

African and German perspective adds significantly to our knowledge and thinking, not only of the police in German Southwest Africa, but also of the colonial state in a wider perspective.

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LIPOTKIN, LAZAR. *The Russian Anarchist Movement in North America*. Transl. and Ed. by Malcolm Archibald. Black Cat Press, Edmonton 2019. xii, 292 pp. Ill. \$24,95.

The history of Russian immigrant radicals in North America is a conspicuously unexplored topic, and virtually all researchers who have touched upon it do not themselves read Russian. The appearance of *The Russian Anarchist Movement in North America*, originally written in the mid-1950s by Lazar Lipotkin (real name Eliezer Solomonovich Lazarev), therefore marks a major breakthrough. However, Lipotkin was an activist rather than an academic, so this is neither a scholarly, nor a definitive work. Rather, given its inclusion of extensive extracts from radical manifestos, congresses, and correspondence, as well as Lipotkin's own views, it should be viewed more as a primary source than a work of history. Nevertheless, it is an important historiographical corrective and indispensable resource for scholars of early twentieth-century immigration, labor, and radicalism.

Lipotkin, already a veteran of Russia's 1905 revolution, migrated to the US in 1910 at the age of nineteen, and took part in a number of anarchist organizations and publications over the next five decades. *The Russian Anarchist Movement in North America* is a translation of his previously unpublished, handwritten Russian manuscript that was donated to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam after the author's death in 1959, and was virtually unknown to English-speaking scholars until its recent rediscovery by historian Mark Grueter in the course of his groundbreaking research on Russian-American anarchists.¹ Now, deftly translated and edited by Malcolm Archibald, anglophone readers are finally privy to a detailed and sweeping overview of this forgotten movement.

The book covers the period from the late nineteenth century to the 1950s, with mixed results. The first four chapters provide brief surveys of the origins of anarchist ideology, the early anarchist movements of the US and Russia, and the late-nineteenth-century beginnings of Russian radicalism in America, none of which include original information or insights. The book's most important sections, and those most likely to be of interest to scholars today, instead comprise its middle portion, and recount the history of the Union of

1. Mark Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919", *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 11 (2017), pp. 53–81; Mark Grueter, "Anarchism and the Working Class: The Union of Russian Workers in the North American Labor Movement" (Ph.D., Simon Fraser University, 2018).

Russian Workers of the United States and Canada (URW), which in its heyday became the largest anarchist organization in the history of North America.

In these chapters, Lipotkin describes how exiles and refugees from the 1905 revolution (like himself) first began organizing Russian anarchist groups, often called “unions” (although, as editor Archibald notes, “‘Associations’ is a more accurate translation”), in 1908. These groups coalesced behind the newspaper *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labor), founded in New York in 1911, and at a 1914 congress in Detroit they officially formed the Union of Russian Workers (more properly translated, Archibald again points out, as the “Federation of Unions of Russian Workers”) and adopted a declaration of principles that was explicitly anarcho-syndicalist and pledged the organization to focus on supporting both the revolutionary movement in Russia and labor and radical activity amongst workers in America.

Lipotkin, who was himself a lecturer and editor for the URW, is a uniquely well-informed chronicler. He narrates the organization’s firm anti-militarist stance during World War I, and its sharp disagreement with famed Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin’s support of the Allied war effort. Another chapter features brief biographies of several of the URW’s leading personalities, including some, like Maxim Raevsky and Mikhail Raiva, who are virtually unknown among American historians. Two more chapters survey the movement’s size and activities in “large cities” like New York, Detroit, Baltimore, and Pittsburgh, and several “small cities”, respectively, revealing important local particularities as well as the URW’s geographical distribution. The organization, he shows, was part of an overlapping network of radical groups, ranging from dramatic clubs and mutual aid societies to Russian branches of the Socialist Party and the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). There is a particularly detailed section on Rochester, New York (where Lipotkin was long active), as well as a chapter on the Russian cooperative movement in Detroit. Another chapter is dedicated to the URW’s presence in Canada, a nation whose history of anarchism is still largely unwritten. (A subsequent chapter on Canada’s community of Doukhobors, an anarchistic Christian sect transplanted from Russia, is unfortunately far less informative.)

