

# Contesting Internationalists: Transnational Anarchism, Anti-Imperialism and US Expansion in the Caribbean, 1890s-1920s

KIRWIN R. SHAFFER

*Penn State University – Berks College, Reading, PA*

## Introduction

By the early 1900s, anarchists penetrated the far corners of the Western Hemisphere. In Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Panama, activists—like their comrades everywhere—struggled to create their own anarchist visions of a free society for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality or gender. To accomplish this, anarchists challenged the power structures of society: capital, church and state. In Cuba, Luis Barcia, Adrián del Valle, Marcelo Salinas and Antonio Penichet, in Puerto Rico, Juan Vilar, Emiliano Ramos, and Ventura Mijón, and in Panama, M.D. Rodríguez, Aquilino López and José María Blázquez de Pedro always thought of themselves as internationalists. They rejected nationalist and patriotic rhetoric that they believed falsely divided humanity for the material and political interests of a few elite. As such, they saw their local and national struggles as part of a global anti-authoritarian movement.

The post-1898 Caribbean offered new opportunities for this global movement. However, Caribbean-based anarchists faced two situations unique to anarchists in Latin America. First, at this time Cuba, Puerto Rico and Panama were transitioning away from political control by other countries decades after the rest of Latin America: Cuba and Puerto Rico from Spain, Panama from Colombia. This new political opening offered anarchists fertile terrain to shape

---

krs14@psu.edu

these “post-colonial” societies. However, these societies proved to be anything but independent as the United States either controlled or strongly shaped all three. Thus, Caribbean anarchists faced a situation unique to Latin American anarchists: having to operate within the realm of US imperial control and expansion. In this context, Caribbean anarchists developed a specific anarchist anti-imperialism targeting the United States.

Cuban independence came after US intervention in 1898, three years after Cubans (with anarchist support) launched a War for Independence. Between 1898 and 1902, the US military occupied Cuba until the military government handed political authority to Cubans in May 1902 after Cubans agreed to insert the Platt Amendment into the Cuban Constitution. Besides authorizing creation of a US naval base, the amendment allowed the US to militarily intervene if it deemed Cuba to be unstable and threatening to US interests. Puerto Rico became a non-colony “colony” of the United States after a series of court cases known as the Insular Cases and after President William McKinley signed the Foraker Act into law in April 1900. The cases ruled that Puerto Rico belonged to the US but was not part of the US. The act provided for a US president-appointed governor for the island, a two-house legislature (one a mix of US and Puerto Rican appointees, the other elected by Puerto Ricans), unequal citizenship with US citizens, and no universal suffrage. In 1903, the US encouraged and orchestrated the independence of Panama from Colombia with the intention of building a canal—a project the French abandoned by the 1890s. Following independence, the US gained control of the ten-mile wide Canal Zone from the Caribbean to the Pacific that ran through the middle of Panama. Similar language as that in the Platt Amendment was inserted into the 1903 treaty that created the Canal Zone. The Constitution of the Republic of Panama also allowed the US military to intervene into the republic should instability arise. These political developments resulted in the expansion of various North American sectors into the Caribbean Basin after 1898. US companies spread North American capitalism, political and military advisers advocated the institutions of republicanism, and the American Federation of Labor developed affiliated unions.

Anarchists challenged this US expansion, and in doing so they generated an anti-imperialist campaign that corresponded to their anti-capitalist and anti-politics agendas. They challenged US-based industrial capital in places like the Cuban and Puerto Rican sugar and tobacco export sectors. In Panama, the massive engineering project to build the canal brought anarchists into direct conflict with canal operators and overseers. Besides these struggles against capital, anarchists also confronted the anti-anarchist American Federation of Labor (AFL). Anarchists believed the AFL favored US workers and business interests. They urged workers either to avoid the AFL or challenge its conserva-

tism from within AFL-affiliated unions. Anarchists also attacked the emergence of US-styled representative democracy that they saw as deceptive: the masses supposedly had a voice, but the elite ran these places to advance their own interests and the interests of the US overlords. Finally, they criticized Caribbean governments' collusion with the US, decried US military interventions and militarism in general, and challenged US concepts of Pan-Americanism. As a result, regional anarchists confronted not only "national" governments, companies and the Catholic Church, but also the imperial reach of US economics and politics in the Caribbean.

This article is both a comparative and transnational history of the Caribbean. One cannot understand the transnational penetrations of anarchists without understanding how anarchists operated within the specific Cuban, Puerto Rican and Panamanian contexts. Likewise, one cannot understand each site without understanding how the anarchist network shaped the experience of these radicals in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Panama. Cuba was the "hub" of the Caribbean network, where the largest number of anarchist groups developed, the most anarchist schools and health institutes were initiated, and where anarchist culture thrived. It is also where many anarchists in the region spent time as they moved between the US, Panama, or Puerto Rico. Finally, anarchists in Cuba published the most newspapers in the region. These newspapers coordinated anarchist responses and initiatives on the island and became the destination for anarchist communiqués and monetary contributions from Panama and Puerto Rico, especially when neither had its own press. Thus money flowed to Havana to support regional and international anarchist causes, and anarchist correspondents sent columns to be printed in Havana and then shipped back to Puerto Rico and Panama. In fact, much of what we know about anarchists in Puerto Rico and Panama can only be derived from their communications with Cuba, making transnational methodology (studying flows of communication, cash and people) key to understanding each particular country. Consequently, this article examines anarchist responses and initiatives in each location, compares them, and in doing so illustrates how the anarchist network confronted US military, economic, and political expansion from the 1890s to the 1920s while generating a regional anarchist consciousness.

### **Unraveling the Caribbean Anarchist Network**

During the first decades after Cuban independence from Spain in 1898, anarchists migrated to the island, merging with homegrown anarchists to slowly develop the largest and most prolific movement in the Caribbean Basin.

Until World War I, anarchists there published over 15 newspapers. The most important and long-lived was the weekly *¡Tierra!*, published in Havana from 1902 to January 1915. For the better part of its long run, *¡Tierra!* took issues of international anarchism and Cubanized them for a Cuban readership. At the same time, the paper regularly relied on anarchist correspondents throughout Cuba who sent correspondence and money to the Havana-based movement. That correspondence was printed in new editions of the newspaper and sent across the island. Additionally, the paper raised funds for anarchists who ran afoul of the law throughout the island. Thus, the paper linked far-flung anarchist groups into an island-wide anarchist movement.

The newspaper not only linked together the island's anarchists, it was also the journalistic hub for anarchists throughout the Caribbean, serving a key communicative and financial role across the far-flung regional network. In particular, anarchists from Puerto Rico and the Panama Canal contributed articles about the status of their organizations and the conditions they faced. Lacking resources to support their own long-term radical media, these anarchists—often with personal links to Havana—sent correspondence and money to Cuba and in return received fresh copies of the newspaper. In this way, readers from throughout the Caribbean were able to read about local developments, keep abreast of anarchist actions and government measures against their comrades, and develop a regional awareness by comparing their struggles with comrades throughout the Caribbean.

Havana's role as a hub in the network suffered a major blow when Cuban government crackdowns against radicals began in 1914. With government repression in the rural sugar zones, less money flowed into the newspaper's coffers. Less money and repression caused the closure of *¡Tierra!* and with it the decline in region-wide communication. However, for over a decade, this newspaper, its editors, and writers from throughout the Caribbean epitomized how radical media linked, configured and framed the anarchist cause throughout the Caribbean. In essence, activist reporters in the region cooperated with the paper's editors to make the newspaper a key tool that linked the anarchist network in US-dominated Cuba, the US possession of Puerto Rico, and the US-controlled Panama Canal Zone.

While *¡Tierra!* enjoyed privileged status as the longest running anarchist newspaper in the Caribbean, it was certainly not the only one. Between 1898 and 1929, anarchists in these three locations published at least 42 newspapers. Thirty of these were in Cuba, five in Panama or the Panama Canal Zone, and seven in Puerto Rico. While *¡Tierra!* played a role as a transnational newspaper, a few other papers did as well—but for shorter duration. The first were *El Productor* from Havana, *El Despertar* and *El Rebelde* from New York City, and *El Esclavo* from Tampa—all published in the 1890s and focused on anarchist roles

in the Cuban War for Independence. In the post-war Caribbean, *¡Tierra!* took the lead, but it had competition. For instance, from 1911 to 1912 two rival anarchist networks linked the Canal Zone, Cuba and Spain. One network published the Canal Zone newspaper *El Único*, the organ of the Federación Internacional Individualista. One of this network's main functions was to finance another newspaper in Havana to rival *¡Tierra!* For a time, this paper—*Vía Libre*—was almost completely financed by anarchists in the Canal Zone as a regional effort to undermine the anarchists then publishing *¡Tierra!* and to cast aspersions on other anarchists who were disliked by *El Único*'s editors (i.e., the Partido Liberal Mexicano and Ricardo Flores Magón in Los Angeles). In Puerto Rico *El Comunista* emerged in 1920, published by a group of long-time anarchists in the tobacco-rolling city of Bayamón. At a time when no other regional anarchist newspapers were coming out of Cuba, the Bayamón group turned *El Comunista* into a propaganda organ attacking the island's Socialist Party, the independence movement, and US neocolonialism while addressing regional issues. They distributed the paper in the Caribbean and the US.

