

SANTOS – THE BARCELONA OF BRAZIL
ANARCHISM AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN A PORT CITY
by Edgar Rodrigues, translated by Paul Sharkey.

Through the Brazilian port of Santos went huge volumes of exports: carried on the backs of a working class constantly augmented by emigrants from Portugal, Spain, Italy... Among them were Anarchists who promptly threw themselves into the bitter strikes of dockers, carters and others.

Edgar Rodrigues, the chief historian of Anarchism in Brazil, recounts some of the events that made Santos notorious as an anarchist stronghold: demonstrations, raids and cavalry charges, but also self-education, workers' newspapers and revolutionary theatre.

“Violent strikes broke out, some of them under the supervision of anarchists and supported by donations from the Spanish and Portuguese restaurants that fed the workers until they could go back to work victorious. Which is why the strikers were able to hold out until they had defeated the bosses who could always rely on help from the police dispatched from São Paulo.

On account of the numbers of Spaniards and Portuguese in Santos and the violence and ideological steadfastness of the strikers there, the city was affectionately nicknamed the ‘Barcelona of Brazil’ and the syndicalist and anarchist workers were indebted for some of their most telling victories over the owners of Santos docks to the donations from these restaurants.”

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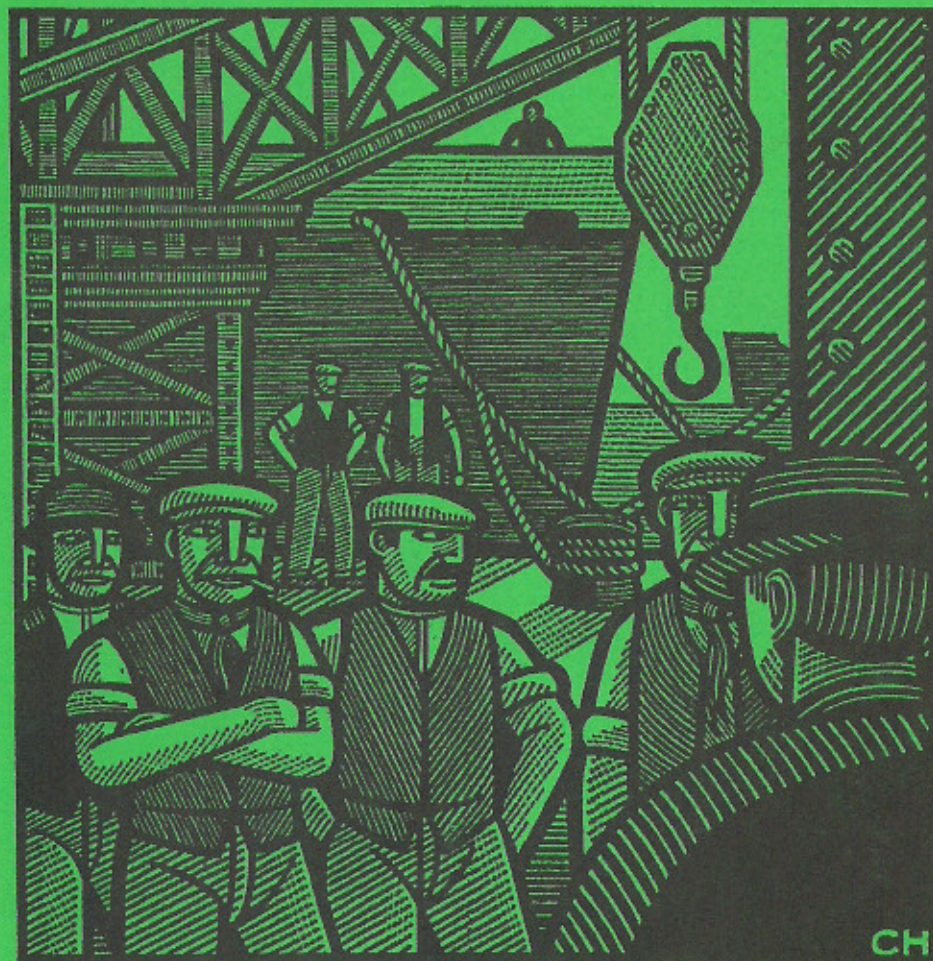
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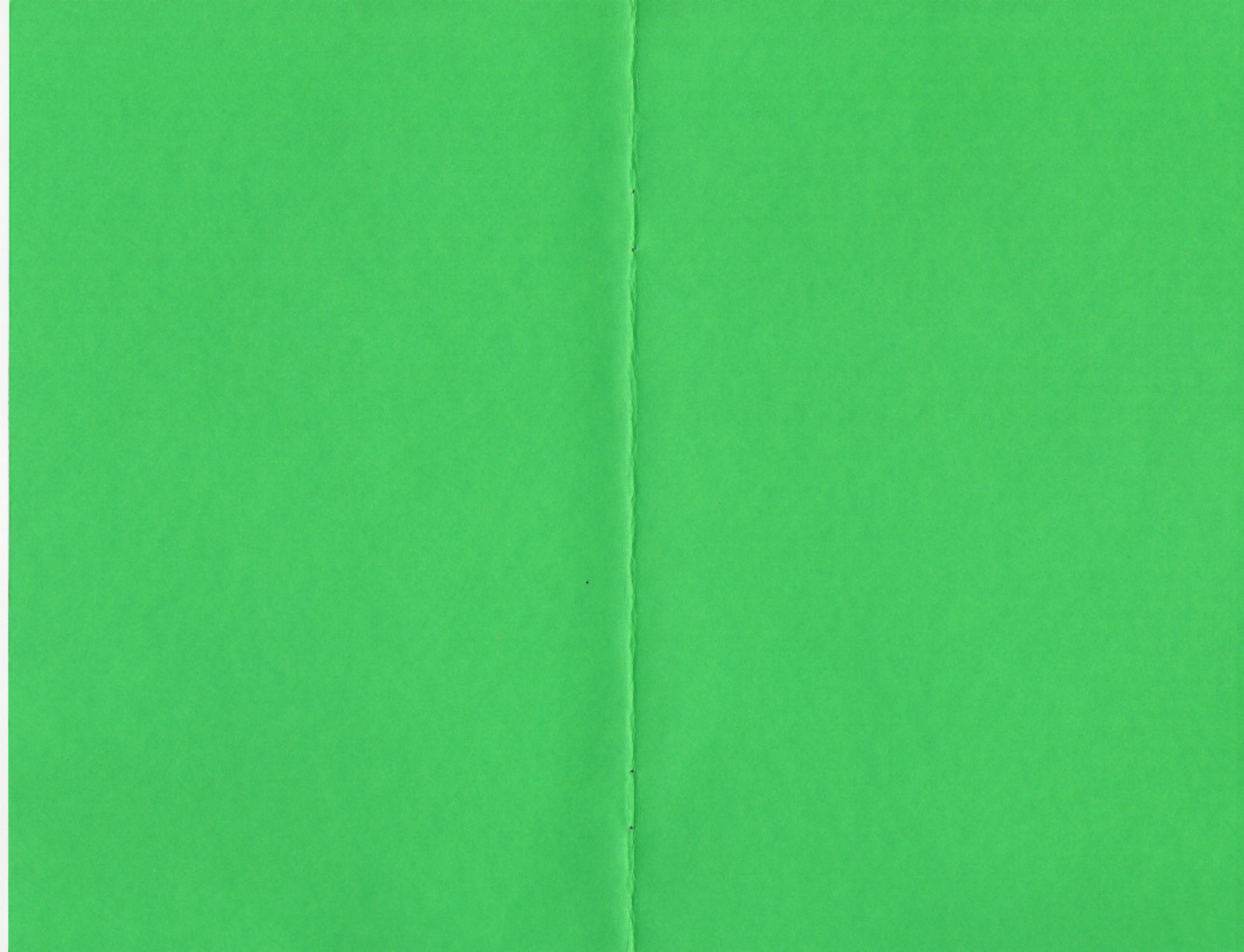
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SANTOS

