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## Anarchist Ideology, Worker Practice: The 1917 General Strike and the Formation of São Paulo's Working Class

JOEL WOLFE

ON August 2, 1914, anarchist, socialist, and other left political organizations in the city of São Paulo rallied to protest the declaration of war in Europe. The advent of the Great War had worsened already unstable conditions in São Paulo, including shortages of food, price speculation, and an industrial downturn that threw 10,000 out of work. In this atmosphere, groups such as the Comissão Internacional contra a Guerra, Centro Socialista Internacional, Centro Libertário, Círculo de Estudos Sociais Francisco Ferrer, and Grupo Anarquista "Os Sem Pátria" met in the Largo da Sé (now Praça da Sé) to denounce the European "hemorrhage of blood promoted by capitalism." In the midst of this denunciation of the war, workers in the crowd stood up and demanded that the speakers address *their* problems. They wanted to know what anarchist and socialist leaders were willing to do about the shortages of goods in the markets. How did these leaders plan to combat the decreasing number of jobs, increasing work loads in the factories for those still employed, and low wages earned?<sup>1</sup> Less than three years later, however, the city's workers demonstrated great unity by launching a devastatingly effective general strike that won increased wages, price controls, and limits on factory regimes. Given the seeming antipathy between the city's workers and labor activists in 1914, what explains this later successful mobilization? Who launched this strike, and what were the forms of organization? And what did the strike gain or lose for São Paulo's workers in the long run?

1. *Correio Paulistano*, Aug. 3, 1914; *Avanti!* (São Paulo), August 1914; Hermínio Linhares, *Contribuição à história das lutas operárias no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1977), 60; Boris Koval, *História do proletariado brasileiro, 1856-1967*, trans. Clarice Lima Avierina (São Paulo, 1982), 116.

Historians have glossed over the conflictual relationship between left activists and the rank and file in their analyses of this period. In early pioneering studies of Brazilian labor, Boris Fausto, Sheldon Maram, Leôncio Martins Rodrigues, and John W. F. Dulles relate the strike to years of organizing during a distinct period (ca. 1890–1920) of anarchist-oriented labor activism that could have produced a powerful union movement had the state not violently repressed it in the poststrike years. They note the seemingly spontaneous nature of the strike but do not analyze the distance between the labor leadership and the rank and file.<sup>2</sup> It is hard to fault these authors, for their studies broke new ground in the historiography by demonstrating concretely the fallacy of the belief that Brazil's past had been conflict-free (i.e., that there had been a tradition of *conciliação*).<sup>3</sup> Further, because these were the first labor histories, they covered urban workers in all fields in Rio de Janeiro, Santos, and São Paulo. With such a broad scope, Fausto, Maram, Rodrigues, and Dulles could not easily trace the complex relationship between the rank and file and labor activists in any one location.<sup>4</sup> A close examination of the origins, operation, and aftermath of the 1917 general strike will not only reveal the strained relations between the rank and file and left activists (e.g., in the August 1914 rally), it will also suggest a new interpretive framework for twentieth-century Brazilian labor history.

Such a reinterpretation must begin with an analysis of the formation of São Paulo's *industrial* working class. Because they have tended to conflate the experiences of anarchist tradesmen (e.g., stone masons, hatters, printers) with those of industrial laborers, scholars have come to assume these two groups share a common history as workers (or even, as “the masses”)

2. See Boris Fausto, *Trabalho urbano e conflito social* (São Paulo, 1976), 157–216; Sheldon L. Maram, “Anarchists, Immigrants, and the Labor Movement in Brazil” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1972), 118–120; Leôncio Martins Rodrigues, *Conflito industrial e sindicalismo no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1966), 115–156; and John W. F. Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists in Brazil, 1900–1935* (Austin, 1973), 1–97. Several of these works' findings anticipate my own. Fausto and Maram find the material bases of the strike in rising food costs and point to the high participation of women, and Rodrigues emphasizes the “spontaneous” nature of the strike. They do not closely study women's militance and vanguard role in the strike movement and subsequent labor organizing and protest activities.

3. The idea of *conciliação* was first challenged by José Honório Rodrigues in his *Conciliação e reforma no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1965).

4. It should be noted, however, that later scholars have failed to provide a more focused perspective. June Hahner's *Poverty and Politics: The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870–1920* (Albuquerque, 1986) is even broader than the studies mentioned. John French's “Industrial Workers and the Origins of Populist Politics in the ABC Region of Greater São Paulo, Brazil, 1900–1950” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1985) analyzes only the “ABC” suburbs of São Paulo but studies all industries and relies on the aforementioned studies and anarchists' memoirs as his sources for the 1910s. Sílvia Lang Magnani in *O movimento anarquista em São Paulo, 1906–1917* (São Paulo, 1982) discusses the problems anarchists had organizing the rank and file but maintains the broad focus on all workers.

that can be deciphered by following the fortunes of anarchist leaders. The gulf between tradesmen (who were, in fact, men) and industrial laborers (who in the case of textiles—the largest industry in São Paulo—were primarily women) helps explain workers' protests during the August 1914 antiwar rally. Indeed, conflicts between the industrial rank and file and anarchist activists were as important in shaping working-class consciousness and politics as were the conflicts with employers and the state.

This essay examines the creation of São Paulo's working-class movement by studying the process of class formation, showing among other things how structural factors propelled women into a vanguard position within that emerging movement. But structures alone did not put women in this leadership role. Their shared experiences as workers and as women laid the groundwork for their activism.<sup>5</sup> Then the strike itself profoundly affected their consciousness, for it provided them the opportunity to meet other women from throughout the city who shared their background, experiences, and outlook. An examination of the evolving relationship between anarchist activists and women workers who had organized themselves independently in factory commissions reveals both the maintenance of an active working-class movement in São Paulo from the 1917 strike well into the mid-1920s,<sup>6</sup> and the continuity between the 1917 general strike and labor politics in the 1930s and beyond.<sup>7</sup>

### The Development of Industry

In 1900, São Paulo was still far from being an industrial center. Neighborhoods such as Brás and Mooca, where large textile factories and small

5. Labor historians tend to stress either structures (the economy, labor markets, type of industry, etc.) or experience (broadly defined as workers' actions or agency) in their analyses. A fundamental premise in this essay is that such a dichotomy is false, for experience is both shaped by and shapes structures. For the basic positions in this debate, see Emília Viotti da Costa, "Experience versus Structures: New Tendencies in the History of Labor and the Working Class in Latin American History—What Do We Gain? What Do We Lose?" and Barbara Weinstein's response, "The New Latin American Labor History: What Do We Gain?" both in *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 36(Fall 1989), 3–30.

6. The standard view of the 1920s is of a period of elite repression against a dead or dying labor movement that had reached its apogee in 1917–19. See, for example, Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 233–249; Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, *Política e trabalho no Brasil; dos anos vinte a 1930* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977), pt. 2; Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 101–150; Azis Simão, *Sindicato e estado; suas relações na formação do proletariado de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 1981), 101–121; Maram, "Labor and the Left in Brazil, 1890–1921: A Movement Aborted," *HAHR*, 57:2 (May 1977), 254–272; and French, "Industrial Workers," 58–68.

7. The standard periodization employed in histories of Brazil's working class breaks the twentieth century into three unrelated periods: the 1890s to the 1917 general strike, an era of anarchist organizing; the 1930s to 1964, a period of state intervention and Communist successes; and the mid-1970s to the founding of the New Republic in 1985 (and beyond), the era of the "new unionism." For examples of works that cover the first two as distinct periods, see notes 2, 4, and 5.

metalworking and other shops would dominate in the 1910s and 1920s, were still swampy lowlands with only a handful of industrial establishments. Beyond the downtown business triangle, a few elite residential areas, and the immigrant slums of Bexiga, São Paulo was still rather rural. Small farms with their fruit trees, cattle, and rustic houses operated in Consolação, Higienópolis, Vila Buarque, Pinheiros, and other neighborhoods of the city. In fact, foreign visitors and local commentators alike praised the beauty of this bucolic town at the turn of the century.<sup>8</sup>

New tariffs and the steady demand for the state's coffee exports were circumstances that favored São Paulo's transition from an overgrown agricultural hamlet to the Third World's leading industrial center.<sup>9</sup> The production of light consumer goods using "semiskilled" labor led the way—textiles especially.<sup>10</sup> Such a manufacturing sector at first precluded the rise of a unified industrial bourgeoisie. Some mill owners maintained their primary interest in the coffee trade, while others concentrated their investments in industrial production.<sup>11</sup> The expansion of the city's industrial base, along with external economic shocks, led to the creation of a new area of industrial production: São Paulo's capital goods sector. This development in turn increased demand for "skilled" metalworkers in and around the city. The clothing, shoe, and processed food industries also expanded dramatically (on average, 8 percent per year from 1900 to 1920)

8. Marie Robinson Wright, *The New Brazil, Its Resources and Attractions; Historical, Descriptive and Industrial* (Philadelphia, 1901), 195, 238–239; Miguel Milano, *Os fantasmas de São Paulo antiga; estudo histórico-literário da cidade de São Paulo* (São Paulo, 1949), 53, 86–87; and Célia Toledo Lucena, *Bairro do Bexiga; a sobrevivência cultural* (São Paulo, 1984), 38–47. For a general overview of São Paulo at the turn of the century, see Richard M. Morse, *From Community to Metropolis; A Biography of São Paulo, Brazil* (Gainesville, 1958), 166–198.

9. See Flávio Rabelo Versiani and Maria Teresa R. O. Versiani, "A industrialização brasileira antes de 1930: uma contribuição," in *Formação econômica do Brasil; a experiência da industrialização*, ed. Flávio Rabelo Versiani and José Roberto Mendonça de Barros (São Paulo, 1977), 121–142; Wilson Cano, *Raízes da concentração industrial em São Paulo*, 2d ed. (São Paulo, 1981), 195–255; Annibal V. Villela and Wilson Suzigan, *Government Policy and the Economic Growth of Brazil, 1889–1945* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977), 88–96; and Steven Topik, *The Political Economy of the Brazilian State, 1889–1930* (Austin, 1987), 129–148. The rise of Brazil's textile industry is detailed in Stanley J. Stein, *The Brazilian Cotton Manufacture; Textile Enterprise in an Underdeveloped Area, 1850–1950* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), 1–77.

10. "Semiskilled" workers can be defined as those individuals who have abilities acquired, in the factory, generally over the long term. They are adept at maintaining high levels of production with older, somewhat fragile machines. Accordingly, these individuals have factory-specific skills. For an analysis of the position of such workers within a general hierarchy of skills, see Charles F. Sabel, *Work and Politics; The Division of Labor in Industry* (Cambridge, 1982), 61–71. For a historical treatment of such workers, see David Montgomery's study of "factory operatives" in his *The Fall of the House of Labor; The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (Cambridge, 1987), 112–170.

11. Versiani and Versiani, "Industrialização brasileira," 125–128; and Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880–1945* (Austin, 1969), 19–47.

TABLE 1: Workers by Sex and Age in 31 Textile Mills in the State of São Paulo, 1912

	Under 12	12–16	17–22	Over 22	Total
Female	244	1,885	2,966	1,706	6,801
Male	127	696	1,825 <sup>a</sup>	NA	2,648

Source: “Condições do Trabalho na Indústria Têxtil no Estado de São Paulo,” 38.

Note: Of the 31 mills studied, 29 were in the city of São Paulo, one in São Bernardo, and one in Santos.

<sup>a</sup>The categories for male employees end with “older than 16 years.”

in response to the overall growth of the state’s economy and population.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, however, in the early twentieth century São Paulo experienced its first round of industrialization as an ancillary economic activity. The actions of neither mill owners nor their workers were of primary concern to the ruling class of this overwhelmingly agrarian state.

Migrants from São Paulo’s coffee fazendas filled the city’s industrial labor market at this time. The migration of young Italians (especially women) from *colono* households to the city meshed with racist ideologies that sought to limit blacks’ access to factory labor and created an industrial labor force dominated by women. That is, while men monopolized the construction, printing, metalworking, and other trades, women were the majority of industrial (especially textile) workers (Table 1).<sup>13</sup> As we shall see, the prevalence of women in textiles would profoundly affect the development of São Paulo’s labor movement.

World War I first interrupted, then intensified this process of industrialization. After a brief suspension of coffee and rubber exports, the Brazilian economy quickly recovered. By late 1915, Brazil was again exporting primary products, but its trade axis had shifted from Europe to the United States. The federal government stimulated this rise in exports by devaluing the milréis. Such an exchange-rate policy along with shortages of manufactured goods on the international market combined to protect Brazil’s nascent industrial sector. While scholars dispute the exact impact

12. Werner Baer, *The Brazilian Economy; Growth and Development*, 2d ed. (New York, 1983), 32–39; Dean, *Industrialization*, 105.