While the anarchist press was one component tying Caribbean anarchists into a regional network, intimately linked to this project were men and women who were migrating throughout the region, who “lived internationalism” and who often encountered US imperialism in different settings. These migrating anarchists were the flesh and face of the network. They used contacts from their travels to develop and maintain linkages that connected different parts of the network. For instance, in 1910 and 1911, Aquilino López and M.D. Rodríguez left Cuba, where they had worked with different anarchist groups for several years, and arrived in the Panama Canal Zone, where they set to work organizing anarchist groups throughout the Zone. As mentioned above, these groups raised money for international causes, launched the newspaper *El Único*, and sent money and articles to the new Havana-based newspaper *Vía Libre*. In their columns from the Canal Zone and in *El Único*, as well as columns from rival Canal writers to *¡Tierra!*, these migrant anarchists criticized US control in the Zone. Wherever those Havana papers were distributed throughout the region—including back to Panama—the articles informed readers about conditions in the Panama Canal from an anarchist perspective.

Similarly, anarchists traveled between Cuba and Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican labor leader Santiago Iglesias Pantín was an anarchist who fled Cuba during the War for Independence; however, he soon abandoned anarchism when he arrived in San Juan. Luisa Capetillo, the best-known Caribbean anarchist from Puerto Rico, made waves in Cuba in 1915 when she signed a labor manifesto, and was ordered to be deported. She was not deported but was arrested for wearing men's clothing in public. Her Cuban experiences were followed in

Puerto Rico and beyond, and helped to increase her already considerable status in the Puerto Rican Left when she returned to agitating in Puerto Rico later in 1915. Similarly, Puerto Rican anarchists had a long history of traveling from the island to New York, Tampa, and Havana. In 1912, Angel María Dieppa and Ventura Mijón worked in Tampa with the Cuban anarchist Marcelo Salinas and Spanish anarchists who were a short time later implicated in the assassination of Spanish Prime Minister José Canalejas. In 1919, Ramón Barrios and Alfredo Negrín—longtime anarchists from the Puerto Rican city of Bayamón—traveled to Cuba to work with anarchists and sought Cuban support for a tobacco workers strike in Tampa. They were arrested and deported during the US-generated Red Scare that, as we will see, was extended to US protectorates in the Caribbean.

Caribbean anarchist movements outside Cuba were small and underfinanced, struggling with their own local and national issues. Ultimately, they were short-lived. By exploring the correspondence of non-Havana anarchists and tracking flows of money from outside Havana to that city's anarchist press, the transnational anarchist network in the Caribbean begins to emerge. The network's radical media also sheds light on the migration patterns of Caribbean anarchists who became correspondents and regional fundraisers—in short, the human face of the network.<sup>1</sup>

### **Caribbean Anarchists and the Early Years of US Expansion, 1898-1904**

During the first decade of the twentieth century, US investment poured into the region, reshaping local economies. By 1905, US corporations and individuals owned 60 per cent of the land in Cuba. General Leonard Wood oversaw the occupation of Cuba from 1899 to 1902 and promoted US private investment in both private and public works projects throughout the island. As one historian puts it, Wood's "tactic was to create an alliance between the U.S. and Cuba through informal political, social, cultural and economic connections that would be established largely through direct U.S. investment."<sup>2</sup> In both Cuba and Puerto Rico, the US-based American Tobacco Company (commonly known as the "Trust") began to dominate tobacco production. For instance, in Puerto Rico by 1909, 79 per cent of the island's tobacco was controlled by the Trust. In both Cuba and Puerto Rico, cigar making began to change from artisanal to factory-style production by 1900, but the arrival of the Trust to mass produce cigars for the American market rapidly proletarianized the workforce. Puerto Rican workers in the tobacco industry soared 197 per cent from 1899 to 1909.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, in 1904, the US began to build a canal through Panama. The Canal Zone was completely run by the US government under the authority of the Isth-

mian Canal Commission (ICC), and utilized concrete, steel and other supplies from US companies.

In all three locations, the US labor movement also arrived to organize workers; however, the Samuel Gompers-led AFL made uneven inroads into this new environment of Spanish-speaking workers. The AFL had little luck in Cuba even though Gompers traveled to Havana during a tobacco workers strike in February 1900. By and large, the AFL also stayed away from the Canal Zone before the 1910s. However, in Puerto Rico, the Federación Libre de los Trabajadores (FLT), created in 1899, organized workers of all trades and allied itself with the AFL. Tobacco workers also organized a branch of the AFL's Cigar Makers International Union (CMIU), so that by 1910, the AFL had two connections reaching into the Puerto Rican workforce.<sup>4</sup>

As US political, economic and labor initiatives spread throughout the Caribbean after 1898, anarchists did so as well, migrating from Spain as well as traveling between Cuba, Puerto Rico and the US. Since the 1880s, anarchists in Havana had dominated the city's labor movement. By the 1890s, anarchists based in Havana moved back and forth across the Florida Straits to roll cigars and agitate in Florida and Cuba. During the Cuban War for Independence, most anarchists on both sides of the Straits supported the war, providing money and fighters as well as conducting sabotage on the island.<sup>5</sup>

In January 1899, following the war's conclusion, anarchists Luis Barcia and Adrián del Valle began publishing *El Nuevo Ideal* in Havana. These anarchists challenged the Cuban elite for abandoning the social reforms that they had promised to the popular classes in return for their war-time support, and also launched anti-imperialist critiques of growing North American power and influence. For instance, Barcia and others lamented the military occupation of the island, comparing it to that of the Philippines, which was also under US control.<sup>6</sup> In the first year of the Cuban occupation, anarchists were among the many groups who questioned whether the US motives on the island and US designs for Cuba were truly in Cuba's best interests. For instance, a new education system modeled after the School City in New York was implemented on the island. Besides teaching republican civics, English instruction was central to the curriculum. Anarchists viewed this as an act of imperialism. While these "New York gentlemen" portrayed the modern man as being able to speak English, anarchists argued that the true goal of English instruction was to annex Cuba to the US.<sup>7</sup> Washington soon rejected efforts to annex Cuba, but the continued presence of the US military and the growing penetration of North American capital troubled anarchists. Manuel M. Miranda—a Cuban anarchist who had just returned from Spanish-imposed exile in Africa during the war—complained that in Cuba, American workers were being paid more than Cuban and Spanish

workers. He noted that the American Electric Company was paying US citizens \$1.50 per day but Cubans and Spaniards only ninety cents per day.<sup>8</sup> Politically, Del Valle argued against Washington's claim that Cubans were not ready for self-government.<sup>9</sup>

Journalistic antagonism toward the US became more tangible in February 1900. On February 27, two weeks after Gompers visited the island, Italian anarchist Errico Malatesta arrived in Havana at the invitation of Del Valle. After working for some time in New York and Tampa, from late-February to mid-March, Malatesta spoke in Spanish to the city's workers and activists in packed meeting rooms at Havana's *Círculo de Trabajadores* and elsewhere. In speeches and newspaper columns, he criticized US foreign policy, charging that US military conquest in places like the Philippines was as much an economic as a military boon to the US since American business would now have new markets and a supply of cheap imported labor. He warned that this could also happen in Cuba. "The only way to limit exploitation is to resist," he concluded in one speech. But authorities were wary. Governor Wood ordered that Malatesta could only speak publicly if he refrained from using the word "anarchism." In more talks and open letters to workers on the island, Malatesta avoided the word but not the anarchist message. He warned audiences to beware of Cubans seeking political office under American oversight. "Tomorrow, the Cuban leaders will sweep aside the interests of their own children, as occurs in all 'independent' countries. And, above all, the owners of land and all of the Cuban wealth will remain in place, whose defense against the pillaging workers is the fundamental mission of every government." Malatesta foresaw the role that the US would play in Cuba over the next twenty years, in which the US repeatedly intervened militarily when Washington believed Cuba was on the brink of political unrest:

Today [1900], Cubans aspire to be liberated from the intervention of the American government—that, under the lying mantle of liberator, has come to dictate and tyrannize as in a country under conquest—and just and holy is their aspiration. But this will not be realized neither by the rich class that needs American protection in order to be able to safely exploit the energetic Cuban worker nor by the merchants of patriotism who beg their share of the interventionists' spoils.