THE BARCELONA OF BRAZIL



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EDGAR RODRIGUES

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Edgar Rodrigues
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Anarchism is a political theory which opposes the State and capitalism. It says that people with economic power (capitalists) and those with political power (politicians of all stripes left, right or centre) use that power for their own benefit, and not (like they claim) for the benefit of society. Anarchism says that neither exploitation nor government is natural or necessary, and that a society based on freedom, mutual aid and equal share of the good things in life would work better than this one. Anarchism is also a political movement. Anarchists take part in day-to-day struggles (against poverty, oppression of any kind, war etc) and also promote the idea of comprehensive social change. Based on bitter experience, they warn that new 'revolutionary' bosses are no improvement: 'ends' and 'means' (what you want and how you get it) are closely connected.

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31 Workers incapacitated for work due to injury or illness had no option but to beg for alms on the city streets.

32 Newspaper published in São Paulo by the Portuguese immigrant Dr Neno Vasco.

33 In 1920, 20 workers belonging to the local Workers' Federation were expelled from Santos in one batch.

34 To warn these workers about deception, the Workers' Federation sent a delegate to Europe to describe to their colleagues just how immigrants could expect to be treated: that delegate was Antonio Felgueiras Vijeites.

35 *A Plebe*, the anarchist daily, 1 October 1919.

36 The name of the learned police chief and thug Ibrahim Nobre presently adorns the corner of a busy street in São Paulo. Of such stuff are heroes made ...

37 Florentino de Carvalho spent six months as a prisoner on board a cargo vessel and in those conditions 'toured' the entire Brazilian seaboard.

38 Prior to 1920 only a few construction firms had granted the eight hour day to their employees (who were the most enlightened segment of the working classes at the time).

39 As set out in the memoirs of Diamantino August Velho (in the author's possession).

40 *A Plateia*, *Gazeta do Povo*, *Comercio* in Santos, *O Combate* and *A Patria* in Rio de Janeiro exposed the brutality of the police under the command of Dias Buenos and Ibrahim Nobre. The labour and anarchist press also reported the day-to-day progress of the strike.

41 Messages of support reached Santos from the press in Italy, Spain, Portugal and several Latin American countries.

42 *A Plebe*, São Paulo, January 1921.

43 *A Plebe*, January 1921.

44 *A Plebe*, 29 January 1921.

45 Support from the seamstresses who stitched the sacks and from other working women in the 1920s appeared in a thrilling manifesto and in the manuscript 'memoirs' of Manuel Marques Bastos (author's archives).

46 See Edgar Rodrigues *Novos Rumos* (Rio de Janeiro 1978)

47 See Edgar Rodrigues *Nacionalismo e Cultura Social* (Rio de Janeiro, 1972)

48 *A Vanguarda*, anarchist newspaper, São Paulo, 16 June 1921

49 *A Vanguarda*, São Paulo, 19 March 1921

50 *A Vanguarda* São Paulo, 19 March 1921

51 *A Plebe*, anarchist newspaper, São Paulo 12 February 1924

52 *A Plebe*, São Paulo, 14 August 1934

Santos – The Barcelona Of Brazil

Libertarian ideas reached Brazil in books and inside the heads of immigrants, spreading into the areas of greatest density of workers, putting down roots, winning over a few intellectuals and leaving their mark to this very day on the press, providing the theme for novels,¹ inspiring poets² and seeping into the theatre³ and cinema,⁴ being taught in the modern schools. There are streets in Santos, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and in the South named after a number of libertarian militants.⁵

Today we focus our attention on Santos, also known as the 'Barcelona of Brazil'. The port through which immigrants and foodstuffs arrived and departed, it was the scene of many great strikes during which the police lassoed and dragged strikers through the streets in broad daylight.