13. On racist ideologies, see Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York, 1974). On the impact of this ideology on São Paulo’s industrial labor market see George Reid Andrews, “Black and White Workers, São Paulo, Brazil, 1888–1928,” *HAHR*, 68:3 (Aug. 1988), 491–524. Migration from the rural sector and the establishment of the industrial labor market are covered in more detail in Joel W. Wolfe, “The Rise of Brazil’s Industrial Working Class: Community, Work, and Politics in São Paulo, 1900–1955” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1990), chap. 1.

of the war years on São Paulo's industry, they all agree that the 1914 to 1918 period witnessed significant increases in industrial output.<sup>14</sup> Expansion of the textile sector grew out of both the increased capacity installed before the war and the intensified use of labor in the factories.

To meet increased demand, industrialists extended work hours, especially the night shifts. Mill owners continued to employ mostly women and children, and foremen did not hesitate to punish them for not meeting production quotas or for falling asleep at their machines. Accordingly, the number of accidents in São Paulo's factories rose steadily during the war.<sup>15</sup> The city's press increasingly reported such accidents. A reporter for *O Estado de São Paulo* noted in 1917 that many of the children exiting a textile mill appeared to have been not only injured in machinery but also abused by foremen.

Yesterday we watched 60 children entering the factory at Mooca at 7:00 P.M. They would leave only at 6:00 A.M. That meant that they worked 11 hours straight on the night shift, with only a 20-minute rest break at midnight! Worse is that they complain that they are beaten by the foremen of the spinning rooms. Many of them showed us the black-and-blue marks on their arms and backs. . . . The ears of one are injured from their having been pulled so violently and so often. These are 12-, 13-, and 14-year-old children.<sup>16</sup>

Although exact figures are not available, both foreign observers and Brazilian government officials noted that São Paulo's mill owners reaped substantial profits during the war years.<sup>17</sup> Even the president of the state of

14. Wilson Cano (*Raízes da concentração industrial*, 140–189) and Albert Fishlow (“Origens e consequências da substituição de importações no Brasil,” *Estudos Econômicos*, 2:6 [1972], 8–20), for example, argue that the wartime expansion deepened industrialization. Dean (*Industrialization*, 83–104), argues that the war period simply witnessed the intensified use of existing capacity and so did not further industrialization. Versiani and Versiani argue that the expansion was indeed based on the expanded capacity installed before the war, but that the war created profits later used for further industrial expansion (“Industrialização brasileira,” 37–63). For a thoughtful synthesis of the various positions on the impact of the war on the Brazilian economy, see Bill Albert, *South America and the First World War: The Impact of the War on Brazil, Argentina, Peru, and Chile* (Cambridge, 1988), 77–94.

15. On accidents, see *Boletim do Departamento Estadual do Trabalho (BDET)*, 30 (1919), 25, and 22 (1920), 1,917. On the work regimes, see *BDET*, 37 (1920), 309, and Maram, “Anarchists,” 155.

16. Cited in Maria Célia Paoli, “Working-Class São Paulo and Its Representations, 1900–1940,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 14:2 (Spring 1987), 211. For the original article, see *O Estado de São Paulo*, Sept. 15, 1917. Other descriptions of such conditions can be found in *O Estado de São Paulo*, June 4, 6, and 8, 1917.

17. G. J. Bruce, *Brazil and the Brazilians* (London, 1915), 295–297; Gilbert Last, *Facts about the State of São Paulo, Brazil* (London, 1926), 75; and Jorge Americano, *São Paulo nesse tempo, 1915–1935* (São Paulo, 1962), 121–122. See also *A Plebe* (São Paulo), June 21, 1917; and Moniz Bandeira et al., *O ano vermelho: a revolução russa e seus reflexos no Brasil*, 2d ed. (São Paulo, 1980), 48–50.

São Paulo publicly declared that industrialists were unfairly profiting from workers' labor. He wrote, "It is clear that industrialists and merchants are reaping profits in the current situation, profits never before seen and that demonstrate that the prices of goods that are indispensable for subsistence exceed what is needed to satisfactorily remunerate capital and the activity of workers."<sup>18</sup>

Industrial expansion had a dramatic impact on life in São Paulo. With the city's population and number of buildings more than doubling from 1900 (239,820 people and 22,407 buildings) to 1918 (504,278 and 55,356), residents experienced the many problems and frustrations of living in a metropolis.<sup>19</sup> Along with this expansion, São Paulo witnessed the clear demarcation of neighborhoods by social class. The growth of luxury housing and of the city's commercial center forced an increasing number of workers to move into *cortiços* in the factory districts of Brás, Mooca, Belemzinho, and Cambucí.<sup>20</sup> Before and during the war years, the São Paulo city government carried out an extensive urban planning campaign to manage this growth. Residences and small shops on Avenida São João were demolished in order to create the sort of boulevard considered appropriate for the downtown. The city also moved to improve transportation and sewage lines.<sup>21</sup> In 1915 and 1916, Mayor Washington Luís Pereira de Sousa encouraged further high-rise construction in the downtown and attempted to renovate Brás and other working-class neighborhoods. Washington Luís's plans sought not only to spur further growth but also "to purify [the city] morally and physically."<sup>22</sup> Paulistano elites wanted to cleanse the working-class neighborhoods of their "vicious mixture of scum of all nationalities, all ages, all of them dangerous."<sup>23</sup> São Paulo's workers felt the full effects of Washington Luís's reforms. In addition to the changes in the downtown area, the city modified the food distribution system by closing the central market in Anhangabaú and instituted a system of neighborhood

18. *BDET*, 27 (1918), 329–330.

19. *Bulletin of the Pan American Union (BPAU)*, Apr. 1919, p. 473.

20. Lucila Hermann, "Estudo de desenvolvimento de São Paulo através de análise de uma radial—a estrada do café (1935)," *Revista do Arquivo Municipal*, 99 (Nov.–Dec. 1944), 20–25; Ernani Silva Bruno, *História e tradições da cidade de São Paulo*, 3 vols. (Rio de Janeiro, 1954), III, 1315–1323; Americano, *São Paulo nesse tempo*, 31–32; Bruce, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, 229; and Paoli, "Working-Class São Paulo," 204–205.

21. Hermann, "Estudo de desenvolvimento" 13–18; *BPAU*, March 1914, pp. 399–404; *Outlook Magazine*, Jan. 31, Feb. 7 and 14, 1914; Villela and Suzigan, "Government Policy," 69–74. On the process of urban reform in general in São Paulo, see Gerald Michael Greenfield, "Privatism and Urban Development in Latin America: The Case of São Paulo, Brazil," *Journal of Urban History*, 8: 4 (Aug. 1982), 397–426. For this process in Rio, see Jeffrey D. Needell, "Making the Carioca Belle Époque Concrete; The Urban Reforms of Rio de Janeiro under Perrera Passos," *Journal of Urban History*, 10:4 (Aug. 1984), 384–422.

22. *BPAU*, Apr. 1916, p. 554.

23. Speech by Washington Luís quoted in Paoli, "Working-Class São Paulo," 217.



TABLE 2: Index of Wholesale Prices for Foodstuffs in São Paulo, 1912–1917 (1912 = 100)

	Rice	Beans	Sugar	Mandioca	Chicken
1912	100	100	100	100	100
1913	112	128	85	85	133
1914	106	136	73	67	89
1915	125	92	103	78	75
1916	104	85	125	96	82
1917	98	136	128	96	100

Source: *BDET*, 24 (1917), chart pp. 580–581.

markets known as *feiras livres*. This aided women workers, for it freed them from having to travel to the central market for a large selection of food items. But the decentralization of food distribution also created a system in which the goods sold in the working-class *feiras* were of the lowest quality and highest price in the city.<sup>24</sup>

This system of markets intensified the impact of the wartime inflation for São Paulo's working people in general and women workers in particular. Speculation and increased exports of foodstuffs from the state to Europe forced up the prices for rice, beans, and other working-class staples. This did not create a steady rise in prices; rather, hoarding, speculation, and exports brought wild swings in prices from month to month (Table 2).<sup>25</sup> During the war workers faced not only higher prices for foodstuffs but extremely unstable supplies, as accepted practices and prices (the “moral economy”) for food were discarded.<sup>26</sup> With the export of inexpensive foods, Brazil also increased its imports of Argentine wheat for the bread sold in markets in the city's elite neighborhoods.<sup>27</sup> Then, when Argentina imposed an embargo on wheat exports in early 1917, the São Paulo city government introduced *pão paulista*, which was baked with

24. Bruno, *História e tradições*, III, 1145; Americano, *São Paulo nesse tempo*, 58; and *BDET*, 13–14 (1914), 790–799, and 19 (1916), 215–218. The higher cost and lower quality of food in the working-class neighborhoods are detailed in *BDET*, 3 (1912), 355; 7 (1913), 339; 10 (1914), 241–245; and 14 (1915), 38–39.

25. On exports to Europe and month-to-month price fluctuations, see Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 163, 200. On food prices and inflation, see *BDET*, 13–14 (1914), 478–481, and 24 (1917), charts after p. 580; *Boletim da Directoria de Indústria e Comércio (BDIC)*, 9: 3–4 (Mar.–Apr. 1918), 129; *BPAU*, Apr. 1917, p. 529, June 1917, p. 809, Aug. 1917, p. 258, Oct. 1917, p. 539, and Nov. 1918, p. 604; and Oliver Onody, *A inflação brasileira, 1820–1958* (Rio de Janeiro, 1960), 25.

26. The breakdown of the São Paulo community is analyzed in Morse, *Community to Metropolis*, 200–256. A similar study of this process in Rio de Janeiro is presented in Michael L. Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil: The Rise of Populism, 1925–1945* (Pittsburgh, 1981), 20–34.

27. *BDIC*, 9: 1 (Jan. 1918), 20–21; *BPAU*, Dec. 1917, p. 818.

corn and some wheat flour, for the Italian immigrants in working-class neighborhoods. Bakers were supposed to mark this product clearly and to sell it at half the price of bread made completely from wheat flour, but few retailers obeyed this regulation.<sup>28</sup>

In the final analysis, women industrial workers—especially those in the mills—bore the brunt of São Paulo’s wartime industrial expansion. Not only did they confront intensified work regimes in the factories, they also faced increasingly difficult conditions in their other jobs as the individuals most responsible for the maintenance of their families’ lives. São Paulo’s workers opposed the impact of the war on their lives; they did not, however, articulate the anarchists’ critique of the conflict as a “hemorrhage of blood promoted by capitalism.”

### The Development of the Labor Movement

São Paulo’s women workers could not hope for much help in their struggles from the city’s anarchist activists, for the ideological, social, ethnic, and gender differences between the leaders of the anarchist movement and São Paulo’s working people limited the development of a coherent and effective labor movement.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Brazil’s early anarchist movement owed more to the antistate politics of disaffected Republicans than it did to working-class organizing. Brazilians such as Benjamin Mota, Manuel Curvello de Mendonça, Avelino Foscolo, Fábio Luz, and Lima Barreto rejected the government of the Old Republic as a corrupt and failed experiment. They considered themselves exponents of logic and morality and called for a return to so-called primitive communitarianism.<sup>30</sup> These anarchist activists concentrated their energies on education programs and cultural events such as the “Workers’ Theater.”<sup>31</sup> Further, anarchists at-

28. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Daily Commerce Reports*, nos. 153–228, containing Consul Hoover, reports from São Paulo, June 2 and Aug. 16, 1917.

29. The small Socialist party in São Paulo in this period had little contact with the city’s workers. For information on the Socialists, see Edgard Carone, *A República Velha; Instituições e classes sociais* (São Paulo, 1970), 211–236, and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 10–20.

30. Nicolau Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão; tensões sociais e criação cultural na Primeira República* (São Paulo, 1983), 161–236; Flávio Luizetto, “O recurso da ficção: um capítulo da história do anarquismo no Brasil,” in *Libertários no Brasil; memória, lutas, cultura*, ed. Antônio Arnoni Prado (São Paulo, 1986), 131–161; Eric Arthur Gordon, “Anarchism in Brazil: Theory and Practice, 1890–1920” (Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1978), 180–225. A group of anarchists founded the Colônia Cecília in the state of Santa Catarina to experiment with “primitive communitarianism.” See Newton Stadler de Sousa, *O anarquismo da Colônia Cecília* (Rio de Janeiro, 1970). For a fictional account of this experiment, see Afonso Schmidt, *Colônia Cecília* (1942), 3d ed. (São Paulo, 1980).

