

Sample chronology of anarchist women's activity in Latin America 1884-1968

What follows is a short sample of some of the activities undertaken by women anarchists in Latin America between 1884 and the 1940s. The chronology is not exhaustive but provides signposts for further enquiry and investigation.

1884

Uruguay: Newspaper *Lucha Obrera* calls for the establishment of a women's branch in the International WorkingMen's Association chapter in Montevideo.

1895

Publication in Buenos Aires of the pamphlet *Propaganda anarquista entre las mujeres* (Anarchist Propaganda Among Women) over the signature of the Italian freethinker Ana Maria Mozón, tackling ideas such as free love, family, exploitation of manufacturing and the various forms of violence (conjugal, beatings, psychological bullying). "We seek liberation from the lust of the employer who exploits us, from the blandishments of the priest who fills heads with superstitions, the authority of the spouse that mistreats you". It is reprinted by the newspaper *La Questione Sociale*.

1896

Newspaper *La Voz de la Mujer* (Woman's Voice) in circulation, 1896-1897. A platform for the anarcho-communist outlook, it circulates among working women in Buenos Aires, La Plata and Rosario for the most part. Its first edition is greeted with hostility by some anarchist circles who describe its editors as "vicious tongues and pens" on account of the attacks they launch on attitudes that are inconsistent with anarchism when it comes to equality between men and women.

1890

Uruguayan anarchist Virginia Bolten heads the first march ever held in Rosario, Argentina to mark the 1st of May. She carries a red flag with this inscription in black: "First of May. Universal Brotherhood. We, the workers of Rosario, abide by the dispositions of the International Labour Committee in Paris." She is the only woman to address the crowd.

1900

Uruguay: Spanish-born Belén de Sárraga, a teacher and freethinking journalist, decides to settle in Uruguay, reckoning that there she will be able to get on with her work without interference, on account of the liberal policies of the government headed by José Battle y Ordóñez.

1901

Mexico: In Guanajuato the first edition of the newspaper *Vesper* appears: it is published by the Mexican revolutionary and anarchist journalist Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza, its purpose being to combat Porfirio Díaz's dictatorship. Despite several interruptions in the form of closures, the paper survives until 1936. Over the years Juana Belen endures political harassment and imprisonment.

Argentina: A significant number of unions affiliated to the anarchist-inclined FORA (Argentine Regional Workers' Federation) back the slogan "Equal pay for equal work".

Uruguay: Unions are formed among the women providing laundry, ironing, match-making and cigarette-making services.

1902

Peru: The anarchist review *La Idea Libre* launches a women's section, including, among other articles, pieces by US suffragettes.

Argentina: The 'Las Libertarias' group is launched offering women alternative ways to resist. Virginia Bolten begins a propaganda tour of several Argentinean cities.

Mexico: Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza's paper, *Vesper*, begins publication in Mexico City. Juana Belén strikes up a connection with the brothers Ricardo and Jesús Flores Magón, core figures in Mexican anarchism and founders of the Mexican Liberal Party.

1903

Mexico: From prison, Elisa Acuña y Rosetti joins with Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza to launch the newspaper *Fiat Lux*. Elisa Acuña is a member of the 'Ponciano Arriaga' Co-ordinating Centre of the Confederation of Liberal Clubs. Their paper becomes the official mouthpiece of the Women's Mutual Society.

Chile: Launch of the pro-anarchist Cosmopolitan Federation of Women in Resistance. Ángela Muñoz Arancibia is prominent in the launch.

1904

Mexico: In Laredo (Texas) Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza, along with journalists and political activists Elisa Acuña and Sara Estela Ramírez, resumes publication of *Vesper*, as well as of the newspapers *La Corregidora* and *La Protesta Nacional*.

Argentina: Juana Rouco Buela, a central figure in female Argentinean anarcho-syndicalism, addresses a FORA rally during the May Day celebrations.

1905

Chile: 10 September sees the release in Valparaíso of the very first edition of *La Alborada* "fortnightly champion of the proletarian classes" (1905-1907), a newspaper with anarchist leanings, founded and directed by the type-setter Carmela Jería, its purpose being "in particular to champion the cause of harried working women". A year later, following the earthquake in Valparaíso, it resurfaces in Santiago with the sub-title "feminist publication".

Puerto Rico: Luisa Capetillo, writer, journalist and anarcho-feminist trade unionist, gets involved at the age of 15 in a farming strike in her native village of Arecibo.

1906

Brazil: At the instigation of the anarchist activist Ernestina Lesina the Association of Bag Stitchers is set up. Lesina issues invitations calling upon the working women to join the fight to secure a cut in work hours. In São Paulo, Lesina launches the newspaper *Anima e Vita*. A lecturer and public speaker, she embraces the cause of female liberation.

