabral Marques's analysis of the oil region in southern Chubut: "Frequently, this conception involved a low level of conflict in industrial relations, expressed in the graphic expression of the common people the "big family". Within the system of relationships that this notion expressed, the individual appeared to be contained by strong networks of sociability that tended to relativize the fringes of rupture between different groups and within labor hierarchies, strengthening the bonds of belonging. Nevertheless, at the root of this supposed harmony, fault lines still existed and resistance was expressed in various forms, but in fact it did not jeopardize the basic conditions for the reproduction of the model." See CABRAL MARQUES, Daniel. "Hacia una relectura de las identidades y las configuraciones sociales en la historia petrolera de la ciudad de Comodoro Rivadavia y de la Cuenca del Golfo San Jorge *Op. Cit.* 2011, p. 15.

This situation is mentioned in Rene's testimony as well:

...we had gathered, but still didn't go out to the streets, or make ourselves noticeable. There was a lot of fear, there was no democracy (...) so we read the constitution to our workmates, we read them the "14 bis" Article of the Constitution, the right to strike, so that they had the knowledge to justify their actions. That evening at 6, the factory was occupied.

The key role of the activists with more political knowledge was evident here. They explained to the rest the new possibilities opened up by the constitutional government. In these activists we can see the connections with the experiences and traditions acquired at a national level, which still in general were not absorbed by the workers of the region.

In both the AOT and UOM unions, regional voting lists to replace the union leaders were postulated. In AOT, the aim was to confront the leadership of the days of the dictatorship, and in UOM a list was postulated as an alternative to the leadership represented by Lorenzo Miguel³⁵ at a national level. These two union electoral histories were very similar: in the 1985 election the pluralist candidates with a platform of resistance won, but were replaced by the previous leadership in the next election. In AOT, the textile factory group *1° de Mayo* (May 1) was formed, winning the 1985 election. In this group different political sectors converged: Peronist groups (which headed the list) together with militants from left-wing parties such as PI, PC, MAS and PO.³⁶ A similar process took place in UOM. Sectors from Peronist currents together with left-wing groups (especially from the PC and the PSA³⁷) defeated the traditional leaders.

These were processes of important social mobilization, but ultimately there were no profound changes in the unions' characteristics. Although during the first years there were changes towards greater internal democracy and more presence in the streets, the new leaderships gradually moved away from that path.

In AOT, the new regional leaders gradually adapted to the national leadership, leaving aside the search for an alternative union model. The resistance strategy – which seemed to have won them the elections – was replaced by a negotiating attitude when it came to concrete union actions.

³⁵ An historic figure of Argentine unionism and a Peronist party member with a classical negotiating approach.

³⁶ *Partido Obrero* [Workers' Party], of Trotskyist orientation.

³⁷ *Partido Socialista Auténtico*, a moderate left party.

During the interviews the workers emphasized the importance of the pressure from the union national structure, through the cutting of funding, for example, when the regional union adopted a formal position against the policy of restricting grievances to the institutional level.

These changes meant, for textile workers, the dissolution of the *1° de Mayo* group, forming other groups affiliated with the different parties with some political weight in the textile park factories. One of the most dynamic groups was *Celeste y Blanca* run by the internal committee of the Modecraft factory.³⁸

Wining the regional elections in UOM did not entail becoming an alternative union project either. The regional leadership could not develop a working-class strategy different from that of the national union structure. The centralized structure impeded economic autonomy because the regional organization could not manage its own funds, and initiatives to seek autonomy were unsuccessful.

In the following union elections this group also dissolved, thus making it possible for the group aligned with the national leadership to win. In our opinion – regardless of organizational or formal issues – the greatest limitation they encountered in the attempts to build an alternative unionism was the level of awareness shown by rank-and-file members, of whom the leaderships (even the most combative ones) were an expression. They could not override the limitations of the corporate perspective of the demands for state industrialization subsidies which made it impossible to carry out an alternative project that supported and gave long-term perspectives to other kind of strategies.

6. 1987-1988: the Storm broke

When the elections that modified the union leaderships took place, labour unrest increased in the region because the national government had begun to reduce tax cuts for the factories in Patagonia. This had a strong impact on the industrial park in Trelew where factory closures and layoffs began to be more frequent.

³⁸ PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ. “Lucha y memoria obrera en el noreste del Chubut. Una aproximación desde la fábrica Modecraft 1990-1991”. *Historia Antropología y Fuentes Orales*. N.41, Barcelona, 2009, pp. 25-48.

At the beginning of 1987, the textile factory Gebco filed for bankruptcy, resulting in the occupation of the factory by the workers. This process ended in defeat that would be remembered in the conflicts of the 1990s. Juan recalls: “The first important factory occupation was that of Gebco. My dad worked there. They occupied the factory, but the managers were already gone and had taken all the money with them...”³⁹ After an occupation of more than 40 days, the union leadership announced that they “had gotten 80% of the compensation from the employers” and expressed their disagreement with “those who want to use this political struggle for sectarian, divisive goals”.⁴⁰ In spite of the tone of the announcement, it is clear that the factory closures could not be prevented, and the total payment of the compensations required by law was never obtained. Moreover, union leaders attacked those who proposed an alternative strategy to organize the struggle. Greater friction did not necessarily mean greater awareness or greater progress for those who proposed an independent strategy.

During these years some conflicts with teachers and provincial employees gained relevance. Both ATE⁴¹ and Atech⁴² went on strike for several months in 1986 and 1987. The provincial government of Atilio Viglione⁴³ suffered a deep crisis. At the national level, some measures were taken, such as the reduction of oil royalties⁴⁴ or the cancellation of industrial subsidies to set up new projects, which defunded Chubut’s budget, aggravating the recession.

The workers of the region found themselves in a new social context. They were dealing with unprecedented forces and it seemed difficult to confront them with the old tools their experience had given them. Their history of struggles consisted of demands for better working conditions and salary increases, but they lacked the tools to figure out how to act in a situation where the companies did not need their work force. It was not about fighting

³⁹ Juan, interview, 6 June 2007. He was a Peronist Party member and a textile worker. Presently he is an activist in the unemployed workers organization, *Aníbal Verón*.

⁴⁰ *Diario Jornada*, 29 April 1987, Trelew, Chubut, p.8. The leadership was responding to left-wing union groups, which had questioned the lack of reaction.

⁴¹ *Asociación de Trabajadores del Estado*, an association of provincial state workers in public administration, health, education, etc.

⁴² *Asociación de Trabajadores de la Educación de Chubut*, representing provincial public school teachers.

⁴³ A UCR (*Unión Cívica Radical*) party politician who won the 1983 provincial elections and was at the end of his term of office.

⁴⁴ Chubut has one of the most important oil fields in Argentina and a significant part of its budget depended on oil royalties paid by the central government to extract this resource. When the province stopped receiving this money, it did not have enough funds to pay the state workers’ salaries.

for improvements in the project of the ruling-class sectors of power; they needed to confront the new project imposed on them.

An alternative to the project from above was necessary, and for that, a corporate perspective was insufficient. The strategy of most workers restricted the struggle to demands within small circles of workers in which the collapse of the *polos de desarrollo* model seemed to match their interests with that of their employers. The only possibility to keep their jobs seemed to be supporting the owners of “their” factories to make profits. The solution seemed clear: there was no alternative but to defend their employers’ interests so as to keep their employment.

Furthermore, they found themselves in a situation where they could no longer trust their historical tools of organization and struggle. The biggest failure of the many unsuccessful attempts at building a new type of union was not being able to modify the political role those organizations played. In the region, the unions were incapable of creating bonds between different fractions of the working class. This became clear with the lack of reaction to the factory closures and massive layoffs. Almost all unions restricted their demands to asking for compensation, that is, for the factory owners to observe the law.

The situation of the state workers was somewhat different. During the 1987 conflicts, unions were growing stronger in the dispute with the weakened government. In 1988 there was an important change: when Peronists took office in the provincial government, some Atech union leaders were offered executive positions in the provincial government (the same would happen in 1989 in ATE).

7. 1989 to 1990: the shipwreck

The end of the 1980s was a historic turning point with 1989 in particular a breakpoint at a national level. Hyperinflation, riots and looting,⁴⁵ the fall of Alfonsín’s government and Menem taking office generated the conditions for the hegemonic period of neoliberalism.⁴⁶ In the region, the decline of the *polos de desarrollo* project accelerated: there were massive layoffs in the textile sector and in other activities. It was evident that there was a crisis in the industrial park and in the rest of the small and medium-sized companies.