31. The most complete analysis of these activities can be found in Francisco Foot Hardman’s lively study of anarchist culture, *Nem pátria, nem patrão; vida operária e cultura anarquista no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1983). See also Mariângela Alves de Lima and Maria

tacked, implicitly and explicitly, the Catholic church. While anticlericalism was a fundamental part of anarchist ideology and was expressed often in plays, songs, and study groups, it served as a gulf between activists and the majority of São Paulo's working people. When the Italian socialist Enrico Ferri spoke out against the church during a street rally in November 1911, for example, a crowd rioted and attacked the "freethinkers."<sup>32</sup> No matter their level of religious commitment or attachment to formal and informal churches, most of São Paulo's working people were no doubt troubled by the anarchists' anticlericalism.

In 1906 and 1907, São Paulo's anarchists began to focus their activities on organizing the steadily growing number of workers in the city.<sup>33</sup> Even this commitment to working-class politics—as opposed to the previous emphasis on culture and education—failed to produce a large-scale workers' movement. The leaders of the new anarchist movement were primarily artisans from the printing, stone-cutting, carpentry, shoemaking and other trades. As a group, they were better paid and more highly educated than most of the city's industrial workers.<sup>34</sup> The anarchists themselves recognized that they had few ties to most of São Paulo's workers.<sup>35</sup>

The gulf between the rank and file and the anarchist leadership became obvious during the widespread textile strike of May 1907. After the Mariangela mill's workers struck against the brutal treatment they suffered at the hands of foremen who directed them for twelve-hour shifts, six and sometimes seven days a week, textile workers throughout the city organized strike committees to demand improved working conditions.

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Thereza Vargas, "Teatro operário em São Paulo," in *Libertários no Brasil*, Prado, ed., 162–250.

32. Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 225–231. The majority of native Brazilians, as well as Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants, were Catholic. Further, religion (often popular, syncretic religion) has traditionally played a central role in popular class resistance to changing social and economic conditions. See, for example, Euclides da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, trans. Samuel Putman (Chicago, 1944), 50–169; Todd A. Diacon, "Peasants, Prophets, and the Power of a Millenarian Vision in Twentieth-Century Brazil," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32:3 (July 1990), 488–514; and Ralph Della Cava, *Miracle at Joazeiro* (New York, 1970). Although active in rural sector resistance, the church did not play a key role in working-class organizing until the emergence of ecclesiastical base communities in the 1960s and 1970s.

33. This shift in outlook probably resulted from the increase in the number of tradesmen, especially printers, that accompanied São Paulo's growth in the first decade of the twentieth century. For an analysis of this period, see Morse, *Community to Metropolis*, 200–218.

34. Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 20–22; and Maram, "The Immigrant and the Brazilian Labor Movement," in *Essays Concerning the Socioeconomic History of Brazil and Portuguese India*, ed. Dauril Alden and Warren Dean (Gainesville, 1977), 186–187.

35. See the articles from *A Luta Proletária* and *La Barricata* reproduced in *A classe operária no Brasil, 1889–1930*, vol. 1, *O movimento operário*, ed. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro and Michael M. Hall (São Paulo, 1979), 72–74, 127–128.

Thinking the workers' discontent could lead to a revolutionary upheaval, the anarchists attempted to take over direction of the strikes from the factories' workers. While the centralized organizing and support for the eight-hour day by the anarchists' Workers' Federation of São Paulo (FOSP) helped the overall movement, the individual workers' committees rejected a revolutionary platform. Instead they sought reforms designed simply to improve work conditions and pay.<sup>36</sup>

The 1907 strike illustrates why São Paulo's industrial workers had few reasons to embrace the anarchists' revolutionary political platform. These immigrant workers did not place their demands within a framework critical of industry or capitalism as such, and as a group they still identified with their fellow Italians, Portuguese, and Spaniards—including many of their bosses. They had had little or no contact with radical ideologies before arriving in São Paulo, and they did not yet view themselves as part of a subordinate class united against employers; they were in the city to better their social and economic position. Workers were often proud of the achievements of immigrant industrialists like Francisco Matarazzo, the owner of the Mariangela mill, who employed them.<sup>37</sup>

Further, São Paulo's anarchists demonstrated little interest in organizing the city's women workers. Like their elite opponents, the anarchists believed women were weak and required men's protection. Belém Sárrage de Ferrero wrote in 1911, for example, "Let us make of women what they should be: the priestesses of the home, the priestesses of morality."<sup>38</sup> In addition to wanting to expel women from the labor market in order to protect them, anarchist men were often hostile to women's presence in the factories as low-paid workers. A 1914 meeting of Rio's tailors thus concluded that "the woman of our class . . . , we are sorry to say, is our most dangerous competition, and this contributes a good deal to her own as well as to our impoverishment."<sup>39</sup> At times, anarchists' frustrations with working women became outright misogyny, as expressed in an article of 1900 in the anarchist *Il Diritto*.

36. Railroad and other workers had struck earlier for the eight-hour day. Their actions no doubt encouraged textile workers and led the anarchists to misconstrue the political potential of the workers' protests. The overall strike movement is well documented in Magnani, *Movimento anarquista*, 119–132. See also Maram, "Anarchists," 154.

37. On workers' lack of contact with radical ideas in Europe, see Michael M. Hall, "Immigration and the Early São Paulo Working Class," *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, 12(1975), 391–407. On their identification as an ethnic group rather than a social class, see Maram, "Labor and the Left," 257–260, and Boris Koval, *Proletariado brasileiro*, 99–102.

38. A *Laterna* (São Paulo), Apr. 22, 1911. It was not rare for women anarchists to take such a position. See Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 136–139.

39. A *Voz do Trabalhador* (Rio de Janeiro), June 20, 1914. See also Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 116.

We are not well enough aware of how at present women are a danger, an enemy of the social movement. We could not precisely count the number of militants who have deserted the struggle and abandoned forever the revolutionary ideas they once so avidly espoused so as not to displease their women and to have tranquility on the domestic scene.<sup>40</sup>

Some anarchists, though certainly not all, even considered feminism a threat to working-class consciousness and thought all feminists were lesbians (whom they viewed unfavorably).<sup>41</sup>

Such views of women's roles in society certainly limited the success of anarchist organizing among São Paulo's thousands of textile and other female factory workers. In fact, the city's women workers consistently avoided participation in male-dominated unions and chose instead to organize their own formal and informal associations, such as factory and neighborhood commissions that were comprised solely of women.<sup>42</sup> Thus, just as the segmenting of the industrial labor market was influenced by immigrants' and Brazilian elites' gender ideologies, those same gender ideologies shaped the organizing and protest activities of twentieth-century São Paulo's labor movement.<sup>43</sup> Anarchist organizers did have some limited success bringing men into their unions, but they could not overcome ethnic rivalries and immigrants' initial disinterest in joining unions and study groups; thus they did not direct a large-scale labor movement during the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>44</sup>

40. Quoted in Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 138.

41. *Ibid.*, 136–137. Other anarchists supported feminism and even printed openly feminist articles in their newspapers. See, for example, "To the Young Seamstresses of São Paulo," reprinted from *Terra Livre* (July 29, 1906) in *Women in Latin American History: Their Lives and Views*, ed. June E. Hahner (Los Angeles, 1976), 114–116. Still, Hahner finds the male anarchists' gender ideologies differed little from those of other urban Brazilian men of this time. See her *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940* (Durham, 1990), 94–95, 109–112.

42. Often, women did not have the time or inclination to join anarchist organizations. Most were burdened by household and childcare responsibilities. Moreover, they were often put off by the atmosphere of large meetings run by male activists (Wolfe, "Rise of Working Class," *passim*). For a fascinating study of the operation of similar factory commissions among Chinese textile workers, see Emily Honig, "Burning Incense, Pledging Sisterhood: Communities of Women Workers in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 10:4 (Summer 1985), 700–714.

43. This process seems to confirm Heidi Hartmann's general perspective on how gender relations condition a transition to capitalism ("Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex," in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein [New York, 1979], 206–247). The segmenting of the labor market in accordance with the extant sexual division of labor in the rural sector demonstrates how gender can later be used to increase existing divisions within a working class. For an analysis that concentrates on industrialists' use of existing gender and race divisions—without a close analysis of the development of those divisions—see David M. Gordon et al., *Segmented Work, Divided Workers: The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (Cambridge, 1982).

44. Maram ("Labor and the Left") details the many obstacles anarchists faced as they

Although anarchist leaders and striking workers briefly came together in 1907, the labor movement continued as a small group of craftsmen who had little contact with most of the city's industrial laborers. Anarchist-oriented trade unions representing São Paulo's craftsmen (e.g., printers, hatters, shoemakers, and stonemasons) operated under an umbrella organization, the Brazilian Labor Confederation (COB), but textile and other industrial workers did not have active unions in São Paulo in 1914. Anarchist activists concentrated on various cultural activities and education through their Modern Schools and so ignored shop-floor organizing of industrial workers. The COB in Rio called on textile workers throughout Brazil to form new unions, but Paulistano anarchists did little actual organizing.<sup>45</sup> In April 1914, the national anarchist newspaper *A Voz do Trabalhador* noted that "the workers' organizations in [São Paulo], once so successful, continue unfortunately in a state of complete paralysis. The labor movement is limited exclusively to the following organizations: the Union of Stonemasons, the Union of Printers, the Syndicate of Workers in Diverse Shops, and the Union of Hatters."<sup>46</sup> The socialist newspaper *Avanti!* commented, "What most impresses the socialists who arrive here in São Paulo . . . is the lack of working-class organization."<sup>47</sup>

The left in São Paulo lacked coherence and a strong base in the industrial working class well into 1917, for the anarchists and socialists continued to concentrate on antiwar politics at the expense of shop-floor organizing. On May Day 1915, for example, socialist and anarchist study groups and the unions representing stonemasons and hatters formed another International Commission Against the War. Its manifesto proclaimed the group's "repulsion and absolute condemnation of the war, with which capitalism, always insatiable for gold and human lives, seeks to deter the growing progress of international socialism."<sup>48</sup>

### Popular Mobilization for "Reason and Justice"

With anarchists concentrating on antiwar politics, São Paulo's women textile workers—as they had in 1907—had to organize themselves to push for

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attempted to organize among native Brazilians and the Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish immigrants. Sidney Chalhoub's study of Rio de Janeiro in the first decades of the republic demonstrates the hostility that existed among the various ethnicities by analyzing criminal court records (*Trabalho, lar, e botequim; o cotidiano dos trabalhadores no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Époque* [São Paulo, 1986], 58–88).

45. *A Voz do Trabalhador*, July 5, 1914; Maram, "Anarchists," 264–271; Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 108–116.

46. *A Voz do Trabalhador*, Apr. 1, 1914.

47. *Avanti!*, Nov. 28, 1914.

48. *A Voz do Trabalhador*, June 8, 1915. See also Linhares, *Contribuição*, 60. On Brazilian anarchists' antiwar positions, see Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 100–107.

improved conditions in the factories and for higher wages. In May 1917, as prices for foodstuffs fluctuated widely and conditions in the mills became ever more dangerous, women weavers at Cotonificio Crespi in the Mooca neighborhood created factory commissions to bargain with employers.<sup>49</sup> According to the *Diário Popular* and *O Estado de São Paulo*, the commissions submitted a list of demands to management in late May. They sought a 20 percent increase in pay (to meet rapidly increasing food prices), an end to all fines (e.g., those that foremen imposed to deduct several hours of pay for minor irregularities in cloth), and an end to unhealthy and dangerous work conditions. They also demanded that supervisors and foremen treat the women and children workers with “more respect.” The women concluded by demanding that “in everything there should be reason and justice.”<sup>50</sup> Explicitly they called for respect; implicitly they demanded an end to foremen’s abuses, for these women workers were protesting sexual harassment in the factories, as well as dangerous machinery.<sup>51</sup>

When management refused to meet these demands, women workers initiated a strike at Crespi that would soon affect industry throughout the city. After 2,000 strikers shut down the mill, men and women from Crespi demonstrated in the city center to expose industrialists’ unwillingness to improve conditions in the factories. Women, men, and children marched, and several women spoke at large rallies about inhumane work conditions in the mills. The strikers also declared that their movement was completely independent of São Paulo’s anarchists and socialists. City officials responded by calling for negotiating teams to settle the walkout, and women from the factory commissions agreed to meet with employers. Interestingly, however, a group of men with no ties to the factory commissions arrived at police headquarters to negotiate on behalf of the strikers.<sup>52</sup>

Details of the first days of the strike are sketchy, but reports in the *Diário Popular* and *O Estado de São Paulo*, as well as the recollections of male anarchist leaders, seem to indicate that women played the van-

49. On the worsening conditions in the factories in 1917, see *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 31, 1917; *Diário Popular* (São Paulo), June 6, 1917; *BDET*, 37 (1920), 309. On fluctuating food prices, see *BDET*, 24 (1917), chart between 580 and 581. First mention of the women’s commission is in *Diário Popular*, June 28, 1917. Fausto also mentions the women’s commission and a separate men’s group (*Trabalho e conflito*, 194).