Through Santos passed nearly all the revolutionaries who arrived in Brazil and most of them made their presence felt by helping the workers to set up class associations, socialist cultural centres and to grapple with the maverick capitalism led by the owners of the Docks Company, the Grafêes and the Guinles. The Grafêes and the Guinles ran the city, its police authorities, its courts and the São Paulo government, and had the Brazilian government on their side. On many an occasion when strikes erupted they were helped out by the Brazilian Navy which dispatched its ships to bombard the 'Brazilian Barcelona' and force the dockers back to work in defeat.

In those days the Brazilian capital was Rio de Janeiro and Grafêe-Guinle had their headquarters there; from there they ran the enslavement of white and black in Santos docks.

With the law on their side they required the dockers to work 10 to 16 hours a day on the ships, often in holds kept at sub-zero temperatures in order to preserve imported foodstuffs or goods for export, and all for starvation wages.

Hundreds of the dockers died of TB while the Grafêes and Guinles got richer and richer. In Santos, there was plenty of unskilled work: working for the Docks Company, for Santos Mills and in railroad construction and so on.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there was a lot of unrest in Santos and violent strikes broke out, some of them under the supervision of anarchists and supported by donations from the Spanish and Portuguese restaurants that fed the workers until they could go back to work victorious. Which is why the strikers were able to hold out until they had defeated the bosses who could always rely on help from the police dispatched from São Paulo.

On account of the numbers of Spaniards and Portuguese in Santos and the violence and ideological steadfastness of the strikers there, the city was affectionately

nicknamed the 'Barcelona of Brazil' and the syndicalist and anarchist workers were indebted for some of their most telling victories over the owners of Santos docks to the donations from these restaurants.

In this brief look at the ideological and class struggle in the 'Brazilian Barcelona' we cannot ignore an illustrious pioneer of this long revolutionary road: the doctor Silvério Fontes.⁶ He was a committed socialist subscribing to a blend of marxism and Fourier-style socialism that was libertarian in outlook and Silvério Fontes was the first of the city's intellectuals to look kindly upon the labourers and to come to their defence in his little (great!) newspaper *A Questião Social*, published on 17 September 1895 with the sub-title *One for all and all for one*.

A physician highly regarded by and supportive of the poor, Silvério Fontes believed that social and human emancipation could be fostered by revolutionary socialism.

With this aim in mind and with characteristic honesty, in 1889 he wrote a manifesto setting out his beliefs:⁷

"Article 4. – The directory [of the Santos Socialist Centre] has a duty to organise propaganda talks, raise consciousness, set up libraries, launch reviews and establish schools for workers.

Article 5 – The directory is to see to it that cooperatives are established to improve the lives of the labouring classes.

Article 6 – The centre is to establish a party to make the necessary progress through reforms to state and federal legislation to ensure collective progress.

Article 7 – Members of the Centre shall be able to borrow books from the library for a period of 30 days on signing the register of loans presented by the secretary.

Article 8 – Every member shall pay whatever he is able towards the costs of propaganda.

Addendum: Extra-ordinary expenses shall be shared among the membership."

Both this Socialist Centre and the newspaper *A Questião Social* made a great impact in Santos, overseeing strikes and popular protests and then 1904 saw the establishment of the *First of May Society*, an association of construction workers. Its founders were ambitious: they meant to organise the workers of Santos to press for better pay and more humane and fairer treatment for all. And to lay on lectures, ideological debates and spread general education and ideas and lay on literacy and professional training courses. The construction workers, for instance, were taught technical drawing and architecture so that they could implement plans and decorate buildings. Not forgetting the anarchist ideology arriving in the books of Kropotkin, Malatesta and Bakunin, Anselmo Lorenzo, Neno Vasco, Dr Silva Mendes and countless other European thinkers.

was a fine writer and public speaker. He eventually became director of *A Plebe* in São Paulo. He was repeatedly jailed and, on one occasion, expelled to Spain. But he returned to Brazil illegally and married Maria Antonia Soares (the daughter of Spanish anarchists) and finally died in Rio de Janeiro during the Getulio Vargas dictatorship (1930-1945).

21 As far as those who governed Brazil were concerned, the social question officially did not exist. Everything could be resolved by means of "drawn sabres" and "cavalry charges". And still they cling to this nonsense! Who know? Maybe today they think they can solve the poverty problem and the misery of the people by killing off 40 million under-nourished citizens.

22 In our possession we have three of Mota's pamphlets (although there were more), namely, *Rebellions*, *Reflections* and *Reason versus Faith*. We also have a splendid document, his defence of anarchists, read into the proceedings of the Brazilian congress in May 1919.

23 *A Lanterna* began publication on 7 March 1901 as a daily and this continued until 29 February 1904. It then resurfaced as a weekly from 17 October 1909 until 19 November 1916. There was also a third phase from 13 July 1933 until October 1935. In its first phase it was under the supervision of Dr Benjamin Mota and, in its second and third phases, under the supervision of the journalist Edgardo Leuenroth.

24 The anarchist Luis Lascala was the most assiduous contributor from Santos to *A Vanguarda*, denouncing the police and expounding upon anarchism.

25 Amateur dramatics in Santos threw up outstanding libertarian performers like Joaquim da Silva Bastos, José Puycegur (a Frenchman), Lauriano Prado, the sisters Odete and Isaura Prado, Aldo Madureira, Thiago Marques, Antonio Covas, Alexandre Lascala, Manuel Marques Bastos, sisters Aurora and Luzia Novoa, the Gomes brothers, Maria de Oliveira and others whose names elude us. The plays staged included *The First of May*, by Pietro Gori, *Tomorrow* by M. Laranjeira, *The Sin of Simony* by Neno Vasco and Batista Machado's *Gaspar the Locksmith*.

26 The libertarians of Santos tried to build a *Casa do Povo* (People's House) but the authorities refused permission and thwarted all their efforts.

27 This was one of many nicknames the workers had for the "well-deserving" Grafêes and Guinles, the owners of the Santos Docks Co.

