

## Anna Mendleson 1948-2009

Anna Mendleson\*, 'Stoke Newington Eight' defendant and poet, has died in Cambridge at the age of 61. She died on 16 November 2009 after a long battle with a brain tumour. Her three children were with her in her last days.

Anna was born in Stockport in 1948. Her father had fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War and became a Labour councillor. Her mother had worked with Holocaust survivors. Studying at Essex University from 1967 to 1969, she left without a degree, having moved from radical student politics to political activism with the Claimants' Union and underground press.

The Angry Brigade's bombing of the house of Home Secretary Robert Carr in January 1971 unleashed a high-profile police campaign against the libertarian left characterised, according to Gordon Carr, by antagonism and mutual incomprehension. Anna was arrested in 1971 and accused of conspiracy to cause explosions and possession of weapons and explosives in the Stoke Newington Eight trial of 1972.

The trial was a scene of political conflict from start to finish. 'The courtroom was made into an open forum by some defendants defending themselves.' (John Barker) He, Anna Mendleson and Hilary Creek represented themselves. This made the cross-examinations 'by far the most bitterly contested part of the trial. It served once again to illustrate the lack of any kind of common ground between the authorities and those on trial. The fact that Barker and the others were so articulate in their own defence threw the conflict into even greater relief.' (Gordon Carr)

Of course, there were lighter moments:

'Mr Yallop (forensic expert): I would indeed say that it was a miracle no-one was killed or seriously injured in any of the explosions.

Anna: Mr Yallop, would you tell the court what is the statistical probability for there to exist an associated set of 27 miracles?

Mr Yallop: Er, no, hum, her, I don't think I could.'

John Barker described her in the trial as displaying 'political passion without clichés'.

Anna was one of the four defendants convicted (alongside John Barker, Hilary Creek and James Greenfield). 'Despite the guilty verdict, it had still been a victory for those who had defended themselves. Relying on lawyers alone would never have got us as close as we did to a spectacular victory against the state ... It was a ten-to-two majority verdict. The mainly working-class jury initially failed to agree on convicting the first four ... Two of them stuck out for a complete acquittal of all eight of us ... the only way out of the impasse had been a compromise with the three 'waverers': four acquittals in exchange for four

convictions - and an attempt to mitigate their decision with a strong plea for clemency.' (Stuart Christie)

Anna was sentenced to 10 years, and was paroled, after five years in Holloway, in November 1976. After her release she avoided publicity and devoted herself to poetry, writing as Grace Lake.

John Barker paid her this tribute: 'I saw her quite a lot in the 1980s and she was as much of a dynamo, excited by life and undefeated as she was before those years in prison. ... she could easily have had followers of one sort or another, and quite rightly she obviously made a clear choice not to.'

Anna's friend and fellow poet, Peter Riley, described her work: 'Her poetry ranged widely in manner but was basically ecstatic and expostulatory, often in an angry tone concerning the harms that had been done to her, but also outrageously ludic [playful] in the Surrealist line. She accumulated several thousand hand-written poems and probably a greater number of ink drawings, at which she was equally skilled.'

'Tall and striking with her plentiful dark hair ... she will long be remembered sweeping through the streets of Cambridge in carefully chosen flamboyant, often dark, clothing, usually on her way to or from the University Library, which became her second home.'

\* [Mendleson was her family name, but it's often spelled Mendelson. Later she adopted the spelling Mendelssohn.]

