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ANARCHISM IN CUBA REVISITED: HISTORY OF A LIBERTARIAN STRIVING

Foreword

Cuba has often been depicted as a theatre of ongoing revolutions and battles for freedom in which those martyred for social justice always align with the State authorities. Nothing could be further from the truth. From the mid-19th century up until the present, there has been a different left on the island, a libertarian left, an anarchist left that has always championed worker emancipation, self-management and freedom against any centralized authority.

This book delves into that forgotten history, following the trail of the workers, trade unionists and thinkers who, operating under the radar or from exile, sustained an ideal that refused to defer to colonial dictatorships or to authoritarian governments or to centralized political parties. From Saturnino Martínez, Enrique Roig San Martín and Enrique Creci through to the activists that opposed Castroism from the press, through strikes and resistance, Cuban anarchism has shown that the striving for social justice cannot be reduced to official speechifying nor to the big names feted by propaganda.

In the pages below, the reader will find a critical, documented and impassioned narrative. There is more involved here than politics or ideology: it touches upon life stories, sacrifices and schemes for freedom that were repressed, ignored or driven out of the country, but which never were expunged from Cuban imagination. This book, then, is a story of resistance and remembrance as well as a call to rethink what it really means to be of the left in an island where authority has been muddled up with social justice.

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Chapter 1

The Awakening of Proletarian Consciousness (1865-1878)

1.1 The Role of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País [Friends of the Country Economic Society]: enlightenment, contradiction and proto-anarchism

The emergence of labour thinking in Cuba cannot be explained away as a mere ideological import from Europe. It was primarily a selective embrace of enlightenment thought, an embrace enacted in specific colonial conditions. In that process, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País in Havana played a telling, if unintentional part.

Established as an instrument of enlightened Spanish reformism, the Sociedad had a paternalistic outlook: it was out to educate so as to boost productivity, to bring morality to the people without subverting the colonial order and to modernize the economy without calling relations of power into question. However, as often happens in the history of ideas, the assets put in place to contain change finished up promoting it.

In theoretical terms, the Sociedad operated as an ideological clearing-house where classical liberalism, enlightened humanism, federal republicanism and incipient querying of political and economic absolutism lived cheek by jowl. Even though these schools of thought were not anarchistic in the strict sense, they carried the seeds of a radical critique of the principle of authority.

Here Saturnino Martínez emerges as a key figure, not so much in terms of any doctrinal originality, but due to his strategic position in the transmission of knowledge.

His being a tobacco-worker and librarian placed him at the intersection of the world of letters and the world of manual labour, allowing him to serve as an ideological mediator between the enlightened elite and the urban proletariat.

From the point of view of theory, his efforts might be construed as a process of undoing the elitism of learning. Abstract notions such as freedom, equality before the law, social contract or distributive justice were stripped of their academic jargon and made accessible to the working man. And that translation was not neutral: the change of audience also altered the political meaning of ideas.

A core contradiction surfaces here which this book needs to underline: Saturnino Martínez was a member of the Volunteer Corps [*Cuerpo de Voluntarios*], a supporter of the colonial order and hostile to pro-independence thinking. However, his intellectual endeavours underlined the very foundations of that established order. From an anarchist vantage-point, there is nothing anomalous about this contradiction; it is merely a transitional phase: the shift from unionist political consciousness to a critical social awareness which was not quite revolutionary, but which was no longer compatible with unbridled rule.

In which context, education had the effect of undermining authoritarian ideology. It did not immediately trigger a rebuttal of the State or nation, but it did bring about a detachment from the notion of a natural hierarchy and that was a core element in anarchist thinking. Martínez was not yet querying authority in the abstract, but he was querying its practical legitimacy. And that was enough to introduce a crack.

1.2 *La Aurora*: labour education, critiquing wage slavery and class consciousness

In terms of theory, *La Aurora* should be construed, not so much as a newspaper but as a resource in the moulding of class consciousness. Its historical importance resides in its having – for the first time in Cuba – offered a structural interpretation of exploitation even prior to the systematic spread of Marxism or Bakuninist anarchism.

The inclusion in the paper of its “Education” rubric was more than just an educational supplement. It was prompted by a profoundly modern notion – and a potentially libertarian one – of knowledge as a precondition for emancipation. In theoretical terms, Martínez here was anticipating an idea central to classical anarchism:

In the absence of education, there is no freedom: and in the absence of freedom, education is incomplete.

Literacy was not depicted as a means of personal betterment, but rather as a collective weapon for social self-defence. The educated worker was not more compliant: he was more aware. This upside-down version of the enlightened bourgeois argument proved key to any appreciation of the subversive nature of *La Aurora*.

But the newspaper’s most radical theoretical tenet was its analysis of labour. In asserting that slavery and wage-slavery were two branches sprouting from the same tree of exploitation, *La Aurora* broke with the liberal distinction between free labour and forced labour. And that assertion places Martínez in a critical tradition that can be linked to utopian socialism, to Proudhonist mutualism and, further down the line, to collectivist anarchism. From a conceptual point of view, implicit in this contention are three fundamental breaks:

1. A break with classical liberalism which regards wages as expressing a contract freely entered into between equals.
2. A break with moral abolitionism, which condemns slavery without querying the economic arrangements that enshrine it.
3. A break with the notion of linear progress, according to which the shift from slavery to wage-slavery is tantamount to complete liberation.

In *La Aurora*, wages were depicted as an indirect mode of coercion, whereby freedom under the law provided cover for absolute material dependency. This outlook prefigures a core notion of anarchism: domination is not effected solely by means of violence, but can also be implemented through the naturalization of economic relations.

The political implication of this outlook is decisive: the emancipation of the worker cannot be confined to legal reforms, nor to the abolition of a specific institution. It requires a thoroughgoing transformation of the social relations of production, which explains the early linkage between labour struggle and the abolitionist struggle.

Thus, whereas *La Aurora* issued no explicit call to revolution, it introduced something that may well have been more durable: historical consciousness in the proletariat as a collective actor. The worker stops seeing himself as an isolated individual and starts to identify as part of a class with interests of its own, interests opposed to those of the people in control of capital and the colonial State.

From that vantage-point, Cuban anarchism came into existence, not as an imported doctrine but as the logical outcome of a social pedagogy carried out by means of collective readings, workers' debates and the day-to-day experience of exploitation.

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Chapter II

The Growth of Anarchism (1880-1892)

2.1 The Radicalization of the Movement: From Reformism to Libertarian Socialism.

The 1880s marked the point of no return in the history of the Cuban labour movement. With its belief in gradual education and moral improvement for the worker, enlightened reformism's limitations were starting to become plain. Exploitation is not eased: it is honed. The wage had once and for all replaced the lash, but not the dependency. Against that backdrop, the Cuban worker was dropping the requests for reforms and beginning to think in terms of rupture.

The telling factor in this radicalization was the fresh tide of immigrants coming in from Spain: it was largely made up of artisans, printing workers and urban workers fleeing from the repression in the wake of the First Spanish Republic and the Bourbon Restoration. They brought with them not just their brawn for hire but also their books, newspapers and debates. Unlike the previous generation, these immigrants were not bringing a well-honed liberalism but, instead, the incendiary thinking of Mikhail Bakunin and libertarian socialism.