There was only one way Cubans could be free from a dual government collaboration that worked against the masses' interests. "In order to be truly free," Malatesta concluded, "it is necessary to abolish not only this government or that, but the institution of government itself."<sup>10</sup>



However, for Santiago Iglesias Pantín—a Spanish anarchist who quickly rose to lead the labor movement in Puerto Rico in the late 1890s—the United States was a model of democratic progress. Having lived in Havana during the first years of Cuba’s War for Independence, he had seen many of his Cuban anarchist friends deported, and been victimized himself by Spanish officials both in Cuba and Puerto Rico. The allure of North American freedom of speech, press and assembly held a powerful hold on Iglesias’ political imagination. In addition, he generally believed that American democracy benefited workers.<sup>11</sup> Now that Puerto Rico was increasingly linked to the US, Iglesias and many of his leftist comrades in the Federación Regional de los Trabajadores (FRT)—predecessor of the FLT—decided to abandon anarchism, throw in their lot with “Americanization,” and ally themselves with the US-based Socialist Labor Party.

In late October 1898, Puerto Rican labor leaders increasingly believed that the island’s working class would find salvation if they were linked to the US. In the FRT’s first meeting, several speakers praised the fate of workers in the US. In his coverage of the October 24 meeting, the anarchist-leaning Ramón Romero Rosa noted how Iglesias “demonstrated the grandiose expansion that today we are enjoying within the extensive progress of the United States.”<sup>12</sup> At the same time, after praising the US, Iglesias proposed sending a delegation of workers to investigate the actual labor and political conditions shaping “that great nation.”<sup>13</sup>

The FRT demanded an eight-hour day, a public education system identical to the US model, health and sanitation systems like the best in the US, maternity leave, a minimum wage, public kitchens for workers, and an end to sales taxes.<sup>14</sup> The FRT leadership also hoped that the US government would protect Puerto Rican workers. For instance, when the police chief in Aguadilla prohibited a workers meeting in March 1899, the union’s newspaper *El Porvenir Social* protested, noting how workers in Puerto Rico and throughout the US had the right to assemble. The chief’s actions contradicted the freedom and equality that were at the root of the US democratic system. “We protest the public functionaries who try to imitate the Spaniards with their arbitrary and reactionary actions that are prejudicial against the honorable and hardworking people,” proclaimed the paper.<sup>15</sup>

The FRT’s relationship with the US and US leftists took a unique turn on May Day 1899. The May Day festivities were a mix of Americanism, socialism and anarchism. The parade began at the FRT local in San Juan, led by the flag of the United States. Local unions followed, carrying slogans praising the FRT as defenders of the working class. A large cardinal red banner with gold trim included the slogan “¡Gloria al trabajo!” with a picture of an eagle, the US flag, and multiple five-pointed stars. The red flag of socialism and a large portrait of President McKinley followed. The accompanying rally led to calls for social

reforms and creation of an eight-hour work day—an appeal that was in fact enacted (though never enforced) the next day by the military government. In covering this celebration of the “Left” and the “American,” *El Porvenir Social* also published poetry by Italian anarchist Pietro Gori.<sup>16</sup>

By 1900, Iglesias, Romero Rosa and others split from the FRT to found the rival FLT. While the FLT leadership continued to promote Americanization, parliamentary socialism, and reformist unionism, some anarchists nevertheless joined the union. However, the anarchist presence in the FLT was never a comfortable fit. First, while the FLT leadership praised US-style democracy, anarchists were less sure of that democracy, wondering if the North American ideals of equality and liberty were merely a veneer hiding a government that worked in tandem with its capitalist class. Second, anarchists distrusted electoral politics, but the FLT at times supported cooperation with political parties on the island, even running candidates for public office. Third, anarchists questioned the growing Americanization of the island’s work force and whether the AFL had the island’s workers and future in its best interests. Finally, Santiago Iglesias—the FLT’s main representative to the AFL—was paid by the AFL, not Puerto Ricans. As a result, anarchists questioned his loyalty to the island’s workers.<sup>17</sup>

More than this, though, was Iglesias’ very public denunciation of anarchism in the labor broadsheet *La Miseria*. Just after May Day 1901, Iglesias attacked anarchism, criticizing in particular recent acts of anarchist violence in the world. “Anarchists prepare plots to kill kings and emperors. These anarchists have too much faith. And the sad truth is that anarchists squander their time so pathetically. . . . Anarchists,” he concluded, “your time has passed. Your function is archaic. . . . For you there is nothing else to do.” Iglesias’ message was clear. Puerto Ricans should abandon anarchism and anarchist tactics like “propaganda by the deed.” The future for the island’s working class lay with the AFL.<sup>18</sup> Despite Iglesias’ words, some anarchists continued to work with their rivals in the FLT in the early post-Spanish era.<sup>19</sup>

While anarchists were in Cuba and Puerto Rico before the US invasions in 1898, there was no anarchist presence in Panama until the US engineering project facilitated their arrival. Both the US and Panamanian governments feared anarchist agitation on the isthmus. For the new government of the Republic of Panama, the last thing they needed was foreign agitators spreading ideas of social revolution just as a new government was trying to organize the country. One only had to look to Cuba to see how anarchists could cause problems for a new government by asking unsettling questions about intimate ties to Washington. Meanwhile, the US wanted nothing to stand in its way to prevent or slow down the canal project that it envisioned as key to expanding US power on the world stage.

As a result, both governments prohibited the migration of anarchists to the isthmus. On May 9, 1904, President Roosevelt issued an Executive Order to this effect, authorizing the Isthmian Canal Commission to restrict immigration. To gauge how the US administration viewed anarchism in the wake of the assassination of President McKinley carried out by an anarchist in 1901, one only has to see how anarchists were placed in a category with other undesirables banned from the Zone. The order prohibited

idiots, the insane, epileptics, paupers, criminals, professional beggars, persons afflicted with loathsome or dangerous contagious diseases; those who have been convicted of felony, anarchists; those whose purpose is to incite insurrection and others whose presence it is believed by the Commission would tend to create public disorder, endanger the public health, or in any manner impede the prosecution of the work of opening the canal.

At its February 1905 meeting, the ICC granted Canal Governor George Davis (who had been military governor of Puerto Rico from 1899-1900) the power to enforce this prohibition as he saw fit.<sup>20</sup> While Davis left in 1905, it would be Davis' successor who benefited from the clarity of this ban when General Charles Magoon became the new governor. For a year, Magoon oversaw the Canal Zone, creating a relatively peaceful era that he would have liked to take with him when in 1906 he was reassigned as military governor of Cuba during the second US occupation from 1906-1909, when that island's anarchist movement began to blossom. Thus, anarchists not only followed US expansion throughout the Caribbean but also ran up against the same US colonial officials whose posts likewise migrated around the region.

The Panamanian government followed the lead of the Roosevelt Administration. On June 11, 1904, one month after Roosevelt's order, Panama passed Law 72, Article 5 on immigration. Like their North American counterparts, they prohibited anarchists from the Republic of Panama, associating them with diseased and criminal populations. Banned from the country were "idiots, professional beggars, anarchists, criminals, individuals of known bad conduct, sufferers of tuberculosis, lepers, epileptics, and in general all foreigners suffering from repugnant and contagious illnesses."<sup>21</sup>

## Anarchists Confront US Internationalism, 1904-1914

Cuba gained formal independence on May 20, 1902, after the Cuban constitutional convention agreed to insert the Platt Amendment into the island's constitution, authorizing the US to militarily intervene in Cuba to protect the island's independence and save it (and growing US business concerns on the island) from any perceived political or economic chaos. Military interventionism in Cuba was central to maintain peace and calm on the island for US companies and stability to protect shipping lanes leading to the Panama Canal. When political chaos returned in 1906 after the Liberal and Conservative parties rose up in civil war, the US intervened and ruled the island until 1909. Anarchists used the resulting intervention and three-year military rule to challenge Cuba's political system and US imperialism. Anarchists derided the Cuban government's "democratic" pretenses, portraying politicians as conniving to win workers' votes and then turning their backs on those very workers. Combined with a critique of Cuba's independence and self-rule, this portrayal of Cuban republicanism was also a critique of the US since the US had been the model for the political system. However, all it took was a brief violent episode to usher in US forces to illustrate how frail that system was and who held real power over the island. Thus, politicians who deceived the Cuban people for their votes were the same politicians whose actions brought forth the US invasion. The Cuban masses who had fought for true independence and social revolution found neither.<sup>22</sup>