In São Paulo the anarchist working women Maria Lopes, Teresa Fabri and Teresa Maria Carini launch a Manifesto addressed to working women. It is published in the anarchist newspaper *Terra Livre*, urging the women to get involved in the strike wave unleashed in São Paulo and urging them to denounce the dire working conditions they have to endure, the excessive working hours and the wretched pay they receive.

Chile: The Santiago Seamstresses' Association begins publication of the newspaper *La Palanca*. It tackles issues such as the workers' movement and carries specific articles on the condition of women and "male oppression".

Argentina: Buenos Aires hosts the International Freethought Congress at which Belén de Sárraga is invited guest of honour.

1907

Argentina: Juana Rouco Buela, Virginia Bolten, Teresa Caporaletti and María Collazo launch the Anarchist Women's Centre. At the same time, in Rosario, a 'Louise Michel' Anarchist Women's Centre is opened to commemorate the French anarchist who took part in the Paris Commune in 1871. Juana Rouco and María Collazo speak at the massive march organised by the historic Tenants' Strike Committee protesting at rent hikes and evictions. That strike gained the support of 100,000 people, most of them working men and women. It was crushed with bloodshed. As a result of the part they played, the government used the Residency Law to deport a number of anarchist leaders as foreigners: these include Uruguayans María Collazo and Virginia Bolten and Spaniard Juana Rouco Buela.

Puerto Rico: Luisa Capetillo champions working women's entitlement to the vote and to organise into trade unions.

Mexico: Emergence of the 'Hijas de Anáhuac' (Daughters of Anáhuac) group made up of female textile workers from Tizapán who embrace the programme of the Flores Magóns' Mexican Liberal Party.

Chile: Carmela Jería delivers a speech to the 40,000-strong crowd at the May Day celebrations.

1908

Uruguay: Appearance of the anarchist newspaper *La Nueva Senda*, launched by Virginia Bolten. María Collazo and Juana Rouco Buela and a team of male anarchists.

1910

Puerto Rico: Luisa Capetillo published the review *Mujer* (Woman).

The VI Labour Congress of the anarchist-inclined Free Workers' Federation (FLT) passes a resolution to launch a women's wing to its organisation.

Uruguay: A Women's Amalgamated Trades Association is launched within the Anarchist Labour Federation of Uruguay.

Argentina: Belén de Sárraga takes part in the International Women's Congress and is appointed honorary chair of the congress.

1911

Peru: Launch of the anarchist paper La Protesta, platform for a group of women tackling matters relative to women's conditions.

1913

Chile: The Spanish-born anti-clerical, freethinking writer Belén de Sárraga arrives in Chile: she gives a series of talks on secularism and freethought. At her instigation, the Women Freethinkers' League of Valparaíso is launched, as is the Women's Anti-Clerical Centre. In Antofagasta, a 'Belén de Sárraga' Women's Centre is opened. At the same time, similar centres open in Iquique and elsewhere in northern Chile.

Paraguay: The first working women's organisations (Papermakers and United Perfume-makers, United Cigarette-makers, United Seamstresses) emerge. The women trouser-makers and waistcoat-makers join the Garment Workers' Resistance Society.

1914

Brazil: Embroidery-worker Angelina Soares gets involved in the anarchist struggle, writing for the newspaper Germinal-Barricata published by her brother Florentino, in Portuguese and Italian. She also writes in different São Paulo anarchist press organs. She helps launch and leads the Women's Education Centre.

Chile: The Iquique Anti-Clerical Centre lays on an evening event with Belén de Sárraga, generating much upset and outrage in clerical and conservative quarters in the town.

Peru: The Female Cooks' Union is set up by way of a protest at an order issued by the governor banning working women from associating freely.

1915

Uruguay: In Montevideo, the newspaper La Batalla "a newspaper of ideas and criticisms" appears under the guidance of the campaigning anarchist María Collazo.

Belén de Sárraga's America a través de un continente begins to circulate. The book is the result of her travels through Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile.

1916

Chile: A 'Louise Michel' Centre for the Instruction of Freethinking Women is launched in Iquique.

Mexico: The 'Mujeres Acratas' (Anarchist Women) group is formed: attached to the Casa del Obrero Mundial, it is headed by the seamstress Esther Torres.

1917

Mexico: Juana Belén Gutiérrez de Mendoza secures funding and land for an Experimental Communal Farming Colony. The project founders for want of trade union support. Puerto Rico's Luisa Capetilla has a similar notion but she too fails to raise interest from the trade union leadership. Both projects are viewed as "overly idealistic".

1918

Emergence of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which proclaims that one of its essential missions is to end the differential pay rates for women and to create the appropriate conditions to "afford equal opportunity to all human beings, regardless of race, creed or gender". The principle of "equal pay for equal work" will have to wait until 1951 and the convention passed by member states on the issue. But even now, implementation is awaited.

