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Travis Tomchuk, Transnational Radicals. Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S. 1915-1940; Kenyon Zimmer, Immigrants Against the State. Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America

Chicago (il), University of Illinois Press, pp. 300, \$30.

The past ten to fifteen years or so have witnessed the emergence of a new and exciting trajectory in history and other humanistic disciplines known as the «transnational turn.» Whereas much of the political, social, and cultural history produced before this time tended to focus on particular national contexts, transnational history emphasizes the circulation of peoples, cultures, and ideas through complex, often diasporic, global networks—networks of communication, trade, transportation, migration, and the like—that transcend national borders. Perhaps not surprisingly, transnational approaches have figured prominently in the recent and quite unprecedented proliferation of scholarship on the political, social, and cultural history of anarchism, much of it the work of younger scholars like Tomchuk and Zimmer. In contrast with older histories such as Berry's *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917 to 1945* or Pernicone's *Italian Anarchism, 1864-1892*, transnational studies like those discussed in this review regard anarchism as a «movement *in* movement... [and]... *of* movements, worldwide in scale but composed of overlapping groups of networks loosely demarcated by characteristics such as location, language, and nationality» (Zimmer, p. 2). The result in both cases is a far richer and more nuanced analysis of the complex histories of immigrant anarchist movements in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Focusing on Italian and Yiddish anarchist movements in «three major nodes within anarchism's larger circuits: New York City's Lower East Side; the Italian district of Paterson, New Jersey; and San Francisco's North Beach neighborhood» Zimmer's *Immigrants Against the State* aspires to provide an «entangled and interethnic history of mutual influences and multilateral connections within specific local contexts» (Zimmer, pp. 2-3). Slightly broader in geographic scope, Tomchuk's *Transnational Radicals* discusses Italian anarchist movements in Detroit, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, and Toronto—cities not usually regarded as significant in the history of anarchism—as well as in the more famous locales of New York and New Jersey. Notwithstanding these similarities in subject matter and methodology, the two volumes have very different objectives. Tomchuk, for example, very explicitly characterizes his project as a corrective to the aforementioned state-centered approaches, to which he attributes several major shortcomings such as a tendency «to focus on native-born anarchists while excluding the contribution of anarchist migrants» and «to divorce... anarchist movement[s]—within the confines of national borders—from the wider transnational movement of which [they are] a part» (Tomchuk, pp. 10-11). A transnational approach, in short, «can provide a more complete picture of these movements,» especially as concerns their remarkable resiliency (Tomchuk, p. 8).

Zimmer, for his part, is especially interested in exploring the «transnational, interethnic, and interracial solidarities» that existed «alongside or in place of 'national ties' in anarchist movements and which formed the basis of their unique brand of cosmopolitanism» (Zimmer, p. 7). In lieu of «geographical and political definitions,» anarchists conceived of nationality as «a natural, fluid structure of affiliations established from the bottom up, not the top down» (Zimmer, p. 7). Though often committed to their «native cultures and languages,» they were not «'cosmopolitan patriots' who supported their states of origins» (Zimmer, p. 8). In this way, Zimmer argues, anarchists were able to «reconstitute themselves as stateless but not necessarily nationless individuals» (Zimmer, p. 7).

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For both Tomchuk and Zimmer a transnational approach to the history of immigrant anarchist movements requires rigorous, scrupulously researched analyses of the various mechanisms through which transnational, interethnic anarchist networks were established and maintained over time. Of particular importance in this regard is the study of anarchist print culture, which «created a transnational community of anarchists and transmitted the movement's ideology across space while sustaining collective identities across time» (Zimmer, p. 4). As Tomchuk notes, «literally hundreds of Italian-language anarchist newspapers were established by anarchists living in Europe and South and North America during the 1870-1940 period, with about one hundred of those newspapers originating in the United States alone» (Tomchuk, pp. 6-7). So important were these newspapers that individual anarchists' «affiliation with the movement and with particular factions within it» often depended on which they subscribed to and read.

Alongside the production and consumption of newspapers and other periodicals, Tomchuk emphasizes the development of unique anarchist (counter)cultures with their own customs and traditions, artistic productions and performances, and social events (Tomchuk, p. 8). Such cultures not only provided for «movement retention, reinforcement of movement values, and movement expansion,» but also facilitated «the mobilization of the transnational movement and its resources during times of crisis» (Tomchuk, p. 8). In this way, they provided an alternative to the prevailing capitalist culture against which anarchists struggled.

Both volumes are eloquently written and exceptionally well-researched, drawing upon an astounding array of primary source material and deftly marshaling it in the service of their arguments. (*Immigrants Against the State* is worth reading just for Zimmer's unbelievably thorough and detailed study of anarchist print culture.) More important, they convincingly demonstrate the merits of transnational approaches to political, social, and cultural history, especially the history of anarchism. With these studies, Tomchuk and Zimmer have made significant contributions to the literature that will surely have a profound impact on the study of anarchist history going forward. I cannot recommend them strongly enough.

Nathan Jun (Midwestern State University)



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