

My First Impressions

I WAS a mere slip of a boy, but ten years old, when in 1887 our comrades Parsons, Fischer, Engel and Spies were hanged.

At that time, under the bloody tyrant Porfirio Diaz' regime, it was so common to learn of men being shot, hanged or who had otherwise vanished from the face of the earth, that the news of the tragedy, read by my father to my mother, did not attract much my attention except the fact that it happened in the United States. In my childish fancy, I placed America far away, at the end of the world, surrounded by misery and with odd landscapes, people and things as those described in the fairy tales of the Arabian Nights, the reading of which deeply impressed me.

Another thing that caught my fancy was the fact that these men, being classified as Anarchists, whom my father, not knowing the goal of the Anarchists and their sublime Ideals, described as men who were much like the Terrorists and the Nihilists of Russia. I had heard my father dwell on the marvelous exploits of these two last named and revered their sacrifices for the liberation of the Russian people, and that was enough for my childish mind to think of our martyred comrades from Chicago as of big, bold, beautiful men who were all devotion to those who suffer from such tyrants as Porfirio Diaz and the czars of the world.

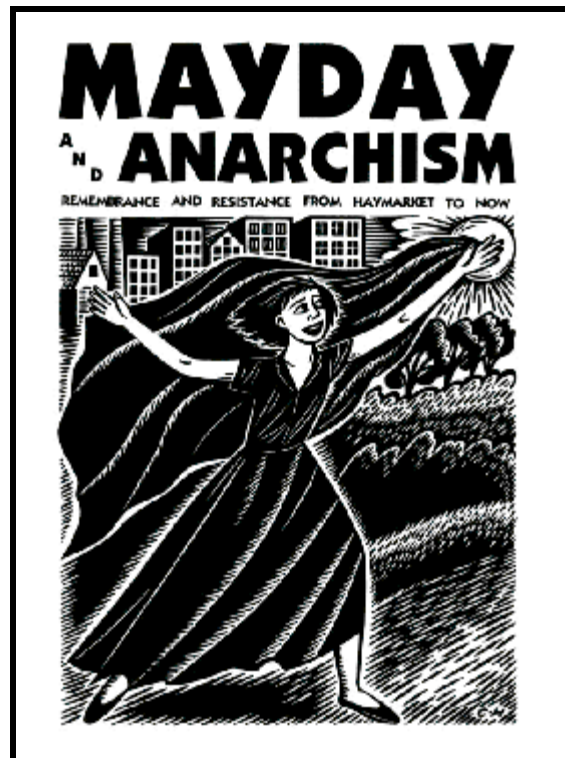
Times passed on and with it the memory of my big, beautiful men who were hanged in Chicago. Suddenly they were again before me. I was standing at my mother's side near our cheap, unpainted table, when my father was reading to her something in memoriam of the Chicago Anarchists. I listened intently and wondered how the bodies of the hanged men must have looked, dangling to and fro from the ends of the ropes fastened to the branches of a tall and leafy oak, as men are hanged in Mexico...

And a full realization of the horrible and shameful tragedy of Chicago struck me for the first time. A world of thoughts, feelings and passions like a hurricane opened up before my mental eye. I thought of them going to the gallows with manly poise, serene, smiling, conscious of the end, but conscious also of the immortality of their Ideals for which they were made to die. I thought of the human herd, humbly placing their necks in their daily yoke in factories and sweat-shops

instead of rising in rebellious protest against the murder of their comrades.

A sense of humiliation, a feeling of disappointment overcame me, for I still had the fancy in those days, due to distance, that America was really to a large extent the Home of the FREE and the Land of the BRAVE, and not another poor Mexico, populated by cowardly PEONS who submit to the brutal oppression and exploitation of their masters...

ENRIQUE FLORES MAGON,
Editor of *Regeneracion*. Los Angeles, Cal., October 19th, 1916. From *Mother Earth*, November 1916.



New Title: **Mayday and Anarchism** Remembrance and Resistance from Haymarket to Now Edited by Anna Key

Mayday means more than maypoles and pagan love rites. It is a remembrance of class struggle and resistance. It commemorates the Haymarket Martyrs of Chicago (Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Spies and Lingg) who were framed – and executed – for their anarchist ideas and fighting for the eight hour day.