50. *Diário Popular*, June 28 and 30, 1917. Scholars have missed these original demands, for they refer only to the reporting in *O Estado de São Paulo* and the memoirs of anarchists. See, for example, Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 192–200, and Maram, “Anarchists,” 70–74, 169–170.

51. *A Plebe*, Aug. 18, 1918, reported on sexual harassment in the Labor textile mill. As we shall see, the anarchist press did not often report on topics such as sexual harassment before women workers raised these issues through their factory commissions.

52. *Diário Popular*, June 30, 1917; *O Estado de São Paulo*, June 20, 21, and 30, 1917. See also Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 194.

guard role by formulating the first set of demands, initiating the walkout, and spreading the strike through their speeches and other public demonstrations. Edgard Leuenroth, the anarchist activist and editor of *A Plebe*, notes in a memoir about the strike that it began without the knowledge or help of the anarchist movement. “The 1917 General Strike was a spontaneous workers’ movement without the interference, direct or indirect, of any known individuals. It was an explosive protest that came out of a long period of tormenting difficulties that burdened the working class.”<sup>53</sup> Leuenroth goes on to explain that the shortage and high cost of food were central among the causes of the strike. The anarchist Everardo Dias similarly notes in his memoir, “You couldn’t say the General Strike of June 1917 was a planned strike or a strike organized in the traditional way by the leaders of unions tied to the [anarchist] Workers’ Federation. It was a strike that burst out of São Paulo’s workers’ rage at their starvation wages and exhausting work.”<sup>54</sup> Dias then goes on to list the increases in food prices São Paulo’s workers faced in May and June 1917.

Leuenroth’s and Dias’s belief in the spontaneous outbreak of the strike reveals the distance between the rank and file and the anarchist leadership, for no social movement is truly spontaneous. Strikes are planned, and the workers at Crespi created their own factory commissions to formulate demands and then to organize their strike after management refused to negotiate. For the participants, there was nothing spontaneous about the strike.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the workers’ demands—for better conditions at both the point of production (the factory) and the point of consumption (their neighborhood markets)—could only have come from women textile workers, for they experienced both the harsh intensification of factory regimes and the wartime inflation and changes in the food distribution system. In June 1917, therefore, women textile workers—because of their unique position within the industrial labor market and the sexual division of labor in working-class households—took over as the vanguard of São Paulo’s labor movement.

Crespi’s women weavers set off a wave of strikes in other mills. First, on June 22, workers at Tecidos Labor in Mooca struck. Those of Estamparia Ipiranga followed. Within days, male and female workers at the medium and smaller textile firms struck. They sought 20 percent increases

53. *O Estado de São Paulo*, March 27, 1966 (reproduced in Pinheiro and Hall, *A classe operária*, I, 226–231).

54. Everardo Dias, *História das lutas sociais no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1977), 224.

55. In her study of nineteenth-century French strikes, Michelle Perrot notes that “spontaneity” is in the eyes of the beholder: “The spontaneity of these strikes, which is relative, is often a result of our ignorance. We only recognize them at the moment they begin; the strikes may surprise observers and employers, but the worker . . . expects the strikes or even plans them” (*Les ouvriers en grève; France, 1871–1890*, 2 vols. [Paris, 1974], II, 414).



in base pay and 25 percent increases in the wages of those on the night shifts. The strikers also demanded prompt payment of their earnings, for some factories were three to five weeks late in paying workers. More than a thousand strikers rallied outside the gates of the Estamparia Ipiranga pressing for wage hikes. They then added to their demands a call for the city's authorities to increase the regulation of public markets, for they were often forced to purchase adulterated food at inflated prices; some bakers, for example, were selling *pão paulista* as regular bread at high prices. After about 1,200 striking Ipiranga workers marched to their factory's gate, the management of that mill offered increases of 15 percent and 17 percent for night work. The strikers refused to return until all demands were met. They even rallied to protest the jailing of one of their *companheiros*, who had been seized during a picket outside the factory. Their march forced his release from prison. In this first week of July—as a steadily increasing number of workers struck the city's large textile mills—the localized protests of women and men weavers inspired other workers to strike and take other direct actions. Workers at São Paulo's largest beverage concern, the Companhia Anártica, struck on July 7. That same day, a crowd of strikers in Brás sacked a truck carrying wheat from the miller, and two more workers were jailed.<sup>56</sup>

By this time, many men workers had entered the growing strike movement. And, as the number of strikes increased, the level of violence grew. Roving groups of strikers encountered and fought with mounted police and some military troops in Brás and Mooca. Before these clashes in the second week of July, all the workers' protests had been peaceful. The violence no doubt came out of the increasing frustration of the strikers and the provocation that the stationing of troops represented. It also resulted from the increasing number of men among the thousands of strikers, for the police were more likely to use violence against men than against women. Indeed, the men at Anártica had violent clashes with the police during the first day of their strike.<sup>57</sup>

As the strike spread and violence against workers increased, some textile mills settled with their workers, and the State Department of Labor sought authority to increase its inspections of factories in order to promote safer working conditions. A general settlement seemed possible, but the city's police continued to increase the number of guards around textile mills and troops throughout the industrial *bairros*. Workers responded by seizing streetcars and closing sections of the city to the troops. In one clash

56. *Diário Popular*, July 2 and 3, 1917; *O Estado de São Paulo*, June 23, July 2, 3, 4, 5, and 8, 1917.

57. *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 9, 1917; *Diário Popular*, July 9–11, 1917.

on July 9 the police in Brás shot and killed a young shoemaker, Antônio Ineguez Martinez. Strike leaders and those anarchists who had taken an interest in the growing popular movement called for a public protest march from the Martinez house in Brás through the downtown to the Araça municipal cemetery. About 2,000 people, mostly women, gathered outside the Martinez home at 7:00 A.M. on July 11. They marched through the city, and at the cemetery several women and men gave eulogies that were speeches against the violence ordered by the industrialists. Another rally in the Largo da Sé followed in the afternoon. Soon after this, workers sacked food warehouses and markets. Strikers seized more streetcars and sought to keep troops out of their neighborhoods.<sup>58</sup>

The funeral march and later rally played key roles in transforming the strike. The women deliberately held a public funeral—a ceremony honored by society and thus not likely to engender police repression—and marched through industrial neighborhoods and the central business district in order to spread the word of their strike to those still working, as well as to other Paulistanos not involved with the factories. In this way, the women used the funeral to strengthen their solidarity, increase the total number of strikers, and peacefully advertise their grievances.<sup>59</sup>

The course of the movement changed in the days after the funeral. An increasing number of walkouts in textile factories and metalworking and other shops generalized the strike.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the funeral and rally, Crespi workers spread their movement by calling on other workers to boycott products from the closed mills. Some strikers went to factory gates at the lunch hour and tried to persuade their *companheiros* to strike. This tactic succeeded at the Matarazzo and other large textile plants that had not yet been struck. Workers at the Fiat Lux match factory as well as at

58. This account was culled from *O Estado de São Paulo* and *Diário Popular* for July 9–13, 1917, Leuenroth's account in *O Estado de São Paulo*, March 27, 1966, and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 49–55. The sacking of food warehouses and the protests against the police presence in working-class *bairros* reveal part of the strikers' frustrations with their loss of control of their neighborhoods and the collapse of the moral economy.

59. Perrot argues that such public demonstrations play a fundamental role in building working-class solidarity and therefore consciousness in the early phases of strikes (*Ouvriers en grève*, II, 546–587).

60. This series of events demonstrates why this and other strike movements like it should not be labeled “general strikes.” They are “generalized strikes,” for the actions of one group of workers airing their grievances encourage other groups to do the same. The movement grows (through public demonstrations, etc.) until there is an overall paralysis of industry. Such a process is much different from the anarchists' concept of a coordinated “general strike” that begins with a complete or near complete work stoppage throughout industry and seeks definite political goals in addition to solutions to workers' grievances. Fausto also points out this distinction (*Trabalho e conflito*, 202), but because this strike movement has been referred to as a “general strike” since 1917, I use that term—rather than “generalized strike”—throughout this essay.

a large screw factory and at small metallurgy shops nearby also followed the strikers' lead. At this point, some 10,000 Paulistano workers were on strike. Without a union structure available to expand the walkout, workers were forced to spread the strike through confrontations outside the factories and through meetings in the markets and in their neighborhoods.<sup>61</sup> By July 12, the press reported that at least 20,000 workers were on strike and that the movement seemed to be growing steadily. Soon the walkout spread to the city's industrial suburbs and into the industrial centers of the interior, such as Campinas and Riberão Preto. By July 18, workers in Rio de Janeiro had followed the lead of São Paulo's working class.<sup>62</sup>

Then, for the first time during the strike, the city's industrialists, under the direction of Elói Chaves, the state secretary of justice and public security, met as a group to respond to the worker uprising. Members of the São Paulo Center for Commerce and Industry had met several times in June and early July, but they did not discuss collective action to end the strike, even though several firms had settled with their workers. The meeting called by Chaves not only started the process of ending the walkout, it also pointed out to the industrialists that their best hope for success against the workers lay in collective action.<sup>63</sup> This move changed the course of the strike and would have a great impact on industrial relations in São Paulo well into the 1920s and beyond.

The final event that affected the strike was the entrance of the all-male anarchist leadership. As has been detailed, the anarchists had had little contact with textile and other industrial workers during the war years, and they played no role in initiating this strike movement. São Paulo city authorities blamed the anarchist Workers' League of Mooca for most of the strikers' activities and therefore closed it, but the evidence indicates that the walkout began without the assistance of the Workers' League.<sup>64</sup> At a

61. *Diário Popular*, July 9–11, 1917; *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 10 and 11, 1917. Women workers have initiated and led large-scale strikes in various countries. See, for example, Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7:3(1982), 545–566; Ardis Cameron, "Bread and Roses Revisited: Women's Culture and Working-Class Activism in the Lawrence Strike of 1912," in *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of Women's Labor History*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston, 1985), 42–61; and Dana Frank, "Housewives, Socialists, and the Politics of Food: The 1917 New York Cost-of-Living Protests," *Feminist Studies*, 11:2(Summer 1985), 255–285.

62. *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 12 and 13, 1917; *Diário Popular*, July 13, 1917. On the spread of the strike to Rio, see Bandeira et al., *Ano vermelho*, 64–71, and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 56–60. Workers in Porto Alegre initiated a similar movement in August; see Miguel Bodea, *A greve de 1917; as origens do trabalhismo gaúcho* (Porto Alegre, 1978).

63. *O Estado de São Paulo*, June 21 and 28, 1917, reports meetings of the industrialists, but makes no reference to the growing strike movement. On the meeting arranged by Chaves, see Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 49–50.

64. Even though Leuenroth and Dias admit in their memoirs that they played no role

meeting at the Salão Germinal on July 9, anarchists and activists in the Printers' Union, such as Edgard Leuenroth, Francisco Cianci, Antônio Candeias Duarte, Gigi Damiani, Rodolfo Felipe, and Florentino de Carvalho, as well as the socialist Teodoro Monicelli, founded the Proletarian Defense Committee to bargain for the various groups of strikers. The committee's first move, however, was to denounce the closing of the Workers' League and the anarchists' Modern School; it did not begin negotiations on the workers' behalf for several more days.<sup>65</sup>

The entry of these activists added cohesiveness to the unorganized general strike, but the creation of the committee by men with no ties to the striking textile workers changed the course of the popular movement. The committee's demands ignored most of the goals of the striking women. The anarchists called for the right to organize unions without government interference, amnesty for all strikers, freedom for all jailed strikers, the abolition of work for minors less than fourteen years old, the abolition of night work for minors less than eighteen years old and women, an eight-hour workday, pay increases of 25 to 35 percent depending upon the base wage, prompt pay, and an increase of 50 percent in overtime pay. In an aside, the anarchists said the city should encourage lower rents and inspect the markets in order to make sure wage gains would not be lost to new price increases.<sup>66</sup> These demands, although in the general interest of the Paulistano working class, demonstrate a significant schism between the aspirations of the strikers and those of the anarchists who assumed leadership of the movement. The demands ignored women's calls for improved working conditions and protection from sexual harassment by foremen. Further, the committee's proposed prohibition on night work for women potentially limited the ability of São Paulo's women workers to earn a living. Because of their duties as mothers, many women textile workers in São Paulo could only be at the factories during the late shifts.

