

trajectory and pays tribute to the scholars who have most influenced her. She also asks how we can continue to contribute to the broader goals of social justice and equality in a time of increasing global inequality, a weakening of progressive forces, and an ever more powerful role of the market (this was written years before the current major economic crisis and US President Barack Obama's election of course). Strikingly, though, she ends on an optimistic note, in line with the overall tenor of the book. There is not only the strong belief that history is important in shaping our aspirations and visions, but also that it can contribute to a better world for all.

Reading this book was for me a rich and rewarding experience. Alice Kessler-Harris's profound knowledge and impeccable scholarship, her ability to ask crucial questions, the continuing interaction with contemporary activism and political concerns, and a moral integrity that shines through all the essays combine to make this an important and powerful book. By highlighting the impressive contributions of one of the main feminist labour historians of our time, *Gendering Labor History* simultaneously underscores the amazing progress that has been made in complicating and diversifying labour history, the book's meta-narrative. Because the essays illustrate the various steps that the process of gendering labour history has gone through, the book will also be very useful as a teaching tool. Even if "the notion of labor history retains its male framework", as the author puts it in the Introduction, the field is now unthinkable without gender, and Alice Kessler-Harris has been in the forefront of creating that change.

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DARLINGTON, RALPH. *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism. An International Comparative Analysis.* [Studies in Labour History.] Ashgate, Aldershot (etc.) 2008. xiii, 323 pp. £60.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859009000066

Syndicalism, sometimes also known as revolutionary syndicalism, was a specific independent current within the international workers' movement, reaching its peak in the years before World War I and rising briefly again – albeit overshadowed by the rise of communism – during the postwar revolutionary crisis. For a long time it was primarily analysed on the national level, with the French *Confédération Générale du Travail* (CGT) serving as a paradigm for other, considerably less successful, movements. The Spanish *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), in contrast, mainly appeared as a sub-category of anarchism.

This has substantially changed since the publication in 1989 of Wayne Thorpe's study of the international network of syndicalist organizations.¹ It focused on the efforts to form an independent Syndicalist International. This was followed by a volume of essays, which Thorpe co-edited with Marcel van der Linden, consisting of twelve national case studies that examined the concrete activities of the various organizations.² This multi-lateral approach brought to light commonalities as well as differences in the causes behind their development, their achievements, and the effects of these movements, including the reasons for their decline. More recently, a new comprehensive two-volume history of the International Working Men's Association has appeared, an international organization that

1. Wayne Thorpe, *"The Workers Themselves": Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913–1923* (Dordrecht, 1989).

2. Wayne Thorpe and Marcel van der Linden (eds), *Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective* (Aldershot, 1990).

emerged in 1922 out of that segment of the syndicalist movement which, under the influence of anarchism, had positioned itself in opposition to communism.³

Now, Ralph Darlington, Professor of Employment Relations at Salford Business School, has brought out a comparative study that attempts, on the basis of six countries, to define the character of the syndicalist movement at its peak, and above all in its conflict with communism. In so doing, he does not simply deliver up a chronological narration of individual organizations but rather teases out specific features in chapters organized according to theme. These, in turn, are structured in two sections: the first describes the dynamics of the syndicalist movement and focuses primarily on the years up to World War I, while the second covers the transition to communism in the interwar years.

His six countries are the USA, Great Britain, Ireland (which, even though formally part of Great Britain until after World War I, had, among other autonomous entities, a separate organized labour movement), France, Spain, and Italy. Thus, it deals with very differing movements: some dominated their country's workers' organizations but had to show consideration for non-syndicalist currents within their own ranks (as in France). Others were locked in fierce competition with reformist trade unions, sometimes as the stronger (Spain), sometimes as the weaker force (USA). Others again were pure propaganda circles, directing their efforts towards the existing reformist trade unions (as in Great Britain and, again, the USA). In addition, their relationships with anarchism were different. This was not merely a question of "ideological" influence but also of the relationship of the specific organizational form of anarchism to the respective syndicalist organization, although Darlington does not pursue this particular story, which is a separate and relatively little researched subject, any further.