### Black flame : the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt [Review]

This is volume one of an introduction to the history and ideas of anarchism, but not like any you've read before. Rather than repeat conventional commentaries, the authors make a series of challenging decisions. Against the lowest-common-denominator approach of writers from Eltzbacher to Marshall they limit anarchism to the class struggle anarchist movement (that is, libertarian socialism) from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

"No serious examination of Lao Tzu, the Anabaptists, and Bakunin can maintain that they shared the same views and goals, so it is not clear why they should be grouped together; [...] To claim that anarchism is universal is a useful legitimising myth for an embattled movement; to take such a claim seriously, however, does little to advance the analysis and activities of that movement." (p18)

This is a helpful and necessary distinction. "The point is not to dismiss other libertarian ideas and the wide range of antiauthoritarian ideas that have developed in many cultures but to suggest that we need to differentiate [continues p. 6]

## Abel Paz

### Abel Paz, Anarchist and Historian

Diego Camacho, better known under his nom de plume Abel Paz, was born in Almería on 12 August 1921. He died in Barcelona on 13 April 2009. An anarchist militant, self-educated and an historian, he wrote a much-plagiarised life of Durruti which has been translated into 14 languages. He toured half the world as a regular lecturer on anarchism and the Spanish Revolution, covering Europe, Latin America and Japan. He was utterly ignored by the official historians who sneered at his immense efforts as a historian on the simple basis that he was not part of the world of academe and the commercial circuit. A militant historian of Abel Paz's stature could expect nothing but rejection from bourgeois academics. Catalanist and anti-libertarian reviews purporting to be about "history" always ignored Abel Paz the militant and historian, although they could not help publishing articles plagiarised from him. Out of hatred for the anarchist? Or was he shunned because of his language, his activism or his lack of letters after his name?

I used to give Diego a call two or three times a year and then drop by to see him the next day. Anybody without a thorough knowledge of Diego might have thought him a hard nut, a hardness that his forthright speech, irrepressible and direct, could aggravate intolerably. He spoke his mind and he believed what he said and this was his "shortcoming". But after that first impression, and one his interlocutor had passed his initial scrutiny, once he was chatting in detail about matters that interested him, you could get some measure of the man's qualities. If some journalist or interviewer failed to pass muster, he might find himself a target of jokes and insults that cut deep like stones thrown with all his might. The house on the Calle Verdi where he lived was, for many a long year, a, international and internationalist place of pilgrimage and hospitality. I remember Diego in the late 1970s climbing up a wooden staircase overlooking the front of the doorway behind which the Italian anarchists Berneri and Barbieri had once lived, in the very building where they were arrested by the Stalinists who murdered them. From the top of those stairs, after placing a cardboard plaque renaming the Plaza del Ángel the Plaza Camillo Berneri, he launched into an impromptu speech invoking the figure of that Italian internationalist, a revolutionary and an anarchist.

Diego had a huge library that covered all the walls of his home, from the reception room to the kitchen-sitting room. If one stopped to read the spines, there were real wonders there to behold, especially in French, a legacy from his long years in exile in Paris. The books dealing with Morocco were truly extraordinary. In his archives he had an extensive collection of handbills and pamphlets published in May '68. Most significant of all, though, was his correspondence with the most prominent leaders of the Spanish anarchist movement of 1936. I once asked him about the fate of his library and archives. Whereupon he told me, very sardonically, about a visit he had had from a prominent university professor, a man in charge of an important archive collection (his name I refuse to recall) who tried to bid for every item in his excellent library, including the collection of handbills and pamphlets on

May '68, and his priceless correspondence. Diego had had high hopes of that offer made towards the end of the 1980s and dreamt of a windfall on which he could survive, publish future books and fund an *ateneo*. But when Diego actually listened to the offer from the learned professor, the director of a leading archive with lots of funds, he could not believe his ears: five thousand pesetas! And not a penny for the opening of any *ateneo* or cultural centre. Diego's very phlegmatic response was that he might be poor but he had never sunk that low, that the offer was an insult to his intelligence and an affront to the very library and archives for which the bid had been made. He literally booted the guy out of his house. And that library and archives are no longer in Barcelona because a penny-pinching Catalonia [...] proved incapable of stumping up the funding for the *ateneo*-archive that Diego dreamed of setting up. But what could a genuine anarchist expect of officialdom anyway? In 1999 he put his signature to the *Fight for History Manifesto* denouncing the manipulations of official historians and their refusal to recognise the existence in 1936 Spain of a splendid revolutionary movement that stood up to the coup attempt of a military-fascist State.