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in initiating the strike, the anarchist press in 1917 implied that activists had helped organize the walkout. The differences between the demands presented by the Crespi workers' commissions and those presented by the anarchists (along with Leuenroth's and Dias's admissions) seem to contradict the activists' assertions (*A Plebe*, June 9, 16, and 23, 1917). The existence of the Workers' Leagues has further confused the issue. Anarchist labor activists opened these neighborhood organizations to foster local worker organizing. While there is no evidence of the Leagues' playing a role in the planning of the original Crespi strike, the Mooca branch's headquarters was available for later organizing.

65. *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 10 and 12, 1917.

66. The original demands of the committee appear in *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 10 and 12, 1917, and *Diário Popular*, July 12, 1917. The creation of the anarchist group and how it took control of the strike and discussions of the Liga Operária de Mooca are detailed in Leuenroth's testimony in *O Estado de São Paulo*, March 2, 1966, and Dias's *História*, 229–232. See also Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 194–204; Maram, "Anarchists," 97–98; and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 48–56.

Moreover, the calls for the right to organize addressed the committee's desire to use this strike to help create the union structure anarchists had previously been unable to build.<sup>67</sup>

Soon after its creation, the committee began negotiations with industrialists, represented by the Center for Commerce and Industry, through a group of journalists who had volunteered to serve as intermediaries. Many middle-class groups and some people in the State Department of Labor supported the strikers' demands, for they recognized how the harsh conditions that had intensified during the war most adversely affected the city's working class. *O Estado de São Paulo* editorialized against the increasing misery workers faced. In the midst of the strike, its editors wrote, "The truth is that at present the situation of workers in São Paulo is in general the worst."<sup>68</sup>

The increasing police violence against strikers, as well as the conditions under which the city's working class lived and worked, outraged many in São Paulo. Mounted police roamed the industrial districts and broke up gatherings of workers. The number of casualties grew in the second and third weeks of July, and on July 13 a twelve-year-old girl was shot and killed in Barra Funda. Fearing a backlash, the state military authorities set up machine-gun nests and blockades at the entrances to the areas where the industrialists and coffee barons lived. By July 14, the city looked like a war zone, with some 40,000 strikers and an ever-increasing number of military personnel roaming the industrial zones. A tense calm hung over the city as state and city military troops and police occupied the working-class *bairros* and operated the streetcars. Special details guarded all food shipments through these areas. At the same time, the committee's journalist allies met with the industrialists, and the anarchist leadership held a well-attended meeting at the headquarters of the Workers' League.<sup>69</sup>

67. There is even some controversy as to whether or not the male anarchist leadership wrote manifestos that it published as women's documents. Several appeared in *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 11, 1917, and Leuenroth's new anarchist newspaper, *A Plebe*, July 21, 1917. Dulles provides no evidence for his claim that these women's appeals were actually written by Everardo Dias (*Anarchists and Communists*, 47–48), but the appeals do seem to incorporate more anarchist rhetoric (e.g., calls to "the great popular mass") than the women's stated concerns. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Argentine women workers organized in the Unión Cremlial Feminina to end night work for children but defended their own night work as necessary due to their double duties as mothers and workers. Male unionists, without the women's consent, agitated to end all night work (Marysa Navarro, "Hidden, Silent, and Anonymous: Women Workers in the Argentine Trade Union Movement," in *The World of Women's Trade Unionism; Comparative Historical Essays*, ed. Norbert C. Soldon [Westport, 1985], 171–172).

68. *O Combate* (São Paulo), July 24, 1917, and *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 9 and 12, 1917. These editions also detail how the State Department of Labor's policies resembled the goals of the striking workers. On the middle class's critique of *urbanismo* and its attempts to aid workers, see Wolfe, "Rise of Working Class," 42–47.

69. *Diário Popular*, July 12–14, 1917; *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 12–15, 1917.

The few industrial establishments still operating were soon struck by their workers. Some textile mills quickly offered wage increases of 20 percent, but most workers stayed away from the shops in solidarity with those who were still on strike. The city's leading industrialists (e.g., Rodolfo Crespi, Ermelino Matarazzo, and Jorge Street) agreed to the terms presented by the journalists. The strength of the workers' movement as well as the lack of cohesiveness among industrialists forced these men to settle. Several large textile mills and many of the small metallurgy shops had granted wage increases during these negotiations. Divided, the entrepreneurs had to meet the workers' demands. The final agreement reached between the journalists and the industrialists called for a 20 percent increase in wages, amnesty for all strikers, complete freedom for unions to organize workers, prompt payment of wages, and a general effort to improve the living and working conditions in the city. The committee accepted these terms and publicly stated it would pressure the government to regulate the work of minors and the quality of food in the markets. The strikers accepted this agreement.<sup>70</sup> By July 16, peace had returned to the industrial districts, and the city's smokestacks were soon billowing as workers went back to the factories. By July 18, almost all the strikers were back at work, and the city was moving to increase the number of markets in working-class neighborhoods.<sup>71</sup>

The anarchists' acceptance of the terms presented by the industrialists through the journalists effectively ended the general strike. It took several more days to gain freedom for those strikers who had been jailed, and the anarchists continued to pressure the city authorities to reduce food prices. The state soon began transporting food from the interior in order to lower prices, and some industrialists sold inexpensive foodstuffs in makeshift stores they opened in factories.<sup>72</sup>

The workers' uprising had taken elite groups by surprise and worried them deeply. Even the textile industrialist Jorge Street admitted that the great deterioration of living conditions for the workers made their movement a just one. He wrote at the end of the strike:

I judged the workers' movement as just in order to negotiate certain concessions . . . that the current living conditions have made necessary and urgent. I also said that I saw the strike as a legitimate right of

70. Because there was no formal union structure, the majority of strikers did not vote to accept or reject these terms as a group. Most strikers probably accepted the settlement in the same way they had decided to strike: through local meetings of factory commissions, and through informal gatherings outside their factories and in their neighborhoods.

71. *Diário Popular*, July 16–19, 1917; *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 16–19, 1917; *BDET*, 24 (1917), 449–450.

72. *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 18, 20, 23, and 25, 1917; *Diário Popular*, July 18–19, 1917.

the worker, and an effective means to get justice, because the previous requests made had been denied. But I also said, and very clearly, that the peaceful and orderly strike should not get involved with subversive movements.<sup>73</sup>

Street was not alone in recognizing the justice in the strikers' demands. The State Department of Labor, which dealt at this time primarily with issues in the rural sector, reported during the war years on the horrible conditions the city's workers faced, and middle-class groups had recognized the harsh impact of rapid industrial growth. The 1917 general strike, then, was a form of class struggle that did not conform to the anarchists' vision of Brazil. The elite was divided, and the state did not fully support the industrialists' position. Moreover, middle-class reformers had a clearer idea of the rank and file's demands than had the anarchist leadership.

### Women Workers and the Anarchist Movement

São Paulo's women workers initiated the strikes of 1917 because, as a majority of textile workers, women were the first to feel the impact of the intensified exploitation that came with expanded production during World War I. Women's work buying and preparing food for their families also forced them to confront directly the many problems created by wartime speculation and changes in the city's marketing system. The views or consciousness that came out of their vanguard position moved them to the forefront of the labor movement.<sup>74</sup>

After the strike, anarchists and other left activists responded to the issues women in the rank and file had raised and shifted their focus away from such macro-level political concerns as the war in Europe and national politics. The anarchists maintained their Modern Schools and other cultural endeavors, but through their newspaper *A Plebe* they began to address seriously conditions in the factories and working-class neighborhoods. In mid-August, *A Plebe* reported on the sexual harassment of

73. *O Estado de São Paulo*, July 20, 1917. For more on Street's view of the social question in the 1910s and 1920s, see Palmira Petratti Teixeira, *A fábrica do sonho; trajetória do industrial Jorge Street* (Rio de Janeiro, 1990).

74. That is, women workers did not have a unique female consciousness centered on the maintenance of life that caused them to strike. Rather, their position within the labor market conditioned the development of their consciousness. Although São Paulo's women workers protested against high food prices and other issues related to their roles in their households, they also presented a coherent critique of work regimes. The women in this case seem to have had a stronger focus on problems arising at the point of production than did the anarchists, who maintained their focus on larger political and cultural issues. For an analysis of "female consciousness" that takes a somewhat different view, see Kaplan, "Female Consciousness," 545–547.

women workers at Nami Jafet's Labor mill. The editors of the left newspaper *O Combate* attacked the continued use of child labor in the mills and the failure of owners and state inspectors to improve work conditions. Anarchist and other left newspapers protested the poor quality and high prices of foodstuffs sold to the city's workers: one issue of *A Plebe* reported that flour mills were adding clay to their product. These activists also proposed state intervention on behalf of workers. *O Combate* called on the state government to regulate markets in working-class neighborhoods and sought state inspection of conditions in the city's factories. Anarchists, through *A Plebe*, continued to rely primarily on direct action, but they also chided the state for its failure to protect São Paulo's working people.<sup>75</sup> The anarchist and labor press had mentioned such issues in the past, but it is important to note that in the wake of the strike women's concerns became a central component of anarchist discourse.

Perhaps the most significant lesson left activists learned (or relearned) from the city's working women was the importance of labor organizations. Although they had participated in unions, some Brazilian anarchists remained skeptical of any institution that would divide workers by trade or region. In late 1916, the Italian-language anarchist newspaper in São Paulo, *Guerra Sociale*, asserted:

As things are at present, trade unions represent an element of disunity. All those people who shout "Workers unite!" render the greatest possible service to the state and the bourgeoisie. They fractionalize the proletariat into categories, divide humanity into classes, and reduce the social question to a problem of hours and pennies.<sup>76</sup>

Anarchists *as a group* embraced unionization campaigns for industrial laborers only after women workers' independent factory commissions had demonstrated the latent power of São Paulo's working class. Edgard Leuenroth and other supporters of the opening of Workers' Leagues used women's independent organizing to justify their program to the doubt-

75. On the Labor mill, *A Plebe*, Aug. 18, 1917. See also *O Parafuso* (São Paulo), Oct. 22 and 27, 1917. On child labor, *O Combate*, July 23, 24, and 30, Aug. 17, and Sept. 4, 1917. *O Combate* had reported on food shortages and high prices in Rio but ignored the situation in São Paulo before the general strike. See *O Combate*, May 1, 8, and 9, 1917, and Maram, "Anarchists," 166–170. On the flour mills, *A Plebe*, Aug. 18, 1917. See also *A Plebe*, Sept. 1, 1917; and *O Combate*, Aug. 2, 3, 6, and 13, 1917. On government regulation of markets, *O Combate*, July 26 and Aug. 3 and 6, 1917. On factory inspections, *O Combate*, July 20, 23, 24, and 30, Aug. 17 and Sept. 4, 1917. On anarchists chiding the state, *A Plebe*, Aug. 18 and Sept. 1, 1917. See also Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 113–115, on early anarchist views of state inspectors in the factories.

76. Quoted in Gordon, "Anarchism in Brazil," 165. Although this may have been an extreme position, many anarchists had been ambivalent about the role of unions. See Gordon, 164–176, and Magnani, *Movimento anarquista*, 81–85.



ers within the movement. In late July 1917, *A Plebe* called on the city's workers to organize into unions. "In the shortest possible time, the working class, here as well as in the interior [of the state], has to be organized in trade unions or workers' leagues, and then tied together in a powerful general federation."<sup>77</sup> It is clear, therefore, that popular mobilization preceded a large-scale unionization campaign, and São Paulo's women workers played the leading role in the creation of the city's labor movement.<sup>78</sup>

These changes in strategy helped both the anarchist leaders and the city's workers. In September 1917, for example, workers and anarchist organizers at the Labor mill pressed the bosses to shorten work hours for weavers. When the mill fired the organizers, the workers struck. They stayed out until the owner, Nami Jafet, changed work hours and rehired the organizers. In late October, three hundred women weavers in Matarazzo's Belenzinho mill struck to force an end to foremen's sexual harassment of workers.<sup>79</sup> Men and women workers in both of these strikes organized on their own and then turned to the recently founded neighborhood Workers' Leagues and the reorganized FOSP for support. At this time, anarchist leaders such as Leuenroth hoped to use the FOSP and Workers' Leagues in the aftermath of women's independent organizing to help metal workers and others found their own unions.<sup>80</sup>

These changes in the outlook and goals of the anarchist movement in São Paulo resulted from that movement making one of its weaknesses—an aversion to centralized authority and decision making—into a strength. Anarchists' tolerance of divergent points of view made it possible for the male leadership to accept women's organizing and protest activities.<sup>81</sup> For the rest, the success of the city's women workers in May, June, and July 1917 both revealed the latent power of São Paulo's expanding industrial working class and demonstrated the efficacy of organizing locally (within neighborhoods and factories) around issues central to workers' lives, such

77. *A Plebe*, July 28, 1917. See also *A Plebe*, Aug. 4, 11, and 18, 1917.