Not only did the second occupation illustrate the chimera of Cuban independence but also the US occupation temporarily thwarted an island-wide anarchist propaganda tour when Marcial Lores and Abelardo Saavedra, who had just arrived from Spain, were arrested. In response, anarchists condemned the military government of Charles Magoon, comparing him to former military governor Leonard Wood, who had restricted Malatesta's speaking engagements in 1900.<sup>23</sup> Lores' and Saavedra's detentions also reflected growing US surveillance of the island's anarchists. Occupation authorities feared that anarchists were responsible for new waves of agitation and planned bombings.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the occupation in 1909, North American agri-business had spread across the island. The increase brought new workers from throughout Cuba, Spain and the Caribbean to work in agriculture. Actually, Cuba's rural areas grew faster than its cities.<sup>25</sup> Havana-based anarchists believed that these expanding areas were ripe for agitation and soon large amounts of money poured into Havana from rural-based anarchists—amounts that often represented the majority of the anarchist weekly *¡Tierra!*'s financing.<sup>26</sup> In 1910, Saavedra moved his paper *¡Rebelión!* to the central Cuban city of Cruces. There, in the heart of

US sugar plantations, he established a Workers Center, disseminated anarchist propaganda, and planned a workers conference for February 1912.<sup>27</sup>

As anarchist and working-class radicalism began to grow in mid-1914, President Mario Menocal hoped to quiet growing anarchist agitation with a series of labor laws, a government-sponsored labor congress and a committee designed to explore labor problems. Anarchists rejected these piecemeal reforms as mere ploys to gain working-class votes just when labor activism seemed to be making headway. Menocal was in a bind. On one hand, workers demanded better conditions and wages. On the other hand, North American capitalists demanded that the government clamp down on radicals. If he did nothing—or too little—the US could invoke the Platt Amendment, invade, and suspend his government. If he used violence, he could be accused of being a North American lackey.<sup>28</sup> By late summer 1914, Menocal acted. The army moved against anarchists in Cruces and Havana. Included in this round-up and deportation was the editor of *¡Tierra!*, Juan Tur, and activists Vicente Lípiz and Saavedra. In January 1915, they were deported to Spain, and with their departures *¡Tierra!*, the key organizational tool on the island and in the region, closed.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico, American democracy's early shine wore off quickly for anarchists. Alfonso Torres originally was intrigued by the US's form of democracy, but cautioned readers in his 1905 book *¡Solidaridad!* that republican democracy was not the only—or even best—answer to the plight of Puerto Rican workers. In fact, he charged that little was different from the Spanish era: “the laboring classes are as enslaved, as exploited, and as ignorant today as they were yesterday.” In fact, he continued, “if they have improved in anything it is not because of some governmental formula that is more or less democratic, but on the contrary due to their own efforts.”<sup>30</sup> Venancio Cruz echoed the growing anarchist critique of electoral politics in his 1906 book *Hacia el porvenir*. The arrival of “democratic” institutions, he argued, merely provided a new means for elites to pass laws in their favor “with no further objective than the subjugation of the masses.” Thus, one had to question the value of democracy in Puerto Rico, how it arose and who actually benefited. “Democracy, oh Democracy! Yesterday the people coveted it because it was offered to them by the *chupópteros* [bloodsuckers] of capital and government. Democracy then today is a farce, constituting the ultimate refuge for political tyrants.”<sup>31</sup>

Through their theoretical and polemical critiques of democracy, anarchists also challenged the role of the US government on the island. Because the governor was a US presidential appointee, anarchists extended their anti-politics rhetoric into an anti-imperialist attack. Alfonso Torres utilized the transnational anarchist press when he took his criticisms to the pages of Cuba's *¡Tierra!* in August 1906. “Here in Puerto Rico, where we cannot count on our own govern-

ment . . . here where no power exists other than that of the North Americans, here where the governor and the executive council are the same rulers, what they order, oppresses the people, so that the struggles of the political parties are not really about power because power is in foreign hands.”<sup>32</sup> Torres’ critiques in the newspaper returned to Puerto Rico at the end of August—just as Cuba erupted in civil war and the US launched its new occupation.

Consequently, anarchists in Puerto Rico joined their Cuban comrades in assailing US-style government in the islands, publishing their critiques in *¡Tierra!* for regional distribution. Republican democracy was a foreign tool that facilitated colonialism and gave the image of popular will while denying average people to do much of anything about their own political, economic and social conditions. At the same time, anarchists increasingly mocked workers who took part in politics. Because the unions in both countries sometimes worked with various political parties, anarchists increasingly faulted unions like the FLT for playing party politics.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, anarchists in the Canal Zone faced very different situations. While Cuba was “independent,” and Puerto Rico had at least some local governance, the US ruled the Zone completely through the ICC. In addition, while anarchists had little contact with the AFL’s weak presence in Cuba, they worked critically with AFL affiliates in Puerto Rico, while in the Zone unions were virtually non-existent. While fighting ICC attempts to ban unions, the AFL limited membership in its organization to white, skilled US citizens.<sup>34</sup> Thus anarchists in the Zone, once they slipped through the bans on anarchist immigration, found little help from the AFL in any labor actions directed at the ICC, its US foremen and police, or working and living conditions.

Employment was a persistent problem on the Canal. Canal officials embarked on a global recruitment effort that initially brought workers on contract. From 1906 to 1908, officials contracted construction laborers from around the region and the world: 8,298 workers arrived from Spain, and 500 from Cuba.<sup>35</sup> Contracted workers soon discovered that North American recruiters had misrepresented the job. Upon arriving in the Canal Zone, workers found a never-ending array of poor living and working conditions. Good food was a rarity. Recreational options were almost non-existent. Rather than finding spacious housing or housing suitable for families, many Spaniards lived in tenements, shacks or even abandoned boxcars.<sup>36</sup>

Notwithstanding the exclusion laws, by 1905 anarchists began appearing in the Canal Zone. Like their Puerto Rican comrades, they utilized *¡Tierra!* to critique working conditions and US rule while sending money to Cuba to support the paper and anarchist causes.<sup>37</sup> Anarchists soon arrived in sufficient numbers to attract the attention of US officials, especially in November 1906 when Presi-

dent Roosevelt traveled to inspect the project. The trip posed significant security concerns for the Secret Service and Canal officials. Before his arrival, authorities detained numerous anarchists in both the Canal and the Republic.<sup>38</sup> During his visit, Roosevelt warned Panamanians to be vigilant against revolutions, praised the work of the Canal police for maintaining order, and promised workers better living conditions.<sup>39</sup> Despite Roosevelt's promises, conditions were slow to improve for non-US workers. In response, anarchists mobilized in the Zone and launched a seven-year campaign against the US to raise worker consciousness. In the wake of strikes in early 1907, anarchists publicly denounced US control in the pages of *¡Tierra!*. As one writer put it, canal employment recruiters deliberately lied to workers in Spain by painting scenarios of excellent conditions in order to lure cheap labor while over-zealous police arrested and fined workers for the slightest offense. Illustrating the importance of trans-Caribbean links between Panama and Cuba, more than three dozen men signed a letter addressed to Havana's anarchists, urging them to send notice to Spanish papers to spread the word to those "still in Spain with illusions of coming" to Panama that if they still wanted to come, then they should expect poor conditions and abuse from US police and foremen.<sup>40</sup>

By July 1911, worker insubordination spread in the Canal Zone with laborers again protesting conditions. Their American overseers replaced Spanish workers with West Indians. Sympathy strikes erupted throughout the Zone, especially among Spanish workers who became targets of increased anarchist propaganda. By August, anarchist militancy spread, anarchist groups emerged throughout the Zone, and anarchists organized the *Federación de Agrupaciones e Individuos Libres del Istmo de Panamá*. The Federation strengthened transnational relations with Cuba. For instance, nearly 120 individuals signed a communiqué published in Havana's *Via Libre*. The early issues of *Via Libre* were financed primarily by Panama-based anarchists led by M.D. Rodríguez and Aquilino López—Spanish-born anarchists who had worked for years in Havana's anarchist community.<sup>41</sup> Also, the Chief Medical Officer, William Gorgas, reported that Spanish patients in the Canal's hospitals often had anarchist publications.<sup>42</sup> Much of this material arrived from Havana.