He was granted a pittance by way of compensation for his years behind bars under Francoism, albeit that it was enough for him to self-publish his autobiography, using the "sophisticated" cardboard box method: the money raised from sales of the first volume was put in the box until enough had built up to allow publication of the second. And so on, with the third and fourth volumes. This will seem laughable to cultural, Catalanist, bourgeois circles used to oodles of money and when they themselves, their master's voice, have access to such generous subsidies.

One of his last public appearances took place at a joint tribute to Andreu Nin and Camillo Berneri, arranged by would-be party officials looking to get their snouts in the trough, as part of their campaign to lay the groundwork for a new election ticket, an umbrella for supporters of Catalan independence, rusty Trotskyists, recycled Stalinists, resuscitated POUMists and disillusioned anarchists. One of the organisers of the tribute had this to say of Diego Camacho's overall contribution to proceedings: "*Up popped Abel Paz and he was invited to say something, and, whatever you might say about the man, he was no hypocrite. When it came his turn to say something he stated that Nin and Berneri had had nothing in common and he wrote us all off as phonies, but luckily he was brief and finished by thanking us for the invitation. You're welcome, but never again.*" That "never again" was reneged upon a few months later when, in an obituary for Diego, the very same writer, now making no mention of Abel Paz's dressing down of the lumping together of the revolutionary Berneri, a critic of the CNT's participation in government with Nin, a minister of Justice in the Generalidad government; nor, of course, was there any reference made to his condemnation of the pro-independence, Popular Front-type election coalition. The writer made do with this remark: "Abel left, increasingly closed-minded in his attitudes."

Abel Paz was so "closed-minded" that he was always up for a debate on any platform, especially where young

## Abel Paz

people were concerned, his purpose being to spur them into action, rebellion, non-conformity and the struggle against the established order! He could put up with any number of differences of opinion, just as long as the methodology and the goals were subversive. As the years passed the differences of opinion between us increased and our analyses of 1936 diverged more and more, although this never impacted on our personal dealings and respect for each other. Diego had always had a gift for distinguishing between revolutionaries (anarchist or otherwise) and posturing phonies whom he wasted no time in exposing where it hurt them the most: in their lies and essential reformism.

Latterly, the walls of his home had been stripped bare: the books were gone, his conversation was punctuated with long, worrisome silences that opened on to the big questions of human existence and the alien, hostile capitalist society that he had spent a lifetime fighting to destroy in order to raise up a new world “already growing in our hearts.” At our last encounter we chatted again, as we always did, about the war and the revolution. And about why and how it was all lost. After one lengthy silence, he whispered, “No matter. Because the joy and the freedom tasted during a fortnight of revolution are justification enough for a lifetime of penury and disappointments.” And in his eyes the purifying flames of burning churches and monasteries seemed to be burning still. More than seventy years after, there was an imperishable flame still in his eyes: they had seen revolution on the streets of Barcelona. And that was his and no one could ever take it away from him.

There is one thing about Diego’s work that academic history knows nothing of and which it holds in contempt in that it falls outside of its business plan, its impossible objectivity and its scientific pretensions; whenever Diego wrote or spoke, he did so without ever playing word games, because before writing, or speaking, he had staked his life on the meaning of those words. Another thing unknown to and scorned by the academics is the fact that much of his research, his reading and his endeavours were pursued at the end of a long day’s work, at the expense of sleep and rest. He was driven by a passion for revolution: he wrote down the history of the 1936 revolution because that was his way of campaigning for the next one.