28 Carters in charge of transporting coffee sacks and the like at Santos Docks had to show up at 5.00 am. to prepare their draught animals and carts and start work at 6.00 am. All day long they ran after their animals in their bare feet: at that time the carts had no seats fitted for the carters.

29 With no place to eat, the Docks workers used to 'dine' sitting on the pavement in the Andradas and Jose Bonifacio squares, come rain or blazing sunshine.

30 Most employers in turn of the century Brazil had no accident insurance schemes for their workers.

11 Soares adopted the alias *Florentino de Carvalho* after he returned from Argentina in 1910 and became one of the leading teachers at the Modern School, a leading journalist and an unbeatable exponent of anarchism in Brazil. He was also a favourite target of the police.

12 João Pedigão Gutierrez first learned of anarchism in Santos: he read anarchist books and newspapers and became a militant that the Santos police could not bear the sight of. They tried to deport him over the border into Uruguay but he made his way back to Santos.

13 In order to be rid of Gutierrez, the Brazilian government ordered that he be expelled from the entire country. In order to escape he walked for many days as far as Sorocaba in Sao Paulo state and then took refuge in the cottage of the Italian anarchist Vicente de Caria. It was while he was there that he met his daughter Anarquía de Caria (all Vicente's children had anarchist names) and married her. They had a family together and lived in Sorocaba. He died on Brazilian soil talking about anarchism in a blend of Spanish and Portuguese.

14 In this examination of the libertarian movement in Santos we have borrowed from a deposition dated July 1968 by Severino Cesar Antunha, former construction worker and a prisoner of the class war in Santos.

15 *Acougue Monstro* was the name given to premises from the ground floor of which beef was sold in joints and by kilo in 1907: it was Santos's best "carvery".

16 They dropped into the Santos Workers' Federation to avidly read and discuss the labour and anarchist press such as *A Lanterna*, *O amigo do Povo*, *A Terra Livre*, *A Voz do Trabalhador*, *A Greve*, *Kultur*, and *Despertar* (all in Portuguese), plus *La Revista Blanca* and several other newspapers in Spanish and Italian.

17 Among the most widely read volumes among those who visited the Santos Workers' Federation were Reclus's *Man and the Earth*, books by Kropotkin, Gorky, Tolstoy, Sébastien Faure, Malatesta, Bakunin and Anselmo Lorenzo, all of the books published by Ferrer's Modern School as well as Russian-language publications printed in Argentina and North America. Plays by Neno Vasco, Campos Lima, Manuel Laranjeira and a variety of Spanish and Italian writers were also read and staged in Santos.

18 Domingos Alexandre wrote a number of novels with social messages under the *nom de plume* Silvio Floreal and these were well received by the Brazilian literati and described as serving as "so to speak, course books within the Santos Workers' Federation and trade unions."

19 Miguel Garrido was a native of Uruguay who arrived in Santos in his youth and was eventually expelled from Brazil as a "foreign agitator". He laid low for a while and then returned, married to a gifted young woman, Sofia, who made speeches in the squares of Santos. They were arrested several times and, not knowing what to do with this anarchist couple, and eager to get them out of Brazil, the police dumped them on the borders of Rio Grande do Sul and Uruguay.

20 Manuel Campos was Spanish-born and arrived in Santos as a young man, was converted to anarchism in Brazil, studying its ideas and amassing a solid grounding in sociology and

Books were shipped in from Italy, France, Spain and Portugal and published in Portuguese language editions by the Guimarães Bookshop and Publishing House, the Ariland and Bertrand Bookshop, the Internacional Bookshop and the Francisco Luiz Gonçalves Press.

The sponsors behind this cultural and ideological and vocational training venture were construction workers and quite educated anarchists like Severino Cesar Antunha, Aurelio Garcia, Florentino Eladio Cesar Antunha, Luis Lascala, João Faria, Miguel Alonso and others as yet unidentified. They also had support and the valuable cooperation of the elderly Spanish socialist Valentim Diego who was responsible for a number of the courses and exhibitions and who was always ready to volunteer and to bring in friends to help sow the seeds of revolution.

The advent of the 20th century found the workers of Santos eager to secure their emancipation. The first people to sound the alarm about the exploitation of human beings in Santos were the socialist followers of Fourier, followed by the workers from the *First of May Society* set up in 1904. The following year (1905) saw the emergence of '*The International*' – a group serving as an umbrella for people from a variety of trades and nationalities and aiming to secure a number of economic and human gains. Socialists staged exhibitions and gave classes on its premises.

To begin with there were no ideological frictions, until Oreste Ristori,⁸ Antonio Leppi and other anarchist militants arrived in Santos to address the workers. Silver-tongued orators of firm convictions, they triggered the first clashes between socialists and anarchists.

With their heated debates escalating – in July 1905 – the very first general strike broke out and at the same time a number of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups emerged in Santos.

The strike started off peacefully enough, with the carters⁹ pressing for a small pay rise: the police were called in by the employers and promptly provoked street fighting, bursting into homes, seizing, clubbing and deporting to other states in Brazil even people who had had no connection with the strike. But instead of this cowing the strikers, the police violence united the proletariat over and above any ideological differences they might have had and for a week the strikers brought Santos to a stand-still: there wasn't "a living soul at work in the city nor in its surrounding districts."

This was the first big victory recorded in the city henceforth known as the 'Brazilian Barcelona' on account of the cohesion and libertarian intensity of its direct action movements and its commemoration of dates such as May Day, Bastille Day,

the Paris Commune, its opposition to the conviction and execution of Francisco Ferrer and, later, its campaign for the release of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

In 1906 two young men born in Spain arrived in Santos to lend a hand in the class struggle, boosting anarchist propaganda in the city and throughout Brazil: these were Primitivo Raimundo Soares and João Perdigão Gutierrez.