⁴⁵ See IÑIGO CARRERA, Nicolás y otros. “La revuelta. Argentina 1989/90”. *PIMSA DT N° 4*, Bs. As, 1995.

⁴⁶ See BONNET, Alberto. *La hegemonía menemista*. Bs. As.: Prometeo, 2008.

In the construction industry, the collapse was steeper due to the decrease in investment and development of new projects.

The increase in extreme poverty revealed changes in the social situation. The Social Services Secretary of Trelew reported that in 1989 two thousand families were living in extreme poverty.⁴⁷ These were the families of many of the workers fired in previous years.

This year was also a turning point for unions. The power several left-wing groups had gained in the first conflicts of 1989 became evident: they won several AOT assemblies defeating the union leaders that tried to avoid confrontations, and positing again two opposing strategies. However, these were circumstantial victories that could not go beyond the short-lived instances of collective participation. Then the attack from the management and the union leadership intensified. At the same time, it became evident that the opposition groups were having difficulties in building a union political project as an alternative to the project of the leadership of the main private workers' unions of the region.

The defeat of the strategy for building an independent organization of the working class – a defeat that was suffered gradually over a few years – now seemed final. Juan pondered the growing “individualism”:

The struggles decreased in those years, because of fear... Many people had lost their jobs. So the other tried to protect theirs, they could see how the people who had been fired were doing, those from closed factories, it was pretty tough. People became individualistic, ‘I protect my job, I have children, have to bring food to the table’.

Miguel, among others, was fired despite being a factory delegate, something that was illegal until then and would have been stopped by the unions. This attack against the unions, and the mild reaction to it, made defeat more important: “When this happened many union activists, the emerging ones, were through. The worst part started when all the intermediate union members were swept out of many of the factories”.

For state workers the situation was not that different anymore. The integration of some of their leaders into the Peronist provincial government in 1988 had weakened them, changing the unions' profile and producing

⁴⁷ *Diario Jornada*, 5 August 1989, Trelew, Chubut, p.16. Estimating an average of 4 people per family, this meant more than 10% of the population of Trelew which in 1991 had 79,340 inhabitants.

deep internal fissures which for many years would not be overcome. In 1989 an event took place that, in my opinion, was very important for this model of union transformation: the Atech congress expelled the *Alternativa Docente* (Alternative Teachers) group, which was aligned with MAS, for having criticized the agreements that the union leadership had signed with the government. This was a key moment, for it was prior to similar events that happened years later in the private workers' unions (in 1991 in the textile sector⁴⁸ and in 1994 in UOM⁴⁹).

At the end of 1989, the state workers' confrontation level increased and it was manifested in the streets; they protested against the economic adjustments in the province. At the end of the year, there was a strike announcement from the state workers for wage arrears and against threats of future layoffs. This laid the groundwork for the conflict that erupted in 1990, the lengthy state workers' strikes, known as the *Chubutazo*, that ended with the governor's resignation.⁵⁰

8. Final comments

In this article, I have aimed to deepen our understanding of what has been characterized as the formation of a working class in the context of a subsidized industrialization project. Workers of different backgrounds migrated to the Patagonia region in northeast Chubut, attracted by growing employment opportunities, stable jobs, and the possibility of owning a house. In this context, a new working class was formed, in part by the small groups of workers from the region. I also attempted to analyze how the new working class created bonds with previous working-class experiences and traditions.

This group of workers gradually formed a class through a subterranean process of struggle and organization in the 1970s. During the dictatorship, this group of workers took several actions to fight as a class against their respective employers in order to improve their living conditions. After the end of the dictatorship, this class did not seem to have emerged from a

⁴⁸ PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ. "Con hilos rotos vamos tejiendo otra historia" Lucha y experiencia obrera en el parque textil de Trelew". *Sociohistórica Cuadernos del Cish*. n.27, Revista de la FHACE de La Plata, 2011, pp. 13-39.

⁴⁹ PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ. "Paternalismo, experiencia obrera y desarrollo del régimen de gran industria: la historia de ALUAR". *Op.Cit.*, pp. 130-150.

⁵⁰ PÉREZ ÁLVAREZ. "Organizaciones y propuestas políticas en el conflicto social del noreste de Chubut 1990–1991". *Actas IV Jornadas Latinoamericanas Hacer La Historia*, La Pampa, en CD. 2006.

crashing defeat, maybe because the attack against workers was gradual and of a different intensity around the country in relation to the workers' traditions the dictatorship wanted to destroy. In the transition to a constitutional government, this young working class called for new actions and showed an organizational level thus far invisible, discussing new models of union organization. It was clear that there were two opposing strategies, which were the expression of two levels of awareness with different potential possibilities of development.

It was then, in my opinion, that this class was formed regardless of its internal heterogeneity. However, it was also then that its development started to be undermined by the characteristics of the subsidized industrialization project in which these workers were immersed. During the 1980s, the ruling class began a systematic attack against the *polos de desarrollo* project for the region; as a consequence there was a crisis in regional industrialization. In this context, workers saw that their jobs depended on the maintenance of state-directed industrial strategies. Most union leaderships – and most of the class – pursued a politics of “social peace”, building alliances with the employers in order to maintain the subsidies. The workers had once demanded the improvement of their living conditions to their employers; now they demanded the maintenance of subsidies for the benefit of their employers. Indeed, this social alliance was captured by the factory owners.

This change, in my opinion, would be decisive, both structurally and ideologically. It helps to understand the development of this working class and the difficulties they went through to maintain and project alternative models of organization – different from the dominant models of traditional unions – or to oppose more decisively the factory closures and the cancellation of the subsidized industrialization project. This hypothesis seems to be reflected in the history of northeast Chubut. However, I cannot claim that this applies to every case of subsidized industrialization. In fact, in Tierra del Fuego there were important conflicts when the first factories were closed.⁵¹ Following E.P. Thompson:

If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not. We can see a logic in the responses of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the

⁵¹ Particularly during the 1995 protests. Some years before, in 1988, a UOM leader from Trelew and Puerto Madryn was sent to take over UOM Ushuaia, showing the repressive role these organizations played.

same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way.⁵²

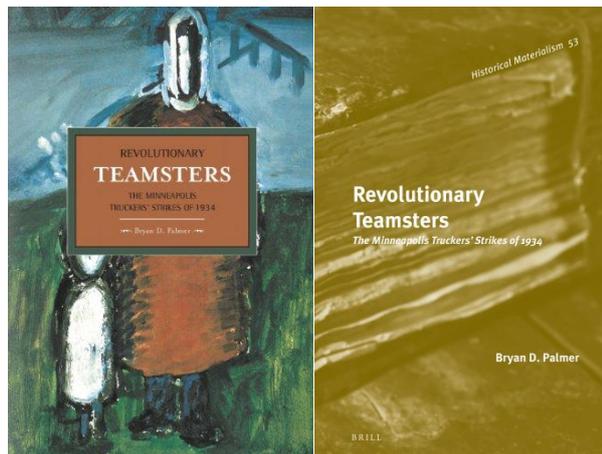
A fundamental characteristic was the different levels of confrontation in the private and state sectors. The state workers' actions were long-term although in general their claims were not met. On the other hand, private workers did not take general measures; they pursued short-term strategies aimed at the specific factory to which the complaint was made. The key point, however, is the evident lack of connections between the two groups. In previous publications, I stressed that this division may be explained by the role the state played as the promoter of capitalist development in the region by means of the subsidized industrialization model. As the crisis deepened, private workers demanded that the state maintain industrial promotion schemes. At the same time, state workers demanded that the same funds be used to raise their salaries. I have traced the different moments of changes in chronological order, and analyzed the period around 1989 when structural transformation was most significant. Although what I consider a defeat of the working class was a gradual process, it was between 1989 and 1990 that it was achieved, in a highly unfavorable national and international context for workers as a whole.

⁵² THOMPSON, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class. Op.Cit.*, p. 10.

Revolutionary Teamsters and Socialist Struggles Today: a forum

on

Bryan D. Palmer, *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strikes of 1934*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2013 (Hardcover) and Historical Materialism Book Series. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014 (Paperback).



Workers of the World has invited three academics to review Bryan Palmer's recent book on the revolutionary teamsters of Minneapolis in the mid-1930s. Sean Purdy, S. Sándor John and Marcelo Badaró Mattos reviewed the book. Bryan Palmer commented.