While some US officials began to believe that anarchists were not a violent threat to the Canal, other Americans expressed uncertainty about the anarchists. In September 1911, the *Federación de Agrupaciones* began publishing the first anarchist newspaper in the history of the isthmus. In the pages of *El Único* and at meetings, the paper's editors and group leaders attacked the ICC, workplace conditions, the Zone's judicial system, and the police.<sup>43</sup> The uptick in rhetoric and mobilization led to rumors of violence. A Catholic priest in the Zone, Henry Collins, wrote to the ICC in October expressing fears about the new groups,

describing their celebrations commemorating the second anniversary of anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer's execution in Spain, and spreading the notion that anarchists were flocking to the Zone to raise money. A month later, the ICC received reports that anarchists were plotting to blow up the canal locks at Gatún with the help of Colombians.<sup>44</sup> Yet, others in the ICC urged caution, noting that speakers at meetings never called for violence. For those who might have considered deporting someone like the ringleader Rodríguez (aka Bernardo Pérez), one ICC official urged restraint, fearing that deportation would only turn him into a martyr.<sup>45</sup> Ultimately, rumors of violence appear to have been just that, and in early 1912, the ICC ceased reporting on anarchists—an odd move since the number of anarchist groups continued to expand until 1914.<sup>46</sup>

### **US Interventionism, Militarism, and Anarchist Anti-Imperialism, 1915-1924**

By mid-decade, Caribbean anarchist activities diminished somewhat with no thriving organization to unite activists. *¡Tierra!*, the main anarchist newspaper linking the regional groups, closed in early 1915. Anarchists in Puerto Rico lost one of their most strident transnational voices—Juan Vilar—on May Day 1915, after a long decline in his health exacerbated by a year in jail in 1912 for violating a US-imposed censorship law. Beginning in 1915, many anarchists joined Puerto Rico's newly formed Socialist Party. By mid-1916, the few remaining anarchist groups in the Canal Zone moved to Panama City. A year later, a new US Executive Order that excluded undesirable persons from the Zone mirrored the 1904 exclusions by again placing anarchists in the category of those with diseases, felonies and people seeking to “incite insurrection.”<sup>47</sup>

In 1914, the renowned Spanish anarchist writer José María Blázquez de Pedro arrived in Panama in order to establish a hemispheric movement linking anarchists and other progressives throughout the Americas. In 1919, Blázquez de Pedro joined forces with Puerto Rican writer Nemesio Canales, Panamanian educator José Moscote and recently arrived Argentine anarchist educator Julio Barcos to publish *Cuasimodo: Magazine Interamericano* in Panama City, which increasingly criticized the US. While Barcos noted he was neither pro- nor anti-US as a whole, he and Blázquez de Pedro were not shy about denouncing US actions in the Americas.<sup>48</sup> They decried US intervention in Mexico under the guise of “law and order” when it was really “oil, coal, copper, gold, sisal, silver and many other very succulent items” that long had lured “many foreign exploiters” to Mexico.<sup>49</sup> Also, they drew links between US domestic repression and overseas expansion. For instance, *Cuasimodo* protested the US government's attack against the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World, publish-



ing an assessment that “after Russian czarism, no other country has followed a policy of such violent repression, radical suppression of freedom of the press, of association, of union, and of people as bourgeois North America.” This was the domestic side of US actions abroad where Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Mexico and Nicaragua had become US “economic colonies.” The column concluded: “The Monroe Doctrine protects America against all European intervention, but not against the intervention of the United States in the rest of the American nations.”<sup>50</sup>

*Cuasimodo*’s editors also discussed the impact of US actions in the isthmus. In April 1920, they published an open letter to US President Woodrow Wilson, condemning the 1903 treaty between the two countries even though conditions had substantially changed. While Wilson sought better relations with Latin America, the treaty still authorized the US to acquire Panamanian territory through eminent domain if doing so helped defend the Canal. Such a stance “left the fate of the small Panamanian people entirely at the mercy of the constant thirst for expansion by imperialist elements of North America.” Ultimately, they asked how Wilson could invoke the clause—this time to build a fortress on the Panamanian island of Taboga—when he was trying to improve the US’s political and moral standing in Latin America?<sup>51</sup>

In June 1920, Barcos attacked what he saw as the US’s false Pan-Americanism, especially when caudillos arose that subverted their governments for their own interests, and then cracked down on an opposition while the US did nothing. These despots were criminals “of all of America” and they should not be sustained. Such strongmen were everywhere in the region.<sup>52</sup> Two months after Barcos attacked the US’s false Pan-Americanism, the editors urged the US to stop helping caudillos. They suggested that the US should overthrow dictators if it wanted to be on the side of a true Pan-Americanism of the people.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, in Puerto Rico—where Julio Barcos and Nemesio Canales met before leaving for Panama—a group of anarchists in Bayamón resurrected anarchist anti-imperialism. In April 1918, they formed “Grupo Souvarine.”<sup>54</sup> By November 1919, Antonio Palau, Juan M. Alicea, and Emiliano Ramos re-named the organization “El Grupo Soviet de Bayamón.” In a manifesto, they offered to support a transport workers strike in the US and Puerto Rico, urging Puerto Rican workers to side with their American allies in a show of strength.<sup>55</sup> Then, on May Day 1920, the Bayamón anarchists launched *El Comunista*. With the newspaper, this group became the strongest independent anarchist organization in the island’s history.

Sandalio Marcial, a regular contributor to *El Comunista*, opened the May Day 1920 rally in Bayamón. Speaking before two hundred people, Marcial condemned the state of public education on the island, claiming that children went to school

to receive “mostly a military education. A child who obtains his Eighth Grade Diploma knows better how to kill a person than to solve an economic problem.”<sup>56</sup> The following week, Antonio Álvarez linked this sentiment to the creation of the Puerto Rican National Guard. Álvarez believed that any government-run school was dangerous. The public education system—financed by, and so supposedly serving, the State—taught loyalty to the US and Puerto Rican governments as well as skills and desires in youth that would lead them to kill in the name of the State. Álvarez cautioned his readers: the real reason for the Guard’s existence was not to protect the people but to help the police repress striking workers and agitators for freedom.<sup>57</sup> Manuel García agreed. He had been watching the creation of a Guard unit in Bayamón. He warned the workers who made up the unit: “Workers of Bayamón and around the Island, you must frankly refuse to form this over-praised ‘National Guard’ that will become one more means that the creole bourgeoisie will have to defend themselves by machine-gunning and subjugating the people.” García urged Puerto Ricans to consider his words; after all, during his travels in the US he had witnessed how the National Guard was used against strikers to protect mines and banks.<sup>58</sup>

Within this anti-militarism context, Puerto Rican and Cuban anarchists joined the attack on US foreign policy waged by anarchists in Panama. In Puerto Rico, García and Amelio Morazín condemned the hypocrisy of Wilsonian foreign policy. While the US fought the Great War to expand democracy, US troops were at that moment undermining democracy in the Caribbean. García conjured the image of Wilson as a bloodsucker: You wanted “to spread freedom and democracy in the world, and now you are like a blood-thirsty hyena sucking from Santo Domingo, Honduras, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and Mexico.”<sup>59</sup> In Morazín’s eyes, the US “talks to us about ‘small countries’ having the right to self-determination and yet such unfortunate countries planted right under the giant cry out” because they are under US domination. Likewise, Puerto Rico suffered under the giant like an “unfortunate and miserable American Sicily, a kind of Cinderella of the Atlantic,” despised and ill-treated.<sup>60</sup>

In Cuba, anarchists portrayed the island as a North American feudal estate. In early 1923, M. Cuervo drew an image of Cuba carved into “small States formed by foreign companies ... thus constituting new feudalisms.” A year later, Cuervo returned to the theme, describing the sugar *centrales* owned by the Cuba Cane Company around the city of Morón where he lived. He was particularly bothered by the readiness of so many working-class men to turn on fellow workers by becoming part of “that army of guards that sustains the feudal vileness” of the owners.<sup>61</sup>

In Cuba the collapse of sugar prices resulted in several years of decline for the Cuban economy. By 1924 companies could not pay their debts and became

owned in large number by US banks that held the mortgages. Workers' wages were sliced and strikes spread throughout the country in all economic sectors, especially sugar, railroads, and manufacturing.<sup>62</sup> In November 1924, the Havana-based *Federación de Grupos Anarquistas de Cuba* issued a manifesto that aimed to organize all workers on sugar plantations. The federation blamed poor working conditions on collusion between Cuban and American elites—a collusion protected by Cuban troops who defended “the interests of those people, the majority of whom live outside of Cuba, under the pretext of the need to protect Cuban riches, put in danger by striking workers.” Thus, workers were “humiliated by Cuban authorities, placed unconditionally at the service of the large American businesses.” Ultimately, concluded the manifesto, “the influence of capital is stronger than the sentiment for the homeland and for humanity, stronger than law and justice.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Caribbean Crackdowns: The US and Its Allies Subdue the Anarchists, 1920-28**