Brazil: Elvira Boni de Lacerda, an anarchist woman leader, joins with Elisa Gonçalves de Oliveira, Aida Moraes, Isabel Peleteiro, Noemia Lopes, Carmen Ribeiro and others to found the Seamstresses', Furriers' and Allied Trades Union.

Mexico: 16 August sees the opening of the Women's Radical Centre, part of the anarcho-syndicalist Casa del Obrero Mundial school of thought. The Centre brings out a newspaper El Iconoclasta that claims to be produced by "eager female fighters and designed to raise the consciousness of women enslaved by Roman vampirism" (a reference to Catholic clergy sucking on women's blood?)

Peru: In the town of Huacho the 'Luz y Libertad' (Light and Freedom) Women's Centre is set up. Of anarchist inspiration, it is chaired by Luzmilla La Rosa.

1919

Brazil: A seamstresses' strike led by the Seamstresses', Furriers' and Allied Trades Union erupts, gaining improved pay and the 8-hour day.

Peru: An anarchist-inspired Women's Campaign for Cheap Subsistence Committee is formed. It agrees to summon "a women's hunger rally."

Puerto Rico: Under the guidance of Emilia Hernández and Genara Pagán the First Congress of Puerto Rican Working Women meets, under the auspices of the Free Workers' Federation (FLT). One resolution passed calls for equal rights for men and women, including the right to vote.

1920

Brazil: The III Brazilian Labour Congress, in which a delegation from the Seamstresses', Furriers' and Allied Trades Union takes part. Elvira Boni de Lacerda chairs the closing session.

1921

Argentina: A group of women headed by Juana Rouco Buela, launches the Argentinean Social Studies Centre which gives birth to the anarchist newspaper Nuestra Tribuna (1922-24), described as dealing with "Ideas, Art, Criticism and Literature". This is the first anarchist publication that is international in character. Like La Voz de Mujer it comes in for a lot of criticism and triggers a controversy in anarchist circles. The publication also wrestles with funding difficulties and the refusal of a press to carry on publishing it as a result of police threats. The final edition appears in November 1923. Juana Rouco and her family are forced to quit Buenos Aires.

Chile: Launch of the Working Women's Union Federation, backed by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

1924

Argentina: Nuestra Tribuna resurfaces in Tandil on 1 November, albeit that it is short-lived. It grapples with lots of problems. The newspaper's premises come under gun attack from a group opposed to its thinking. It ceases circulation.

1925

Bolivia: In the Oruro district the II Labour Congress is held. It draws only two women delegates - Angélica Ascui and María de Macedo - who denounce the exploitation of women and children in industry. They demand legislation in favour of pregnant working women, the establishment of people's universities and schools for the working class.

Argentina: In Buenos Aires, Nuestra Tribuna embarks upon its third phase and publishes three issues. This is a difficult time for anarchism which is entering a decline.

1927

Bolivia: Establishment of the Women's Labour Federation (FOF), a wing of the pro-anarchist Local Labour Federation (FOL), most of whose members are drawn from domestic service, women market traders and cooks. They agree to operate autonomously of the men's organisations. In addition to raising a schedule of work demands, they call for absolute divorce, the setting up of nurseries and for all children of either sex to be equal before the law.

1936

Bolivia: Launch of the Women's Florists' Union. The female anarchist leader Petronila Infantes launches the Kitchen Staff Trade Union, demanding fixed hours. The Labour Congress meeting in La Paz agrees to lobby for "universalisation of Sundays off", the 8-hour day, the inclusion of domestic servants in social legislation and the replacement of the term 'domestic' by 'housework employee'

1937

Bolivia: During a FOL demonstration, anarchist leader Petronila Infantes opens her address with the words “To my proletarian women comrades”, invoking the exploitation suffered by women paid less than their male counterparts. “Women are shackled by the heaviest, blackest, foulest chains ... And the remedy lies in rebellion.”

1940

Bolivia: At the end of the war in the Chaco, the FOF is relaunched with additional women’s trade union branches.

1947

Chile: With the Gabriel González Videla dictatorship at its height, the ‘Louise Michel’ Libertarian Athenaeum opens in Iquique to “address the needs of female weavers”, under the leadership of Flora Sanhueza, one of the most outstanding anarchists. She was arrested and ‘disappeared’ in 1973 during Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship.

1964

Argentina: Publication of Juana Rouco Buela’s autobiography *Historia de un ideal vivido por una mujer* (The Story of an Ideal as Lived by a Woman).

1968

Argentina: Juana Rouco Buela dies at the age of 80.

From: www.rojoynegro.info/. Translated by: Paul Sharkey.