SEAN PURDY
S. SÁNDOR JOHN
MARCELO BADARÓ MATTOS
BRYAN PALMER

In many respects Bryan Palmer's masterful study of revolutionary Teamsters in the great Minneapolis strikes of 1934 is a continuation of his almost 40-year exploration of working-class studies in North America and Marxist historiography. The supremely rigorous research, poignant analyses and theoretical sophistication of the research into one of the most important strikes of the 1930s in North America recalls his first forays into Canadian labor history in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹ Like the work of the E.P. Thompson he has so thoroughly studied,² this is a historian's history: exhaustive archival research in diverse locales in the United States, thorough analysis of secondary sources on the strikes and the 1930s labour and socialist movement and a vibrant narrative of events, people and places that delves into the political and social history of the period.³ While not directly engaging with wider historiographical debates on Marxism and history, the Teamsters study is unapologetically materialist and informed by Palmer's long engagement with Marxist theory.⁴ Perhaps most importantly, this study of Trotskyists in the trucking sector in Minneapolis is eminently political and explicitly intended to provide lessons for today's working-class

¹ PALMER, Bryan D. *A Culture in Conflict: Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979; PALMER, Bryan D. and KEALEY, Gregory. *Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labor in Ontario, 1880-1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

² PALMER, Bryan D. *The Making of E.P. Thompson: Marxism, Humanism and History*. Toronto: New Hogtown Press, 1981; PALMER, Bryan D. *E.P. Thompson: Objections and Oppositions*. New York and London: Verso, 1994.

³ For other examples of Palmer's richly-detailed histories, see *Cultures of Darkness: Night Travels in the History of Transgression*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000 which is based on an undergraduate class that he taught in the 1990s; *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2007; *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009. Palmer has also published dozens of detailed empirical and historiographical articles in history journals since the 1970s and edited many collections of essays. Later this year, Brill Academic Publishers will publish a two-volume collection of Palmer's empirical and theoretical articles. It is also worth noting that Palmer has also been long involved with the prominent bilingual Canadian labour history journal, *Labour/Le Travail*, serving as Review Editor from 1983 to 1997 and as Editor from 1997 to 2015. A highly committed supervisor, Palmer has also supervised dozens of graduate theses in labor and social history since the 1980s at Simon Fraser University, Queen's University and finally Trent University where he has been a Canada Research Chair in Canadian Studies since 2001.

⁴ PALMER, Bryan D. *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

struggles, a concern long expressed in Palmer's prolific historical and political writings.⁵

Revolutionary Teamsters originated as a chapter in Palmer's second volume of his biography of American Trotskyist James P. Cannon. It includes three introductory chapters on the historiography of the strikes, the 1930s U.S. labor movement, the concept of the mass strike and the political economy of Minneapolis; 18 short, lucid chapters chronicling the ups and downs of the struggle, the key players and events and analyzing the progress of the strikes; a conclusion on the lessons to be learned today; and a useful appendix on Trotskyism in the United States in the 1930s. The 300-page book is richly illustrated with a total of 28 striking images including photographs, paintings, leaflets, newspapers and paintings.

Downplayed by many historians who focus solely on the Communist Party (CP) or bureaucratic trade unionism, Palmer emphasizes the centrality of the Minneapolis strikes (as well as similar socialist-led strikes in San Francisco and Toledo) as critical moments in the class struggle of the 1930s which played a crucial role in the revival of the workers' movement after several years of depression-era misery, demoralization and defeat. What was new in the 1934 strikes was the existence of a solid cadre of revolutionary workers in the trucking sector in Minneapolis belonging to the Communist League of America (CLA), the first U.S. Trotskyist organization formed in 1928 by sympathizers of the international dissident component of the international communist movement led by Leon Trotsky. Expelled from the established and much-larger CP, a small group of CLA militants worked tirelessly in the first bleak years of the Depression to provide a pole of ideological opposition to both the Stalinists in the CP and the conservative labor bureaucrats of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) to organize workers (drivers and coal-heavers) in the largely non-union trucking sector in the city. Led by the Dunne brothers – Ray, Miles and Grant – Carl Skoglund and the non-Trotskyist ally Bill Brown, workers in the trucking sector organized a resilient rank and file union and through a series of strikes that faced brutal state repression consolidated their unions and effectively ended the open-shop regime in the city. It was one of the first salvos in the great working-class upheaval of the 1930s that witnessed the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and important advances in

⁵ For some examples of Palmer's explicitly political writings, see PALMER, Bryan D. *Solidarity: The Rise and Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1987; PALMER, Bryan D. *Capitalism Comes to the Backcountry: the Goodyear Invasion of Napanee*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 1994.

wages, working conditions and union protections for millions of American workers.

What is also new in Palmer's analysis is his focus on the key role of CLA in the leadership of the strike. Along with the established militants and new recruits on the ground, the CLA sent its leading organizers such as James Cannon, Max Shachtman and Albert Goldman to Minneapolis to aid in strike organization and mobilization. Stressing the necessity of a democratic and rank-and-file based strike, they organized regular mass meetings, a daily strike paper and a Women's Auxiliary. All in all, he highlights the cohesive nucleus of Trotskyist leadership that remained free from the conservatism of the Democratic Party and the reformists of the Farmer-Labor government, developed a winning strategy and mobilized workers to confront the hostile and repressive forces of capital and the state. Palmer is not uncritical of the CLA and the strikes' leadership, highlighting their sometimes sketchy assessment of the reformist state government during the strike and relations with other trade unions in the years after the strikes that have been overlooked in the wake of the decisive victory in 1934.

If Palmer deftly outlines the "skeleton" of the 1934 strikes - organization, ideology, negotiation and conflict - he also provides the human "flesh" of the movement with a narrative punctuated by many mini-biographies, colorful story-telling and sensitive analysis. The three Dunne brothers who were central Trotskyist militants in the strike are portrayed in detail and labelled "Propagandistic Old Moles" for their persistent propaganda and incipient agitation in the first years of the Depression and contrasted with their older brother Bill who remained with the CP even writing a scurrilously sectarian pamphlet against his younger brothers' Trotskyist activities. The contradictory gender relations involving the important Women's Auxiliary in the strike is handled with the necessary nuance as is the reformism of the moderate Farmer-Labour state government in Minnesota. Palmer's use of various primary sources such as the strike newspaper, leaflets, posters, personal and internal party correspondence and the memoirs of militants provide fascinating detail on the day-to-day progress of the strikes. Palmer's exploration of the often conflictual personal and political styles of the Trotskyists' strike committee and various other key players deftly rounds out his overall analysis.

Palmer is concerned throughout the book with drawing the lessons of the 1934 strikes and the importance of revolutionary socialist ideas and leadership in today's struggles. As he states in the introduction: "Minneapolis in 1934 matters because, in 2013, it has things to tell us, ways of showing that the tides of history, even in times that seem to flow against

change, can be put on a different course.” (p.7) This is an utterly principled intention that cuts against much recent historical scholarship that feigns objectivity or disinterest in the fight for a better world in the present. It is an optimistic assessment for socialist and social movement militants today that recalls Gramsci’s famous dictum on the necessity of “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will”. In the present context of global economic crisis, war, environmental devastation and oppression, highlighting historical examples where committed minorities of socialists helped to mobilize and lead masses of workers to decisive victories is an essential intellectual and political task.

If the determination, shrewd strategy and innovative tactics of the 1934 Minneapolis strikers and the Trotskyist militants give us an inspiring historical inspiration, it is clear that the strategies, tactics and forms of today’s struggles would be decidedly different. Class composition and relations have shifted, employers and the state command massive resources of repression, technology and communications aid and complicate today’s struggles, multiple oppressions cut against class solidarity, most trade unions have ossified bureaucratic structures and practices, established left parties have adopted neoliberal politics and the revolutionary left fights against the current to establish embryonic footholds in the diverse struggles that we confront on a daily basis. Surely the keys to success today in any struggle would require an intelligent remapping and rethinking of the political lay of the land and innovative strategies and tactics appropriate to twenty-first capitalism. Yet thanks to Bryan Palmer’s inspiring history of Teamsters and Trotskyists in the 1930s we have a great place to begin this renewed project of socialist struggle.