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ARMAND GUERRA (1886-1939) MOVIE-MAKER AND PIONEER OF MILITANT MOVIE-MAKING

It is particularly hard to retrace the life of Armand Guerra, the Spanish type-setter, anarchist and movie-maker. When he died in Paris in 1939, a refugee from a Spain that had fallen into the clutches of Franco, he was not even carrying any identity papers. He had been on his way to the embassy to obtain fresh documents when he stopped in his tracks. A weary traveller who slipped away almost without fuss. The earliest movie libraries were just coming into being, but his movies had already vanished. In Perpignan in 1942 when the Nazis invaded the south of France, his wife spirited away the last of the writings she had retained, fearful that Guerra's past as an anarchist who had spent more than ten years living in Germany, might be turned up and provide the pretext for reprisal actions. For more than fifty years, Armand Guerra was to be left in oblivion, until one of his movies *Carne de Fieras* was rediscovered in 1992 by the movie library in Zaragoza. Through his articles in the libertarian press or movie magazines, through police archives and movie libraries, we can arrive at a rough reconstruction of his life journey.

Armand Guerra (his real name was José Estivalis) was born in Liria near Valencia on 4 January 1886. His father was a peasant and his mother was already busy with his five year old brother, Vicente. A happy child, José was sent to a seminary in Valencia to complete his studies and emerged from this experience as a rabid anti-clerical.

He started work at a printer's in Valencia around 1899, at the age of 13, only to join his brother at another firm in the city. Around 1907 a strike by type-setters led to his being tossed into prison. Police sources indicate that he then took ship for the West Indies. Be that as it may, in 1908 he moved to Paris – still with his brother in tow – and mixed with anarchists. In 1909 he was attending meetings of the 'Germinal' anarchist group in Geneva and keeping up a correspondence with Pedro Vallina, the Spanish anarchist doctor then in exile in London. From 1910 to 1914 he was a regular contributor to *Tierra*, the Cuban weekly published out of Havana, but was also writing for *Le Réveil*, the Swiss anarchist weekly published by Bertoni, using the nom de plume of Silavitse, an anagram of his real name. Armand was forever on the go: in February 1911 he passed through Italy on the way to Egypt, only to meet up in Cairo with a tiny Italian community centred upon a printworks in the city centre near the El Muski bazaar. There he helped produce the trilingual newspaper *L'Idea*, published in Italian, French and Greek. When an Arabic version

was forbidden he quit Cairo where he had thought that it might be possible to "sow the seeds of rebellion". He then embarked upon a long voyage from Istanbul to Braila (Romania) and Salonika, under continual police surveillance. They even went so far as to order him off the ship whilst at the same time banning him from setting foot ashore! Faced with these contradictions, the ship's master came to his defence... On returning to France, first to Toulouse and then to Deauville, he penned a few articles about his eventful travels. A book entitled *Stefanoff*, filled with his memoirs, was published in Cuba in 1914 (to date not a single copy of it has been traced). During the summer he worked in a printer's at 40 rue du Casino in Deauville. It was in the summer of 1912 and on a Deauville beach that Gaumont operatives managed to produce the first coloured moving pictures in cinematic history (using a very complicated technique that was later abandoned). On his return to Paris in 1913, José made a movie for the Eclair company, *A Cry in the Jungle*, on the basis of a script written by Bidamant, the then secretary of France's Union des Syndicats. It was Bidamant who suggested that he make a 'social' movie. And so began the Cinema du peuple (People's Cinema) venture during which his alias of Armand Guerra first appeared.

At the time that he was making movies for the People's Cinema (movies like *Les Misères de l'aiguille*, *Le Vieux Docker* and *La Commune*) he was living in the Rue des Vignerons in Vincennes, directly opposite the Pathé building. He was working as a type-setter at the Maison de la Presse at 16 Rue du Croissant in Paris (the address plaque is still there today) where most newspapers were printed and in a street intersecting with the one where Jean Jaurès was assassinated on 31 July 1914 before the very eyes of Nono (Jean Vigo), another movie-maker dear to anarchists. Again according to a police report of the time, he was believed to have married Jeanne Marquès, the elder sister of Marcelle Capy, a staffer with *La Bataille Syndicaliste*, who later made her name as a feminist and pacifist writer.

His movie *La Commune* became among other things the subject of a painting by the anarchist painter Maximilien Luce. Armand Guerra carried on reporting on developments in People's Cinema for *Tierra* and, thanks to him, *Tierra* opened a subscription in support of People's Cinema activities (a subscription was featured alongside another one on behalf of the Mexican revolutionaries around the Flores Magón brothers).

