PART TWO

ANARCHISM AND SYNDICALISM IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD
At first glance early 20th century Peru would seem an unlikely setting for anarcho-syndicalism to flourish. A predominantly agrarian society with a large and economically marginal indigenous population, Peru scarcely resembled a nation in the second stage of industrial manufacturing. Despite significant capitalist growth in Peru’s export sectors (chiefly mining, sugar, cotton, wool), vast areas of the nation were largely unaffected by capitalist change. With the exception of Lima-Callao, Peru’s capital and adjacent port city, which served as the nation’s administrative, commercial, and financial centre, sizable urban economies were conspicuously absent. Not surprisingly, given this context, the massive influx of European immigrants that catalyzed the anarcho-syndicalist labour movements in Argentina and Brazil bypassed Peru.

Yet Peru was not entirely isolated from anarchist currents. Anarchist ideas and publications circulated widely in Peru by the first decade of the 20th century. Manuel González Prada, a Peruvian aristocrat and social gadfly, and a handful of radical immigrant intellectuals based in Lima facilitated the dissemination of anarchist thought. Simultaneously, a nucleus of self-taught craftsmen and machine-tenders inspired by the writings of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, and Malatesta, spearheaded a movement to organise workers in Lima-Callao based on anarcho-syndicalist doctrine. By dint of their efforts anarcho-syndicalism would become the dominant radical ideology of Peru’s fledgling labour movement. Although the influence of anarcho-syndicalism was strongest in Lima-Callao, it also spread to working-class elements along Peru’s northern coast, and central and southern highland regions.¹ The ideals

¹ There are no national level studies of anarcho-syndicalism in Peru. The extant historiography focuses almost exclusively on Lima-Callao. Evidence of the influence of anarcho-syndicalism among workers along Peru’s northern coast and in the central