Here a few titles from Diego’s extensive list (his most important books perhaps)

*Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* (in English from AK Press 2007, translation by Chuck Morse)

*The Spanish Civil War* (available in English: Hazan Pocket Archives, Paris, 1997)

*The Story of the Iron Column*

*Paradigm of Revolution*

His four volumes of autobiography:

*Prickly Pears and Scorpions (Memoirs 1921-1936)*

*Journey into the Past (Memoirs 1936-1939)*

*In the Fog (Memoirs 1939-1942)*

*Backs to The Wall (Memoirs 1942-1954)*

*The Internationals in The Spanish Region*

*The Moroccan Question and the Spanish Republic*

*CNT 1939-1951: Anarchism versus the Francoist State*

Diego’s filmography or a list of those films on which he worked as screenwriter deserve a separate listing. For the death of a man with this sort of an oeuvre to his credit to escape the notice of the media (with the exception of the anarchist press and a short notice in *El País* a fortnight after his death) and the failure to attract fulsome comment in specialist contemporary history reviews is no accident. Diego was/is in the black list of authors not to be published, who “do not exist” because they are incorrigible and dangerous. Which is the finest tribute that could be paid to an author of a life of Durruti, a just reward for his struggles and research. I think, too, that it says all that needs saying about the press because it chooses ignorance of what ought to be known.

The Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, which Diego helped set up had reissued most of his books. For anyone keen to understand the war and the Spanish revolution of 1936 they are essential reading. **Diego has gone now but he has left us his oeuvre, his passion.**

Agustín Guillamón, Barcelona, October 2009

### New pamphlet

#### **Anarchist International Action Against Francoism From Genoa 1949 to The First Of May Group** **Antonio Téllez Solà, translated by Paul Sharkey**

From the end of the Spanish Civil War, the anarchist movement fought to undermine the Francoist dictatorship. Solidarity actions in Western Europe aimed to isolate the regime, and bring pressure to bear in defence of militants inside Spain. Determined to avoid casualties, their campaign of armed protests saved many activists from the death penalty.

Contents:

The attack on Spain’s embassy in Genoa in 1949

The Libertarian movement in the fight against Franco (1962-1974): The Internal Defence agency (DI) and the Iberian Libertarian Youth Federation’s (FIJL) First of May Group

The 1962 abduction of Spain’s honorary vice-consul in Milan

One Episode in the Libertarian Movement’s Struggle against Francoism : The “First of May Group” and the kidnapping in Rome of Monsignor Marcos Ussia, the ecclesiastical attaché at Spain’s embassy to the Vatican (Friday 29 April 1966-Wednesday 11 May 1966)

Antonio Téllez Solà, the Herodotus of the anti-Franco maquis by Stuart Christie

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### Credit

This issue of KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library produced February 2010. Thanks to all who helped (this nearly had to be a double issue), and those who are already at work on texts for the next one!

### “Workers in Uniform”

Please get in touch if you have or know the location of any issues of “Workers in Uniform”, World War Two British anarchist bulletin aimed the armed forces.

## Apollon Karelin

### Life of the Anarchist Jesuit [Review]

Review of: Sapon, V. P. *Apollon Andreyevich Karelin: Ocherk Zhizni* [A.A. Karelin: *A Sketch of His Life*] Nizhny Novgorod : Izd. Yu. A. Nikolayev, 2009. – 120 pg.

This monograph by the Nizhny Novgorod historian of the anarchist movement Vladimir Sapon, published in 200 copies, is dedicated to a person who is somewhat controversial in the history of Russia's libertarian movement – the anarcho-mystic who was a member of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee<sup>1</sup> representing the anarchist-communist faction, Apollon Karelin (1863-1926). The author's reserved and polite manner is contrasted to the reaction that the book's main protagonist caused in his contemporaries.

The book provides an overview of Karelin's volcanic activity – in simple chronological order, against the background of the epoch and the development of the Russian revolutionary movement. After starting his illegal activities as a grammar-school boy, the son of prominent photographer Andrey Karelin (a photo he took of Nizhny Novgorod is on the cover – too bad the printing is lousy) undertook propaganda and organisational activities wherever his luck and the repressions sent him throughout the empire, from Siberia to Belarus.