In a hand-written deposition in the author's possession, we read, regarding Soares: "Shortly after the 1905 general strike ended a stranger to labour circles appeared in Santos and was elected secretary of 'The International'. What was known about him was that he was an ex-member of the São Paulo police force. This led to certain elements from the *First of May Society* launching attacks and showering insults on the newcomer who, though highly intelligent, was of no definite revolutionary persuasion. He worked as an editor on a weekly paper published by 'The *International*', using reformist language and not particularly clear as to the real principles of the struggle in which its members were engaged. The stranger was the man who later went on to be a great champion of the Social Revolution in Brazil: Primitivo Raimundo Soares.¹⁰ His indomitable determination to work on behalf of the socialist cause and the young man's ideological immaturity meant that he was drawn into the *First of May Society* even though some of its members had previously had their doubts about his bona fides. Within a short while, Primitivo was in the van of the fight against capitalism and was an established militant of unquestioned calibre,¹¹ in terms of his writings as well as a spokesman for the labouring classes."

On May Day 1906, Primitivo Raimundo Soares played an active part in the proceedings, but, being physically fragile, was unsuited to manual labour, which was demanding in Santos, and he made up his mind to move on to Argentina. He stayed there until 1910 when the government there decided to deport him. At the hands of the Buenos Aires police, Primitivo and nearly a dozen of his fellow libertarians were "forced into the hold of a steam ship that stopped off en route to Spain in the Brazilian port of Santos with these undesirables on board." When the Santos dockworkers heard about the brutality of the Argentinean police, they held the ship and when it was tied up at the docks they forcibly freed the captives and helped them to escape and they all stayed in Brazil, lost in its vast territory: Primitivo Raimundo Soares died in São Paulo on 24 March 1947, leaving behind him one of the most impressive "records of services rendered to anarchism".

The second of the newcomers – João Perdigão Gutierrez¹² was born on the island of Puerto Ventura in the Canaries and arrived in Santos as a teenager with his parents. In Santos he picked up his trade in the building industry and became an anarchist. He

NOTES

1 Among the pioneers who introduced social issues into the Brazilian novel were the anarchists Fabio Luz, M. Curvelo de Mendonca, Domingos Ribeiro Filho, Lima Barreto, Ranulfo Pratas, Avelino Foscolo and others.

2 The anarchists José Martins Fontes (the physician son of Dr Silvério Fontes), Afonso Schmidt, José Oiticica, etc. were poets.

3 Among Brazilian theatre-lovers were Avelino Fosco, José Oiticica, Souza Passos, Pedro Catalo, Gigi Damiani, etc., and other libertarians also helped translate and stage hundreds of social plays on the premises of workers' associations.

4 Films like 'The Dream Never Ends' and 'Libertarians' used anarchist primary sources.

5 In Brazil (in addition to Francisco Ferrer street in Rio Grande do Sul) there are streets named after anarchists like Fabio Luz, Ricardo Gonçalves, João Perdigão Gutierrez, Pedro Catalo, José Oiticica and José Martins Fontes.

6 Dr Silvério Fontes fathered the anarchist physician José Martins Fontes, renowned for his more than 15 books and exhibitions in anarchist circles. He used to treat people free of charge and paid for medicines for those who could not afford them. To this day, many people speak with reverence and admiration of *Dr Zezinho*, to whom one of his four biographers dedicated a book in excess of 200 pages long with a poem describing him as a 'saint'. Martins Fontes was an anarchist in the Kropotkin school.

7 Dr Silvério Fontes began writing his socialist manifesto in 1889, revised it in 1895 and produced a final draft in 1902, when the Santos Socialist Centre was founded. His socialism had nothing in common with the generic socialism that could as easily be advocated by Hitler, the Pope or Leonel Brizola. [Brizola: famous Brazilian politician, radical leader of the PTB (Brazilian Labour Party) launched by the populist Vargas in 1945 as his Labour Front. Brizola was governor of Rio Grande do Sul.]

8 An Italian anarchist expelled from Argentina, Oreste Ristori tried to escape on the first leg of his trip back to Italy and broke both his legs. But this did not stop him from converting the doctor treating him to anarchism and the latter allowed him to escape in Uruguay. With help he made it to Brazil and was welcomed by Italian libertarians in São Paulo where he settled in the early months of 1904. Within a short time he was publishing the weekly *La Battaglia* in Italian and became a travelling salesman for anarchism in Brazil. With a vast knowledge of sociology, he was one of the most fluent polemicists ever seen in the country.

9 Back in those days transportation was by draught animal: carters, coachmen and deliverymen represented a battle-hardened and conscious trade.

10 Primitivo Raimundo Soares was born in Oviedo, Spain and arrived in São Paulo as a teenager with his parents. There he joined the mounted police and was made a sergeant. One day he stopped outside a bookshop and spotted Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* in the window. He leafed through the book, paid for it and read it and then resigned from the police and became a labourer in Santos.

second time), Manuel Peres Távira and the deportation to Santa Catarina of José Aranda and Deoclecio Fagundes.⁴⁹

Some of those tried were acquitted but others were tried and convicted in their absence.⁵⁰ This was Ibrahim Nobre's last ditch attempt to earn a reward from the employers of Santos for aborting a strike. Some time later Diamantino Augusto Velho was back in the news and was forced to flee in whatever clothes he stood up in to Rio de Janeiro and Antonio R. Julião, the heart and soul of the strike, fled into the bush outside Santos, disguised as a woman and nothing more was ever heard of him: he paid with his life for the eight hour day in Santos – the 'Brazilian Barcelona'.

In 1922, the syndicalist and anarchist movement bounced back but it lacked its previous cohesion: supporters of the Brazilian Communist Party set up in March that year triggered dissent and splits and the police seized this chance to shut down the premises belonging to the libertarian groups and free trade unions.⁵¹ And the employers, noticing that some of their employees were just looking for a few pence more, decided to grant these rises, whereupon the organisational structures began to break down⁵¹ as dissent spread through the various trades as their ability to press home their demands was whittled away.

Meanwhile, *A Plebe* (São Paulo) of 1 March 1924 reported another strike wave in Santos with support from the construction workers, carters, coffee dockers, bakers, railwaymen, barbers, shopworkers and Cleansing Department employees.