Consequently, he studies the specifics of the various organizations. Yet what interests him most are the common characteristics, which he convincingly elucidates. These include the idea of trade unions as the "essential" organizational form of the workers' movement and the economic struggle as the principle lever for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society. Referring to these general features allows him to link movements together that occasionally distinguished themselves from one another or had differing organizational forms, such as trade or industrial associations (including those parts of the IWW in the USA that long rejected the label "syndicalist"). Against the background of the socio-economic revolutions and shocks around the turn of the century, syndicalism spread in stark opposition to social-democratic reformism, whose strategy was deemed to be inadequate to the task of opposing capitalism. Only hinted at here is the different political environment as a significant condition, be it favourable or unfavourable, for the development of syndicalism as a movement that ignored or openly rejected parliamentarism.

Another characteristic of syndicalism was the way in which the international movements influenced one another, in part through direct labour migration and in part through an internationalized labour process, as was represented by the shipping industry, which for syndicalism (as well, one might add, as later for communism) represented an important organizational backbone. The occupational structure of syndicalism reflects the economic situation of this time and thus cannot be reduced to a simple notion of particular (i.e. qualified) occupational groups or (unqualified) migrant workers. There were the most diverse manifestations and/or alliances, even if at certain times individual organizations were dominated by a particular occupational group. However, the syndicalists derived their strength not least from the fact that their movement catered for groups that were neglected by "traditional" organized labour organizations.

The role of women in syndicalism cannot be characterized in simple terms. Nevertheless, as in other segments of the workers' movement, women were a minority, even

3. Vadim Dam'e, *Zabytyi internatsional*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 2006 and 2007).

though the efforts towards achieving women's equality did lead to the emergence of several outstanding leaders, and even though the great struggles initiated by the syndicalists repeatedly witnessed efforts to include women, an aim which corresponded largely with the movement's self-conception. The specific conceptions of trade-union organization were also reflected in a wide array of organizational structures, but led equally to the most diverse conflicts, usually deriving from fundamental strategic differences, e.g. the approach to non-syndicalist currents.

The emergence of syndicalism evoked sharp reactions from the state as well as from employers, which led to defeats and thereby to a weakening of the movement. Prior to 1914, syndicalism, much like communism after 1917, was the *bête noire* of the ruling order. Yet World War I created a much more serious breach, which led to the conversion of an entire current of syndicalism to the side of the respective war-waging governments and, in the case of Italy, even to absorption into the rising fascist movement. Among the many issues that Darlington touches on, he does not address the question, formulated most pointedly by Zeev Sternhall, of possible affinities.

Yet, as the title already suggests, it was rather the rise of communism after World War I that, according to Darlington, put an end to a broad and independent syndicalist current; the latter development being an immediate consequence of the former. This discussion takes up the final third of the book. It is true that the attitude of the young Communist International was not uniform: not a few (e.g. Zinoviev or Radek) harkened back to the "orthodoxy" of the Second International from before 1914, which had denounced syndicalism as a dangerous deviation from the "political strategy" of Marxism. It was, above all, the authorities of Lenin and Trotsky who emphatically advocated cooperation, Trotsky himself having fought side by side with syndicalists in France during World War I, and correspondingly finding in his old alliance partners a willingness to work together. The common organizational bond was the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), known in Russian as the Profintern, which was founded in 1921 and whose development Darlington traces.

However, despite this rapprochement, sharp controversies persisted over the right strategy, above all what actions to take in economic struggles, the relationship to reformist trade unions ("dual unionism" or "boring from within"), the attitude toward "political questions" like workers' councils and, above all, toward the political party. This process was not free of frictions and schisms. In the end, however, the outcome was a "syndicalist-communist" fusion: under the influence of syndicalism, the young communist movement developed an "industrial strategy" that the Second International – with its exclusive orientation toward elections – had lacked. This, in turn, represented an important contribution in the development of the Comintern. Thus, despite all the organizational complications, this fusion followed an inherent logic, albeit one that would soon be suspended by a burgeoning Stalinism (the point at which Darlington, with a few, all too brief comments, ends his story). In any event, in a final assessment, he claims that the debates about strategy and fundamental principles "that took place between the syndicalist and communist traditions [...] have retained their relevance for activists in contemporary social movements" (p. 288).