Armand Guerra's anti-militarism was probably what prompted his expulsion from France under a ministerial ordinance on 27 September 1915. Ever since 1909 in fact he had been under surveillance in

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connection with the publication in Nice of the newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* of which he had been the director and editor. In the wake of the week-long insurrection in Barcelona in 1909 (in opposition to the sending of young conscripts to Morocco) – one of the results of which was the execution of the libertarian educationist Francisco Ferrer – anarchist newspapers had been under a ban in Spain. Which is why, as in Armand Guerra's case, certain newspapers were printed in France for shipment to Spain.

From 1 November 1915 onwards Guerra was working as a type-setter in Lausanne. His landlady told police that he received "a huge number of newspapers on the themes of anarchy and free thought." At the end of 1917, he returned to his movie connections by launching a firm of his own, Cervantes Films, in Madrid. After making six movies this venture was abandoned for reasons as yet unclear (probably having to do with funding, in that most of his movies were shot out of doors, raising his costs far above those of competitors who shot theirs in studio settings). Most of these movies were inspired by tales involving gypsies and bullfighters, rather conventional themes that went down well with contemporary audiences. Yet *The Curse of the Gypsy Woman* had been shot in order to ridicule the superstitions of a profoundly religious Spain.

In 1920 he returned to Lausanne with his brother Vicente, only to travel on to Berlin. This was the beginning of a lengthy period from 1920 to 1931 when he turned his hand to all sorts of jobs connected with movies – actor, director and script translator (Guerra was fluent in seven languages). In those days Berlin was trying to compete with Hollywood and its directors – people such as Pabst, Murnau, Ernst Lubitsch, Fritz Lang, Robert Siodmak, Billy Wilder – brought prestige to the movie industry of the Weimar Republic. In 1925 he featured in a Hans Neumann movie *Sommernachtsstraum* (Summer Night's Dream) alongside another libertarian actor well known to movie-lovers - Alexander Granach.

Just as another Spanish anarchist, Valeriano Orobón Fernández, had done, during the 1920s Guerra worked as a script translator for a Spanish-German firm, Filmfono. In those days he frequently shuttled between Berlin and Spain. On 2 May 1926 in Valencia he was present at a preview of a talkie that the *Diario de Valencia* newspaper described on 5 May 1926 as a significant "scientific event". That same year he directed Luis Candela, *el Bandido de Madrid* followed by *Batalla de damas* (1927). *Die geschenkte loge* (1928) on the other hand was banned by the German censor on the pretext that a gardener busy watering his garden appeared to be urinating: the movie never made it to the screen. Armand Guerra also became the Berlin

correspondent of *Popular Film*, a Barcelona movie magazine run by none other than Mateo Santos (the very same Santos who was to make the first documentary on the Spanish civil war on 20 July 1936 for the CNT). In 1930, Guerra was approached to work in Spain for a movie production company unhappy with the original director: it was suggested that he take over the direction of *El amor solfeando*. It was on this occasion that he directed the celebrated Spanish actress Imperio Argentina. In 1931, with his brother's backing, he bought some land near Valencia as a site for movie studios but after his other partners pulled out the venture fell through. Because of the new protectionist laws he left Berlin once and for all and settled in Madrid, reunited with his lover Isabel Anglada with whom he had a baby girl, Vicenta. In 1934 he played the part of a clown in Sabino Antonio Micon's *La Alegría que pasa*. The Francoist coup of July 1936, countered by the libertarian revolution, caught him in the middle of a remake of his movie *Carne de fieras*.

Armand Guerra was to write detailed memoirs from this period in *A través de la metralla* ('Midst the Shrapnel'). Ezequiel Fernández's documentary *Armand Guerra: requiem for a Spanish movie-maker* lovingly reconstructs the context in which this movie, Guerra's last fiction, was made. Shortly after completing a re-shooting of *Carne de fieras*, Guerra and his crew made civil war documentaries for the CNT. A letter of his dated 17 December 1936 and discovered in the CNT archives informs us, among other things, that he was negotiating unsuccessfully for a movie about Durruti.

At the end of 1936 the CNT had need of his oratorical skills and Guerra therefore had to set movie-making to one side. A brilliant public speaker, Armand Guerra had already spoken on the Spanish anarchists' behalf in Paris on 1 May 1914. So, in the early months of 1937, while his newsreel *Estampas guerreras* was showing in Madrid, he was involved in a series of lectures in the south of France, speaking on the CNT's behalf together with his friend Manuel Pérez whose pamphlet *Four Months of Barbarism: Mallorca under the Fascist Terror* Guerra had translated. To anyone who reminded him that Mexico was not the only country providing arms to Spain he would retort that the USSR had never given any arms, it had sold them.