Harsh criticisms of the United States, the political climate of the Red Scare, and continued anarchist agitation led to US-backed repression in Puerto Rico, Cuba and Panama. In September 1920, the US Postal Service denied second-class status to *El Comunista* when the Postal Service ruled that the paper violated the 1917 Espionage Act. The act had become a tool in Washington's effort to prevent communist and anarchist groups from using the US mail to disseminate propaganda after the Russian Revolution. Then, in February 1921, the paper was exposed to the whims of capitalist caprice. The Trust initiated a series of forced lay-offs throughout the island, resulting in a sharp decline of financial contributions.<sup>64</sup>

Pressure from the Postal Service and the Trust was coupled with increased surveillance. In December 1920, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation increased its scrutiny of Puerto Rican radicals, including the Bayamón anarchists. On January 31, 1921, Special Agent H. S. Hubbard described the anarchists' call for violent revolution and their desire to form “a Soviet government controled [sic] by the laborers.” Hubbard offered his superiors a taste of what could happen if the anarchists were not subdued. Identifying 71 editors, writers and members, he suggested that the anarchists would take advantage of growing labor strife to agitate among the workers, possibly resulting in anarchist violence: “It is evident that the purpose of the propaganda published in this paper, is to educate and incite the working classes of Porto Rico to revolution, and to the use of violence in the overthrow and destruction of all existing forms of government, and society.”<sup>65</sup>

The investigation, the growing clampdown by the Postal Service, and economic warfare unleashed by the Trust ultimately ended *El Comunista* in February 1921.

Four years later, as the Cuban anarchist movement surged to lead numerous unions and federations, Cubans elected Gerardo Machado president, in part on pledges that he would protect Cuban independence. What he meant was that he would control anarchist-led labor militancy and thus negate any need for the US to send troops to Cuba. This was a continuation of using Cuban State power to protect mainly North American businesses, but few were ready for his ruthlessness. Soon after taking office, the government went on the offensive against anarchists and communists. The government closed the anarcho-syndicalist Manufacturers Union and its newspaper *El Progreso*. Authorities arrested anarchist leaders within the labor movement; some were murdered by the police. Other anarchists fled the island, went into hiding, stopped their anarchist activism, or were deported. In Cuba, the anarchist press ceased publishing in 1926.<sup>66</sup>

The international anarchist press publicized reports about the repression and condemned Machado, but it also focused attention on the role of the United States. In a letter from Cuba sent to anarchist publications in the Americas, one anarchist summed up the repression as merely the latest chapter in a sad saga of unfulfilled dreams since 1898. After independence, “the republicans forgot the teachings of [José] Martí and [Antonio] Maceo, entrusting their ‘freedoms’ to the machete of the rural police and the noose to hang workers from the branches of the guásima trees.” Under Machado, workers and activists were repressed by “the servants of the industrial fortresses that Wall Street established in this colony of *Yanquilandia*.”<sup>67</sup> *La Protesta*, a leading anarchist paper in Buenos Aires, echoed this theme. Since the time of McKinley, the “recommendation was to deport from the island of Cuba and from all the rest of the small republics that today the Americans dominate, all of the Spaniards and descendants of Spaniards”—a common US reference to anarchists—because “these people constituted a threat to the thieving ambitions of Uncle Sam.” The writer concluded that the rest of Latin America needed to do something before Wall Street and Washington turned them into another Cuba.<sup>68</sup>

There was little that could be done though. Havana hosted the Sixth Pan-American Conference in 1928 with Machado playing master of ceremonies. Anarchists labeled it the “VI Conference of Pan ... of Wall Street.” Writing from Santiago de Cuba, “John Smith” lamented this façade of “Pan-Americanism.” It was even worse that former anarchists were key supporters of Pan-Americanism. For instance, “Smith” charged Orestes Ferrara—a former Italian anarchist in Florida who went to Cuba to aid in the fight against Spain—with being a lackey of Machado. Both were Cuban Liberal Party leaders who acted like “two debt collecting mannequins for Wall Street.” Then there was Puerto Rico’s Santiago

Iglesias, whom anarchists had despised since he turned away from anarchism thirty years earlier. Iglesias was now secretary of the AFL's Pan-American Confederation of Labor—"another instrument of Wall St., the same as Pan-Americanism."<sup>69</sup>

In Panama, conditions for anarchists became just as bad. From 1921-22, anarchists and socialists collaborated to control the Federación Obrera de la República de Panamá (FORP)—the country's first labor federation. José María Blázquez de Pedro was elected to the FORP's Central Executive Committee. In July 1921, to further their radical agendas, Blázquez de Pedro and his comrades formed the Grupo Comunista—an organization of over 50 radicals from Spain, Colombia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and Panama that met weekly in Blázquez de Pedro's home. The international nature of the group, and the fact it was headed by the best-known anarchist in Panama, attracted the attention of US authorities. "The real danger," concluded one US investigator, "is the inculcation of radical ideas in the minds of the school boys that it seems it is the particular endeavor of Blázquez de Pedro to ensnare in his schemes and ideas."<sup>70</sup>

By 1923, reformers wrested away control of the FORP from the Grupo Comunista, and the anarchists found themselves virtually shut out of the union they had helped to found. There was no clearer sign that the tide had shifted than the warm welcome the FORP gave to AFL head Samuel Gompers during his January 1924 visit to Panama.<sup>71</sup> Throughout 1924, the Grupo Comunista struggled to regain influence in the FORP. By December, leftists led by Blázquez de Pedro split from the union and formed the Sindicato General de Trabajadores (SGT). Throughout 1925, the SGT led a wave of labor actions, including the 1925 Rent Strike.<sup>72</sup>

Eleven years after the Canal's opening, expensive housing made life in the Republic difficult for working families. In Colón and Panama City, the cost of living outpaced wage increases. From 1920 to 1925, rents increased between 25 and 50 per cent.<sup>73</sup> In early October 1925, the SGT-linked Liga de Inquilinos y Subsistencias launched a rent strike in Panama City and Colón. Tensions mounted when strikers and police squared off, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries. Panamanian police began arresting Panamanian and foreign members of the Liga, charging the former with treason and beginning deportation proceedings against the latter. When thousands of strikers carrying red flags followed to the cemetery the red flag-draped coffin of the initial demonstrator killed by police, Panamanian police with bayonets charged the procession. Continued violence scared both US and Panamanian authorities. Invoking the US-Panama Treaty of 1903, new Panamanian president Rodolfo Chiari asked for US military assistance. On October 12, the US Army entered the Republic.<sup>74</sup> They were met with resistance and defiance. A crowd of several thousand in Panama City tried

to prevent US troops from marching in, but they were dispersed when soldiers lowered bayonet-fixed rifles at the crowd. Elsewhere, strikers attempted to cut telephone cables and occasionally troops were confronted by militants on motorcycles waving red flags. The disturbances, though, were short-lived. By October 14, US troops brought calm to the city.<sup>75</sup> By October 23, the Liga strike had been suppressed in the Republic, and US troops returned to the Canal Zone. In a show of strength, Chiari banned the flying of red flags and deported “dangerous” foreigners.<sup>76</sup>

The deportation of foreigners, especially anarchists, however, had begun even before US troops moved out of the Zone and into Panama. On September 24, 1925, Panamanian police arrested Blázquez de Pedro and transported him to a Canal Zone prison in Balboa from where he was deported to Cuba. This was a bad time to be an anarchist deported to Cuba. In fact, just three weeks before Blázquez de Pedro’s deportation, Cuba’s leading anarcho-syndicalists Antonio Penichet and Rafael Serra were jailed in Machado’s crackdown.<sup>77</sup> A month after arriving in Cuba, José María’s brother and comrade in Panama was also deported to Cuba. Both men lived the next two years in Cuba before ultimately succumbing to tuberculosis in 1927.<sup>78</sup>

## Conclusion

In the early twentieth century, anarchist groups emerged in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Panama, struggling to spread their ideas of liberation in three sites that were themselves newly “liberated” between 1898 and 1903. Following a change in political status from either Spanish or Colombian rule, though, all three sites came under either direct or indirect control of the United States. North American-style republican government, laws, the military, corporations, and labor unions spread into these locations from the late 1890s through the 1920s—all designed to enhance US political and economic goals.

While anarchists agitated against local and national elites in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Panama, they also engaged these North American expansionists. This article has illustrated how anarchists in all three locations challenged and criticized the US presence and local and national actors who sided with or acted on behalf of US political, military, and economic forces. Anarchists attacked the US imperial presence throughout the region in at least two ways. First, many of these anarchists were transnational radicals who migrated between countries. Originally, we could count Santiago Iglesias, who moved from Cuba to Puerto Rico. But other Puerto Rican based anarchists like Emiliano Ramos, Alfredo Negrín, Luisa Capetillo and more traveled abroad to link the island with the

anarchist community in Cuba. At the same time, dozens of anarchists, like M.D. Rodríguez, migrated from Cuba to the Panama Canal Zone and linked the two sites by sending communications and money. People like J.M. Blázquez de Pedro arrived in the Zone in 1914 and over the next decade maintained a relationship with anarchists abroad. These migrant anarchists created and sustained regional networks, linking disparate groups, sharing information, facilitating information and the flow of money, and helping to create a regional consciousness of shared experiences living and working under US expansion.