The author also supplies many important statistics drawn from URW records. He is able to relate, for example, that, at its founding in July 1914, the organization had 596 members belonging to twenty-four constituent groups, and its membership peaked in 1918–1919 at over 12,000 divided between 156 branches (pp. 73, 92). In Detroit alone, the URW’s six branches counted 1,500 members in early 1919, and in Connecticut one could find groups in cities like Hartford, New Haven, and Bridgeport with several hundred members each (pp. 219–224). The URW newspaper *Khleb i Volya* (Bread and Freedom) – of which Lipotkin was an editor – had a circulation of 6,000 copies per issue (p. 112), placing it among the largest of such publications in the US. These details and figures unambiguously show that the URW was much more substantial and, at the local level, far more influential than existing studies – excluding Grueter’s – have portrayed it to be.

The book’s account of the decline of the URW is more familiar. Most of the organization’s leadership and many members enthusiastically returned to Russia in a “massive exodus” following the February Revolution, including the entire editorial board of *Golos Truda*, which was re-established in Petrograd – with the aid, Lipotkin tells us, of thousands of dollars donated by Russian-American anarchists (pp. 83–84). Although the URW rebounded over the next two years, it was destroyed by the coordinated efforts of federal authorities to arrest and deport members during the so-called First Red Scare of 1919–1921. The Communist seizure of power in Russia, meanwhile, led to the repression of the resurgent anarchist movement there, further demoralizing anarchists in the US. (Lipotkin does not mention that some former URW members themselves also joined the Communist Party

of America.) By 1920, the URW no longer existed. Although these events are well-known, Lipotkin supplies evocative examples of federal raids, turncoat informants, and, in one case, a Pittsburgh member of the organization who was allegedly “tortured to death in prison” (p. 107).

The following three chapters then trace the twists and turns of factionalism and ideological divisions within what remained of Russian-speaking anarchism throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Although Lipotkin, an ardent participant in these squabbles, hails the reconciliation that the opposing factions reached in 1939, by that point Russo-American anarchism was clearly a movement of little significance. Of greater interest to historians of immigration will be his descriptions of former URW members who found new outlets for the activities in seemingly non-political ethnic mutual aid societies and cooperatives.

Lipotkin is no objective observer. Although once a prominent member of the anarcho-syndicalist URW, by 1920 he was an anti-syndicalist anarcho-communist and proponent of “underground” anarchist activity, and, correspondingly, the book has little positive to say about syndicalism. This fact may also explain why it includes so little about the IWW, which profoundly influenced the ideology of the URW and shared many members with it. Lipotkin’s discussions of Russian Communism are, predictably, thoroughly negative; he was, after all, a personal friend and comrade of many anarchists who, by the early 1920s, had been imprisoned, killed, or exiled by Communist authorities. The book’s final chapter, “Results and Perspectives”, was written for a new generation of Russian-American anarchists that never existed, and its recommendations to these imagined inheritors, written at the historical nadir of American anarchism, seem positively naive in retrospect. Although the URW included female members, women are almost entirely absent from Lipotkin’s narrative, as are the topics of race and ethnicity. American anarchism’s Yiddish-speaking wing, which outnumbered and overlapped with its Russian contingent, goes virtually unmentioned – despite the fact that Lipotkin was himself Jewish and contributed to the Yiddish-language anarchist press. The manuscript also includes some incorrect names and dates, which the translator has helpfully corrected in footnotes, and at one point it refers to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer as the “Minister of Justice” (p. 103).

The author’s unsurprising biases and blind spots, however, do not detract from this book’s indisputable importance. In Lipotkin’s words, “Russian anarchists in the United States ‘made’ history: they created organizations, schools, libraries, cooperatives, federations, and special groups of agitators and propagandists; they published journals, newspapers, books, brochures, and other literature with anarchist content; they helped the anarchist movement in Russia, as well as the anarchist movement in America, etc. In short, the Russian-American anarchist movement deserves to have its story told” (p. 1). But more than that, historians cannot accurately understand the insurgent immigrant labor movement of America’s Progressive Age, or the Red Scare that dissipated it, without properly understanding the movement described in these pages.

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