SEAN PURDY
S. SÁNDOR JOHN
MARCELO BADARÓ MATTOS
BRYAN PALMER

To start with conclusions: Bryan D. Palmer's *Revolutionary Teamsters* is a book for today. This account of class battles in Minneapolis during 1934 is must reading for those intent, in 2015, on changing the world we live in. Vivid, in fact thrilling, is its account of how workers ground down by economic depression and union-busting rose up in victorious struggle. Gainsaying those from both right and "left" all too smugly certain that it couldn't be done, they paved the way for mass union organizing drives that followed on a national scale.

Minneapolis was but one of an infinity of places where it needed to be done, and far from the only opportunity for successful class struggle at the time.⁶ What made the difference, as Palmer convincingly shows, was the determined nucleus of revolutionary Marxists – Trotskyists – at the heart of his story. Up-front about his sympathies, Palmer is equally so when it comes to his intentions. To those who would cast yesteryear's revolutionary Teamsters as voices from a long-dead past, Palmer provides explicit rejoinders, emphasizing that despite significant contrasts, there are important social and political parallels between what working people faced then and the situation today.

I would argue that the key conclusion to be drawn from his account is this:

Revolutionary Teamsters shows what even a small revolutionary nucleus can do, even in a difficult situation, if it is serious – in deeds as well as words – about bringing revolutionary politics into the class struggle. As Palmer writes, "the coming together of teamsters and Trotskyists in Minneapolis in 1934 provides a concrete case of just what can be accomplished by workers guided by those who have a revolutionary perspective" (p. 4), even if the immediate objective is as basic as establishing real union representation.⁷ That is a living lesson for today.

⁶ From this standpoint, *pace* Palmer, "uneven and combined development" provides little guidance to understanding class-struggle victories there.

⁷ On p. 220, Palmer quotes Cannon's statement that in the combination of revolutionary leadership and workers' organized militancy, "one can see the power that will conquer the world."

Some may concede that hard class struggle informed by revolutionary politics was necessary in 1934, even that it might be desirable in 2015. Few seem to believe that it is *possible*, let alone act accordingly, today. revolutionary Teamsters brings welcome lessons, and inspiration, for those willing to show not only that it should, but that it must and can be done in the here and now. He describes the labor officialdom of 1934 as “far more reticent than it was radical” (p. 275). You can say that again when it comes to their descendants of 2015. How to meet today’s burning need to organize the unorganized, with or without immigration papers, and carry out the urgent revitalization of the labor movement? Today’s version of the hidebound labor bureaucrats who stood in the way of victory in 1934 can’t and won’t. Only the kind of revolutionary outlook and program advanced by those who led the struggle to victory in Depression-ravaged Minneapolis can make this possible.

It is commonplace for activists to bemoan the sorry state of labor today, with a “leadership” good only for bringing one defeat after another. What brought it about? Perhaps the biggest factor of all was the purge of reds who built mass unions in the first place. *Revolutionary Teamsters* is a contribution to reviving the historical memory of what they did and how they did it. Yet Palmer’s book is not an uncritical account of this heroic chapter in labor and revolutionary history. Nor is it a hagiography of Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon or his comrades among the strike leaders of 1934. Critical analysis is front and center.

So too – and this is one of the pleasures of the book – is the human story. Who made up this handful of hard-bitten reds that, facing daunting odds and obstacles, dug deep into the Minneapolis coal yards? Why were men and women newly awakened by class struggle “oddly jubilant” (p. 83) on the eve of big battles? When the cops busted heads and shot unarmed workers in the back, how did the militants of Teamsters Local 574 organize care for the victims and regroup to win? How did they manage to put out a daily strike paper, *The Organizer*, that thousands of workers made the vibrant voice of their own aspirations? Above all, how *did* this small group of revolutionaries successfully organize workers battered by economic crisis, facing relentless employer hostility, after seemingly endless retreats “led” by worse-than-useless labor bureaucrats beholden to the parties and politicians of the capitalist status quo?

Because of, not despite, their politics. The allegedly esoteric doctrine espoused by Cannon’s then-isolated cohort was no esoteric footnote, as mainstream historians would have it, in this rollicking story of rough and

ready Teamster rebels. Nor was it a sidelight to the “nitty-gritty” of organizing. Instead, as Palmer makes clear, it made the story possible: it *was* the nitty-gritty of how they built a powerful union – which wound up rocking the Northwest and beyond – from hard-pressed truck drivers together with the coal-shovelers, crate-heavers, “chicken-pluckers,” and others despised and excluded by the hidebound craft-unionists who lorded it over the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

“Going with the flow” is no way to win. As part of the Trotskyist nucleus then called the Communist League of America – itself scorned and derided by currents that fancied themselves the big-league players of leftist politics – they had assimilated the lesson that preparing real victories means swimming against the stream. This too is vitally relevant today, when what Cannon, Trotsky and their comrades called opportunism is deeply ingrained amongst all too many on the labor left. (To cite one example, organizing rallies for low-wage workers are repeatedly turned into photo ops for Democratic politicians. For another, see most left reactions to the recent Greek elections.)

“Jugar con reglas del patrón, es segura perdición.” Roughly translated, this means “if you play by the bosses’ rules, you lose,” a slogan eagerly picked up from revolutionaries by immigrant workers at New York’s Hot and Crusty restaurant who waged a difficult, successful union organizing drive – and won a union hiring hall – in 2012.⁸ In an oft-quoted retrospective of the Minneapolis strikes, Cannon insisted: “Our people didn’t believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity.”⁹ This is crucially pertinent to events in the U.S. today, as the labor officialdom preaches submission to the bosses’ anti-labor laws, endlessly subjugating the labor movement to the same Democratic Party that leads the charge against education workers, wages endless wars abroad, and ramps up police-state measures “at home.” To unchain workers’ power today, it really is essential to build an opposition guided by the lessons of class struggle; that is, by revolutionary politics.

Palmer’s book sheds light as well on the very current topic of police violence against the oppressed. Mass protests from Ferguson, Missouri to New York City have brought claims from “official” (Democrat-aligned) leaders that it’s a question of a “few bad apples,” and that racist police

⁸ See “Hot and Crusty Workers Win With Groundbreaking Contract,” *The Internationalist* (November 2012), <http://www.internationalist.org/hotandcrustyworkerswin1211.html>.

⁹ James P. Cannon, “The Great Minneapolis Strikes,” *Fourth International*, May 1944.

violence can be reformed away. More radical forces insist the problem is systemic; young Marxists have sought to popularize the chant that “Only revolution can bring justice.”

The Trotskyist-led Teamster insurgents of 1934 stressed that repression is the *function* of the “special bodies of armed men” at the core of the capitalist state. When police bullets wounded at least 67 unarmed strikers on “Bloody Friday” (20 July 1934), *The Organizer* drove home the lesson that police are “the Uniformed Protectors of Profits.” Guiding the strikes to victory in the face of this organized state violence required an understanding of this basic class insight plus a sophisticated sense of strategy and tactics informed by the lessons of previous class struggles, not only in the United States but internationally. Union militancy was necessary but not sufficient; again, *revolutionary* leadership was required.

Capitalist or working-class politics? As co-thinkers of Leon Trotsky, Minneapolis Teamster leaders knew that for unionists to defeat powerful employers backed by capitalism’s politicians and state power, they had to go beyond trade-unionism “pure and simple” and enter the terrain of politics.

Revolutionary Teamsters is an antidote to the conventional wisdom snake-oil tale that Roosevelt’s National Labor Relations Act, Labor Board and federal mediators embodied victories for the working class. As savvy veterans of battles going back to Wobbly days, Minneapolis Trotskyists showed their ability to outmaneuver local politicians, and sent some of those mediators scurrying out of town with their tails between their legs. The felt need to maneuver in the face of “Farmer-Labor” governor Floyd Olson’s support in the labor movement is understandable – but the book details important weaknesses in their approach regarding this capitalist politician. Trotsky was, moreover (as Palmer notes), quite critical of what he saw as his U.S. comrades’ tendency towards conciliation of “Rooseveltian” trade-unionists. From the standpoint of the exiled Red Army organizer, principled intransigence in the fight for the political independence of the working class forms the basis for smart tactics in difficult situations.

If that was a lesson of Bolshevism, so too was Lenin’s insistence that labor’s power must be brought into the fight against all forms of oppression if labor, and all those downtrodden by capitalist society, are to win. Key to the Minneapolis struggle was the fighting alliance Local 574 forged with the unemployed and with farmers facing ruin in the capitalist crisis. Palmer highlights the importance of the union’s Women’s Auxiliary, refuting historians who have put it down as an expression of submission rather than

what it was: one of the most vital weapons in for defeating local rulers ruthlessly determined to keep the women and men of 574 in their “place.”