Bakunin was not read in Cuba as an abstract philosopher but rather as a theorist of action. His radical repudiation of the State, his distrust of any form of centralized authority and his championship of organizing from the bottom up found fertile soil in a colonial society where the State was synonymous with violence, lawful racism and political exclusion. As far as the Cuban artisan was concerned, the State was not, as it was in Europe, a promise for the future: it was a daily presence and a hostile one.

A phenomenon emerged at this point that traditional Marxist historiography has had a tendency to downplay: the Cuban proletariat's libertarian instinct. Karl Marx anxiously watched the headway being made by anarchism in the Caribbean and Latin America and came to the conclusion that that influence was diverting the Cuban movement away from the "scientific" path. It was no coincidence that he put his son-in-law, the Cuban Paul Lafargue, in charge of countering this Bakuninist influence and promoting Marxist socialism on the island.

Lafargue's efforts failed. Due, not to any lack of theoretical rigour, but to historical unsuitability. With its emphasis on the party, discipline and taking power, State socialism did little to persuade the workers who were already living under authorities imposed from outside. The Cuban worker had no desire to capture the State: he wanted to be rid of it. This early rejection of authoritarian politics was a foretaste of subsequent Cuban history. Every time that an enlightened vanguard sought to speak in the people's name in order to "lead it" towards liberation, the upshot was some brand-new form of tutelage. Cuban anarchism, by contrast, right from the outset gambled on the worker's moral and organizational autonomy, a lesson that the 20th century would see tragically confirmed.

2.2 Enrique Roig San Martín and El Productor: ethics, action and negation of authority

If there was a face, a voice and an identifiable ethic to Cuban anarchism during that phase, they belonged to **Enrique Roig San Martín**. A self-taught printing worker and indefatigable agitator, Roig was no systematic theoretician; he was something rather more of a menace to the colonial order: an organizer of consciences.

In 1887 he launched the weekly *El Productor* which quickly became Cuban anarchism's chief mouthpiece. *El Productor* was not so much a newspaper as a **permanent political school** from where ideas were disseminated, strategies debated and a coherent libertarian ethos built up. Its editorial policy was clear-cut and uncompromising:

- **Absolute negation of the State**, be it the colonial State or any yet to come.
- **Uncompromising rejection of electioneering politics**, which was regarded as a mechanism for absorbing the worker into the system by which he was oppressed.
- **Radical internationalism**, in contrast to any form of narrow nationalism.

Roig grasped something essential: that anarchism could not confine itself to an economic critique, but had to constitute an alternative moral code. In his writings, freedom was not cast as some far-off goal, but as a daily practice: through solidarity, mutual aid and a compatibility of means and ends.

Under his leadership, the Cuban anarchist movement achieved a startling international profile for a Caribbean colony. In **1887**, in the wake of the **Haymarket** incidents in Chicago, Cuban anarchists orchestrated **mass rallies in support** of the workers sentenced to death in the United States. This was no token gesture: it was a political assertion: that the working class recognizes no national boundaries.

Three years later, in **1890**, Cuba became one of the **very first countries in the world** to mark the **First of May** as a day of worldwide labour struggle. That fact, often unmentioned or downplayed, indicates that Cuban anarchism was not some Johnny-come-lately imitation of Europe, but a **pioneering actor in the history of the worldwide workers' movement**.

Perhaps its most radical feature – and the one that sat least comfortably with subsequent nationalist outlooks – was its stance on the **race issue**. Unlike other political currents of the day, Cuban anarchism, right from the outset, championed the **eradication of the notions of race and nationality**. In its newspapers and workers' associations, blacks and white shared the same spaces, discourses and struggles on a footing of equality unprecedented at the time.

And that stance went beyond mere rhetoric. In a society founded upon the legacy of slavery, anarchism was the very first current to argue bluntly that **humankind is one** and that any racial hierarchy was a device designed to divide the exploited. In which regard Cuban anarchism went much further than lots of republican and even pro-independence discourses.

Here, a comparison with the present day is unavoidable. Every time that the authorities in Cuba have sought to hijack the language of national or racial unity – such as in the case of the abortive **Concilio Cubano in 1994** – they have attempted to do so from above, neutralizing any effective autonomy. By contrast, 19th century anarchism built up a unity **without any apparatus**, without any party and without any State. And that, perhaps, was its most subversive lesson.

Enrique Roig San Martín's untimely death in 1889 did not stop the movement, but it did mark the end of a stage of extraordinary ethical coherence. After that, Cuban anarchism would enter a phase of expansion, internal frictions and escalating repression, and this on the very eve of the war of independence.

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Chapter III

“Anarcho-separatism” and the War of ‘95

3.1 The Homeland and Freedom Quandary: internationalism in time of war

By the late 19th century, Cuban anarchism was facing **one of the most complicated crossroads in its history**. How was a movement that rejected the State, repudiated borders and called for a worldwide brotherhood of workers to throw its weight behind a **war for national independence**? Was that not an implicit betrayal of its quintessential libertarian internationalism?

The response was not doctrinal but **material and historical**. Cuban anarchism was not born into a ready-made nation-state, but into a **late slave-holding society** where the machinery of State was not some ideological abstraction but actual machinery of repression. As far as the Cuban worker – white or black – was concerned, the Spanish State did not stand for some form of social mediation but was instead the **rawest form of overlordship**.

From that point of view, independence stopped looking like an end in itself and came to be regarded as a **negative act**, a necessary demolition job. The fight was not in pursuit of some new authority, but rather for the **dismantling of the one already in place**. This outlook allowed lots of anarchists to reconcile the libertarian ideal with armed struggle, albeit that it was a stretch.

Here in comes the figure of **Enrique Creci**, perhaps the most rounded example of that contradictory marriage. Influenced by the anarchist thinking peddled in *El Productor* and by the ethic of direct action, Creci viewed independence not as some bourgeois republic in the future, but as the **sine qua non of any actual social emancipation**. The implicit message was clear: without an end to colonialism, there was no prospect of worker freedom.

Creci did not confine himself to propaganda or theoretical debate. Rightly regarded as the “**anarchist martyr of independence**”, he was killed in action in 1896 whilst holding the rank of **captain in the Liberation Army**. He was the very embodiment of an unprecedented amalgamation of ‘Tierra y Libertad’ and ‘Cuba libre’. Not an attempt to outgrow anarchism, but instead a **strategic ranking of forms of oppression**.

In theoretical terms, this “anarcho-separatism” was not an opportunistic deviation but a **contextual adaptation**. The Cuban anarchists were not embracing nationalism as a permanent ideology: they were availing of it as a **tactical weapon** with the intention of eliminating the most visible and brutal form of overlordship. It was power that was the issue and not the nation. And in 1895 power spoke Spanish.

This tension – between social freedom and national liberation – was to be a recurrent theme in all subsequent Cuban political history. The essential difference is that 19th century anarchism never mistook independence for ultimate emancipation. More insightfully perhaps than other actors, it knew that on the day after victory there was a **fresh struggle** to be launched, this time against the *crillo* elites and their authoritarian leanings.

