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This is a study of the influence of anarchism and syndicalism (a variant of anarchism) on the left and labour movements in South Africa between the 1890s and the 1920s, but with a focus on the first two decades of the twentieth century. Internationally, this was a period of widespread working class unrest and radicalism, and the apogee, the "glorious period", of anarchist and syndicalist influence from the 1890s to the 1920s. The rising influence of anarchism and syndicalism was reflected in South Africa, where it widely influenced the left, as well as significant sections of the local labour movement, as well as layers of the nationalist movements. This influence also spilled into neighbouring countries, fostering a movement that was multi-racial in composition, as well as internationalist and interracial in outlook. These developments are today almost entirely forgotten, and have been largely excised from the literature: this thesis is, above all, a work of recovering the history of a significant tradition, a history that has significant implications for understanding the history of left and labour movements in South Africa and southern Africa.

Keywords

Labour history, unions, radicalism, anarchism, syndicalism, class, national liberation, Marxism, 20th century South Africa, African history, African nationalism, transnational studies, racial ideology, Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, labour, diaspora, internationalism