So no, the past is no “foreign country” for those intent on learning how to organize a different future. Today, some of the less deluded mouthpieces of capitalism admit to a sneaking suspicion that the working class will not forever take a beating without striking back. Glimpses and flashes have emerged, in immigrant workers’ revival of International Workers’ Day; in the May Day 2008 longshore union action against the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that shut down all 29 ports on the West Coast; in work stoppages there and in Brazil for the freedom of radical black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal; in the increasingly open discontent of low-wage workers throughout the U.S., the determination of strikers standing up to the robber oil barons and a number of organizing campaigns. Of course we cannot pinpoint when broader struggles will erupt. What we can clearly affirm is that for a successful counteroffensive to be waged, organizing now on the basis of a program to win the class struggle is of the greatest importance.

Through the many and varied sources Palmer brings to bear, we hear the voices of those who built on that basis in the years leading up to the victories of ’34. Among them are legendary militants such as the Dunne brothers and “illegal” immigrant revolutionary Carl “Skogie” Skoglund; less-known but pivotal activists like Jack Maloney, Carlos Hudson and the Dakota Sioux Trotskyist Ray Rainbolt, commander of the Union Defense Guard;¹⁰ picket-line defenders and Women’s Auxiliary organizers like Clara Dunne, Marvel Scholl and the indomitable “Mrs. Carle”; together with Cannon and other Trotskyist leaders who helped beat a path to victory in Minneapolis. Readers looking towards revolutionary future for the world workers movement will get the satisfying sensation of being in conversation with some of “our people” from the past, who have much to pass down to us today.

¹⁰ Rainbolt was one of several Sioux and Ojibwe (Chippewa) revolutionary Teamsters who issued a humorous rejoinder to claims that the union was “un-American” (p. 264n).

SEAN PURDY
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BRYAN PALMER

In this second decade of the twenty-first century, any analysis of current social conflicts would recognize that we are witnessing social struggles of great proportions in diverse places around the planet. Mass protests have multiplied with some reaching the proportions of true political revolutions (even if many times they are incomplete) and almost all have questioned the current bases of capitalist accumulation (if not capitalism itself). Surely they were impelled in great part (but not exclusively) by the crisis detonated in 2008 and the “austerity” packages used by governments to combat it: from the “Arab Spring” (2010-2011) to the protests against the deaths of the Mexican students (2014) passing through the diverse “Occupy” movements in North America (and other places), by the Spanish 15M or the “June Days” of 2013 in Brazil, among many others. Analyses of these movements have highlighted among their principal characteristics, the profile of the protestors – more heterogeneous, young and educated –, the “horizontal” organizational forms and the rejection of traditional leaderships and organizational instruments typical of the struggles of the working class since the nineteenth century such as parties and unions.

There are good reasons for such a rejection including: the exclusionary character that dominates the workers’ movement with representation almost always restricted to the formal sector of the working class in which precariousness, informality and elevated unemployment rates are widely evident (in the North as much as the South of the planet despite different dimensions); the bureaucratic practices of union leaders more interested in maintaining their relative privileges than effectively representing class interests; and the clear commitment to the ruling order by the leaderships of the immense majority of parties born through workers’ movements that still possess parliamentary/electoral weight. Yet the recent movements also face flagrant difficulties in relation to their capacity to guarantee that their explicit or implicit demands in mass mobilizations result in positive outcomes on the political level or even to take advantage of the moments of greater mobilization to create more permanent spaces of organization and struggle. Is this situation inevitable? Would it not be possible to (re)connect the recent mass mobilizations and their participants to the more traditional organizations of the working class, potentializing the former and revitalizing the latter? Can the history of the struggles of the working class in the

twentieth century, without pretension to give scholastic “lessons” to current generations, raise discussions about past experiences and processes that could be useful in the search for solutions to the impasses of the present?

It is exactly in this sense that Bryan Palmer’s book, *Revolutionary Teamsters*, may be read as very rich contribution to analyses of the workers’ movement in North America in the context of the capitalist crisis that emerged in 1929, but also as a stimulus to debate alternatives in the present situation of social struggles. After all, the subject of the book – the truckers’ strikes in Minneapolis in 1934 – brings together a group of events that were central turning points in relation to questions of mobilization and organization in the decade. A context of capitalist crisis prevailed with the whole range of consequences for the working class that we all know so well today: a brutal rise in unemployment, the reduction of real wages of those who have work, the absolute and relative pauperization of the majority of the population as well as the anti-union politics of the bosses (combined with the passivity/complicity of the union bureaucracies encrusted in the craft unions dominant in the American Federation of Labor/AFL) and the combination of strongly repressive measures and mechanisms of social assistance (and at the most anti-cyclical interventions) of the state.

In 1934, after various years of the evident decline of the capacity of intervention of the workers’ movement, a few mass strikes initiated a significant shift in the situation of American unionism. This was the case of the San Francisco general strike led by the stevedores of the city’s port that paralyzed around 125,000 workers at its peak. Similarly, the Toledo strikes, initiated in auto-parts factories, had a great impact that counted on the strong support of the unemployed sector of the working class. Treated in the second chapter of Palmer’s book, these strikes were characterized by the strong union and political presence of the left who organized the strike movements and together with the Minneapolis strikes of the same year provided a decisive impulse to the reorganization of American unionism that in the following years would result in the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).

The truckers’ strikes in Minneapolis and the movements with which they connected – in a city with a little more than 450,000 inhabitants (the fifteenth largest city in the United States at the time) there were 30,000 unemployed and around 120,000 depending on some form of public assistance in the first years of the 1930s – are highlighted as one of the great events of the time and have been evaluated by other studies, all of which are addressed by Palmer in the first chapter of the book. Even so, *Revolutionary Teamsters* is distinguished by a strong dose of originality for diverse

reasons. First, by the emphasis he gives to the importance of a left-wing leadership distinct from the vanguard organized in Toledo by the American Workers' Party (an organization with a proletarian base and a fluid reformist program spurred on by the radical events of 1934) and the leaders of the San Francisco strikes linked to the Stalinist Communist party in its most sectarian phase at the beginning of the 1930s. Minneapolis witnessed the surprising encounter between a small (really small with only a half dozen militants at the beginning of the process), but decided groups of militants from the communist left opposition – Trotskyists organized in the Communist League of America – and the largely unorganized workers in the trucking sector.

Palmer's analysis demonstrates that such leadership had a decisive role in the grass roots organization of the trucking sector, widening the professional category and the mobilized base beyond the drivers and their helpers to involve all workers involved in the loading and unloading of goods. Studying this grass-roots organization in the 1930s, especially in Chapter 4 – accomplished through the patience of the revolutionary “old mole” referred to by Marx – Palmer reminds us that it was not done in detriment to the occupation and renovation of the existing space of the established union (Local 574 of the General Drivers' Union of the AFL). Establishing anterior relations with the sector most disposed to mobilize for union recognition, the left vanguard was able in 1934 to transform the union into a more combative organization with a wider industrial logic of representation. The result was evident with the increase in the number of workers organized in the sector from between 75 and 175 in 1933 (p.37) to some thousands (2-3 thousand in April and close to 7 thousand in the middle of the year) who fought for union recognition during the strikes of 1934 (p.60).

The emphasis on the importance of the organizational work of the Trotskyist leadership leads the author to highlight the role of James P. Cannon, one of the principal leaders of the Left Opposition in the period and the subject of an important biography already published by Palmer.¹¹ Cannon did not accompany the actions in Minneapolis from a distance but involved himself directly on the ground, especially from the final days of the second strike in May 1934 when he brought to the city his experience of decades as an organizer of movements to strengthen the Strike Committee constructed to sustain the struggle (see chapter 10). Cannon also represented a point of

¹¹PALMER, Bryan. *James P. Cannon and the origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2007.

convergence between the local mobilizations in Minneapolis and the wider conjuncture of the class struggle on the national level. As a way to understand the role of Trotskyists in the wider movement, Palmer includes an appendix to the book with a synthetic recuperation of the trajectory of Trotskyist militants and their organizations in the United States in the years before the 1934 strikes.