Second, the anarchist press in the region proved vital in sustaining this transnational flow of migrants, monies, and information. Much of what we can piece together of the anarchist networks comes from the newspapers these anarchists published. Through their media, anarchists reported on their experiences confronting North Americans while leading efforts to challenge US military governments, reformist or collaborationist labor unions, and “feudal” corporations penetrating into the far reaches of the region. In Puerto Rico or Panama, where a native anarchist press was sporadic at best, activists wrote to Havana’s *¡Tierra!* to describe their activities. The paper published the anti-US critiques by Puerto Ricans like Juan Vilar and Alfonso Torres. Similarly, anarchists in the Canal wrote to *¡Tierra!* and *Vía Libre* in Havana. These articles were published in Cuba and sent to Puerto Rico and the Canal Zone for distribution. These transnational links helped readers throughout the Caribbean to understand their own confrontations against US imperialism in a comparative light.

Through migration and communication, anarchists in the Caribbean created a regional anarchist consciousness that defied political borders. In a sense, they labored to forge an “imagined anarchist community” for the Caribbean that would embody an authentic democracy of equal and free individuals liberated from economic, racial and gender exploitation committed by local, national or international forces. In addition, they were unified in their condemnation of US policy in the region. Traditionally, anarchism has been studied within the confines of one country. On the surface, one can think of anarchists in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Panama in terms of local and national movements because they responded to immediate geographical issues, supporters, detractors and conditions. However, anarchists considered themselves to be internationalists and thus part of a global movement to spread anarchist concepts of freedom and progress. These networks and their effectiveness in showcasing comparative struggles around the Caribbean worked to develop an anarchist consciousness that was not localized but regionalized, and understood in the context of US expansionism after 1898.

Anarchist struggles against US expansion were strikingly parallel to globalization confrontations that would appear a century later. Especially following the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999, anti-globalization forces

decried US military interventions around the world and denounced the links between these interventions and the expansion and protection of international capital. Modern global anarchists are at the forefront of new anti-globalization efforts, campaigning for the protection of local autonomy, human rights, and basic freedoms against what they see as a new wave of global imperialism from corporations and wealthy countries. Their struggles are transnational, linking local and national organizations via the flow of contributions, media, the internet, and traveling activists to fight local manifestations of capitalist globalization and international meetings of its representatives. While twenty-first century anarchists send money and information along digitized communication networks and jet to conferences or demonstrations at record speeds, their predecessors could be found throughout the Americas in the early 1900s doing the same—just a bit slower. In particular, anarchists throughout the Caribbean Basin forged a communication, financial and migratory network to battle North American-led capitalist globalization that finds its legacy in today’s struggles. In fact, the Caribbean Basin in the early twentieth century was the site of the first confrontation in the century-long struggle between transnational anarchists and representatives of US foreign policy.

## NOTES

- 1 For the role of *¡Tierra!* in this network, see the author’s “Havana Hub: Cuban Anarchism, Radical Media, and the Trans-Caribbean Anarchist Network, 1902-1915.” *Caribbean Studies* 37, 2 (July-December 2009), 45-81.
- 2 Juan C. Santamarina. “The Cuba Company and the Expansion of American Business in Cuba, 1898-1915.” *The Business History Review*, 74, 1 (Spring 2000), 45. See also Louis A. Pérez. *Cuba Between Empires, 1792-1902*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press (1983), 359.
- 3 Ángel Quintero-Rivera. “Socialist and Cigarmaker, Artisans’ Proletarianization in the Making of the Puerto Rican Working Class.” *Latin American Perspectives* 10, 2-3 (Spring-Summer 1983), 31-33; Arturo Bird Carmona. *Parejeros y desafiantes: La comunidad tabaquera de Puerta de Tierra a principios del siglo xx*. Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán (2008), 74-5; Juan Ángel Silén. *Apuntes: Para la historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño*, Second Edition. Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Norberto González (1995), 50.
- 4 Joseph Bedford. “Samuel Gompers & the AFL, Cuba & Puerto Rico, 1898-1906.” *Labor’s Heritage* 6, 4 (Spring 1995), 9-11; Julie Greene. *The Canal Builders: Making America’s Empire at the Panama Canal*. New York: Penguin Press (2009), 25-6, 61-2, 86-99.
- 5 Gerald E. Poyo. “The Anarchist Challenge to the Cuban Independence Movement, 1885-1890.” *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos* 15, 1 (1985), 29-42; Joan Casanovas. *Bread, or Bullets!: Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850-1898*. Pittsburgh: Univer-



- sity of Pittsburgh Press (1998), 222-31; Kirk Shaffer. "Tropical Libertarians: Anarchist Movements and Networks in the Caribbean, Southern US and Mexico, 1890s-1920s." *Anarchism and Syndicalism in the Colonial and Post-Colonial World, 1870-1940: The Praxis of National Liberation, Internationalism, and Social Revolution*, Steven Hirsch and Lucien van der Walt, eds. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers (2010), 273-320.
- 6 *El Nuevo Ideal* (Havana), February 4, 1899, p. 2; August 24, 1899, p. 2.
  - 7 *El Nuevo Ideal*, April 29, 1899, p. 2.
  - 8 *El Nuevo Ideal*, July 20, 1900, pp. 1-2.
  - 9 *El Nuevo Ideal*, February 11, 1899, pp. 1-2; March 25, 1899, p. 1.
  - 10 *La Revista Blanca* (Barcelona), December 1, 1932, pp. 400-1. *El Nuevo Ideal*, March 9, 1900, pp. 1-2; March 29, 1900, p. 1; April 6, 1900, p. 1.
  - 11 Santiago Iglesias Pantín. *Luchas emancipadoras (Crónicas de Puerto Rico)*, Tomo I. Second edition. San Juan: Imprenta Venezuela (1958), 17-19, 31-3.
  - 12 *El Porvenir Social* (San Juan), October 27, 1898, p. 1.
  - 13 *El Porvenir Social*, October 27, 1898, p. 2.
  - 14 Iglesias Pantín, *Luchas emancipadoras*, 96.
  - 15 *El Porvenir Social*, March 28, 1899, p. 1; Gervasio L. García and Ángel G. Quintero Rivera. *Desafío y solidaridad: breve historia del movimiento obrero puertorriqueño*. Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán (1982), 33.
  - 16 *El Porvenir Social*, April 11, 1899, p. 2; May 4, 1899, pp. 1-2; May 6, 1899, p. 1; Erick J. Pérez. "May Day 1899 in Puerto Rico." *The Memory of May Day; An Iconographic History of the Origins and Implanting of a Workers' Holiday*. Venezia: Marsilio Editori (1989), 679 and 683.
  - 17 Miles Gavin. "The Early Development of the Organized Labor Movement in Puerto Rico." *Latin American Perspectives* 3, 3 (Summer 1976), 28-30.
  - 18 *La Miseria* (San Juan), May 11, 1901.
  - 19 It is impossible to delineate how many anarchists there were. If there had been large numbers of anarchists, they would have been better able to finance their own newspapers. Still, anarchists did serve as leaders in the FLT and its locals, including Pablo Vega Santos, Pedro San Miguel, Alfonso Torres, Juan Vilar and Venancio Cruz. See, for instance, *Libro de Actuaciones de la Primera Asamblea Regular de las Uniones Tabaqueras en Puerto Rico (Cigar Makers' Internacional [sic] Union of America)*. Celebrada en Caguas, P.R. durante los días 14, 15 y 16 de Julio del 1908. San Juan: Real Hermanos, 1910.
  - 20 *Proceedings of the First Canal Commission. March 22, 1904 to March 29, 1905*. Washington: ICC (1905), 372-3. See also David Viñas. *Anarquistas en América Latina*. México, D.F.: Editorial Katún (1983), 99.
  - 21 *Gaceta Oficial, Segunda Época* (Panama), June 23, 1904, 1/31, p. 2.
  - 22 *¡Tierra!* (Havana), November 10, 1906, p. 3; Kirwin Shaffer. *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Cuba*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida (2005), 39-71.
  - 23 *¡Tierra!*, December 15, 1906, p. 1; June 12, 1907, p. 1.
  - 24 Letter from Inspector General of Jails, Penitentiary & Charitable Institutions to Gov. Magoon on Detention of Marcial Lores García and Abelardo Saavedra, May 5, 1907;