3.2 Alliance with José Martí: pragmatism, language and organization

Convergence between Cuban anarchism and the pro-independence lobby would not have been feasible but for the **political shrewdness and moral intelligence of José Martí**. Martí grasped

something that many later revolutionary leaders would miss: that **legitimacy is not imposed; it is built.**

At the financial and organizational heart of the revolution were **the tobacco-workers of Tampa and Key West**, both communities profoundly influenced by anarchism. But for their financial, logistical and human support, the '95 War would have had a hard time graduating from plot to actual uprising. Martí knew that and acted accordingly.

But he deserved praise not for stupidly making use of the anarchists but for **speaking to them in a language that respected their libertarian sensibilities.** Martí made no attempt to recruit them on behalf of some narrow nationalism, nor did he promise them a strong State. Instead, he came up with an ambiguous but powerful vision: a **“Republic for all, for the good of all”**. A Republic that, in its rhetorical foundations at any rate, was not portrayed as a mechanism for overlordship but rather as a haven of justice and pluralism.

The anarchist clubs joined the **PRC (Partido Revolucionario Cubano)** without disbanding or formally abjuring their own principles. Such coexistence was facilitated by a **flexible, de-centralized** organizational structure very different from the 20th century's hierarchical parties. In fact, many of the cell-based organizational methods of the PRC were **borrowed directly from the anarchist workers' societies**, from mutualist lodges and the clandestine networks built up over decades of repression.

This symbiosis lifts the lid on something that the official history finds awkward: not only was the Cuban independence movement a national epic, but it was also a **project riddled with libertarian, workerist and anti-authoritarian currents.** Without anarchism, the revolution would have been the poorer, more elitist and, in all likelihood, less impactful.

The subsequent tragedy can be traced to lots of such influences having been **silenced, absorbed or betrayed**, once formal independence was achieved. But that is another story, the story of the thwarted republic and the protracted divorcing of political freedom from social justice.

On entry into the '95 War, Cuban anarchism did not lose its soul; it gambled upon **a partial victory**, in the knowledge that no national war could occupy the entire skyline of human emancipation. That perspicacity, rare in revolutionary processes, accounts for both its grandeur and its subsequent marginalization.

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Chapter IV

The Republic and Disenchantment (1902-1925)

4.1 A *“Peace” not intended for workers*

The proclamation of a Republic in 1902 was formally celebrated as the realization of the dream of independence. However, broad swathes of the workers’ movement – and especially manifestly for anarchists – that landmark event signalled not a culmination but rather the beginning of a **structural disenchantment**. The change of flag had not entailed any alteration to the system: **power had merely been relocated**.

From early on, the Republic displayed a familiar face: concentration of wealth, economic dependency on foreign capital, a continuity in social hierarchies inherited from colonialism and a political class more interested in administering the State than in changing the lives of the workers. In that respect, the republican State was a **functional facsimile of the colonial apparatus**, but now legitimized by a discourse about sovereignty.

The anarchists were the first to frame that unambiguous critique. Whilst the parties exulted in republican legality and the press talked about progress, anarchism denounced the failure of the much-promised “peace” to reach into the workshops, refineries or ports. Wages were still inadequate, working hours exhausting and repression was still the customary response to any form of autonomous organizing.

Far from losing strength after the war, Cuban anarchism entered a **phase of organizational maturity**. The point now was no longer just propaganda or libertarian ethics; it was time for **sustained trade union activity**. One early milestone was the **1902 Apprentices’ Strike**, the first big strike in the republican era. Led by anarchists, the demand was that young Cuban apprentices should enjoy the same labour rights as Spanish workers, breaking with a discriminatory practice that replicated the colonial rationale, but in a new guise.

Two essential things came to light during this strike. First, that the Republic had not eradicated structural inequalities; it had merely **nationalized** them. Secondly, that anarchism was still the current most coherently championing **effective equality**, rather than the merely legalistic variety. As far as anarchists were concerned, citizenship without social justice was a dangerous fiction.

During those same years, links with **Spain’s National Confederation of Labour [CNT]** were bolstered. Havana became a **strategic hub of Atlantic anarchism**, the gateway through which libertarian newspapers, pamphlets and books entered for onward distribution throughout the broader Caribbean and Central America. This trans-national network bolstered the internationalism of the Cuban movement and allowed it to keep ascendant State nationalism at bay.

Not that the republican State was slow to respond to this. Strikes were crushed, labour leaders jailed and newspapers shut down. The Republic which had professed to have inherited freedom started to display a **penchant for discipline**. As far as anarchists were concerned, this bore out what they had long suspected: that the State, even though it professed to be one’s own, is inclined to protect capital’s interests rather than the dignity of workers.

4.2 *The Rise of International Figures: culture, education and anarchism*

Far from cowering in the face of repression, Cuban anarchism during the early decades of the Republic, widened its theatre of operations, delving into **cultural affairs and popular education**. Against this backdrop personalities emerged that transcended trade union activism and formed part of a continent-wide intellectual tradition.

Outstanding among these was **Marcelo Salinas**, whose importance has been unfairly overlooked by the official historiography. Not only was Salinas a labour organizer and propaganda, but he was a **rounded libertarian intellectual** as well. His literary oeuvre and plays were designed to shape social consciousness through art, convinced as he was that emancipation could not be confined to economics, but had to encompass **the people's moral sensibilities**.

In his plays and essays, Salinas tackled themes such as distributive justice, republican hypocrisy and the sham neutrality of the State. He saw theatre and literature as **educational tools**, areas in which the worker might come to see himself as an historical agent, rather than as a simple cog in the processes of production. This notion ties in with another core idea of classical anarchism: that culture is not an ornament but a **battlefield**.

Together with Salinas, figures such as **Adrián del Valle** helped consolidate an anarchism that was in communication with libertarian currents in Argentina, Mexico and Spain. The Cuban movement was no peripheral exception; it was part of an **international constellation** sharing similar diagnoses: that the liberal Republic had defaulted upon its promise of justice and that authoritarian socialism was starting to display equally oppressive tendencies.

Such cultural and educational anarchism offered an ethical alternative to the growth in political cynicism. Even as the parties were becoming more and more bureaucratic and the reformist trade unions casting around for their niche in the institutions, the anarchists insisted **that means and ends be consistent with one another** and they repudiated any liberation that entailed replacement of one elite by another.

And so the years between 1902 and 1925 can be construed as a slowly emerging history lesson. The Republic demonstrated that political independence was no guarantee of social freedom. By sticking with its radical critique of authority, anarchism was left marginalized, but it also preserved an **uncomfortable memory**, a tradition of resistance that would crop up time and again, every time the Cuban State – under whatever ideological branding – demanded obedience in return for unfulfilled promises.