“The Beard” (Karelin's nickname was quite justified: only Prince Kropotkin could be his rival in the amount of facial hair) arrived in the Parisian émigré circles as a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and, if the Brockhaus & Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary is to be trusted, a not particularly outstanding economist. However, his political sympathies were getting closer and closer to anarchism, and Karelin ended up quitting the PSR. It was in Paris that Karelin, whose articles under different pen names would fill entire issues of certain émigré anarchist papers, joined a Masonic Grand Lodge. It was also in the early 1910s that the first large-scale scandals regarding the “Jesuit,” “dictatorial” methods of organisational work that Karelin used were made public. It was then the Nikolai Rogdayev started to use the word “karelinshchina” which signified a combination of conspiratorial methods and mystical rituals. (In 1913-1915 there was a massive split in the Russian émigré anarchist groups – the Zurich group led by Rogdayev accused Karelin and his organisation in Paris of antisemitism (they have published some leaflets in Yiddish though), using mystical elements in their propaganda, centralised and Nechaev-like organisational methods. The 1913 conference of Karelin's organisation ended in scandal due to persistent rumours of some agents provocateurs present there. Karelin eventually agreed to a mediation court, though he tried to delay it and eventually it didn't happen because of the war. Burtsev and Kropotkin refused to support Karelin in this matter.)

After the revolution, in 1918 Karelin became one of the leading “Soviet anarchists” and joined the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. Naturally, this was sharply criticized by other anarchists who thought him a renegade. Alongside his legal, parliamentary role, Karelin also played the part of the leader of the “Gnostic” movement. From his House of Soviets apartment grew the metastasis of anarcho-mysticism which was perhaps the most telling sign of the crisis the libertarian movement was

experiencing in 1920s Russia. Anarcho-mysticism was a 1920s “new age” type sect in the Soviet Union which was influenced by theosophy and some strains of anarchism. Its origins are likely to be found in the 1900s symbolist movement, with poets Alexander Blok (who was quite enamoured with Bakunin's rebellious spirit, for one), Vyacheslav Ivanov and particularly Georgy Chulkov as supporters. Anarcho-mystics moved away from political and economic analysis into psychology and the spiritual world, and eventually split from the political anarchist movement altogether. The main ethical categories for them were freedom of the will (which was similar to anarchist individualism) and a will to sacrifice oneself for the common good (which was part of Russian revolutionary ethics). Their propaganda mostly consisted of gnostic- and New Testament-influenced oral legends which described a mystical “alternative history” of the world, ancient Egypt, Holy Grail, high spirits etc. Needless to say it was almost completely an intelligentsia-based movement.<sup>2</sup>

Karelin's life story itself takes up about half of the book. All statements that the author makes are supported by references and source quotations. The image of “The Beard” / “Santei The Knight” that emerges from the text is not particularly colourful but it is accurate. No picturesque yet hardly trustworthy psychological explanations of his activities are offered. In fact it is a little unclear why the author doesn't really pay much attention to the works and ideas of his protagonist, despite the extreme wealth of writings by the latter.

The other half of the book contains source documents, mostly unpublished previously – gendarmerie papers (including briefing notes on Vladimir Zabrezhnev, Mariya Goldsmith and Nikolai Rogdayev), excerpts of polemics in the anarchist papers, Apollon Andreyevich's address to the 5th Soviets Congress on the question of the death penalty, a sizeable, depressing and inarticulate anarcho-mystical tract “Outlines of Non-Modern Psychology” (mid-1920s, unknown author, the style is horrendous parody) and, last but not least, an excerpt from Alexei Borovoi's diary dated June 28, 1928 which sums up Karelin's historical role:

“Revolt, criminal stories that I cannot write about here...”

“I've received some interesting materials on Karelin from Ryndev. This vulgar anarchic holy-roller, self-righteous hypocrite, Jesuit, who didn't stop at mystifications, at lies, at backstabbing, is now finally clear to me.