All the emphasis the analysis places on the role of leadership should not lead us to a rash judgment that it was the only element responsible for the dimensions of the movements in Minneapolis in 1934. On the contrary, Palmer's chief interest is in registering the specific form of the virtuous "dialectic of leaders and led" that occurred in this process. Such a dialectic is visible to the reader because the author presents a detailed narrative – supported by memoirs, testimonies, official documents and, especially, extensive research in periodicals of the period – of the events of the strikes in February, May and July/August. The narrative is certainly designed to highlight important particularities of the movement such as the degree of the extremely detailed preparation of all the activities undertaken by the militants, their preoccupation with mobilizing the unemployed (Chapter 6), the involvement of families (with emphasis on the role of women, dealt with in Chapter 7) and the disposition to confront harsh repression. The latter may be observed as much in the conflicts between strikers/picketers and the police and hired militias, such as in the "Battle of Deputies Run" that occurred in the May strike (see Chapter 9) as in the clashes of July/August when the National Guard was called up and martial law decreed against the strikers by the supposedly "progressive" governor of the Farmer-Labour Party. This latter battle was an even more violent confrontation, especially "Bloody Friday" on July 20 when dozens of strikers were arrested, many were wounded by bullets and one man was killed as a result of his wounds (see Chapters 14 and 15).

The descriptive richness of the narrative of these events is strongly integrated with a theoretical-analytical approach that is the principal source of the originality of Palmer in relation to those who preceded him. In a creative form, he employs the theory of uneven and combined development to explain the process. In Chapter 3, Palmer recuperates the history of the workers' movement in Minneapolis, demonstrating that significant advances in struggles at the end of the 1910s were followed by a series of defeats for workers in the 1920s and the rise of a reactionary and anti-union sector, organized around the Citizens' Alliance, that pushed left-wing unionism to the margins and even relegated the class collaborationist mediation of conflicts by the AFL, highly relevant in other areas of the country, to a

secondary role. However, in the midst of the powder keg of contradictions generated by the economic crisis after 1929, the relative “backwardness” of the local workers’ movement became the principal reason for the privileged position of the city as a platform for the workers’ movement to “leapfrog” towards the most important manifestation of class struggle at that time in the United States. In Palmer’s words: “labor’s very failures meant that there were spaces for radicalism to breath, for it could not be suffocated by mainstream counterparts almost entirely lacking in strength” (pp. 33-34). This same explanatory approach allows the author to explain how the ruling class exacted revenge in the first years of the 1940s against the leaders and conquests of the strikes such as the small economic victories of the February strike, the recognition of the union after the May strike and to a certain point the surprising victory of the July/August strike that resulted in wage increases, improvements in working conditions and a significant impulse for union reorganization not only locally, but in many other cities (see Chapter 21).

Yet the importance of Palmer’s book goes well beyond the history of the strikes themselves that he tells. The central point is that Minneapolis in 1934 “matters because [today] it has things to tell us” (p.7). Which things? Among the “lessons” of this process, Palmer stresses: “a sense of both the necessity *and* possibility of rebuilding the kind of revolutionary organization that can simultaneously nurture a creative leadership *and* encourage and develop the militant combativity of the working class. Struggles that secure gains in new causes have to be fought through, planned, and mobilized in order to be won”. Without doubt, this book rescues this “important chapter in the history of the possibility of class struggle” (p.268).

SEAN PURDY
S. SÁNDOR JOHN
MARCELO BADARÓ MATTOS
BRYAN PALMER

My thanks to *Workers of the World* for providing a forum for the discussion of my *Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers' Strikes of 1934*. The commentaries by Sean Purdy, Marcelo Badaró Mattos, and S. Sándor John are laudatory and generous. It is gratifying to read reviews that value history, not as some kind of precious artifact, but as a living process, with relevance in the here and now. I wrote the book to make the elementary point, too often lost in the swirl of playful postmodernisms or detailed accounts of cultural minutiae, that history matters. To be sure, as Sean Purdy points out, we cannot recreate the past in current political struggles, and just how much has changed and what that means for how we approach the project of socio-economic transformation in our times are critically important questions, with which we must engage rigorously. That said, it is important not to lose sight of continuities, of principles that do not die. Too much is perhaps often made of how *everything* today is so relentlessly different than *anything* we may have known in the past. This kind of positioning has a way of obfuscating the obvious, obliterating the outlines of the knowable in a charade of endless consideration, however sophisticated, that manages to immobilize active resistance rather than guide it in fruitful ways.

What is most striking in the response to *Revolutionary Teamsters* is that, as what Sándor John calls “a book for today,” it elicits reactions that come out of today as well. Purdy, John, and Badaró Mattos rightly read my account of arguably one of the most important strikes of the 20th century with an eye to what can be learned about how we might struggle today. They express differences of nuance and subtlety, but they all agree that the crucial importance of a revolutionary Trotskyist left in Minneapolis in 1934 mattered decisively. This registers with them in terms of appreciating the importance of the lack of such a presence, for the most part, in the class struggles of the current period.

How different this is from what we might label the standard academic review, an early example of which is Richard Oestreicher’s short assessment in the British journal, *Social History*. Oestreicher praises *Revolutionary Teamsters*’ “energetic narrative,” delivered with what he describes as “skill and verve,” building on “laborious delving in primary sources.” He acknowledges that the leadership of the strike was well-served by its

revolutionary commitments, in as much as this dedication to a cause steeled the determination of the Minneapolis trade union leadership. But for Oestreicher the victory in Minneapolis somehow happened “in spite of their Trotskyist politics, not because of them.” Managing to virtually ignore the book’s narrative, Oestreicher bypasses how the Minneapolis revolutionaries functioned as architects of a momentous labour mobilization in a non-revolutionary situation. As an academic reviewer Oestreicher finds it perplexing how anyone could actually believe in the possibility of revolutionary politics, and his review ends with a dismissal of all such fine sentiments, calling for an “effective analysis of contemporary world politics” and an “appropriate strategy for the Left in the current moment.” What that might be, however, and how it might draw on the history of the teamsters’ strikes of 1934 is never addressed. Ironically enough, the academic historian, seemingly guided by the need for an objective account, is able to ignore what happened in the past if it does not suit his sensibilities about what should be happening today.¹²

Left critics of *Revolutionary Teamsters*,¹³ such as Teamsters for a Democratic Union founding figure, member of Solidarity, and *New Politics* co-editor Dan La Botz can fall into the same trap. La Botz, in what is arguably the most critical assessment of my treatment of the 1934 teamsters’ strikes, takes umbrage at *any* criticisms of the strike leadership, both during the confrontation in 1934 and for years afterwards. He blurs nuances, misrepresents positions, and argumentatively asserts that there are problems where others find strengths. Thus, Sándor John describes the reconstruction of class struggle in *Revolutionary Teamsters* as “vivid, in fact thrilling,” and another Solidarity reviewer, Barry Eidlin calls the book “the most vivid, in-depth, meticulously documented account” of the 1934 events, “written with a novelist’s attention to narrative tension and plot development.” La Botz, in contrast, bemoans an “all-too-dense narrative,” likening *Revolutionary Teamsters* to “a political tract from another era.” Whereas Badaró Mattos rightly sees my book’s attention to the dialectic of leaders and led as unfolding in the “descriptive richness of the narrative of events,”

¹² Richard Oestreicher, “Review of *Revolutionary Teamsters*,” *Social History*, 40 (February 2015), 123-125.

¹³ In what follows I will often allude to three reviews that have been collected digitally: Dan La Botz, “Trotskyist Teamsters of the 1930s – An Attempt to Draw the Lessons,” first published in *New Politics*; Barry Eidlin, “Minneapolis 1934 Strike Revisited,” first published in *Against the Current*; and Alan Wald, “‘A Seemingly Incongruous Alliance’: Trotskyists and Teamsters in 1934,” first published in *Labour/Le Travail*, all in “The Year 1934: Three Reviews of Bryan Palmer’s *Revolutionary Teamsters*,” <http://www.solidarity-us.org/site/node/4213>, accessed 20 March 2015.

highlighting how the Left Opposition of the Communist League of America was able to advance the cause of trade unionism in Minneapolis, La Botz complains, yet again, of the “limited degree” to which “the Trotskyist leadership’s functioning in Local 574” is revealed.¹⁴ Sean Purdy sees the