78. See notes 2 and 4 for several of the works that hold the traditional perspective.

79. On Jafet, *A Plebe*, Sept. 8, 1917. On Matarazzo's mill, *O Parafuso*, Oct. 27, 1917.

80. *A Plebe*, July 21 and 28, Aug. 4 and 11, 1917. It should be emphasized that the reopening of the FOSP followed the strikes initiated by independent factory commissions. Several authors have viewed the 1917 general strike as resulting from anarchist organizing, but the evidence seems to suggest that Crespi workers initiated the strike on their own. For works that posit a larger anarchist role, see Cristina Hebling Campos, "O sonho libertário; movimento operário nos anos 1917 a 1920" (Tese de Mestrado, Universidade Estadual de São Paulo-Campinas, 1983), 31–34, and French, "Industrial Workers," 42.

81. Argentine anarchists also had a complex relationship with feminist activists. See Maxime Molyneux, "No God, No Boss, No Husband: Anarchist Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Argentina," *Latin American Perspectives*, 13:1 (Winter 1986), 119–145.

as food quality and prices and work conditions. In this way, women workers dramatically altered the trajectory of São Paulo's labor movement.

### The Evolving Industrial Relations System

The general strike not only resulted from the distinctive formation of São Paulo's industrial working class, it also shaped the continuing development of that class. By meeting outside their factories' gates to discuss shared problems and carrying word of their strike throughout the city, São Paulo's workers gained a stronger sense of themselves as members of a potentially powerful social class.<sup>82</sup> At the same time, they built some tenuous ties between their factory commissions and the city's anarchist movement.

The success of the general strike also affected the consciousness of São Paulo's nascent industrial bourgeoisie. The threat posed by the city's laborers forced factory owners to recognize their common interests as members of a class (or class fraction) and to form their own organization in order to confront the workers in a unified way. Accordingly, the state's largest mill owners founded the Center for Spinning and Weaving of São Paulo (CIFTSP) in 1919 to provide such a unified front and to lobby the state for assistance in labor confrontations.<sup>83</sup> Industrialists employed a two-track policy of cooptation and repression as workers in São Paulo organized and struck to force their bosses to meet the commitments of the 1917 general strike accord.

### The Strikes of 1919 and 1920

Events around the May Day rally in 1919 illustrate well how labor relations operated following the 1917 general strike. Soon after workers and labor activists held the rally, weavers in Matarazzo's Brás Mariangela mill struck for an eight-hour day, equal pay for women and men, a 50 percent wage increase, double pay for overtime, and an end to night work for minors.

82. It is important to keep in mind the distinction between groups labeled "workers," "the masses," "o povo," etc., by outsiders, and individuals who view themselves as part of a group (i.e., those who see themselves as part of a "class for itself").

83. During the May 1907 general strike, the city's textile industrialists planned to form such an organization, but they did not do so until 1919. See Pinheiro and Hall, eds., *A classe operária*, vol. 2, *Condições de vida e de trabalho, relações com empresários e o estado* (São Paulo, 1981), 156–162; Dean, *Industrialization*, 121–122; Fausto, *Trabalho e conflito*, 188–189; Maram, *Anarquistas, imigrantes e o movimento operário brasileiro, 1890–1920* (Rio de Janeiro, 1979), 142–143. Rio's industrialists relied on the national association (Centro Industrial do Brasil) located in the capital to negotiate with strikers in 1917 (Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 59–60).

Textile workers throughout the city and its suburbs soon struck. Metalworkers and others followed their lead, and some 10,000 strikers closed down São Paulo by the end of the first week of May. Within days, 50,000 textile, metallurgical, and other workers were out on strike.<sup>84</sup> The city's industrialists responded with a mixture of violence and conciliation. On May 5, mounted police charged groups of strikers congregated on the Avenida Celso Garcia and on the Rua Belo Horizonte in Brás, attacked other workers in the Mooca and Ipiranga neighborhoods, and killed a worker in São Bernardo. Congressman Nicanor de Nascimento commented, "When I arrived in São Paulo, the general feeling among the workers was of terror; they feared to go to meetings or rallies because they said that the police would [violently] break them up." At the same time, Jorge Street and other industrialists accepted the idea of an eight-hour day, and Governor Altino Arantes called on the congress in Rio to adopt national labor legislation along the lines suggested by the Paris peace treaty in order to protect workers. These strikes were settled throughout May. Workers won the eight-hour day and wage increases of between 20 and 30 percent.<sup>85</sup>

Beyond these gains for workers, the May strikes revealed São Paulo's evolving system of industrial relations. In the wake of the 1917 general strike, both workers and employers created institutions to push for their interests. Workers ran the local strike negotiations through their factory commissions. These local organizations maintained ties to the neighborhood Workers' Leagues and the newly organized Textile Workers' Union and Metalworkers' Union. The unions often met in the headquarters of the FOSP and coordinated their activities through the General Workers' Council. The industrialists met several times in the headquarters of the Commercial Association of São Paulo and coordinated their negotiations with the various factory commissions through their new Center.<sup>86</sup>

84. *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 3 and 5, 1919; *A Plebe*, May 10, 1919. Once again, the original demands of the women workers did not include a call for the end of their night work. Men strikers sought this, but women in their factory commissions did not want it (*O Estado de São Paulo*, May 3, 4, and 6, 1919). São Paulo's workers pushed for these demands as they faced steady increases in prices and scarcity of food, clothing, and housing. See Associação Comercial de São Paulo, Centro de Comércio e Indústria, *Relatório da Diretoria de 1918*, 92-94; *BDET*, 28/29 (3d and 4th trimesters 1918), 481-486; *Monthly Labor Review*, 7:5 (Nov. 1918), 106-107.

85. On police matters, *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 6 and 8, 1919. The congressman is quoted in Maram, "Anarchists, Immigrants, and the Brazilian Labor Movement," 184; the original is from *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 23, 1919. On industrialists' acceptance, *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 8, 1919, and report from British Embassy, Rio, May 6, 1919, Foreign Office (FO) 371/3653, Public Record Office (PRO). On the state's backing for the labor legislation suggested by the Paris peace conference, see "Inquerito às condições do trabalho em São Paulo," *BDET*, 31/32 (2d and 3d trimesters, 1919), 185-202. On the strike settlement, see *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 9, 13, 15-18, 22, and 25, 1919.

86. On union meetings, *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 5, 16, and 18, 1919. See also

The city's anarchists, however, did not completely understand the nature of the evolving working-class structure. In October 1919, leaders of the FOSP attempted to help striking trolley workers by declaring a city-wide general strike. Textile and metallurgical workers closed a few establishments for a day or two, but the strike call had little impact.<sup>87</sup> The anarchists had once again miscalculated the views of São Paulo's rank and file. They did not consider that workers who had just won an eight-hour day would be uneasy waging sympathy strikes. These leaders also failed to recognize how a downturn in the economy was already threatening many of the workers' jobs in São Paulo.<sup>88</sup> The anarchists' failure in October 1919 was not the death knell of the labor movement. It simply demonstrated that few among the city's rank and file embraced the anarchist ideal of the general strike as a political act.

The failed general strike of October 1919 was not, as scholars have often assumed, the beginning of the end of labor activism in São Paulo, for the city's workers continued their grassroots organizing.<sup>89</sup> In addition to the neighborhood Workers' Leagues, the city's textile workers continued to expand the shop-floor activities of their factory commissions in the early 1920s. This local level of organizing was extremely important for textile workers, who remained sharply divided by sex. Although women made up 58 percent of the textile work force in the state as a whole, they earned only 60 percent of men's wages in the same industry.<sup>90</sup> In the aftermath of the 1917 and 1919 strikes, industrialists did little to correct this imbalance. Further, foremen continued to threaten and harass women workers. Ambrosina Pioli, who worked in the Companhia de Indústrias Têxtis, was repeatedly threatened with firing to make room for the foreman's lover. When she complained, she was severely beaten by her foreman, Paschoal Botti.<sup>91</sup> In the face of such discrimination, women textile workers chose to

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Campos, "O sonho libertário," 56–60. On industrialists' meetings, Associação Comercial de São Paulo, Centro do Comércio e Indústria, *Relatório da Diretoria de 1919*, 93; see also Marisa Saenz Leme, *A ideologia dos industriais brasileiros, 1919–1945* (Petrópolis, 1978), 99–107.

87. *O Estado de São Paulo*, Oct. 23–28 and Nov. 1, 1919.

88. The city's establishment press and foreign observers noted the differences in the grassroots role in planning the general strikes of 1917 and October 1919. See *O Estado de São Paulo*, Dec. 7, 1919, and British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1919, June 1920, FO 371/4435, PRO. See also Maram, "Anarchists," 190–192, and "Labor and the Left," 267; and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 88–90, 113–118.

89. For a partial list of those studies that have seen 1919 as the beginning of the end, see note 6 above.

90. *BDET*, 31/32 (1919), 11th and 12th inserts. Interview, Assumpta Bianchi (a weaver), São Paulo, Aug. 10, 1987. The 58 percent figure represents an increase in the number of men working in the mills. The great expansion of the textile sector during the war led to the increased hiring of men, although women remained the majority of mill workers.

91. *O Estado de São Paulo*, May 18, 1919.

maintain separate factory commissions that would then affiliate with the Workers' Leagues.

These divisions did not affect organizing in the new metallurgy sector, for men made up over 95 percent of the state's metalworkers. Spread out in small shops (often employing fewer than twenty), São Paulo's metalworkers relied on contacts outside the shop to organize their Metalworkers' Union in 1919.<sup>92</sup> Ernesto Mendes Dantas, José Albertino, and others recall the important role anarchists played helping metalworkers organize their union but note it was the dangerous conditions in this new, expanding industry more than a revolutionary ideology that drove workers to join. In fact, the rank and file struggled to force shop-floor issues to the fore because the anarchists often concentrated on political questions related to the working class as a whole.<sup>93</sup>

The shop-floor level of orientation in the Metalworkers' Union masked its steadily growing cohesiveness and power in the early 1920s. Metalworkers in the Lidgerwood do Brasil shop, for example, struck against the long hours they had to work without the customary "time and a half" overtime pay. Metalworkers at the Companhia Martin e Barros, Viuva Craig shop, Associação Paulista das Indústrias Mecânicas e Metais, and other firms initiated strikes a few days later to force bosses to accept rules on hours and pay. And, after shops throughout the city accepted work rules, metalworkers as a united group struck to enforce them. These important struggles were more or less ignored by the anarchist leadership in the city, for at this time the FOSP attempted—unsuccessfully—to initiate a general strike to strengthen textile, railroad, and other workers' strikes in March and April 1920.<sup>94</sup>

Industrialists and the state and federal governments again responded with repression. A British diplomat noted in 1920 that "strike meetings are surrounded by troops, and the leaders and orators arrested. If they happen to be foreigners, they are at once deported—if they are Brazilians they are imprisoned for a time, or else they are sent up to the north and dis-

92. BDET, 31/32 (1919), 12th insert; Brasil, Ministério de Agricultura, Indústria, e Comércio, Diretoria Geral de Estatística, *Recenseamento do Brasil realizado em 1 de Setembro 1920* (Rio de Janeiro, 1927), 1, 222–223, 294–295; and Luís A. Corrêa do Lago et al., *A indústria brasileira de bens de capital; origens, situação recente, perspectivas* (Rio de Janeiro, 1979), 37–47.