“Anarchist Khlyst lacking sincerity who gave birth – to insolent, charlatan Khlysts (Solonovich<sup>3</sup>), to beat down meditators (Anghel, Proferansov, Bogomolov<sup>4</sup>, “the ecstatic old ladies” etc.) – was a hanger-on, Khlystakov (Borovoi combines the name of Khlysts sect and that of a Gogol character Khlestakov – translator's note)... Only now do I appreciate the price of prejudice against him in all – active anarchists who had real standing and unspoiled reputation. Too bad that no one at the Golos Truda (Voice of Labour, anarchist publishing house in the USSR – translator's note) gave me a character reference of him that went all the way at the right moment. That was the only reason that I made the mistake – of making an acquaintance of him which provoked other – remarkably larger

## Apollon Karelin

mistakes: restoring relationships with the compulsive liar Solonovich, attempting to work together etc. etc.”

Szarapow

<http://spb-anarchists.anho.org/karelin.jpg>

[http://bakunista.nadir.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=350&Itemid=1](http://bakunista.nadir.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=350&Itemid=1)

### Notes

1 The All-Russian Central Executive Committee was the highest legislative, executive and controlling organ of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic between 1917 and 1937, and was Bolshevik-dominated from the beginning, with other factions (SRs and Mensheviks) eventually removed. The Anarchist-Communist faction which included Karelin, Alexander Ge (1879-1919), R. E. Ermand, and F. G. Gorbov (d. 1918) for the most part did not take part in voting and performed an observatory role.

2 “Order of Light (Orden Sveta) appeared, most likely, in 1922/1923 as a filiation of Order of the Templars which united writers, actors, musicians and artists of Moscow. During 1924 and early 1925 it experienced the biggest rise and influx of members which was for a while halted by repressions against anarchists. The Order later recovered and until early 1930 has worked in close contact with the Kropotkin Museum occasionally using its space for charity and educational events – lectures, concerts, memorial nights....

“The conflict which developed at the Kropotkin Museum in the Spring 1927, caused by an attempt by a group of political anarchists to use the museum as a legal platform for their agitation, has, probably with some assistance from the OGPU [the author does not substantiate his claim – translator’s note], spilled over to the pages of the Paris-based *Delo Truda* (*Labour’s Cause*) magazine which in the next two years has printed materials exposing anarcho-mystics, *Rassvet* (*Dawn*) newspaper and *Probuzhdeniye* (*Awakening*) magazine, which culminated in an article which was a denunciation of the Order and A. A. Solonovich personally [in no. 50/51, 1929]. As a result, starting from autumn 1929, the OGPU started systematic actions to liquidate first the periphery of the Order (the Bibliographic Circle case, groups of Moscow anarchists and young anarcho-mystics), from summer 1930 moved to destroy the provincial centres (Nizhny Novgorod case, Sochi case), liquidating the head organisation of Order of Light in September 1930. The Templars who remained free after this action were arrested in 1937-1938 and later. Attempts to revive the Order in late 1950s which were undertaken by G. V. Gorinevskiy, B. M. Vlasenko and V. S. Pikunov who contacted the surviving members did not produce notable results.”

From “Mystical orders in cultural life of Soviet Russia” by A. L. Nikitin In: *Orden rossiyskikh tamplierov* (*Order of Russian Templars*). Vol. 1 (1922-1930). Published and compiled by A. L. Nikitin. Moscow, Minushee, 2003. Pp. 29-30

3 Alexei Alexandrovich Solonovich (Oct 11, 1887-March 4, 1937) was a poet, mathematician, and theorist of mystical anarchism who led the movement after Karelin’s death having inherited his title of Santei the Knight. Born in the shtetl of Kazimierz in the Lublin province in a colonel’s

family; nobleman. In February 1911 expelled from the Moscow university after student riots, after rehabilitation returned to Moscow and graduated from the physics & maths faculty in 1914. Soon thereafter accused of insulting religion and morality in his poetry book *Vagrancy of the Spirit*, acquitted by the court. Taught maths in schools, including the Bauman Higher Technical School. Arrested in 1925 and sentenced to 3 years in political isolator for underground anarchist activities, released on parole. Headed the anarchist section at the Kropotkin Museum. Re-arrested in 1930 along with his son Sergey, and again in 1936. He died in gaol in Novosibirsk while on hunger strike.