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Chapter V

Repression, Treachery and Eclipse: from the Machado era to the downfall of Batista (1925-1958)

5.1 *The Machado era and the annihilation of organized anarchism*

Whereas Cuban anarchists had, under a variety of republican governments, faced imprisonment, deportation and summary execution, **systematic and planned repression** peaked under General **Gerardo Machado y Morales**. A former officer in the Liberation Army, Machado assumed the presidency in May 1925, swathed in an aura of popularity and promises of stability. He wound up becoming a dictator and was toppled in 1933 by a general strike which he himself had publicly sneered at, insisting that no labour boycott was going to hold out any longer than twenty-four hours.

His miscalculation was his undoing.

In obedience to the accords passed by the **1920 Workers' Congress**, the Havana Workers' Federation had drawn up plans for the establishment of a nationwide trade union. In a crucial move, a **Second National Workers' Congress** was convened, meeting in Cienfuegos from 15 to 19 February 1925, with some 110 delegates in attendance, representing 75 organizations. The **anarcho-syndicalists** were clearly in the ascendancy, although there was also a social democratic and Marxist-Leninist presence.

The scheme culminated in the **Third National Workers' Congress** held in Camagüey from 2 to 7 August 1925, a bare three months after Machado had assumed power. Against a tragic backdrop, this marked the birth of the **CNOC (Cuban National Workers' Confederation)** headed by **Alfredo López**. Its initial anarcho-syndicalist leaders espoused a line of **trade union a-politicism** that precluded the unions from being turned into the instruments of any political party, and that included the recently founded **Communist Party of Cuba**, launched in Havana that same August.

Machado, determined to ensure "social stability" as required by national businesses and foreign capital, the anarchists represented the **only real threat**. Right from the earliest strikes, the regime reacted with mass arrests, systematic application of the *ley de fugas*, with disappearances and selective murders. Not that the crackdown was confined to the libertarians, but they were the main targets.

The onslaught was taken to the levels of extreme brutality. Among the killings ordered by the regime were those of **Enrique Varona** (the rail-workers' organizer), **Margarito Iglesias** (secretary of the Manufacturing Workers' Union) and **Alfredo López** (CNOC secretary) who was picked up on 20 July 1926 whilst en route to the Workers' Centre. His remains would resurface in the environs of Atarés castle only after Machado's downfall.

There was no mistaking the message: the republican State was ready to **exterminate anarchism physically**.

5.2 *Anarchists and Communists: an unhappy marriage*

Machado's crackdown created a leadership vacuum upon which the **communists** swooped with remarkable shrewdness. Increasingly, they took over leadership positions within the CNOC that had been left "vacant" due to the jailings, disappearances and killings. This is a process that can only be

properly understood if we hark back to the **initial ambiguousness** in Cuban anarchism's response to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

The reports filtering through from Russia were confused and prey to effective propaganda. Some Cuban libertarians – rather naively – saw Bolshevism as an authentic workers' revolution. Indeed, in 1920 one group of anarchists cobbled together an alleged "Congress of Soviets in Cuba", proclaiming a "Communist Republic", complete with Red Army, dictatorship of the proletariat and the death penalty for saboteurs: this was, from any libertarian point of view, a **theoretical aberration**.

Very soon, though, reality prevailed. The **1921 anarchist uprising in Kronstadt**, crushed by might and main by the Red Army acting on Trotsky's orders, lifted the lid on the true character of the new soviet State. And, thanks to testimonies circulated by the Cuban libertarian press, many anarchists came to appreciate that the USSR was no beacon of emancipation, but merely a **new form of despotism**.

The newspaper ***¡Tierra!***, the mouthpiece of the Cuban Federation of Anarchist Groups was quick to denounce the spell cast by Moscow and defined the local brand of communism as "**barrack-room communism**". However, figures such as Alfredo López, prompted by a misguided quest for unity, paved the way for communist inroads into the CNOC.

The result was devastating.

By 1927 the CNOC had virtually become a **political tool of the Communist Party** which was headed by Rubén Martínez Villena. By 1933, communists ruled the roost in much of the labour movement, with backing from abroad from the USSR and espousing domestically a policy of intrigue, switching between confrontation and horse-trading with the dictator of the day.

The most serious historical faux pas came when, in return for a legalizing of party and trade union posts, **the communists ordered a standing down of the general strike targeting Machado**, thereby helping prolong the agony. That move, which even the Marxist historians have difficulty justifying, left an indelible stain on the record of Cuban communism.

The **Federation of Anarchist Groups** reacted with a public declaration denouncing the communists' treachery. That statement, circulated internationally and published in the Chicago-based *Industrial Worker* (3 October 1933) issued a clear warning about the future that awaited Cuba under pro-soviet influence.

5.3 From '33 to Batista: authoritarianism's long shadow

Machado's downfall in 1933 did not deliver a rehabilitation of anarchism. Instead, it signalled the beginning of a new phase of **authoritarian reshuffle**, with the communists – now implicated in power games – and emerging military figures signing up to circumstantial alliances.

One such military figure was **Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar**, a leading light in the 1933 Revolution who was able to capitalize upon the political chaos and present himself as a law-and-order champion. The communists, who had cut a deal with Machado and forgotten about Alfredo López, would later get into bed with Batista, explaining this away as a "lesser evil" and partnering with Batista's power set-up.

Decimated, persecuted and erased from the official history, anarchism found itself reduced to tiny cores of ethical and intellectual resisters. However, their legacy lingered on as a **subterranean critical**

awareness, resurrected every time that the State – be it republican, revolutionary or military – demanded utter obedience.

The **fall of the Batista dictatorship in 1959** brought that long historical cycle to a close. But, contrary to what some believed, it did not deliver on libertarian ideals. Instead, a brand-new phase of authoritarian delusion was ushered in, albeit wrapped up in a veneer of the jargon of liberation that would again mislead anarchist audiences around the world in a replication – forty years on – of the mistake already made with regard to the Bolshevik Revolution.

The liquidation of libertarian socialism in Cuba was not the end of a utopia, but it signalled the **temporary defeat of an ethical tradition** that at all times refused to excuse oppression exercised in the name of History.

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Chapter VI

Revolution versus Freedom: Anarchism versus Marxism-Leninism in Cuba

6.1 *Two irreconcilable languages about socialism*

In June 1962, by which point the authorities had consolidated their machinery of repression and virtually every dissenting voice had been silenced, the official newspaper of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) ventured to utter what it was claimed to be a definitive pronouncement:

“Anarchism is hostile to Marxism-Leninism. Whereas Marxism-Leninism represents the ideology of the working class, anarchism is a petit-bourgeois ideology ... inimical to all authority, all discipline, all organization, all order.”

There was more to this than a political attack: it was a symbolic act of expropriation. Marxism-Leninism was staking a claim to a monopoly on worker representation, whilst consigning anarchism – historically, the majority presence in the Cuban trade union movement – to the terrain of deviancy, chaos and the morally suspect.

But what the official version described as “lack of discipline” was actually a **thoughtful rejection of deference**: what it criticized as “hostility to authority” was a **radical critique of concentrated authority**; and what it characterized as a “lumpen” ideology was, in practical terms, a **worker ethic rooted in self-management, solidarity and mutual aid**.