All in all, Darlington has delivered an informative representation of syndicalism that highlights its essential features and lays out the debates and experiences that defined it in a clearly constructed synthesis. It proceeds, above all, analytically, the concrete organizational history and developments receiving only a passing mention. The work is based in part on the analysis of primary sources but even more heavily on a detailed study of the primarily English-language research literature. One might quibble about the case studies upon which it is based. One could imagine that in place of Ireland he might have chosen the example of the movement in Argentina, which exercised considerable influence not only within its own country but over the whole of Latin America and even as far afield as

Spain and Italy. Yet in terms of the big picture, this would have added only individual nuances (such as the important role of anarchism in the Argentinian case). However, in this way, syndicalism is presented as an exclusively European and North American phenomenon (South Africa, which has been the subject of recent works by Lucien van der Walt, is equally overlooked). In addition, the work would have benefited from more careful copy-editing (above all in the case of the foreign names and expressions).

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GOLDMAN, WENDY Z. *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin. The Social Dynamics of Repression* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [etc.] 2007. x, 274 pp. £40.00; \$75.00; doi:10.1017/S0020859009000078

The nature of the Great Terror has long been one of the most debated issues in the historiography of Stalinism. With the new findings from the Russian archives, even the scholars who view the Great Terror as a series of centrally directed punitive actions now rarely deny the presence of a social dimension to it. Despite the established vision of the Great Terror as a socio-political phenomenon there has not been, until the publication of *Terror and Democracy in the Age of Stalin*, a special comprehensive study of popular participation in repression.

How did it happen that normal and, by and large, decent people destroyed themselves? To answer this question Wendy Goldman examines the mechanisms by which the repression engulfed Soviet society. More specifically, she uses archival materials of the All-Union Central Council of Unions (VTsSPS) to explore how the terror spread through the unions of factory workers, a network that encompassed 22 million members. She argues that “repression was a mass phenomenon, not only in the number of victims it claimed, but also in the number of perpetrators it spawned” (p. 7).

In her thorough, almost anatomic, analysis of terror Wendy Goldman marks out the factors that pushed and facilitated its development. She recognizes the role of the political tensions for the beginning and the development of the terror: Stalin’s demand for absolute loyalty and his fear of a “fifth column” on the eve of a war, as well as the aggressive role of the NKVD, and particularly of Nikolai Ezhov, in broadening the “murder plot” after the assassination of Sergei Kirov.

However, she goes far beyond these traditional political explanations of terror by exploring the interplay between the central party authorities and the factory unions, local party committees (*partkomy*) and workers. She documents how and why the “demand” for terror that came “from above” penetrated the society and involved everyone. In doing so, she stresses the importance of socio-economic and institutional issues. Thus, while in the second half of the 1930s, many industrial and everyday problems caused by forced industrialization remained unsolved, the transformation of the unions, in the course of the 1920s, made it difficult for workers to pursue their grievances collectively. By the second half of the 1930s unions ceased to play any role in defending the interests of their members. They turned into “cheer-leaders for production”, and “watchdogs over the wage fund”, their function differing little from that of a capitalist manager.

The central party leaders managed to find a “language of terror” that appealed to the masses and helped to channel the workers’ grievances into repressions. Wendy Goldman’s *Terror and Democracy* proves that the mass membership in social organizations (particularly unions) became one of the crucial factors in the rapid spread of repression. By analyzing the role of VTsSPS, unions and factory *partkomy* in the progression of repressions, Wendy Goldman’s *Terror and Democracy* presents terror not only as a social