Sources:[http://www.hronos.km.ru/biograf/bio\\_s/solonovich.html](http://www.hronos.km.ru/biograf/bio_s/solonovich.html)

E.V. Zolotukhina-Abolina. *V.V. Nalimov*. Moscow – Rostov-on Don, IKTs MarT, 2005, pp. 8-12

*Orden rossiyskikh tamplierov* (*Order of Russian Templars*). Vol. 1 (1922-1930). Published and compiled by A. L. Nikitin. Moscow, Minushee, 2003.

4 Proferansov, Nikolai Ivanovich (Oct 23, 1885-March 12, 1934), historian, technical editor of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. Anarcho-syndicalist, later anarcho-mystic.

Bogomolov, Nikolai Konstantinovich (July 28, 1887-not earlier than 1934), Moscow region. Accountant. Anarcho-communist, later anarcho-mystic. Pen name Nikolin.

(from: <http://socialist.memo.ru/lists/slovník/index.htm> and *Orden rossiyskikh tamplierov* (*Order of Russian Templars*). Vol. 1 (1922-1930). Published and compiled by A. L. Nikitin. Moscow, Minushee, 2003.)

### Anarchist Lives

**Vladimiro Muñoz** (b. Gijón, Spain, 12 November 1920). Educated at the Arts & Crafts School in San Sebastian, he fled to France in 1936 after the fall of the city of Irún. He then returned after a time to Tarragona and in 1937 was conscripted for service on the Aragon front (at the age of 17). In the meantime he had become an anarchist pacifist and individualist, a follower of the philosophy of the Frenchman Han Ryner. In 1938 when the civil war ended he finished up in concentration camps in France in Argelès-sur-mer and Bram. After he was released he was drafted as a slave labourer for the Germans, working on the La Rochelle submarine base. In 1947 he moved to Uruguay (where he had relatives living) and became a regular contributor to the Uruguayan anarchist press. He was also an associate of Eugen Relgis, the Rumanian anarchist and wrote a *History of the Rumanian Anarchists* (leading individuals rather than movements). Developing an interest in Rafael Barrett he tracked down his family and researched the man and his works, his findings appearing in several books. One was a *Bibliography of Rafael Barrett: Uruguay 1908-1911* (1982). He died in Montevideo in 2004, but not before publishing *Barrett* (Asunción-Montevideo 1995), a chronology of Barrett’s life and writings.

[We have ready to go onto our website a review of a new book on Rafael Barrett and another article on the history of Paraguayan anarchism.]

## Black Flame Review

**Black Flame Review** [continued from page 1] anarchism and syndicalism from other currents, including libertarian ones, the better to understand both anarchism and these other tendencies. “Class Struggle” anarchism, sometimes called revolutionary or communist anarchism, is not a type of anarchism; in our view it is the *only* anarchism. We are aware that our approach contradicts some long-standing definitions, but we maintain that the meaning of anarchism is neither arbitrary nor just a matter of opinion – the historical record demonstrates that there is a core set of beliefs.” (p19)

Against standard Marxist “explanations” of the existence of anarchism, “we reject the view that the broad anarchist tradition is an atavistic throwback to the precapitalist world, and argue that it was a response to the rise of capitalism and the modern state, that its origins were as recent as the 1860s, and that it emerged within and was an integral part of modern socialist and working class movements.” (p14)

Though dependent on English-language sources, Schmidt and van der Walt take a global approach, pushing beyond the “usual suspects” in Western Europe and North America, to Latin America, southern Africa and East Asia. This is helped by another, more controversial and less successful, redefinition: all types of syndicalism are claimed as anarchist.