93. Centro de Memória Sindical, "O trabalhador e a memória paulistana." Transcripts of interviews, 51–52, 118–120.

94. The metalworkers' walkouts are detailed in *O Metalúrgico* (São Paulo), Apr. 14, 1920. The Textile Workers' Union struck to force mill owners to allow them to collect dues at factory gates. See U.S. Embassy, Rio despatch, Mar. 26, 1920, Record Group (RG) 59, 832.5045, National Archives (NA); Maram, "Anarchists," 195; and Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 131–133.

appear altogether.”<sup>95</sup> The city’s mill owners also recognized the power of the factory commissions. In addition to attacking union headquarters and meetings, they initiated a system of identifying and blacklisting workers who played active roles in the commissions. After the strike in the Scarpa mill in São Bernardo, the Textile Industrialists’ Center circulated a Special Register of Workers and circulars giving the names and descriptions of rank-and-file workers who had participated. These Paulistas also contacted the national industrialists’ association in Rio offering to coordinate the dissemination of such blacklists.<sup>96</sup>

### The Effectiveness of Factory Commissions

Even in the face of repression, workers’ factory commissions negotiated throughout 1921 for improved work conditions and higher pay. In early January 1921, workers at Companhia de Anagem Paulista struck for payment of their Christmas bonuses. Commissions at Matarazzo’s Mariangela mill also demanded the bonus.<sup>97</sup> The factory commissions continued to attract workers with calls for improved work conditions. A handbill circulated in one mill asked: “Do you want to improve your conditions? Do you want to end the abuses in the factories? Do you want to be [treated like] human beings?” It then called on workers to participate in factory organizing and also, if they could, to attend meetings of the Textile Workers’ Union.<sup>98</sup> This call to attend union meetings demonstrates that factory commission leaders were not necessarily hostile to the anarchist organization. In the end, however, they saw the commissions as their primary line of defense for dealing with employers.<sup>99</sup> In addition to handling negotiations with bosses, the commissions coordinated acts of sabotage, such as work slowdowns and the theft of materials and equipment.<sup>100</sup>

95. British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1920, Feb. 1921, FO 371/3539, PRO. See also British Embassy, report on textiles, Jan. 15, 1919, FO 371/3653; and British Embassy, despatch, May 6, 1919, FO 371/3653, PRO.

96. Centro dos Industriais de Fiação e Tecelagem de São Paulo (CIFTSP), letter to Centro Industrial do Brasil, Aug. 4, 1920, Biblioteca Roberto Simonsen (BRS). For the actual blacklists, see CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 59, Aug. 2, no. 65, Sept. 13, no. 67, Oct. 13, no. 70, and Dec. 9, 1920.

97. CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 73, Dec. 14, 1920; no. 76, Jan. 5, 1921. See also CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 80, Feb. 22, and no. 85, Mar. 16, 1921. It was not possible to determine if these workers eventually received the bonuses.

98. Mill owners reproduced the handbill in CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 78, Jan. 28, 1921.

99. Interview, Assumpta Bianchi, Aug. 10, 1987; interview, Hermento Mendes Dantas (metalworker and union activist in the 1940s and 1950s), Sept. 14, 1987.

100. CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 7, Apr. 28, and no. 10, May 4, 1921. Textile workers used sabotage less than did workers in other industries, for they received low hourly wages and a piece rate. The destruction of equipment would bring them lower wages. Textile workers tended to rely more on theft as a form of direct action in the mills.

Factory commissions were much more effective in organizing women workers than was the Textile Workers' Union. After all, the union was dominated by men, conducted its meetings while many women were on the night shift, and often faced police repression. In May 1921, twenty-two women (eighteen Italians, one Portuguese, and three Brazilians) were expelled—along with one Italian man—from the Luzitania mill for organizing commissions to press for higher wages. The women's commissions did not back down in the face of threats and were only broken up when the mill owners called in the police. A few weeks later, women textile workers in the Companhia Fabril Paulistana struck against fines that were being subtracted from their wages. Twelve women (ten Italians and two Brazilians) led this protest and were arrested and blacklisted for doing so. The city's mill owners maintained extensive blacklists to guarantee they would have “only the real workers” in their factories. What they failed to understand was that the women running factory commissions were “the real workers.”<sup>101</sup>

Women textile workers also used less direct forms of resistance to fight low wages and poor work conditions. The easiest and most common strategy was changing jobs. Women textile workers, through their factory commissions and informal neighborhood social networks, collected information on wages available in the city's factories. They also discussed which factories had foremen known for harassing women. Women workers frequently returned to the rural sector to avoid these harsh work conditions, earn higher wages during harvest, or help their families who still lived as *colonos*.<sup>102</sup> This mobility became such a problem for mill owners that bosses attempted to standardize wages throughout the city and state.<sup>103</sup>

São Paulo's industrial workers continued to use such survival and resistance strategies throughout 1922. The city's Metalworkers' Union again faced police repression, but *metalúrgicos* managed to negotiate directly with their bosses through their factory commissions. Some of these

101. On the Luzitania, CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 15, May 18, and no. 19, May 21, 1921; CIFTSP letter to Pereira, Ignácio, e Cia., May 19, 1921, BRS. On the Companhia Fabril Paulistana, CIFTSP, *Circular* (no number), June 2, and no. 26, June 8, 1921; CIFTSP letters to Delegado Geral João Baptista de Souza, June 6 and 7, 1921; CIFTSP letters to Companhia Fabril Paulistana, June 6 and 8, 1921. On mill owners, CIFTSP letter to Bruno Belli, July 23, 1921; CIFTSP letter to Indústrias Reunidas Francisco Matarazzo, August 1921; CIFTSP letter to Fábio da Silva Prado, July 23, 1921; CIFTSP letter to Estamparia Ypiranga Jafet, Dec. 29, 1921, BRS. See also CIFTSP, *Boletim de Informações*, Aug. 7–13, 1921; CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 39, July 25, no. 40, July 26, no. 41, July 27, no. 44, Aug. 21, no. 76, Dec. 31, 1921; no. 77, Jan. 10, 1922.

102. Interview, Assumpta Bianchi, Aug. 10, 1987. On the mobility of labor in São Paulo at this time, see U.S. Consulate, report, Sept. 8, 1921, RG 59, 832.504/5, NA.

103. CIFTSP letters to Cotonifício Rodolfo Crespi, Sept. 6, 1921, and May 2, 1922; Fabril Pinotti Gamba letter to CIFTSP, April 19, 1922, BRS; and CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 93, Apr. 12, and no. 118, July 5, 1922.

commissions, composed of one worker from each small shop in a given neighborhood, managed to negotiate work rules and wages.<sup>104</sup> The Textile Workers' Union also suffered from police repression and so held few formal meetings in 1922. Although the formal labor institutions had been silenced by violent interventions, arrests, and deportations of leaders, rank-and-file workers in São Paulo continued to organize in their factories and often, in the case of metalworkers, in their neighborhoods.<sup>105</sup> These rank-and-file groups continued to launch strikes, and in textiles immigrant women remained in the vanguard of the protest movements.<sup>106</sup>

Labor and other left leaders in São Paulo recognized the independent nature of this working-class organizing. In May 1922, the Italian-language newspaper *Fanfulla* ran a long letter calling on São Paulo's textile workers to join (i.e., become dues-paying members of) the Textile Workers' Union. The letter, which was no doubt written by labor activists, admitted that the union had made many mistakes that alienated the rank and file from the leadership. It promised to "make a new union from the lessons learned from past errors, and the new union will be founded using new methods. . . . All the aspects of power will be eliminated from our environment."<sup>107</sup>

São Paulo's industrial workers had fled or failed to join the city's unions because they did not feel those unions adequately represented their interests. And, by relying on their own local forms of organization, they protected themselves from the shifting political alliances and repression that characterized the left in São Paulo at this time. In February 1922, a group of militants broke from the anarchist movement and, with other leftists, formed the Brazilian Communist party (PCB). The shift from anarchism with its loose organization that tolerated grass-roots movements (e.g., factory commissions) to Leninism with party discipline and hierarchies further alienated São Paulo's industrial working class from some activists. Few workers in São Paulo joined the Communist party in the 1920s.<sup>108</sup>

104. *A Plebe*, Mar. 18, 1922; interview, Hermento Mendes Dantas, Sept. 14, 1987.

105. On the absence of union activity, see British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1922, Feb. 1923, FO 371/8431, PRO; British Consulate, São Paulo, monthly consular report, Feb. 1, 1922, FO 371/7189, PRO; U.S. Consulate, São Paulo, report, July 19, 1922, RG 59, 832.504/6, NA; *Fanfulla* (São Paulo), May 5, 1922. See also Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 186–187.

106. CIFTSP, *Relatório*, 1922; CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 161, Dec. 16, 1922; *A Plebe*, May 13, 1922.

107. *Fanfulla* (São Paulo), May 5, 1922.

108. On the paucity of working-class support for the PCB in São Paulo, see U.S. Embassy, Rio, despatch, Aug. 6, 1926, 832.00b/orig., NA; U.S. Consulate, São Paulo, report, Dec. 18, 1926, 832.00b/2, NA; Carone, *Classes sociais e movimento operário* (São Paulo, 1989), 147–148, 166; Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 186–187, 209. Cf. French, "Industrial Workers," 61–63.



The founding of the PCB, along with increasing state repression, strengthened the workers' resolve to maintain their own local organizations. This independence shielded rank-and-file activists from the increasingly effective state repression of formal labor institutions. Moreover, laws authorizing arrest and imprisonment for acts aimed at "destroying the existing social order" and regulations for the closing of unions did not affect factory and neighborhood commissions, for those organizations were concerned primarily with industrial relations issues (wages, hours, conditions on the shop floor, etc.) rather than with overtly political questions (e.g., the destruction of the capitalist system).<sup>109</sup>

### Rationalizing Production

These local, grassroots forms of organizing worried the city's industrialists, who in the early and mid-1920s began the process to "rationalize" production. In the metalworking sector, which was expanding now that the economic climate encouraged reinvestment of local capital in such industries, employers maximized production by changing work rules on the shop floor. For the first time in many shops, workers were forced to stay at their work stations for set periods, and their breaks (including, at the Santa Rosa screw factory, those in the bathroom) were timed. Matarazzo's Metal Graphica Aliberti shop initiated a 12.5 percent increase in hours but gave only a 5 percent raise.<sup>110</sup> Mill owners felt too that they needed an apolitical, submissive labor force if they were to succeed in the modernization of textile production. In late 1923, Octávio Pupo Nogueira of the São Paulo Textile Industrialists' Center proposed a national identification system so that factory owners could find workers who had no history of participation in "political strikes." Interestingly, Pupo Nogueira felt strikes for increased wages were just, but any work stoppage for changes in work conditions was "political" and thus unjust.<sup>111</sup> Industrialists made this distinction because they were altering work regimes as they installed

109. U.S. Embassy, Rio, despatches, Jan. 27 and Mar. 14, 1921, RG 59, 832.108/1 and 832.5043/1, NA. The anarchist movement in Chile had a similar position in the late 1910s and 1920s. Although more organized than the loose collection of factory and neighborhood commissions in São Paulo, Chile's anarchists, while not abandoning revolutionary goals, concentrated on bread-and-butter issues while the Communist party paid more attention to political questions (Peter DeShazo, *Urban Workers and Labor Unions in Chile, 1902-1927* [Madison, 1983], 146-242).

110. *A Plebe*, Aug. 4 and Apr. 21, 1923.

111. *Gazeta de Notícias* (Rio de Janeiro), Oct. 17, 1923. For more on the rationalization of production, see Wolfe, "Rise of Working Class," 78-92, and Flávio Rabelo Versiani, "Technical Change, Equipment Replacement, and Labor Absorption: The Case of the Brazilian Textile Industry" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1971).

new equipment. As a part of the process, employers unilaterally rescinded the eight-hour day. To facilitate these changes, in 1923 mill owners in São Paulo had the police carry out preemptive arrests to clear their factories of leaders of commissions.<sup>112</sup>

Throughout 1923, workers' commissions organized strikes to regain the eight-hour day and end onerous new work rules. In February and March, leaders of various commissions coordinated their activities through the Textile Workers' and Metalworkers' unions, but the strikes remained local by factory.<sup>113</sup> Yet this association with the anarchist unions hurt the strike movement. Workers' demands lost legitimacy in the eyes of industrialists who respected "peaceful" strikes (i.e., those for wages) but repressed "political" strikes (those related to work rules or any movement tied to a revolutionary ideology). Accordingly, employers broke up the walkouts by jailing as many commission leaders as they could identify.<sup>114</sup>

In September 1923, workers responded to this repression by using their commissions to launch strikes that had no *overt* ties to the unions. Women textile workers even phrased their demands to appeal to their bosses. They complained about foremen who lacked the necessary technical abilities to keep the new machines operating efficiently and said that they could not earn a high enough piece rate to meet increasing prices. Workers also threatened to take their "skills" in using the new machines to other factories. These arguments convinced mill owners to grant wage increases of 10 percent. The strikes succeeded because industrialists did not construe them as "political," and because the "skills" of the women workers (most of them weavers) were highly valued by industrialists in the midst of an expansion program.<sup>115</sup>

112. CIFTSP, *Relatório*, 1923; CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 187, Mar. 3, 1923; British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1923, Mar. 14, 1924, FO 371/9516, PRO; *A Plebe*, Jan. 27, Feb. 17, and Mar. 10, 1923.