¹⁴ La Botz wonders whether the Trotskyist leadership made decisions first in their cell, fraction, or branch, or if those decisions were arrived at through dialogue with workers’ leaders and activists. I can only question whether La Botz has read the book. There is abundant discussion of how the Trotskyist leadership, which rallied to it virtually all of the militant class fighters within the ranks, had existed within the trucking sector for some time. It clearly connected with workers, listened to them, and incorporated their tactical and strategic suggestions. Then, through their Communist League of America (CLA) discussions, these Trotskyists arrived at strategic orientations. Once they were in positions of strike leadership, these CLAs conveyed to the Teamster membership suggestions about strike developments and how to advance the struggle in open, democratic union meetings, where union decisions were taken. From the establishment of the Trotskyist-led volunteer organizing committee that orchestrated the first February 1934 strike through to the development of the Strike Committee of 100, the relations of Trotskyist leaders and the rank-and-file led are part of the “dense narrative” that La Botz finds unsatisfying. Had he been more open to reading it carefully, he would have answers to some of the questions he poses. The issue of party fractions and their role in situations like Minneapolis has been elaborated on in E. Tanner, “Revolutionary Teamsters: The Minneapolis Truckers’ Strikes of 1934 – A Review and Commentary,” Parts I & II, *Workers Vanguard*, 1052/1053 (19 September/3 October 2015), <http://www.icl-fi.org/English/wv/1052/palmer.html>, accessed 20 March 2015. Tanner claims that *Revolutionary Teamsters* fails to address the work of the “Teamster *fraction* of the Minneapolis CLA branch.” This is overstated and it misunderstands precisely how Minneapolis in 1934 differed from Trotskyist trade union work in the 1933 New York hotel strike or among the Progressive Miners of America in Illinois. In both cases the struggle to build and sustain disciplined fractions of CLA cadre was essential but also flawed and incomplete, revealing both strengths and weaknesses within the Left Opposition’s trade union work. In both cases, albeit to differing degrees, the CLA fractions were struggling to achieve influence within established unions, integrate headstrong fraction members incompletely assimilated to the program of revolutionary trade union work, and overcome marginalization by entrenched, conservative labour leaderships. The CLA presence as a fraction thus had to be, as Trotsky advised his American Left Opposition comrades in 1933, disciplined but far from open in its operations. Among the Minneapolis teamsters, however, the CLA fraction *was* the CLA itself, largely because of the size of the local and the importance of the work among the teamsters to the branch. To talk of the fraction as somehow different than the CLA branch or, indeed, the local CLA strengthened by those Left Opposition leaders brought in from New York City like Max Shachtman and James Cannon, is to miss the main point. After breaking through various barriers with its orchestration of the February strike, this CLA leadership was the *de facto* leadership of the truckers’ insurgency, effectively displacing the International Brotherhood of Teamsters-American Federation of Labor-affiliated officialdom. In this situation the fraction could function openly and effectively as the ‘party’, and it did so adroitly, not with the purpose of establishing a revolutionary Soviet Minneapolis (which it was alleged was happening by a viciously red-baiting mainstream press), but with the intention of building militant class struggle unionism. Trotsky, recognizing that such situations would be rare for the revolutionary Left Opposition, nonetheless anticipated the possibility of these kinds of circumstances, and wrote: “The more the influence of the Communist fraction grows in the union, the more boldly and openly will it fling out the banner of its party.” See Leon Trotsky, “Trade Union Problems in America,” 23 September 1933, in *dog Days: James P. Cannon vs. Max Shachtman in the Communist League of America, 1931-1933* (New York: Prometheus Research Library, 2002), 591-593. For a discussion of how the International Communist League/Spartacist

human “flesh” that *Revolutionary Teamsters* puts on the skeleton of working-class leadership as illuminating; he enjoys the “mini-biographies, colorful story-telling and sensitive analysis” that is used to portray figures at the center of the strike, like the three Dunne brothers. La Botz, in contrast, following a position first articulated by Alan Wald, dismisses “one-dimensional ... portraits of Teamster leaders that border on caricature.” This is not so much a matter of there being ‘no accounting for tastes’, as it is a clear indication of how much preference is determined by politics.

La Botz (and Wald as well) wants more on women and the support Auxiliary that they organized, while other reviewers (such as Eidlin) comment on the book’s attempt to “highlight and assess the central role that women played in the strike.” What is at stake in this discussion, however, is highlighted in Sándor John’s decisive judgment that *Revolutionary Teamsters* refutes “historians who have put [the Women’s Auxiliary] down as an expression of submission rather than what it was: one of the most vital weapons for defeating the political rulers ruthlessly determined to keep the women and men of 574 in their ‘place’.” Radical feminists such as Elizabeth Faue have represented the Women’s Auxiliary as part of the gendered construction of working-class Minneapolis,¹⁵ and while I do not deny the importance of this in the making of class relations in the 1930s, I stake out an entirely different appreciation of what was involved in how women mobilized to support the teamsters’ strikes. Wald, in particular, argues that talking to surviving relatives of those involved in the 1934 conflicts will give us a fuller picture.

Could more be done in the way of oral histories of the strike and its participants?¹⁶ Absolutely. Might the search for other sources reveal a cache of fresh documentation? Certainly that is possible. For women, ethnic groups, and the particular case of native Americans, of whom I have identified six strike supporters, and about whom La Botz insists more should be told, useful information may well surface that will expand our

League critique of *Revolutionary Teamsters* around the issue of fractions and class struggle caucuses relates to perspectives of contemporary trade union work see “Spartacists Repudiate Class-Struggle Caucuses: Belated rationalization for abandonment of trade-union work,” http://www.bolshevik.org/statements/ibt_20141231_spartacists_caucuses.html, accessed 20 March 2015.

¹⁵ See Elizabeth Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹⁶ There already are many oral history sources relating to the 1934 strikes, including the material presented in Philip A. Korth, *The Minneapolis Teamsters Strike of 1934* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1995).

understandings of the 1934 events in Minneapolis greatly. No such evidence came to my attention and none is cited by La Botz. Still, discoveries happen; those seeking may well find. There remains much to be done, for instance, even on the ground of politics, with a fuller exploration of the importance of the Farmer-Labor Party, which governed the state of Minnesota, of undoubted importance.¹⁷ A good history of the reactionary Citizens Alliance exists, but there remains much to explore in terms of the local civic officialdom and its administration of the city amidst an intense period of class struggle.¹⁸ The context of Minneapolis's "privilege of backwardness," which I adopt from Trotsky's discussion of uneven and combined development, is unconvincing to Sándor John but suggestive to Badaró Mattos, and I am more than willing to concede that the full story of Minneapolis's political economy and how this material context relates to the workers' mobilization of the Great Depression needs fuller elaboration.¹⁹ *Revolutionary Teamsters* claims no definitiveness. This said, however much more we may come to know about the 1934 strikes and the circumstances in which they developed, their meaning and significance in the history of American class struggle is unlikely to be so altered that we can ever discount the importance of the Trotskyist leadership that guided Minneapolis's teamsters to victory.

History matters. Not because it is interesting, and lively, and full of human richness, diversity, and complexity, although all of this is true enough, and quite important. History matters because, while it can neither predict the future nor assure us of the outcomes we want, it is all that we as historical materialists have to go on in our attempt to see the present as the raw material of social transformation. La Botz wants to restrict our vision to victories for industrial unionism, suggesting that my claims about revolutionary Trotskyism miscue. But as much as 1934 was about consolidating a union, as long as that consolidation was the victory of

¹⁷ Unpublished MA and PhD theses are suggestive, although their interpretations demand challenging interrogation. See, for instance, George Dimitri Tselos, "The Minneapolis Labor Movement in the 1930s," PhD dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1971; Kristoffer O. Smemo, "The Politics of Labor Militancy in Minneapolis, 1934-1938," MA thesis, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2011; and for the later 1930s, Smemo, "A 'New Dealized' Grand Old Party: Labor and the Emergence of Liberal Republicanism," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, 11 (Summer 2014), 35-60.

¹⁸ William Millikan, *A Union Against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and its Fight Against Organized Labor* (St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society, 2001).