“Syndicalism is a *variant* of anarchism, and the syndicalist movement is *part* of the broad anarchist tradition.” (p16) “That some syndicalist described themselves as Marxists or rejected the anarchist label does not invalidate their place in the broad anarchist tradition; we do not use self-identification but rather ideas as the basis for inclusion.” (p17)

No doubt discussion on this will run and run, but I think they’re too energetic claiming every syndicalist for anarchism. James Connolly and Daniel De Leon may be close to our ideas, they are certainly worth studying, but fighting for “industrial socialism” is not the same as anarchism. The drawback to disagreeing with their definition is having to note if historical figures are anarchists, or syndicalists and “honorary anarchists”. Otherwise their potted biographies of thinkers and militants are very useful.

Having defined the broad anarchist tradition (and its historical roots), the remaining two thirds of the book is a discussion of anarchist strategy and tactics, illustrated with examples from the movement’s history. The first section here suggests a further division of the anarchist movement into followers of “mass” and “insurrectionist” strategies.

First, “mass” and “insurrectionist” are current terms, not the ones used historically. Luigi Galleani, with his suspicion of unions and his calls for political violence, certainly “was one of the most articulate spokespeople for the insurrectionist tradition” (p128), though at the time it would more likely have been called “anti-organisational anarchism”. But deciding anarchists have changed their political strategy when they follow different tactics is problematic. For example, when he was released from prison in 1917, Nestor Makhno began organising peasants to expropriate the landlords, rather than carrying on shooting policemen. Was this because he “broke with

insurrectionism” (p255)? Or was he using different tactics in different circumstances? Rather than a change of heart (or ideology), was it not that he had other fish to fry? This quote, from one of the authors in an online forum, shows that they do appreciate that sometimes it comes down to local possibilities:

“We do not say that the insurrectionaries are anti-mass, just that their method is based on the inspiration of insurgent actions by minorities, instead of being based on mobilising broad class organisations. Lucien and I accept both mass and insurgent anarchism – and only those two, as both are located firmly in class struggle – as legitimate, holistic expressions of fully-fledged anarchist praxis, although we tend towards the mass approach ourselves. Both approaches of course have their dangers: reformism / gradualism for the mass anarchists; and vanguardism / substitutionism for the insurgent anarchists. But still, I stress, both are legitimate – and sometimes either one is adopted because of the different possibilities of local conditions; thus anarcho-syndicalism in Barcelona in the 1870s, but insurrectionism in rural Catalonia.”

<http://www.anarchistblackcat.org/viewtopic.php?f=8&t=3200&sid=09717cf0009124e9172c4fb8e90b0fd2&start=120>

Thankfully, the authors are able to make their discussion of anarchist ideas accessible. There’s no jargon introduced for its own sake. You might need to have been in the anarchist movement a year or so before you bump into “praxis” for theory and practice but other technical terms get explained clearly: see page 124 onwards for a dissection of the different meanings of “anarchist communism”. Organisations have their names translated into English (which is more useful in an introductory work) but not their initials. It would have been nice to have their original names in an appendix (or the index). And it has a proper index, with ideas in it, and not just a list of names.

This book is obviously the result of a huge amount of work and a valuable synthesis of an awful lot of historical and political writings. Their clear idea of what they wanted from it has kept their writing to the point. Their discussions of ‘whiteness’ and current arguments among anarcho-syndicalists are both short and interesting.

This book is unlikely to end debates about “what is anarchism?” but it’s a useful (if not perfect) contribution to them. It’s also a great contribution to anarchist history. Not everyone will like the political choices they make, but anyone would be able to learn something from their work. But this is not just about history, nor just about the internal affairs of the anarchist movement. After the blind alley of authoritarian “socialism”, it’s about putting liberation back on the agenda, and how to make it a reality. It’s enjoyable to read something where the “big picture” is handled so confidently. Roll on volume two, a global history of anarchism.

Bookunin.

*Black flame : the revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism* by Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt. Counterpower, volume 1.

AK Press, 2009. 395 pages.

ISBN 9781904859161 \$22.95, £18

<http://www.akpress.org/2007/items/blackflameakpress>

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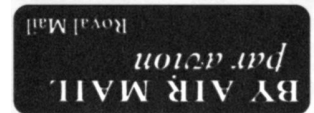
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