Jailed from 8 April to 26 August 1938 by the SIM (the Communist-dominated military investigation service) on the prison hulk *Uruguay* in Barcelona harbour, Guerra wrote to CNT general secretary Mariano Vázquez asking him to intervene to secure his release. In February 1939 he managed to sail for Sète in France before fleeing to the concentration camps, the only places where the French socialist government would accept Spanish antifascists. Less than a month

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later, having rejoined his family in Saint-Mandé, Armand Guerra passed away on 10 March 1939 of an aneurysm. An unfinished draft screenplay was left behind on his typewriter...

Was Armand Guerra the movie-maker any good? Unfortunately, since that movie rediscovered in 1992, no more Guerra movies have yet come to light in the film libraries. And it is very hard to reach a conclusion as to the artistic merit of his output since only a few short fragments of his early movies have been traced – the very movies shot on the meagrest budget. By contrast his last movie, *Carne de fieras*, had to be shot in a hurry under bombing (and regularly without any light) and shot reluctantly in that he was eager to return to the front. So he will remain an unknown quantity in movie making ... unless the Barcelona film library, which last year acquired about fifty documentaries shot during the Spanish revolution and impounded by the Francoists, has some splendid surprise in store for us. Meanwhile, the search goes on.

Eric Jarry *Bollettino Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli* (Milan), No 18, December 2001

Bash the Fasc Reviewed

“Reasserting the role played by anarchists in challenging fascism for control of the streets, *Bash the Fasc* details, with honesty and humour, the involvement of the DAM [Direct Action Movement] in opposing fascism...

“Visceral, uncompromising and unashamedly confrontational, *Bash the Fasc* stands in the same tradition of militant anti-fascism as Morris Beckman’s *43 Group* providing a brief yet exhilarating view of life at the sharp-end of the anti-fascist struggle during the 1990s.”

Of course, honesty dictates that we should point out that they also thought “Whilst providing an immediate and illuminating portrayal of the highs and lows of the anti-fascist struggle, *Bash the Fasc* is less exacting in its’ failure to evaluate the success of the AFA’s tactics against those of the broader anti-fascist movement...

Whilst *Bash the Fasc* makes no claim to represent an analytical view of AFA, and even less so militant anti-fascism in the round, the publication of further autobiographical accounts, something which is currently envisaged by the Kate Sharpley Library, would undoubtedly provide significant raw material from which such analysis could be made.”

from *Labour History Review*,

Vol. 68, No. 3, December 2003.

Bash the Fasc is still available. ISBN 1-873605-87-0 £5 (£2 to individuals.)

Any other anarchist autobiographical accounts (and not only anti-fascist ones) welcome...

! " # \$ % & ' () * + , - **Alexander Berkman.**

AK Press, 2003. ISBN 1-902593-70-7 £10/\$13.95

As the introduction shows, Berkman was a tireless militant, always learning, always struggling. This is why he wrote *What is Anarchism?* which could just as easily be called *How Do We Change the World?*

“Capitalism robs and exploits the whole of the people; the laws legalize and uphold this capitalist robbery; the government uses one part of the people to aid and protect the capitalists in robbing the whole of the people. The entire thing is kept up by educating the people to believe that capitalism is right, that the law is just, and that the government must be obeyed.

“Do you see through the game now?” (p.17)

War, authority, politics and religion all get it in the same easy style – “The prophets of religion are dead and forgotten; there remain only the profits.” (p.62)

Berkman looks at the need for and the nature of revolution, which also ties in with his thoughts on the Bolsheviks and the need to explain the failure of the Russian revolution. ““They are not against the big stick,’ as a clever friend of mine is wont to say; ‘they only want to be on the right end of it.’” (p116) This is not some academic point-scoring exercise, but simply asking what went wrong? Can we escape “new chains which are stronger than the old?”

What is Anarchism? has hardly been out of print since the nineteen twenties, but it is good to see it back with both halves (‘Now’ and ‘Anarchism’ aka ‘What is Communist Anarchism’ and ‘The ABC of Anarchism’) together. Read it. Chew it over, and if it inspires you to do your own version, that’s all to the good.

What is Anarchism? is available from the KSL.