Almost twenty years later and from exile the *Guámgara Libertaria* review would answer back with a definition that has retained its uncomfortable clarity to this day:

“We are anarchists, which is to say supporters of freedom. And we are trade unionists, which is to say for the emancipation of the working class from all its oppressors – whether these be capitalists, communists or fascists.”

The gulf between these two quotations encapsulates the **real conflict in 20th century Cuban socialism**: it is not between revolution and counter-revolution, but between freedom and authority, between a self-managerial socialism and State socialism.

6.2 *1959: Early Suspicions*

Cuban anarchists were not taken by surprise at the authoritarian turn taken by the new regime. As early as the beginning of 1959 they were cautioning workers about the person of Fidel Castro, not because of his radical rhetoric, but on account of his **consistent failure to honour his commitments** and his instrumentalist approach to power.

They were also the first to voice objections to the restoration of the **death penalty for political offences**, an unmistakable signal that the incipient revolution could not conceive of justice without exemplary punishment.

On the pretext of “purging” the **Cuban Workers’ Confederation (CTC)** of pro-Batista personnel, the new government encouraged a targeted purge of anarcho-syndicalists from certain strategic sectors such as catering, transport, construction and power plants. A lot of these leaders had fought Batista and endured imprisonment, been driven underground or forced into exile. The real aim was not to

make the unions more moral, but rather to hand the CTC over to cadres loyal to Castroism; many of them had been moulded within the pro-soviet Popular Socialist Party (PSP).

6.3 Anarchism spoke out through whatever vestiges of press freedom still survived. And it spoke with **clarity and mindful of history.**

Publications such as *Solidaridad Gastronómica* and *El Libertario* reaffirmed principles that, in hindsight, look prophetic: opposition to imperialism in all its forms, condemnation of private property as a form of slavery, advocacy on behalf of a free socialism – or something other than socialism – and a demand that the land and industries be handed over to the workers through the trade unions and not to the State, nor to any party.

In June 1959, the **Libertarian Federation of Cuba** issued a message to the anarchist movement worldwide sounding the alarm about four specific dangers: State centralization, extreme nationalism, the double-dealing of the Catholic hierarchy and communist infiltration.

El Libertario was an early critic of the State farms, pointing out that they spoke to a deep-seated distrust of the peasantry and the latter's self-managerial capabilities. It put it on record that slogans like "the land for him that works it" derived, not from Castroism, but were emblazoned on banners hoisted decades earlier by libertarians like Niceto Pérez and Sabino Pupo.

In other texts, the alarm was raised about torture's becoming normalized and about concentration camps and denouncing the ominous figure of the "post-revolution revolutionary" ever ready to justify horrors by invoking the future.

6.4 Militarizing Childhood, Disciplining Society

On 25 November 1959, *El Libertario* denounced the early militarization of children and adolescents on the streets of Havana. The uniformed youth patrols were more reminiscent of **Mussolini's Fasci do combattimento** or **Franco's Blueshirts** than any plan for liberation.

The critique dug deep: **a society that schools for armed obedience mutilates the individual before he can be free.**

In July 1960, the same paper openly queried the existence of press freedom in the wake of a ban on publicity for a campaign of solidarity with 99 anarcho-syndicalists jailed in Spain. The query was simple but devastating:

"Does press freedom really exist in Cuba?"

6.5 The 'Statement of Principles' and the Point of No Return

The straw that broke the camel's back was the *Statement of Principles* published by the Libertarian Syndicalist Agrupación in June 1960. It condemned the State in all its guises and proposed that it be replaced by **grassroots revolutionary bodies** such as trade unions, free municipalities and autonomous cooperatives.

It advocated for the right of parents to educate their children without State meddling, repudiated militaristic training, professional armies and all war – be it just or unjust – and subscribed to an **internationalism based upon solidarity and mutual aid.**

The text culminated in a principle that resonates with a bitter relevance today:

“The revolution belongs to all.”

Not to one party. Not to a Leader. And not to some State ideology.

The backlash was immediate. *El Libertario*, *Solidaridad Gastronómica* and all independent publications were shut down. In came **clandestinity, imprisonment and exile**.

6.6 Names and Remembrance

By 1962 tens of anarchists were filling Cuban prisons: they included Plácido Méndez, Antonio Degas, Luis M Linsuain, Sandalio Torres, José Acena and Alberto García. A look at their life stories makes a nonsense of the official narrative: these were anti-Batista fighters, decent trade unionists, punished , not for past offences but for refusing to abide by the new dogma.

Others managed to escape and kept up the fight from exile: people like Santiago Cobo, who had lived through several dictatorships and who was the underground organizer and founder of *Guángara Libertaria*; or Jorge C Bourbakis, the creator of Radio Reloj. Both these men died far away from the land of their birth, but they left behind a **legacy of resistance and freedom**.

6.7 An Epilogue to this Chapter

The history of Cuban anarchism under Castroism is neither an afterword nor a footnote. It is an **interpretative key**: exposing the fact that the revolution was not betrayed after the event: from its very inception it was incompatible with social freedom.

Anarchism was not defeated by capitalism, but instead by a socialism that confused justice for power and organization for obedience.

And **Cuba is paying the price for that defeat to this very day**.

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Chapter VII

Cuban Anarchism in Exile: Remembrance, struggle and Survival

7.1 *The Unstilled Voice*

The Cuban anarchist exile community did not come into being voluntarily nor for opportunistic reasons. It grew out of the need to survive a regime that made freedom a crime and rendered solidarity suspect. From Miami and other US mainland cities, libertarians raised a **voice that cried out for justice, freedom and remembrance** for comrades jailed, tortured or disappeared inside Cuba.

Reviews such as *Guámgara Libertaria* became genuine bastions of anarchist ethics. In their columns, exiles not only exposed the regime's oppression but **resurrected the movement's history**, commemorating the pioneers, trade unionists and militants that had fought for working class emancipation in whatever context.

"We are anarchists, which is to say supporters of freedom. And we are trade unionists, which is to say for the emancipation of the working class from all its oppressors – whether these be capitalists, 'communists' or 'fascists'."

The clarity of those words disclosed a consistent principle: the anarchist struggle transcends borders, governments and historical eras. It has to do, not with nostalgia, but with strategy and political consciousness.

7.2 *Organization and Resistance from Exile*

The exiled libertarians did not stop at writing. They built up international solidarity networks for the protection of imprisoned comrades and to keep autonomous trade union culture alive. They oversaw news briefings sent out to Europe, Latin America and Spain; they denounced torture, persecution and human rights breaches; and they orchestrated campaigns in support of political prisoners such as the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists under Francoism.

Men such as Santiago Cobo César were living examples of such resistance. Shaped back in the days of Machado and eye-witnesses to the underground struggle under Batista, once in exile they overhauled lines of communication and direct action structures, even when time and distance invited them to lose heart. They were the founders of *Guámgara Libertaria* which not merely documented the repression but provided a forum for strategic thinking about rebuilding the movement. Another prominent exile was Jorge C. Bourbakis, the creator of Radio Reloj, which, from a base in the United States broadcast news and libertarian values to those left behind in the island, keeping the memory of Cuban anarcho-syndicalism and its revolutionary ethic alive.