¹⁹ The issue is not so much that Minneapolis was a locale of combined and uneven development *per se* (in the orthodox Marxist sense of the term), but that the presence of Trotskyists *along with the relative backwardness of the labor movement*, allowed a vanguard element, for a time, to leapfrog over backwardness, advancing the class struggle and necessitating a marshalling of antagonists against its leadership.

revolutionaries, there existed the ever-present twinned danger of compromising the independence of the Trotskyist left or of having it succumb to repression. Almost all of La Botz's critical commentary on my moderate criticisms of the Minneapolis leaders relates to post-1934 developments, where I suggest that the leadership of the 1934 strikes followed a post-1936 course in their relations with trade union officialdoms in other cities and states that deprived them of a base of support in the ranks that could only result in their being targeted in future times of conflict and retrenchment. The issue is not, as La Botz would have it, whether the Trotskyists could realistically have undertaken the arduous task of building party fractions throughout the Midwest and developing left-wing caucuses inside the International Brotherhood of Teamsters locals. I am well aware of how difficult this would have been, perhaps even impossible. But in the absence of this kind of active development of a revolutionary presence in the wider union and, tellingly, in the apparent failure of the Minneapolis Trotskyist teamster leadership to use its important regional voice, *The Northwest Organizer*, to differentiate itself from "the pro-Rooseveltian trade unionists" lay the seeds of an accommodation that would bear the bitter fruit of repression. Trotsky warned of this, writing of the "terrible danger" that confronted the Minneapolis victory and those who made it. In June of 1940 Trotsky discussed all of this with Farrell Dobbs, James Cannon, and other leading Socialist Workers Party (SWP) figures. He was adamant that, for all its strong points, *The Northwest Organizer* was "a photograph of our adaptation to the Rooseveltians." He noted that the Dobbs-edited paper, proposed "a trade union policy, not a Bolshevik policy. ... You are afraid to become compromised in the eyes of the Rooseveltian unionists. ... If you are afraid, you lose your independence and become half Rooseveltian. In peacetime this is not catastrophic. In wartime ... they can smash us."²⁰

Roughly two weeks later, on 29 June 1940, Roosevelt signed what would become known as the Smith Act into law, criminalizing those who so much as advocated overthrowing the government. A year later, 27 June 1941, the Minneapolis SWP offices were raided; 23 Trotskyists and Minneapolis teamster leaders were eventually brought to trial on a variety of charges, with 18 convicted of Smith Act-inspired counts in December 1941. What Trotsky had predicated had come to pass. To address this and to relate it to the policies of the Minneapolis Trotskyist leadership in the aftermath of 1934's advances, is not, as La Botz and Eidlin suggest, allowing "sectarian

²⁰ Leon Trotsky, "Discussions with Trotsky, June 12-15 1940," *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1939-40]* (New York: Pathfinder, 1969), 271-273.

tendencies to show through.” It is grappling with the actual history of the revolutionary left, addressing its victories and defeats with suggestions of what could have been done differently. Not to do this is to abdicate our responsibilities as both historians of labour and the left, and leftists attentive to history.

This history matters because the 1934 Minneapolis strikes, led by Trotskyist revolutionaries, remind us that revolutionaries can indeed win, even in the most inauspicious of circumstances. But in order to win, revolutionaries must be true to their principles, living by them through the thick and thin of protracted class struggle. Those principles are not a loose and elastic container into which anything can be poured, just as they are not dogmatically rigid and incapable of adapting to complex realities. Against my insistence that the victories achieved in 1934 in Minneapolis were more thorough-going than those achieved elsewhere – and can one really argue with this when the San Francisco waterfront strike or the Toledo auto parts battle and their outcomes are scrutinized? – La Botz claims that it was not the historic Left Opposition that won so much for workers, but “far left leadership of any sort.” This echoes, in some ways, the view that the Trotskyist leadership led so effectively in Minneapolis in 1934 not so much because of its politics but in spite of them.

This, in my view, is not the lesson that should be drawn from an examination of the class struggles of 1934. Rather, the significance of the class struggle leadership of the revolutionary Trotskyists who set the pace for events in Minneapolis in 1934 tells us that just the opposite was true 80 years ago. There are those who are in denial about this history. They take the positions that they do because history matters to the politics they would like to see operative right now. For some, anything to the left of Barack Obama will do. Others, if they look at struggles like those that unfolded in Minneapolis and elsewhere in 1934, will insist on thinking otherwise.

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Abstracts

Carlos Ángel Ordás

From resisting military service to the anti-militarist movement: Conscientious objection and resistance to compulsory military service in France, Italy and Spain. A comparative analysis, from the First World War until the 1980s.

This article analyses the young people's resistance to participate in the war throughout the twentieth century. This resistance was determined by the obligatory participation of citizens in the wars and continued in "peacetime" with the resistance to conscription. It began by the individual resistance for conscience's reasons, and culminated in a large and heterogeneous social movement that influenced the Government's decision to abolish the obligatory conscription. To analyze this issue, I selected three European countries: Spain, France and Italy. In all of them, the opposition to conscription had similar motivations among the young refractories; they suffered a strong state repression, which made them deepen even more in their anti-militarism and disobedience that lead to a social movement against the conscription. Finally, resulting from the magnitude of the conflict and their wear, the states opted to professionalize their armed forces.

Keywords: military service, refractory, repression, conscientious objection, insubordination, social movement, anti-militarism, Spain, France, Italy.

Christer Thörnqvist and Susanne Fransson

Women and Wildcats: Unofficial Women's Strikes in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s

While the strike propensity in manufacturing declined in the 1980s and 1990s, it remained high or even increased in services, health care, education and so on. The growing portion of tertiary sector employment has further moved the searchlight from men to women, as the demographic transformation in work has promoted a feminization of strikes. However, what if we go back in history, to when strikes and industrial conflict was still mainly a men's concern? Did women go on strike at all, and if so, how

did their strikes differ from the overall pattern? The 1970s was the decade of “resurgence of class conflict” in Western societies, including Sweden, with an outstanding upsurge of strikes in many countries. There is an affluence of studies of both the 1970s strike-waves and single strikes in this rebellious decade, but few of them deal with female-dominated strikes. This article explores women’s strikes in Sweden in the 1970s and 1980s with special attention to the treatment in the Labour Court, since the article finds a remarkable difference in legal outcome between “male” and “female” strikes.

Fernando Mendiola

Cogs in the military machine? War experience and antimilitarism during the Spanish Civil War

This article focuses on how the Spanish Civil War was experienced and understood by those who in previous years had declared themselves pacifist or antimilitarist, mainly the pacifist movement around the *War Resisters’ International* (WRI) and the antimilitarist and anarchist trade union *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT). In the article, I deal with the different ways in which these men and women analysed the reality of war, starting with the use of violence and the attitude towards the creation of an army, followed by the questions of recruitment and finishing with the ideological repression behind Republican lines. These perspectives will help us understand the militarization process that occurred on the Republican side, the way that the culture of war was experienced and the strategies that were sometimes carried out to prevent some of its negative consequences.

Key words:

Spanish Civil War; Pacifism; Antimilitarism; War Culture; Anarchism

Gonzalo Pérez Álvarez

The Workers of Northeast Chubut (Patagonia, Argentina): A Study of the Contextual Features that Shaped the Formation of a Working-Class Fraction

We were interested in deepening the knowledge about the history of the working class in Patagonia, Argentina, and in Chubut’s North-East in particular. In this region, since the 1960s, industrialization was stimulated and subsidized by the national and provincial state, which gave origin to Trelew’s Industrial Textile Park and to the primary aluminium production plant ALUAR, in Puerto Madryn. Through these years a new working class was formed in the region, resulting from the massive arrival of different kinds of migrants from other provinces of the country, from the rural zones of the province of Chubut and from neighbouring Chile. This extremely heterogeneous working class, that in many cases had no previous experience

of industrial work, union activity or urban life, met a social context of full employment, frequent inauguration of new factories and the possibility to improve its living conditions and better work conditions. We've tried to understand how this working class was formed, how it developed its first actions and organization and in what conditions they faced the changes that began around the middle of the 1980s and fully impacted it during the 1990s.

Keywords: Working class formation, Patagonia, subsidized industrialization

Lon Strauss

Fear of Infectious Dissent: First World War Military Intelligence, Labor, and the Conscientious Objection of Erling Lunde

When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, the military had to drastically expand to meet the requirements of a modern industrial war. Congress passed the Selective Service Act a month later with very few provisions for conscientious objectors. Erling H. Lunde was a pacifist who sought to avoid military service. With his stated objection to war and marriage to Laura Hughes, a well-known and outspoken pacifist, after the American declaration of war, Lunde came under investigation by the US Army's Military Intelligence Division. Military personnel conducting surveillance of American civilians was a new concept in the United States. Intelligence officers were often citizen-soldiers themselves with inadequate training to conduct surveillance. Thus, they were guided by the prevalent political paranoia of the middle and upper classes that feared socialism, dissent, and the influence pacifism could have on the overall war effort.

Keywords: Conscientious objectors, Erling Lunde, surveillance, Military Intelligence, Selective Service, US Home Front