New Pamphlets available (Limited numbers)

Abraham Guillen *Anarchist Economics : the Economics of the Spanish Libertarian Collectives 1936-39* ISEL/ La Presa 1992. 34 pages. 1-873606-01-3 £1 Shows how the Spanish workers took control of the economy. A look at self-management in practice.

Solidarity Federation *Anarcho-syndicalism in Puerto Real : from Shipyard Resistance to Direct Democracy and Community Control* Solidarity Federation / La Presa, 1995. 24 pages. £1 How community organising defended and extended a shipyard strike

Credit

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Thanks for letters, orders and donations (you know who you are, you *Fiends*). Feedback welcome.

“THE ANGRY BRIGADE” REVIEWED

In the eye of the beholder

Book reviews, like beauty, are in the eye of the beholder. So too the authorship that produced this indexed, expanded new edition of Gordon Carr’s “THE ANGRY BRIGADE: a history of Britain’s first urban guerilla group”. My meaning here is simply that inevitably there is a degree of subjectivity on all sides, including my own.

Carr’s own 1975 text remains virtually intact. The additions are ‘Prefatory’ pieces by John Barker and Stuart Christie, numerous photographs and a concluding 14 page itemised “Angry Decade” (1966-1975) chronology. It has 500 plus entries for events then currently in the news, the purpose of these being to contextualise the background against which the Angry Brigade events unfolded. In addition, by way of ‘Post-Script’ there is a piece by Special Branch Sergeant Roy Cremer and, much more interesting, the full text of Barker’s revealing, reflective critical review of a separate (1997) Angry Brigade volume by Tom Vague. This is the most remarkable of the book’s new items.

At moments this brought Ali G to mind. Barker writes with obvious and very welcome sincerity that the Angry Brigade he now owns to having been an active member of were not as serious as other European urban guerilla groups while at the same time (and I accept that he’s right about this) he also clarifies that his co-brigaders *were serious*, his meaning being that the Angry Brigade did really care about what and they were doing and why. What they were doing of course was fighting back against what they claimed was an extremely repressive State. Christie’s Preface pointedly stresses this. Indeed he argues (not convincingly in my view) that the radical movements of the time became demoralised and therefore declined very significantly because of that repression. Yet Barker writes that the Angry Brigade went on with their youthful bombing campaign recklessly believing that if caught they wouldn’t find themselves in that much trouble. He also adds that they were naïve about the prison system. These are astonishing and extremely revealing admissions.

Barker and Christie’s outlooks differ significantly on certain matters. For example the development and significance of the women’s and anti-racist movements. Barker argues that they were right to develop in the way that they did while Christie argues an opposite view. Barker and Christie both argue that the Angry Brigade weren’t hoping to instigate revolutionary change whereas Carr posits the opposite (as at times Angry Brigade Communiques also seem to) while Cremer, more in line with Barker and Christie contradicts Carr. This text is riddled with no end of imponderables.

Christiebooks have got behind the republication of Carr’s text because they believe it is the best account of the Angry Brigade events to date but the question still arises as to whether new work needs to be put in hand and Barker makes the interesting point that focus now needs to be shifted away from those who were prosecuted and focused on the achievements of those who formed the Stoke Newington Eight Defence Campaign. From personal knowledge I wonder how many of those who could contribute something worthwhile would much care to do so. Of course they would have their reasons for and against doing so. In this respect a 2002 Angry Brigade television documentary was disappointing, Ian MacDonald QC opined that nothing had come out of the campaign – which I know is incorrect. For instance the MacKenzie Advising, George Ince Campaigning, PROP supporting and “one bad appleing” (police corruption exposing) UP AGAINST THE LAW COLLECTIVE came out of the defence campaign.

Carr’s 1975 text still ends with the assertion that the real significance of the Angry Brigade events would not become clear for any number of years so the implication must be that the jury is still out on this one. This brings us back to Barker’s point. If those who could assist choose not to do so they make it easier for those who are antagonistic to write the Angry Brigade and all its works off.