Between 1921 (and the general strike for the eight hour day) and the revolution in October 1930 which established the foundations that would later underpin the (fascistic!) Getulio Vargas dictatorship, May Day was still being marked and there was a vigorous campaign in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti.⁵²

Among those who passed through Santos and left an enduring mark there were Miguel Garrido, Sebastião and Joaquim da Silva Bastos, the sisters Odete and Izaura Prado, Thiago Marques, Antonio Covas, sisters Aurora and Luiza Novoa, Gumercindo Rivera, the Argentine Botejara, Justiniano da Silva (aka Tupi), José Gomes da Silva, Victor Rodrigues, Emilio Gomez, Serafim Costa, Domingos Gonçalves, Manuel Pena, Manuel Trindade, Epifanio Feijo Lousada, Angelo Fernandez, Benedito Novoa, Belarmino Fernandes, José Prol, José Alves, Joaquim Rosas, Lino and Manuel Garrido, Enrique Ramos, José Barros, Albano Santos, Manuel Fernandez Casal, Antonio Vidal, Primitivo Lopes, Silvio Floreal (Domingos Alexandre) and Carlos Zaballos. Outstanding courage and libertarian consistency were displayed by Manuel Marques Bastos, João Perdigão Gutierrez, Diamantino Augusto Velho, José Puysegur, Sofia Garrido and Maria Rodrigues.

Articles taken from series in *Orto* (Barcelona) May/June 1996 – March/April 1997

bought books, took out subscriptions to newspapers and within a few years had become one of the most active militants and a public speaker greatly harassed by the Santos police. He was even deported to the southern part of the country and years after that was served with an expulsion order.¹³

By late 1906 participants in this social unrest included Luiz Lascala, the Antunhas brothers, Serafim Solé and other anarchists, all from the building trades, a union that worried the Santos bourgeoisie. Anarchist influence was strong among the dockers, drivers, carters, baggers and stone-cutters working for the City Co, Santos Mills and other sectors and had taken over the First of May Society and 'The International'.

At around this point there emerged a social theatre group and revolutionary dramas were staged, newspapers, pamphlets and leaflets were published: *Tribuna Operária* and *Aurora Social* date from this time. 1907 saw the emergence of the Workers' Federation of Santos; plainly libertarian in its outlook, it embraced all of the unions in Santos and its influence in turn led to the establishment of schools that adopted Ferrer's educational methods. [...]

The launch of the Santos Workers' Federation in 1907 and the support it won from the local unions and workers came as a shock to the Rio-based Brazilian government.

The army and, above all, the navy were always on stand-by to come to the aid of the owners of the Docks Company at the slightest move from libertarians, even should they only be marking some historical anniversary. And Santos was not short of police torturers specialising in hunting workers through the streets in broad daylight even if the latter had come out on strike with good cause. Nor was there any shortage of police commanders adept in the "arts" of repression; especially notorious were Eneas Martins, Bias Bueno, Ibrahim Nobre and other "human" excrescences after whom streets are named to day, this being their reward from the Brazilian governments whose lap-dogs they were in life.

The Workers' Federation¹⁴ was to set up shop on the top floor of the *Acougue Monstro*¹⁵ in the Rua General Camara, near the junction with the Rua Senador Feijó. The premises were shared by several unions, notably the construction workers' union. There the Santos Federation set up night classes at which pretty much everything was taught and learnt: literacy classes, technical drawing, drama, sociology, politics and general culture. All of the workers were drawn there by a great determination to learn. Some who had been denied the chance to go to school could study and learn there!

One of the rooms at the Workers' Federation was a reading-room for newspapers¹⁶ and books¹⁷ which were avidly discussed and commented upon by those with a little spare time. They turned up there every evening after work was over.

"It was really great" – says one deposition I have – "to see horny-handed men picking up a pencil or ruler. Many of them were elderly, with greying hair and gleaming pates. Others were mere boys with bow-ties and thick heads of hair, posing as literati or public speakers caught in mid-speech. They lived to argue about and teach whatever they knew. Teenagers, most of them stone-cutters' helpers, took part in these marathon activities. A few youngsters had a particular fondness for amateur dramatics and they livened up meetings."

Domingos Alexandre was one graduate of this academy among the many decried.¹⁸

"A few short-lived newspapers were published. There was a plan to set up a People's House to operate as a proper Social Cultural Centre divided into classrooms, auditoria, stage areas, etc. And there were no fixed dues; everybody gave whatever they could afford: the object being that no one should feel left out. The unions, the Federation and the social theatre groups had no presidents or obvious leaders, only comrades who took on the most varied administrative tasks. A lot was achieved in the 'barn' and more would have been accomplished had those in government not put so much effort into harassment of the workers and their associations, breaking them up and using the police to seize their assets. Only the bourgeoisie's private property was respected. Whatever the workers had managed to scrape together wound up in the police pound or in the homes of agents of the authorities, a practice that persists to this day."

In the 'Barcelona of Brazil', the scene of so many struggles that were often turned into 'exercises in class warfare' with help from the Brazilian navy vessels anchored in the port, anarchist militants drawn from a number of countries came to prominence – people such as Miguel¹⁹ and Sofia Garrido, Manuel Gonçalves, José Garcia, José Louzada, Manuel Campos,²⁰ Jacinto Emiliano, Juvencio Dias Camargo, José Martins, Antonio Moral, José Rufino, Angelo Martinez and other idealists whose names have yet to be definitively brought to light in spite of our efforts.

Between 1907 and 1910, Santos attracted folk from a number of European and American countries. On a daily basis militants of a wide variety of ideological persuasions passed through the 'Brazilian Barcelona' but mostly anarcho-syndicalists and libertarians. Many of these left only after they were deported by the police authorities, whilst others wound up in São Paulo or the Brazilian interior.