7.3 *Education, Remembrance and Libertarian Culture*

Exile was not just a haven: it was a laboratory for education and libertarian culture. Through bulletins, reviews and radio stations, the anarchists taught labour history, approaches to organization, workers' rights and the ethics of solidarity. They reminded people of figures such as Niceto Pérez and Sabino Pupo, reminding younger generations that the fight for the land, industry and social emancipation was dependent, not upon governments nor parties, but upon autonomous organization of the working people.

This educational endeavour was also an act of resistance: in the face of regime propaganda and an imposed silence, remembrance became a weapon of struggle. Teaching the movement's history amounted to keeping the principles of freedom, equality and mutual aid alive, albeit at some remove.

7.4 International Solidarity and the Ethics of Action

The exiles realized that anarchism could not be a merely local project: that they had to build bridges with libertarians from Spain, Argentina, Mexico, the United States and Europe. By means of international campaigning, they sounded the alarm regarding authoritarianism, the harassment and the manipulation of the workers' unions and organizations. Libertarian ethics required that injustice be exposed, not just wherever one was living, but wheresoever the voices of the oppressed might be heard.

In that respect, the Cuban anarchists in exile were pioneers in articulating international solidarity, making connections between struggles, sharing experiences and championing the freedom of the workers movement over and above political or ideological boundaries.

7. Exile as a School for Freedom

There was more to the Cuban anarchist exile than mere geographical removal. It was an act of commemoration, resistance and ethical instruction. There, the libertarians built up networks, publishing and teaching and organizing international solidarity, keeping alive the flame of a movement that back in Cuba had been outlawed, persecuted and silenced.

From Miami, New York and Madrid, the exiles showed that freedom was not reliant upon governments nor constitutions but upon the determination to organize, expose and educate. And that, no matter how painful, history can work changes if passed on with clarity, justice and memory.

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Chapter VIII

Between Autonomy and the Trans-national Outlook: Trade Unionism and Labour Memory in Cuba

The story of autonomous Cuban trade unionism has been written between the lines of the official version and in the silences in the prevailing narratives. Beyond the discourses of the State, there are voices out there salvaging workers' memories, documenting resistance and querying the ideological hijacking of the historical record. Outstanding among those voices is the work of the documentary-maker Jorge Masetti Jr. who has retraced the trajectory of Cuban independent trade unionism, highlighting the tension between labour autonomy and State centralization.

Between 2003 and 2004, a documentary film was produced as *A Partido Único, Periódico Único* [Just One Party, Just One Paper]. It received its world premiere on 15 March 2004 during the Second International Human Rights Festival in Geneva, Switzerland, whilst in France it premiered in October 2004 at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine in Paris. The film reconstructs the history of autonomous Cuban trade unionism, highlighting the efforts at independent organizing that the official narrative strove to cover up and showing how worker memory can prove a political and educational resource that transcends borders.

In Sweden, the historic SAC – Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation – an anarchist trade union of libertarian persuasions – hailed the film as an asset to consideration of trade union autonomy. The SAC could identify in the Cuban experience lessons to be learnt in terms of direct action, horizontal organization and resistance to trade union bureaucracy.

The international resonance of such narratives was boosted by publication of an article in the Swedish syndicalist newspaper *Arbetaren* over the by-line of Annika Hjelm, that exposed the absence of freedom of the press and freedom of organization in Cuba. Hjelm stresses that the regime forbids independent trade union organizing, harasses anyone who attempts to exercise freedom of association and curtails the opportunities for critical debate inside the country. Published on 15 December 2004 and updated on 28 November 2016, the article is also critical of the stance of portions of the left worldwide that back the Cuban regime, pointing out that their stance is tantamount to "an act of betrayal of the principles of the left."

Hjelm stresses the importance of differentiating between solidarity with social progress and the championing of an authoritarian system: It is possible simultaneously to criticize the Cuban dictatorship and the United States's policy of blockade without lapsing into ideological reductionism. Tellingly, the article provided a context for the work of Masetti Jr. who, after quitting Cuba and moving to Paris, approached the SAC with an eye to producing a documentary film about Cuban autonomous trade unionism, offering a narrative that salvages workers' memory and direct action as core factors in the island's social history.

The *Arbetaren* article also recounted the hindrances encountered: Objections raised from within the SAC's own ranks and squabbles about the project's funding and legitimacy. The controversy goes to show the complexity of the diaspora's intrusion into Cuban political and cultural life and how international alliances can be strained by differing appreciations of what constitutes the left and solidarity. Nevertheless, the SAC decided to back the documentary, being of the mind that Cuban

workers' memory is a vital resource in any thinking about autonomy and self-management in any political context.

This experience highlights one central point: the historical remembrance of Cuban autonomous trade unionism is not a done-and-dusted thing of the past, but a resource that circulates, is susceptible to change and engages with contemporary movements striving for freedom and self-management. From Masetti Jr.'s experience through to the circulation of such stories in Stockholm, a bridge is being built between generations of workers, between Cuba and the diaspora and between history and political praxis.

In conclusion, the amalgamation of historical memory, audio-visual documentary evidence and international debate reflects the fact that the struggle for trade union autonomy and the freedom to organize are not some merely local or isolated phenomena. Viewed from the vantage-point of the SAC and critical media outlets such as *Arbetaren*, the lessons offered by Cuban autonomous trade unionism demonstrate how worker resistance and the production of independent knowledge add up to a legacy that transcends geographical and temporal borders, weaving past and present together in the quest for social justice and proper freedom.

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Chapter IX

The Fourth Generation: Libertarian Renaissance in 21st Century Cuba

21st century Cuban anarchism did not arrive from exile like some imported notion. It was not a gift from those who had been forced far from the island, but who retained memory and solidarity links with it. It grew out of the very entrails of the post-Special Period society in a country marked by the collapse of the soviet bloc and the fracturing of the State's absolute hegemony over social thinking. Within that vacuum, independent initiatives started to surface, looking for alternatives beyond official channels and withstanding the silence enforced over decades.

Towards the end of the 21st century's first decade the Red Observatorio Crítico (OC) or Critical Observatory Network, a broadly-based forum for intellectuals, activists and leftwing alternative artists, started work. There a core of individuals staked a claim to an anarchist identity, not merely in terms of historical research but as a live tool for political praxis in contemporary Cuba. In 2012 this group launched the Taller Libertario Alfredo López (TLAL)/ Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop, signalling the formal arrival of a fourth generation of Cuban libertarians. As Isbel Díaz Torres, founder of the TLAL has it:

"We were not out to replicate history: we wanted to resurrect what Alfredo López stood for: an autonomous trade unionism, a freedom not begged for."

This is a generation that stands out in terms of its spectrum of interests. Whereas classical anarchism was focused on trade unionism and the labour movement, the fourth generation marries environmental protection, reproductive rights, sexual freedom and digital autonomy. New technologies and horizontal networks have facilitated an escape (partially at any rate) from the State's monopoly on communication.

The Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop (TLAL) and the Infra-structure of Autonomy

The TLAL described itself as an anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist project, determined to reintroduce the libertarian gaze to the national dynamic. Founders such as Mario Castillo and Isbel Díaz Torres have insisted upon the constriction of an "emergent sociability" free of institutional meddling. Between 2010 and 2012, the TLAL orchestrated debates on the Spanish Revolution, feminism and European protest movements, laying the groundwork for its own public profile.

One fundamental milestone was the opening of the ABRA Social Centre and Libertarian Library in Havana on 5 May 2018. Operating in the face of unrelenting harassment, these premises represented the very first such autonomous infrastructure since the 1960s. ABRA operates as a self-educational centre, affording unfettered access to literature that will not be found in State libraries: as a production-line for horizontal information in the form of fanzines and digital media: and as a workshop on ecological sustainability, promoting responsible consumption and community-based management of resources. In addition, it offers a haven for marginalized communities, including LGBT activists and independent ecologists. As **Mario Castillo** stresses:

"ABRA shows that it is possible to construct spaces for freedom through cooperation, without waiting for authorization from anybody."

Libertarian Ecologists: the Colectivo Guardabosques

The ***Colectivo Guardabosques***, a libertarian offshoot, links environmental degradation and political authoritarianism. It denounces the impact of centralized decision-making:

- * The **water-management policies of the 1960s** introduced salt into aquifers and reduced the fertility of the soil by prioritizing huge dam works and subjecting eco-systems to technocratic authority.

- * The ***Che Guevara Brigade*** cleared upwards of 180,000 hectares of land of forest for what amounted to inefficient tillage, making it plain that a militarized structure cannot manage bio-diversity on sustainable lines.

- *The **causeways through the keys** broke up marine habitats and tampered with currents, impacting the native wildlife: tourist traffic through the State-owned enclave sacrificed natural habitat in return for foreign currency revenue.

- * Even the **Matanzas fire (2022)**, with its black rain and chemical pollution, exposed the absence of safety procedures and the lack of any community-based autonomy in terms of risk management.

In the eyes of libertarians, ecology is not technology: it is a **land-management policy aimed at delivering a decent life**. Reforestation, the protection of species and environmental education cannot be separated from reconstruction of the social bonds broken by decades of coercion.

Queer-Anarchy: sexual autonomy versus CENESEX

Another essential front line is the fight for sexual diversity rights. Historically speaking, LGBT activism in Cuba was under the **CENESEX** umbrella, with restrictions upon the community's political autonomy. To counter this, up popped the **Proyecto Arcoiris** (Rainbow Project) which is anti-capitalist and independent and, together with collectives such as "Ahí Te Va", it has exploited **cyber-activism** in order to build up solidarity connections outside of State control. Marches and demonstrations such as the '**Besada por la Diversidad**' faced crackdowns but they showed that sexual liberation is a step forwards asserted through autonomy and direct action.

Critical Thinking: Trans-domination and Kairology

The libertarian resurgence has brought with it an overhaul of theory. **Dmitri Prieto Samsónov** has come up with "**trans-domination**", an analysis of how power structures have survived from colonial times into bureaucratic socialism. Prieto queries Marxist teleology and has posited a **kairology of resistance**, whereby revolution is not something that happens in the future, but consists of **acts in the here and now that add to human freedom** by challenging the legacies that attempt to imprison it.

Resistance Culture: Punk, Hip-Hop and self-publication

The fourth generation has found fertile ground in urban sub-cultures. **Cuban punk**, with its marginality and DIY ethics, has historically been an ally of anarchism: **independent hip-hop**, with its lyrics that complain about monitoring, racism and the lack of freedom, chimes with segment of the young that are alienated as much by the official discourse as by the traditional, liberal opposition.

Self-publications support memory and independent voices:

Tierra Nueva, is a monthly for internal debates and the dissemination of classical as well as contemporary ideas.

Guillotina Inútil is an imprint producing books and pamphlets about anarchist theory.

Revista Guardabosque: autonomous environmental activism.

Carne Negra: a fanzine dealing with the visual arts and libertarian social criticism.

These publications are crucial when it comes to speaking up against State media and international agencies that often ignore the existence of the libertarian left inside Cuba.

Conclusion: Freedom is Built from Below

21st century Cuban anarchism is neither nostalgic nor utopian. It finds expression through city gardens, autonomous libraries, independent LGBT collectives and mutual aid networks that surface when the State is found wanting. Salvaging the memory of Alfredo López and adapting it to the digital age and climate crisis, this is a generation that is marking out a path to freedom, a freedom that is not begged of the authorities, but which is built up from below, with creative thinking, historical memory and direct action.

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Chapter X

Culture, Resistance, Freedom – Libertarian Praxis in Contemporary Cuban Art

The resurgence of anarchism in Cuba in the 21st century as described in Chapter VIII is not confined to direct political action or to trade union activism. Its influence extends crucially into the realms of culture, creativity and artistic expression. Contemporary libertarians have discovered in art, music, performance and autonomous cultural spaces a vehicle for resistance, a way of practising freedom wherever State repression curtails the conventional forms of political participation.

In contemporary Cuba, culture is contested territory. Official restrictions and relentless monitoring sit cheek by jowl with imagination, creativity and civic autonomy. Independent art and cultural activism become extensions of historical anarchist praxis: just like the newspapers and trade unions did at the start of the 20th century, cultural collectives are now operating below the radar and through self-management, preserving memory, identity and a symbolic sovereignty against State control.

Recent studies of Cuban culture show that the State has wavered between promoting official cultural schemes and systematic censoring of autonomous ventures. Alonso (2012) has documented a continuity in centralized cultural policy, whereas Azcuy (2009) has highlighted the debates emerging from civil society regarding artistic and cultural output. Chagueceda (2014) and Fernández (2011) have pointed out how citizens have come up with cultural resistance strategies for confronting the current authoritarianism. Zurbano (2019) has provided an analysis from the critical left of the tensions between State sponsorship and dissident creativity. Such dynamics show parallels with libertarian history: thus, just as the earliest anarchists organized newspapers, mutual societies and trade union workshops in order to flesh out an autonomous identity, so contemporary artists are devising cultural spaces that challenge the official hegemony and seek to consolidate an emblematic scope for freedom.

Contemporary Cuban art operates like a bastion of resistance. Literature, performance and the visual arts are not only expressions of creativity; they also constitute tools for political and social criticism. Biddle (2021) analyses how the battle for cultural autonomy is turning into an extension of libertarian resistance: Calzadilla and Escobar (2018), González (2020) and Ramos (2017) have set out the impact of Decree 349 and other policies for exercising control over independent art, whilst Sosa (2022) has highlighted the relationship between watchfulness and ideological monitoring in the Caribbean. Cultural praxis has a direct bearing on the history of Cuban anarchism: clandestinity, the dissemination of ideas and self-management are direct carry-overs from the experience of the CNOC, the libertarian press and the early 20th century workers' workshops.

The San Isidro and 27N incidents were a watershed in 21st century cultural resistance. Díaz (2021) and García (2022) have documented how such mobilizations combined performance, the take-over of public spaces and digital networks in order to manifest demands for cultural autonomy. López (2023) and Martínez (2021) stress that such actions are an extension of libertarian thinking: horizontal practices, self-management and a symbolic butting of heads with the authorities. These experiences have replicated in the realm of culture what the fourth generation of anarchists cited in Chapter VIII have done in the political: coming up with autonomous structures for sociability, debate and action.