- Memo to the Chief of Staff from Captain John Furlong, December 28, 1907; Memo to the Chief of Staff on Havana Strike Conditions from Captain John Furlong, December 20, 1907, Record Group 199 Records of the Provisional Government of Cuba, US National Archives, College Park, MD.
- 25 Mark Smith. "The Political Economy of Sugar Production and the Environment of Eastern Cuba, 1898-1923." *Environmental History Review* 19, 4 (Winter 1995), 39-45; Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 225; Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics*, 73 and 150-3.
  - 26 Shaffer, "Havana Hub," 57-60.
  - 27 Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics*, 54.
  - 28 Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics*, 55.
  - 29 Amparo Sánchez Cobos, *Sembrando Ideales: Anarquistas españoles en Cuba (1902-1925)*. Sevilla: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (2008), 281; Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics*, 55. Puerto Rican anarchist Luisa Capetillo was also rounded up at this time, but escaped deportation and continued to agitate for anarchism in Havana.
  - 30 Alfonso Torres. *¡Solidaridad!* San Juan: Unión Tipográfica (1905), 8.
  - 31 Venancio Cruz. *Hacia el porvenir*. San Juan: La República Española (1906), 11.
  - 32 *¡Tierra!*, August 4, 1906, p. 2. See a similar view in *Voz Humana* (Caguas, Puerto Rico), October 22, 1906, p. 1.
  - 33 See columns in *¡Tierra!*, September 2, 1905, p. 2 and October 7, 1905, p. 2; August 4, 1906, p. 2; April 14, 1909, p. 2; September 23, 1911, p. 2. Also, see the Mayagüez, Puerto Rico-based *Unión Obrera*, August 22, 1910, p. 2; October 8 and 10, 1910, p. 2; November 9, 1910, p. 1.
  - 34 Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 25-6, 61-2, 86-99.
  - 35 Luis Navas. *El movimiento obrero en Panamá (1880-1914)*. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1979, 120-125; Julie Greene. "Spaniards on the Silver Roll: Labor Troubles and Liminality in the Panama Canal Zone, 1904-1914." *International Labor and Working Class History* 66 (Fall 2004), 82; Harry A. Franck. *Zone Policeman 88: A Close Range Study of the Panama Canal and Its Workers*. New York: The Century Company (1913), 105, 120; Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 50, 161.
  - 36 Franck, *Zone Policeman 88*, 105; Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 163.
  - 37 *¡Tierra!*, July 8, 1905, p. 4. This issue reported the arrival of the first funds to Havana from the Zone.
  - 38 *New York Times*, November 15, 1906, p. 1.
  - 39 *New York Times*, November 16, 1906, p. 1; November 17, 1906, p. 1; November 18, 1906, p. 1; November 20, 1906, p. 1.
  - 40 *¡Tierra!*, September 7, 1907, p. 3.
  - 41 *Vía Libre* (Havana), August 5, 1911, p. 4.
  - 42 Greene, "Spaniards on the Silver Roll," 90-92; Greene, *The Canal Builders*, 172, 175.
  - 43 *El Único* (Panama Canal Zone), November 12, 1911, p. 30; January 12, 1912, pp. 61-2, 65; Supplemental, January 20, 1912.
  - 44 See the letters in ICC 1905-1914, 2-P-59.
  - 45 Letter to Goethals from JKB, ICC 1905-1914, 2-P-59.

- 46 The ICC never had a good grasp on the Zone's anarchists during this 1911-12 radical activity. In fact, there were two rival anarchist groups in the Zone, both establishing local organizations throughout the Canal Zone, communicating with rival newspapers in Cuba and Spain, and raising money for anarchist causes. This rivalry is invisible in ICC records. See *El Único* (Panama Canal Zone), *¡Tierra!* and *Vía Libre* (Havana), *Regeneración* (Los Angeles, California), and *El Libertario* (Gijón, Spain).
- 47 Shaffer, "Havana Hub," 49; *Cultura Obrera* (New York), May 22, 1915, p. 2; Bird Carmona, *Parejeros y desafiantes*, 129-132; Juan S. Marcano. *Páginas Rojas*. Humacao, Puerto Rico: Tipografía "Conciencia Popular," (1919), 4; *Tierra y Libertad* (Barcelona), May 2, 1916, p. 4; "The Panama Canal Executive Office: Exclusion of Undesirable Persons," RG 185 General Files of the Panama Canal, 1914-1934 (hereafter referred to as ICC 1914-1934), 2-P-59/16, US National Archives, College Park, MD.
- 48 *Cuasimodo* (Panama City), June 1919, pp. 32-3.
- 49 *Cuasimodo*, October 1919, pp. 21-2.
- 50 *Cuasimodo*, December 1919, p. 55.
- 51 *Cuasimodo*, April 1920, pp. 82-3.
- 52 *Cuasimodo*, June 1920, pp. 39-48.
- 53 *Cuasimodo*, August 1920, p. 43.
- 54 Encarnita Montes de Rodríguez. "Nemesio R. Canales: Vida y Obra, 1878-1923." MA Thesis in Hispanic Studies, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Río Piedras (1967), 20-22. *Yo Acuso* (Caguas, Puerto Rico), April 20, 1918, p. 4.
- 55 *Yo Acuso*, April 20, 1918, p. 4. See the following manifestos "La Huelga del Trust del Tabaco; Manifiesto de Información," January 22, 1919 and "Manifiesto a los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico," November 5, 1919 in *Movimiento Obrero Puertorriqueño hojas sueltas 1898-1937*, Microfilm Periódicos Obreros Puertorriqueños. Colección Puertorriqueña, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Río Piedras.
- 56 *El Comunista* (Bayamón, Puerto Rico), May 8, 1920, p. 4.
- 57 *El Comunista*, May 15, 1920, p. 3.
- 58 *El Comunista*, July 10, 1920, p. 2.
- 59 *El Comunista*, May 8, 1920, p. 4.
- 60 *El Comunista*, July 31, 1920, p. 2.
- 61 *Nueva Luz* (Havana), February 15, 1923, p. 11; *El Progreso* (Havana), May 8, 1924, p. 4.
- 62 Robert Jackson Alexander. *A History of Organized Labor in Cuba*. Westport, CT: Praeger (2002), 28-30.
- 63 *¡Tierra!* (Havana), November 27, 1924, p. 1; *El Progreso*, November 29, 1924, pp. 3 and 5.
- 64 *El Comunista*, September 18, 1920, p. 4; December 11, 1920, p. 4; February 2, 1921, p. 4.
- 65 Information for General Intelligence Bulletin: The Communist Party of Porto Rico, January 31, 1921, FBI OG, 202600-40.
- 66 Shaffer, *Anarchism and Countercultural Politics*, 7, 58-9, 191-3; Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets!*, 227-8; *Cultura Obrera* (New York), April 16, 1927, p. 3.

- 67 "El martirologio del pueblo cubano." R. Lone Collection. Artículos Publicados. International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam. Italics in the original.
- 68 "De Estados Unidos: Un sirviente de Wall Street." Lone Collection.
- 69 *Cultura Proletaria* (New York), March 28, 1928, p. 3.
- 70 Confidential letter from Gov. Jay Morrow to US Minister William Jennings Price, Republic of Panama, November 17, 1921, ICC 1914-1934, 2-P-70; Memorandum for the Governor from Inspector George Vraff, November 17, 1921, ICC 1914-1934, 2-P-8.
- 71 Marco Gandásequi. *Las luchas obreras en Panamá (1850-1978)*. Panama City, Panama: CELA (1990), 52.
- 72 Jorge Turner. *Raíz, historia y perspectivas del movimiento obrero panameño*. Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Signos (1982), 35-6.
- 73 Michael Conniff. *Black Labor on a White Canal: 1904-1981*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press (1985), 64-5.
- 74 ICC 1914-1934, 80-H-5; Hernando Franco Muñoz. *Blázquez de Pedro y los orígenes del sindicalismo panameño*. Panama City, Panama: Movimiento Editores (1986), 189-91; Ricaurte Soler. *Panamá: historia de una crisis*. Panama City: Siglo XXI (1989), 53.
- 75 *New York Times*, October 13, 1925, p. 1; October 14, 1925, p. 1; ICC 1914-1934, 80-H-5.
- 76 Soler, *Panamá*, 54-5; ICC 1914-1934, 80-H-5.
- 77 *El Inquilino* (Panama City), August 23, 1925, pp. 1-2; *Nueva Luz*, September 5, 1925, p. 1; ICC 1914-1934, 80-H-5.
- 78 Franco Muñoz, *Blázquez de Pedro*, 199; ICC 1914-1934, 80-H-5.