The attention of the Brazilian government was drawn to Santos because of its fear that the city might spark some sort of 'conflagration' that would spread around the

Under the Adolfo Gordo Law expulsions were legalised and 'the foreign agitator' received 'special treatment'; he was stripped of his belongings by the police criminal Sebastião Arruda and other thugs under the orders of police chiefs Bias Bueno and Ibrahim Nobre, and, if he couldn't be deported, he was bundled on board cargo ships and sent for a long trip around the Brazilian coast.³⁷

At the time the working class was living through an ongoing climate of war which lasted into 1920-1921 as the eight hour working day failed to 'take' in Santos. Every employer dismissed his workers on a whim, except for a few of the more enlightened employers.³⁸ The others took their lead from the bosses of the Docks Co. who were always eager to sweat the blood out of their employees.

With only the strength of their arms and their wits to help them in their fight with the bosses and police, the workers of Santos, under anarchist guidance, joined forces and unleashed a concerted general strike [in 1921] in the city.³⁹ Their main aim was to achieve the eight hour day for all wage-earners and with reprisals against none.

The strike started at the Docks Co., the Santos Mills and the stone-cutters, construction workers, city employees all joined in and the city was brought to a stand-still. Then the bosses went to draft in unemployed workers from Rio de Janeiro and Japanese workers from São Paulo. But on arrival in Santos and discovering that they were there the smash a strike, most of these ran away⁴⁰ or sided with the strikers.⁴¹ The Japanese staged a sit-down on the pavement outside the Docks Co. and chanted: "In Japan, it's no pay, no work."

Solidarity manifestoes, telegrammes and messages of support flooded into the commercial press⁴² from Italy, Portugal, Spain, Argentina and every state in Brazil.⁴³ Many were arrested for forwarding solidarity and/or aid to the Santos strikers⁴⁴, even the sack-stitchers who joined the strike and issued a manifesto.⁴⁵

The police cracked down on strikers who took to the streets⁴⁶ in broad daylight. The strike committee which the police thought they had locked up continued to call for a peaceable strike but when they saw their colleagues hunted like animals, two home-made bombs were made and violence was repaid with violence: a donkey which might well have had its own reasons for seeking a reduction in working hours between the traces of a cart on the quayside was killed whilst peaceably standing in its stall⁴⁷ The explosion shocked the bosses and they got the message: the eight hour day was granted. But what ought to have been a resounding victory for the Santos proletariat then turned into a police 'show trial' targeting strikers Guilherme Luz, Abel Cardoso, Antonio Ribeiro, Manuel Antonio Penha, José Augusto Amaral, Antonio Rox (from Rio de Janeiro), Antonio R. Julião, Diamantino Augusto Velho and Agostinho Matheus⁴⁸, resulting in the expulsion of Manuel Campos (for the

which there were many: against the cost of living, against working days of between 10 and 16 hours, lack of accident insurance etc.

In January 1913 a bulletin from the Santos Workers' Federation signed by its secretary Manuel dos Santos informed the workers of Santos that a delegate from the unions was being dispatched to Europe³³ to warn their counterparts to alert the unemployed against the deceitful promises of labour contractors offering jobs in Brazil.³⁴ In turn, the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist press³⁵ reported the depredation carried out by police officers Deolindo Prates, Piraja and Pontes and other delinquents under the command of the learned police chief Ibrahim Nobre,³⁶ in defiance of the habeas corpus orders granted by Dr Heitor de Morais on behalf of 474 workers who had arrived in Brazil on foot of promises made to them in Europe. Many of them were clubbed, others were jailed and then banished without due process to the jungles of the Amazon, ill clad and ill housed. And the police had stolen the belongings of these workers. Ibrahim Nobre ignored the orders from the judges on the Court of Justice and ignored objections arriving from Portugal, Spain, Italy and elsewhere and went on to deport Manuel Peres Tavira, João Gomes, José Gomes, Antonio Luis, Manuel Perdigão Seabreda, all of whom were forcibly shipped out under cover of the night, in soiled and torn clothing, without a penny in their pockets.

Ignorant of such acts of barbarism on the part of the police, two young Portuguese arrived in Santos. Manuel Marques Bastos and Diamantino Augusto Velho were to make their names in the field of libertarian ideas, class struggle and left an indelible mark on Brazilian social history, both of them living into the 1980s, by which time all of their police persecutors were long dead. [...]

In the 1920s there was a high death toll from TB in Santos. Most of these victims were employees of the Docks Co. The disease affected the lungs of poorly fed workers who worked long hours in unhygienic conditions. And even though people in Santos witnessed on a daily basis the sight of dockers carrying bulging sacks on their backs and untold wealth unloaded from vessels, the central, state and city governments behaved as if Brazil was still under colonial rule; Santos was run by the owners of the Docks, Water and Sewage Co., the Santos Mills and a half dozen high-living businessmen and industrialists. Which is why, at a call from this 'elite' group, the government immediately drafted in police reinforcements, army and naval troops with express orders to capture, torture and deport (and, in the case of the police, to kill).

country. According to its advisers at the time, the social question was a 'police matter' and could be resolved by 'drawn sabres and cavalry charges'.²¹

Among those who contributed to the libertarian movement in Santos we find names like Manuel Gonçalves, Ezequiel Simuni, Dr Martim Francisco, Julio Conceição, Manuel Fernandes Casal, Ramon Peres, plus several dozen other anarchists. They all did their best to better the lot of the employees of the Docks Company, Santos Mills, the quarries and the building workers and frequently stood up to the police. From São Paulo came the lawyer Benjamin Mota, a courageous reporter and libertarian who had spent several years in France, returning at the end of the 19th century enthused by the ideas of Proudhon and Kropotkin. Swayed by those two thinkers, he wrote and published a number of pamphlets²² that drove the bourgeoisie of São Paulo to distraction. In 1901 Mota launched the newspaper *A Lanterna*²³ which was anti-clerical and anarchist: it created a real 'earthquake' in the state. Later he moved to Santos and launched the newspaper *A Vanguarda*, opening its columns to anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists²⁴ whom he defended in the courts when the government sought to 'arraign' them in order to mislead the very immigrants it was still hell bent on attracting to the country.