113. British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1923, Mar. 14, 1924, FO 371/9516, PRO; *A Plebe*, Jan. 27, Feb. 17 and 24, Mar. 10 and 24, 1923.

114. CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 210, May 5, no. 217, May 26, and no. 237, July 27, 1923. The anarchists, while pressing for bread-and-butter issues such as wage increases, had not abandoned their revolutionary goals. See *A Plebe*, May 1 and 12, and June 9, 1923.

115. CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 247, Sept. 17, no. 249, Oct. 2, no. 256, Oct. 26, no. 259, Nov. 17, no. 260, Nov. 9, no. 266, Nov. 30, and no. 269, Dec. 14, 1923; *A Plebe*, Oct. 13 and Dec. 22, 1923; British Consulate, São Paulo, "Events in São Paulo," Nov. 7, 1923, FO 371/8429, PRO. Mill owners who had not purchased new equipment also valued these workers, for they could skillfully operate the old machines that tended to require frequent adjustments and quick repairs. Industrialists' reliance on these semiskilled workers for the operation of both old and new textile equipment demonstrates how notions of skill are socially constructed. At this moment of a perceived labor shortage, the women workers' skills were highly valued, so they could use them to negotiate for higher wages.

## The Strike Movements of 1924 and the *Tenente* Rebellion

As prices for foodstuffs once again increased dramatically, the city's industrial workers renewed their push for higher wages and better work conditions through their factory and neighborhood commissions. In January 1924, women workers from the Crespi, Mariangela, Gamba, Penteado, Tecidos de Juta, and other mills struck against inflation and harsh work regimes; they sought wage hikes, an eight-hour day, and payment of their wages fortnightly instead of monthly. Industrialists recognized the demands as generally just and noted that the strikes were being instigated and run by factory commissions. Factory owners did, however, use the strikes as an excuse to arrest anarchist leaders and move against union headquarters.<sup>116</sup>

The jailing of anarchist leaders did not affect this strike movement, for the walkout had been initiated and was being propagated by workers (especially women) in factory commissions. Throughout February, an increasing number of industrial workers joined the walkout. Although the police continued to attempt to break up the strike, the decentralized nature of the movement protected it. Leaders of the workers' commissions frustrated both the industrialists and São Paulo's anarchist leaders: industrialists could not settle the strike through violence, and the anarchists could not influence its direction.<sup>117</sup> Although the movement did not have the participation of the city's unions, the factory and neighborhood commissions managed to keep it well organized and peaceful, even as the number of strikers reached 30,000 in February and early March and the police stepped up their attacks against them.<sup>118</sup>

A downturn in demand for textiles allowed mill owners to wait out the strike. Because they valued their skilled work force, however, they offered wage increases of 10 percent and some reductions in hours. Textile and other industrialists also felt they needed to rehire the strikers, but they blacklisted leaders of the factory commissions. Once again, the vast majority of the blacklisted workers were immigrant women, mostly from Italy. Activist women workers likewise faced arrest after the strikes, for the

116. British Consulate, São Paulo, report, Jan. 15, 1924, FO 371/9509, PRO; CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 280, Jan. 18, no. 282, Jan. 23, no. 283, Jan. 25, 1924; *O Estado de São Paulo*, Jan. 24 and 31, 1924. On increasing prices, see British Embassy, Rio, annual report for 1924, Apr. 1925, FO 371/10609, PRO.

117. On the industrialists' frustrations, see CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 286-A, Jan. 31, and no. 291, Feb. 11, 1924. For the anarchists' complaints about the disorganized nature of the grassroots movement, see *A Plebe*, Mar. 15, 1924.

118. *O Estado de São Paulo*, Feb. 1 and 17, 1924; *A Plebe*, Feb. 16, 1924.

city's industrialists wanted to cleanse their factories of such rank-and-file leaders during this period of reequipping.<sup>119</sup>

The January to March 1924 strike rekindled anarchists' hopes of building an effective and representative union structure in São Paulo. José Righetti, a weaver who had ties to the anarchist movement as well as to the factory commissions, was one of the leaders in this effort. He and other activists founded the new Textile Workers' Union on April 14, 1924, hoping it would bridge the gap between them and the grassroots workers' movement. They also moved to reopen unions in other industries, and throughout May and June 1924 the anarchist press reported record numbers of new union members. Whether or not these unions appealed to the majority of the rank and file, they did make a conscious effort to address workers' primary concerns (e.g., food prices, rents, working conditions, etc.), along with their usual set of political issues.<sup>120</sup>

Perhaps the contrast with the PCB, with its concentration on political issues, bolstered the image of São Paulo's anarchists in the early 1920s. Further, the anarchists' belief in decentralized authority again allowed them to build loose ties to the factory and neighborhood commissions. This process, however, was abruptly interrupted in early July 1924 when a group of young officers (*tenentes*) seized the city of São Paulo as part of a rebellion against the regime in Rio. Anarchist weavers such as Righetti, João Castellani, and Paulo Menkitz sought promises from the *tenentes* of a minimum wage that would meet the cost of living, price controls, an eight-hour day, the right to free association, and an open press. After taking the city, the military men made some foodstuffs available to workers at reduced prices, but they did little more to gain working-class support.<sup>121</sup>

While the rebels held the city (July 5–28, 1924), São Paulo's workers ignored their political platforms and took direct action. During the second week of July, workers sacked food warehouses in Brás, Moca, and other neighborhoods in riots carefully targeted against the holdings of industri-

119. On the owners' offers, CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 294, Feb. 20, 1924; nos. 295, 296, and 298, n.d.; no. 299, Mar. 3, no. 300, Mar. 6, 1924; British Consulate, São Paulo, report, Mar. 8, 1924, FO 371/9508, PRO; British Chamber of Commerce of São Paulo and Southern Brazil, *Bulletin*, July 7, 1924; *A Plebe*, Mar. 15, 1924. On the blacklisted workers, CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 301, Mar. 8, no. 302, Mar. 12, no. 304, Mar. 19, and no. 307, Mar. 29, 1924. Of the workers on these blacklists, 79 percent were women. Blacklisting related to this strike movement continued into June 1924. On the arrests of activists, *A Plebe*, Mar. 15, 1924; CIFTSP, *Relatório*, 1924, February 1925.

120. *A Plebe*, Mar. 15 and 29, May 1, June 14, 21, and 28, 1924.

121. On the conflicts between the anarchists and Communists, see Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 229–231. On the *tenentes*, *A Plebe*, July 25, 1924; U.S. Consulate, São Paulo, report, Aug. 3, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/409, NA; Morse, *Community to Metropolis*, 241–232.

alists, especially Matarazzo and Gamba. According to the U.S. consul, the attacks were “largely an expression of dislike for large industrialists who were accused of being responsible for the high prices of foodstuffs.”<sup>122</sup> Workers stole and destroyed machinery in some factories and burned down certain flour mills they blamed for the highest prices.<sup>123</sup> These attacks set the rebels against São Paulo’s workers, for the *tenentes* feared the “mobs”; the rebels threatened to shoot anyone involved in any form of looting.<sup>124</sup>

The rebellion brought increased misery to São Paulo’s workers. The conflict cut off supplies of food to the city, sending prices for available goods too high for workers. They also endured artillery and aerial bombardment from federal troops, for the rebels had made Brás and Mooca their strongholds. The bombing destroyed workers’ homes and places of employment, including sections of the massive Crespi mill, and killed several hundred workers. Roughly 1,000 Paulistanos died and 4,000 were wounded in the bombing and shelling, and an estimated 300,000 people fled the city for the interior.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to this physical suffering, São Paulo’s workers faced increased repression after the federal government expelled the rebels from the city. The state government created a special political police, Departamento de Ordem Política Social (DOPS), and worked with industrialists to close all formal labor institutions in the city. The British consul reported that industrialists were using the 1924 revolt as an excuse to completely repress the city’s labor movement. Indeed, the Textile Industrialists’ Center bragged: “We have the honor to report, confidentially, that the police, taking advantage of the unusual times we have just experienced, destroyed everything inside the headquarters of workers’ associations. . . . This solution, in our view, will keep us safe from future strikes.” The government initiated a state of siege, during which it closed *A Plebe* and other labor newspapers. At the same time, political prisoners from São Paulo, includ-

122. U.S. Consulate, São Paulo, report, Aug. 3, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/409, NA; U.S. Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 7, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/405, NA; *A Plebe*, July 25, 1924. The attacks only on certain warehouses demonstrate the internal logic of the riots. Workers’ attacks were a protest against only those industrialists who paid them low wages and charged them high prices for foodstuffs and other goods.

123. British Consulate, São Paulo, “Report on Events,” July 5–10, 1924, FO 371/9511, PRO; British Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 30, 1924, FO 371/9511, PRO.

124. British Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 9, 1924, FO 371/9510, PRO; British Consul, Santos, report, July 15, 1924, FO 371/9510, PRO.

125. U.S. Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 9, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/370, NA; U.S. Consul, Santos, reports, July 13 and 23, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/358 and 832.00/371, NA; U.S. Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 24, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/405, NA; U.S. Consulate, São Paulo, reports July 31 and Aug. 3, 1924, RG 59, 832.00/393 and 832.00/409, NA; U.S. Consul, Santos, report, Aug. 5, 1924, RG 59, 832.00411, NA.

ing many anarchist and other labor activists, were sent to Clevelândia penal colony in the jungle on the French Guiana frontier.<sup>126</sup>

Industrialists relied on such repression against labor and the left in São Paulo in the aftermath of the *tenente* rebellion. When textile workers in the Companhia Fabril Paulistano, Companhia Anglo-Brasileira de Juta, and other mills struck for higher wages in September and October 1924, owners granted modest 10 percent wage increases and made some discounted foodstuffs available to workers, but they also violently repressed the strike commissions. In addition to blacklisting activists, they requested that the police jail strike leaders. With the union structure destroyed, industrialists believed they could continue their policies of cooptation and repression to facilitate the rationalization of production in their factories.<sup>127</sup>

### In Larger Perspective

Repression—no matter how brutal—did not destroy São Paulo’s nascent working-class movement. In the late 1920s workers again used their factory commissions to bargain for improved conditions and higher wages. In the early 1930s they mobilized quickly and effectively to press Getúlio Vargas’s new national government to intercede on their behalf. São Paulo’s working-class movement had thus survived the 1920s because it had strong roots among the rank and file.<sup>128</sup>

The 1917 general strike was not the culmination of years of anarchist organizing. It was the expression of discontent among a new group: the city’s largely female industrial labor force, few of whom even identified themselves as anarchists. Thus, working-class ideologies and politics were not simple restatements of European ideas or rhetoric from populist politicians. They were socially constructed through a complex interplay of workers, activists, employers, and state policy makers. The end result was a distinctly anarcho-syndicalist ideology that combined the rank and file’s concerns over life inside and outside their factories with anarchists’ interest in larger political issues. Relations between the two groups remained tentative throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but the two groups began to understand each other and to work toward common goals. The attempt by

126. On the British consul’s report, British Embassy, Rio, despatch, July 30, 1924, FO 371/9511, PRO; British Embassy, despatch, Aug. 12, 1924, FO 371/9511, PRO. On the center’s boast, CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 346, Aug. 14, 1924. On the state of siege, Dulles, *Anarchists and Communists*, 274–279, 251–266.

127. CIFTSP, *Circular* no. 348, Aug. 21, no. 357, Sept. 29, no. 359, n.d., no. 360, Oct. 7, no. 368, Oct. 28, no. 371, Nov. 1, no. 374, Nov. 6, no. 390, Dec. 12, no. 393, Dec. 19, 1924.

128. For details on the 1925–35 period, see Wolfe, “Rise of Working Class,” chap. 3.

the anarchist weaver José Righetti to open a textile union that combined political and syndicalist interests epitomized the new outlook. In the final analysis, then, the 1917 general strike did not conclude an anarchist era, it ushered in a long epoch of grassroots working-class activism that continues to play an integral part in the unfolding of São Paulo's and Brazil's history.