

# New Forms of Worker Organization

## The Syndicalist and Autonomist Restoration of Class Struggle Unionism

Edited by Immanuel Ness

Foreword by Staughton Lynd

Bureaucratic labor unions are under assault throughout the world. Most unions have surrendered the achievements of the mid-twentieth century, when the working class was a militant force for change throughout the world. The decline of labor unions has exposed workers throughout the world to capitalist absolutism, where trade unions are unable to defend workers' interests.

As unions implode and weaken, workers are independently forming their own unions, rooted in the tradition of syndicalism and autonomism—and unions rooted in the tradition of self-directed action are auguring a new period of class struggle throughout the world. In Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe, workers are rejecting leaders and forming authentic class-struggle unions rooted in sabotage, direct action, and striking to achieve concrete gains.

This is the first book to compile workers struggles on a global basis, examining the formation and expansion of radical unions in the Global South and Global North. The tangible evidence marshaled in this book serves as a handbook for understanding the formidable obstacles and concrete opportunities for workers challenging neoliberal capitalism, even as the unions of the old decline and disappear.

Contributors include Au Loong-Yu, Bai Ruixue, Arup K. Sen, Shawn Hattingh, Piotr Bizyukov and Irina Olimpieva, Genese M. Sodikoff, Aviva Chomsky, Dario Bursztyn, Gabriel Kuhn, Erik Forman, Steven Manicastro, and Jack Kirkpatrick.

### ABOUT THE EDITOR

**Immanuel Ness** is a political economist who specializes in labor unions and professor of Political Science at City University of New York. He is editor of *WorkingUSA: The Journal of Labor and Society* and author of numerous works including *Guest Workers and Resistance to U.S. Corporate Despotism*. He was a worker and union organizer in the food, maintenance, and publishing industries.

### ABOUT STAUGHTON LYND

Staughton Lynd taught American history at Spelman College and Yale University. He was director of Freedom Schools in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. An early leader of the movement against the Vietnam War, he was blacklisted and unable to continue as an academic. He then became a lawyer, and in this capacity has assisted rank-and-file workers and prisoners for the past thirty years. He has written, edited, or coedited with his wife Alice Lynd more than a dozen books.

### ACCOLADES

"As the U.S. labor movement conducts its latest, frantic search for 'new ideas,' there is no better source of radical thinking on improved modes of union functioning than the diverse contributors to this timely collection. *New Forms of Worker Organization* vividly describes what workers in Africa, Asia, South America, and Europe have done to make their unions more effective. Let's hope that these compelling case studies of rank-and-file struggle and bottom up change lead to more of the same where it's needed the most, among those of us 'born in the USA!'"

—Steve Early, former organizer for the Communications Workers of America and author of *Save Our Union: Dispatches from a Movement in Distress*



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