In June 1907 the Santos construction workers called a strike for the eight hour day. The strike committee was made up of Luiz Lascala, Eladio Cesar Antunha, Enrique Ramos, Serafim Solé and João Faria. The strikers held out for 18 days and they won. But shortly after that the defeated bosses, arguing that other workers did not enjoy the same rights, tried to default upon the agreement. It took further strikes over the ensuing years (into the 1920s) when a violent strike finally defeated the employers and the governor of São Paulo state implemented the eight hour day for all workers: that victory, however, had cost nearly 100 deportations, including that of Manuel Campos.

The anarchists explained their beliefs to the unions and opened up new vistas to the workers as they explained the meaning of the economic strike, solidarity, human rights, accident insurance and medical insurance for the sick (these were the days when TB was rampant) work-site and home insurance, reductions in working hours, including for those who had to work in the holds of the refrigeration ships who deserved more humane treatment so that their work would be less of a burden.

In the Social Cultural Centres they set up libraries well endowed with books on sociology, history, philosophy and ideas: amateur drama groups²⁵ and music groups, literacy classes, trades education and training for militants. Through the staging of revolutionary and anti-clerical plays prefaced by lectures or reading and discussion sessions, the libertarians made general education popular and accessible to all.²⁶

In 1909 the Santos construction workers called another strike, this time for better pay. It won backing from other sectors and emerged victorious. That same year (1909) the bakers also decided to strike, but some scabs (strike-breakers) held out against this and the local police chief decided to 'attend' the meeting being held at the Workers' Federation but was denied entry to the meeting by the worker Jacinto Emiliano. The policeman seemed to have accepted the workers' arguments and left the premises only to come back a short time later in the company of police officers who stormed the Federation premises. They arrested all the bakery workers they came across and since the union premises were on the second floor, the police tossed everything out into the streets below: out through the windows went tables, chairs, archives, books and any other 'subversive' materials they could find on the Federation's premises. The following day the bourgeois press carried the screaming headline: "*Number of bombs and large amount of dynamite discovered.*" The upshot of this strike-breaking effort was that many were jailed, others (who were unable to get away) were deported and the bakery workers' strike was thwarted.

After some 20 days, those Santos workers who had not been 'taken into custody' against their will, returned to their 'headquarters', only to be surprised by another police raid which broke down the doors. After that libertarians moved successfully that trained groups be established to reply to police violence with labour violence. They trained their comrades and these teams showed up at all meetings to resist police assaults ordered by the learned delinquents under the overall command of the governor of São Paulo state.

In those far-off times, the proletariat organised and ran its associations, unions and cultural centres without bosses, leaders or presidents: everything was run along self-managerial lines. They would come together, assess their needs, come to a consensual agreement and appoint comrades to run their organisations on a rota basis (they were replaced after their term of office ran out). And since they knew how to find their own way and live together peacefully, violence was reserved for use against traitors, the bosses and the police, if provoked.

Worried by the radical stance of the workers, the (São Paulo) state authorities and federal authorities immediately dispatched the most violent police to Santos at the slightest provocation, with powers of life and death over the anarchists in particular.

In the run-up to May Day and other historic commemorations, the Santos *Octopus*²⁷ would turn to the government for reinforcements. Thus, on 1 May 1909 the governor of São Paulo, intending to make a nonsense of the demonstrations, declared a state-wide holiday, thereby pre-empting any clash with unionised workers

and the carters who were always ready to unleash strikes. But in spite of these precautions by the authorities, in the run-up to 13 October that year, the workers of Santos took to the streets in an effort to save the life of Francisco Ferrer, the founder of the Modern School in Spain, who was due to face a firing squad in the Montjuich fortress. Workers, intellectuals and ordinary folk turned out to listen to open air addresses by Martim Francisco, the Antunhas brothers, Luiz Lascala, the poet Martins Fontes and other libertarian speakers. Edgard Leuenroth, M. Moscoso, Julio Sorelli, Oreste Ristori, Alexandre Cerchiai, Benjamin Mota, A. Picarolo and Ernestina Lesine travelled up from São Paulo.

By the end of the day, carrying placards and posters, they called for the release of Ferrer and were chanting: Death to Maura and Alfonso XIII! But these protests could not prevent the Spanish criminals from executing the Spanish founder of the Modern School, although the workers had reached beyond the usual borders in order to express their solidarity with a comrade of like mind.

In 1910-1911, the Santos bourgeoisie were worried by further strikes, mainly the general strike in 1911 when the Brazilian government dispatched warships to Santos port. In the Docks Co., the worst treated workers were the carters and unloaders.²⁸ They had nowhere to eat²⁹ or change their clothes and were expected to carry up to three 50-kilo bags of coffee on their backs, running around all day barefoot.³⁰ And in the event of injury or illness (upwards of 50% of them were afflicted with TB) they were forced to go begging through the city streets.³¹

To counter the powerful *Santos Octopus*, the anarchists set up associations, cultural centres and, under the aegis of the latter, schools, libraries, and social dramatic groups.

In *A Terra Livre*³² at around this time we read: "*Serafim Solé got things under way at the Carlos Gomes Theatre in Santos with a splendid talk on the importance of education and general studies and of sociology for a new society in which everyone would have equal rights and duties. He was followed by Eladio C. Antunha who spoke about solidary work freed of the stigma of slavery placed upon it by the capitalists. Then came Ramon Gens with a talk on solidarity between peoples, stressing its moral and human values.*

Rounding off this libertarian preamble, the young Mercedes Rio, Maria Pilar Moura and Ida Simoni recited Leviathan, The New Gospel, The Captive Bird, Coming Home, The Street Urchin, and young Severino Gonçalves Antunha recited Human Grief by the Portuguese poet and anarchist Angelo Jorge."

The commonest brain-food fed to the workers of Santos was undoubtedly anarchism which injected an ideological content into strikes and protest campaigns of