In the past 35 years or so an enormous amount of politically inspired effort has gone into making the police more accountable than they previously were but in my experience Special Branch have remained the least accountable and least visible part of the police service. Structures that have evolved have rarely put them in the spotlight and partly this has been because of the outlook and disposition of those who engage in the processes. This has some bearing on this re-edition of Carr’s text because Carr expresses gratitude to Special Branch for their assistance but against this has to be set the longer term perspective that I have alluded to. The contribution by Special Branch to this book represents peanuts and the danger is that those without experience might misjudge it. I had occasion recently to look again at Gordon Winter’s “INSIDE BOSS” and Peter Hain’s book’s on the attempt by BOSS and our own spooks to frame him for the Putney Bank snatch – not a lot of Special Branch action, insight or accountability there and even in the Kenneth Lennon case the ‘Branch eventually produced shoddy goods. Then there was the 1973 Scotland Yard/ Special Branch secret solicitors blacklist. And finally when Essex Police mounted Operation Century (1996) using undercover Special Branch to role-play as life threatening IRA terrorists there was no police accountability, those on the receiving end of this spot

“THE ANGRY BRIGADE” REVIEWED

of Special Branch adventurism complained but Essex Police got the Police Complaints Authority to waive aside any police complaints investigation.

Anyone starting from scratch to inform themselves about the subject matter which this volume in its various ways covers would find it worthwhile and of some obvious value. It is interesting enough to engender regrets on my own part that I never looked in on the trial. It is clear from Carr’s text that certain parts of the trial were more interesting than others. Although convicted Barker still finds the welcome generosity of spirit to comment charitably on the task the jury faced and took on board. I think Situationists ought to offer similar condolences to their readers too ‘cos as one of them I ain’t that much endeared to what they had to offer. I joined the UP AGAINST THE LAW COLLECTIVE, which came out of the heart of the Stoke Newington 8 defence campaign and I can’t recollect that Situationism got much of a UPAL innings . When George Davis’s wife’s brother Colin hit on the idea of sabotaging the Headingly Test Cricket wicket I suspect that he and the other East Enders who did the job would have been greatly delayed as well as miffed if we’d lectured them about Situationism. IC

Mayday and Anarchism [→ from front]

Since the 1890s workers have marked Mayday all across the world.

Anarchists have always insisted on its revolutionary meaning – in essence that we will get nothing without fighting for it. Politicians (of one sort or another) have always tried to co-opt or sanitise it: “Follow your leaders!” “That was then, this is now.”

The world has changed since the 1880s – but the more things change, the more they stay the same. We still live in a world where exploitation rules, and where the police and media are tools in the hands of the rich and powerful.

This pamphlet shows the origins and history of Mayday, and the differing ways in which Anarchists have responded to its call. It includes pieces on:

- The Haymarket affair and its aftermath
- The idea of Mayday in the 1890s
- Responses and appeals from America, Italy, Spain
- Mayday and Latin American Anarchism
- Reclaiming Mayday in recent times.

Cover illustration by Clifford Harper.
ISBN 1-873605-53-6. Series: Anarchist Sources # 4.
A5 pamphlet, 32 pages. Price: £3/ \$3 Post free.

History Bandits

Every town, every city has a radical history that’s been buried and conveniently forgotten by those who wield power. The ‘good burghers’ of the city are immortalised in marble, stone, bronze and steel, those who made history lay in unmarked graves, their contributions conveniently forgotten. Each new generation unaware of its past, is forced to reinvent the wheel and repeat the same mistakes over and over and over again.

We need to dig up that historical record and share it with those around us. Melbourne, Sydney, Tenterfield, Barcaldine, Broome, Launceston, Darwin and every other Australian town and city has a forgotten radical history. That history has been stolen from us, we must take it back if we want to understand the present and change the future. Local libraries, oral histories from older members of the community, family histories, old newspapers and history books can be utilised to build up a picture of that radical past. Rediscovering the past is not enough. We have to drag it into the present and link it with what’s happening today if we want to change the future.

In 2004, the Melbourne based Anarchist Media institute will be holding a monthly event in a different part of the city to highlight the city’s radical past and its relevance to life in Melbourne today. Years of research by a number of dedicated people have brought that forgotten history to the surface. These historical lessons need to be shared the rest of the community. If they are not shared, they remain dull, lifeless facts and figures that are of little interest outside historical circles.

The Anarchist Media Institute through the *Anarchist Age Weekly Review* and the *Anarchist World This Week* plans to hold one event a month around Melbourne to highlight the importance of specific sites and events in Melbourne’s radical past. We encourage our readers and listeners around the world to rediscover their radical history and hold events to reinforce the importance of those historic events. The retelling of history is everybody’s business, don’t leave it to those in power or professional historians, if you do, you run the very real risk of losing that vital link to the past that we need, if we want to understand the present and change the future.

from *Anarchist Age Weekly Review* #577
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