Historically, Cuban anarchism has been a trans-national phenomenon. The diaspora's networks have enabled the dissemination of knowledge, art and political activism. Dilla (2018), Estévez (2015), Pérez (2014) and Prieto (2020) have documented how such networking has facilitated the communication of libertarian expertise, connecting historical memory, cultural praxis and creativity in the present time. Such networks not only consolidate the memory of the libertarian struggle but represent strategic tools for resistance in the face of the cramping of spaces on the island, and a bridge between the historic past and upcoming generations.

Contemporary cultural praxis relies upon theories that address resistance and autonomy. Butler (2015), De Certeau (1984), Foucault (1978), Scott (1990) and Rancière (2004) provide insights into how culture acts as a sort of direct action against the powers-that-be: every work, fanzine, mural or performance is a libertarian micro-contribution that adds to social and symbolic freedom.

The digital and printed media have a crucial part to play in the presentation of such practices. Platforms such as *El Estormudo*, *Hypermedia Magazine* and *YucaByte*, along with documentaries such as *Dos Patrias* (2020) and *Nadie* (2017), allow for the recording, dissemination and registering of autonomous cultural praxis by linking historical memory and contemporary action. Archives such as the Movimiento San Isidro, the Archivo 27N, interviews in *El Toque* and *Periodismo de Barrio*, plus the *Cuba Posible* digital collection consolidate a documentary substratum linking Cuba anarchism's origins and 21st century cultural activism.

In contemporary Cuba, culture is no neutral territory: it is contested ground in which freedom, autonomy and resistance take shape. Just as the fourth libertarian generation addresses ecology, sexual diversity and digital possibilities in the political sphere, so cultural praxis blends creativity, criticism and action. The 21st century anarchist renaissance is not confined to political activism: it shows itself through music, performance, literature and urban art, building a bridge between historical memory, innovation and social freedom.

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Epilogue: Remembering and a Freedom Not Begged For

Allow me to close this book by paying tribute to Frank Fernández, whose efforts opened the door to a reconstruction of the forgotten history of Cuban anarchism. I had the pleasure of meeting him in the flesh just before publication of his book *El Anarquismo en Cuba*, an encounter that afforded me some insight not just into his academic rigour but also his enthusiasm for rescuing the memory of those who fought for freedom in the island.

Prior to our meeting, Fernández had read some of my articles on Cuban anarchism, articles published in the *Cuba Nuestra* review, and he was keen to meet me in person. In the course of our conversation, he made me a gift of a priceless collection of *Guángara Libertaria* (the review of the Cuban anarchists in exile), which he and his comrades regarded as a real treasure-trove. That collection has continued providing me with a source of inspiration and a guide in further works, consolidating the historical continuity of the libertarian struggle, transcending borders and decades.

His studies documented how from the 1960s through to departure for exile, libertarians had championed workers' emancipation and autonomy vis a vis authoritarianism in all its guises – colonial, dictatorial or revolutionary. Fernández reminds us of the names of those who faced imprisonment, repression and persecution to the point of death: names such as Rolando Tamargo, Santiago Cobo, Luis Linsuain and Plácido Méndez and so many more that live on as symbols of resistance. He also flagged up internal treachery, showing that even libertarian loyalty can be corrupted by the thirst for power.

But history did not come to an end with anarchism's defeat at the hands of State centralism nor with the decades-long silence. The movement has sprung back to life inside Cuba itself, bringing forth a fourth generation that has reinvigorated the ideals of self-management and freedom with brand-new forms of praxis. From the Critical Observatory Network through to the Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop (TLAL) in 2012, contemporary libertarians have demonstrated that social emancipation depends, not upon State legitimacy, but upon horizontal cooperation, solidarity and territorial defences.

This resurrection incorporates unprecedented dimensions such as libertarian ecologism, collectives such as Guardabosques that expose environmental degradation tied to authoritarian decision-making, queer-anarchist activism, with independent projects like Arcoiris that challenge institutional homophobia and State trespasses into personal life: and a culture of resistance through punk, hip-hop and autonomous publications that keep historical memory and social criticism alive.

The movement engages in concrete practice in which freedom is neither begged nor bequeathed but built up from below: city gardens, autonomous libraries, mutual aid groups and horizontal news networks that challenge the State's communications hegemony. This is a direct continuation of the history that Frank Fernandez documented: an anarchism that lives on, not just in exile or in books, but is being reborn in day-to-day action in defiance of coercion and precariousness.

This epilogue, therefore, is a hymn to memory and a call to action: the libertarian utopia lives on, not in government statistics nor in the discourses of the authorities, but in those who reckon that social emancipation is achievable only through freedom, solidarity and self-management, today and forever.

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Backpage Blurb:

This book has been prompted by historiographical necessity: a reconstruction of the narrative of anarchism in Cuba, a phenomenon that has been systematically silenced. On the one hand, colonial and republican historiography looked upon it as a subversive minority: on the other, the official historiography of the 1959 revolution has downplayed any expression of socialism that does not fit in with the State's Marxism-Leninism.

These pages offer an analysis of how Cuban workers, from the workshops of Havana to the communities in Tampa and Key West, devised a current known as anarcho-separatism, which married defence of national independence to a consistent critique of centralized authority in all its guises. The book includes a detailed examination of strikes, newspapers, organizations and key figures, as well as of the strategies of resistance and exile that marked the trajectory of the libertarian movement.

The writings of Frank Fernández, whose book *El Anarquismo en Cuba* and earlier publications documenting the history of Cuban libertarian socialism from the latter half of the 19th century and the fall of the Castroite dictatorship are incorporated. His endeavours, remarked upon in this book, includes testimonials from militants, analysis of domestic repression and an acknowledgment of international contributions made by the exiles. The author's dealings with Fernández, dating back to after the publication of articles about Cuban anarchism in the *Cuba Nuestra* review, afforded access to historical collections such as *Guángara Libertaria*, an essential source in the reconstruction of the movement.

Similarly, the book tackles the rebirth of anarchism in contemporary Cuba, from the emergence of the "Critical Observatory Network" through to the consolidation of a fourth generation of activists in the Alfredo López Libertarian Workshop (TLAL) and the ABRA Social Centre. It documents libertarian ecological initiatives, activism about sexual and reproductive rights, independent publishing activity and strategies for self-organization in a context of State control. This analysis affords an understanding of how libertarian currents adapt to actual circumstances, maintain a continuity with their history and devising new forms of social praxis.

All in all, the book offers a rounded picture of Cuban anarchism, from its origins through to its contemporary expressions and it constitutes a tool for researchers, historians and readers interested

in social and political processes in Cuba, as well as the development of libertarian currents in authoritarian settings.

Retomando el Anarquismo en Cuba was published 28/06/2026

<https://www.lulu.com/es/shop/carlos-manuel-estefan%C3%ADa-aulet/retomando-el-anarquismo-en-cuba/paperback/product-84w92nq.html>

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