

Sport, War & Aggression [Letter, 1966]

It is suggested by Michael Woolliscroft (Freedom 16.4.66) that sport is wrong because it helps 'maintain aggression, aggression competitiveness and ultimately war'. He relies on the (findings of psychologists to show that sport maintains aggression, but where is the proof that aggression leads to war? I suspect that psychology may today be as much an opiate of the people as was evangelical religion. Is it boxers and footballers who declare war? Is it even the despised sport-watchers who declare war? Or is it meek, mild, elderly men in striped pants, carrying umbrellas? Most military leaders of the Hitler type like to *think* of themselves in the same class as Olympic champions, but the truth is Hitler was much more like Chaplin's caricature than he was like the 666 of popular imagination (that is why he hated Chaplin so much). Hannah Arendt was struck with the banality of evil when she saw Eichmann in Jerusalem. He was no Cassius Clay.[1]

The psychologists, or at least their popularisers, have too long identified national and abstract trends with individual characteristics. You cannot psychoanalyse 'Britannia' or 'John Bull'; the nation is made up of vastly differing individuals. The causes that lead to war have nothing whatever to do with individual aggressiveness. Indeed, the contrary applies: it is precisely the aggressive individual who does not make a good soldier. For years the old-fashioned liberal-pacifist sought to convince that by training children in farm-toys and not playing with forts, we would bring up non-aggressive types who would never become soldiers. The majority of these, together with the majority of all others, did not resist conscription. They did not jump into uniform screaming 'On to Berlin!'; they did not resist army discipline either. It was easy in England for someone with that 'non-aggressive' Quakerish background to have his conscientious objection legalised; some did. But let us face it, the majority who resisted conscription, either by objection or indiscipline, desertion or struggle within the forces, were the aggressive types, or, as the psychologists might have it, the 'delinquents'.

We do not know how people will grow up in a free society; we do know that those who will achieve it will be those who are rebels in this one. It is not the aggressive individual who causes wars (to talk of 'aggressive nations' has nothing to do with individual

psychology and is bound up with economics); it is, however, the aggressive individuals who do not take part in them. The tragedy of the present day is not the determination of people to throw atomic bombs all over the place; it is the conformistic, obedient, unthinking movement of indifference to the abstract and nameless organisation that can ultimately drop the bomb. And in this light we can see what troubles another correspondent, Keith Nathan, in criticising the West Ham Anarchists.[2] They have committed the unforgivable sin of treating politics like sport; of enjoying their opposition to the State; of aggressive disobedience. (He uses other words such as 'arrogance' and 'neurotic megalomania', by which he means exactly the same thing.) In 'expressing his disgust', he joins the ranks of the liberal-minded pacifist who might be a 'critical supporter of the ideals of freedom' but feels that freedom degenerates into a farce if you do too much about it.

I wonder if Michael Woolliscroft knows how boxing, as we know it today, was introduced into England? It arose almost entirely out of Jewish immigration in the Regency period. Previously, the image of the Jews in England had been of rich merchants and bankers, some of aristocratic origin. Suddenly, a large lower-working-class and impoverished class of peddlers came in. All over London, Jewish peddlers were kicked and bullied (as they were in Germany). A number of Dutch Jews introduced the art of self-defence, which had two effects: the anti-semitic agitation died down when Jews hit back (not out of fear but plainly out of respect); and the old English arts of self-defence were revolutionised. In Vienna, any number of middle-class Jews with goldrimmed spectacles proved the folly of anti-semitism, analysed its causes carefully, and revolutionised the world of psychoanalysis. Anti-semitism as it was known on the Continent disappeared in London. It flourished in Vienna as a popular movement (Hitler merely imitated Karl Lueger).

I am afraid it is true that in this competitive society people do not like the poor and unfortunate, and the poorer and more unfortunate they are the less they like them.

It is also well known that in the process of brain-washing, to surrender is to die. The State demands

Inside: Looking for Decio Anzani

obedience, but the reward is often death. Keith Nathan thinks those West Ham Anarchists were grown in a bottle by the Home Office to ‘discredit’ the Anarchists; I have often thought of some carefully disciplined youngsters how they might have been grown in a bottle by the War Office to serve the State; I think I would settle for the former any day even if it were not West Ham Anarchists but West Ham United.

A. Meltzer. *Freedom* 23 April 1966

Notes

1, Muhammad Ali, Muslim Black American boxer and draft resister.

2 ‘More in sorrow’ [Letter] Keith Nathan, *Freedom*, 16.4.66. ■

Looking for Decio Anzani

Albert Meltzer was scathing about the supposed ‘anti-fascism’ of the British ruling class shown in the second world war: ‘it was not an anti-fascist war merely because that was the enemy’s ideology (something impossible it seems for people to grasp).’[1] He reviewed the story of the ‘Dunera Boys’[2] and recorded his memories of ‘Joe the Tailor’ who ‘spoke at the same London stomping grounds – Finsbury Park speakers corner, Clerkenwell Green, and so on – regularly from the outbreak of the Italo-Abyssinian War, denouncing fascism. He always began, “I’m an Italian, an anti-fascist, just Joe the Tailor” [...] He was notorious to the fascisti after speaking on a joint platform with Ethiopians, at a meeting organised by Sylvia Pankhurst.’[3]

Albert always provides ways in to the world of unsung and unknown anarchists. At this distance in time, it might be possible to identify ‘Joe the Tailor’; but it would hardly be easy. Examining the story of London’s Italian anarchist antifascists of the thirties leads on to the story of the *Arandora Star* and Decio Anzani.

Our comrades at Past Tense reviewed Alfio Bernabei’s 2023 exhibition about British suffragette and communist Sylvia Pankhurst and her life partner, Italian anarchist Silvio Corio, antifascists who denounced Mussolini’s regime and infamous war on Ethiopia.[4] The exhibition contained a brief biography of Decio Anzani, secretary of the London branch of the Italian League For The Rights Of Man. Anzani was arrested as an ‘enemy alien’ (because he was a ‘subversive’) and killed when the *Arandora Star* was torpedoed (2 July 1940). Pankhurst described Anzani as ‘one of the most known anti-Fascists in this country and a tower of strength to the refugees who had come here from Mussolini’s terror.’[5]

In this issue we reprint a 1946 tribute to Anzani and a short account of his life by Alfio Bernabei. *Esuli ed emigrati italiani nel Regno Unito (1920-*

1940) by Bernabei is devoted to Anzani and the London antifascist exiles. There are other connections to follow up. We have posted on our site Mat Kavanagh’s tribute to John Humphrey who printed ‘Fascism : What it has done to the Italian people [1933]’ for the Italian League For The Rights Of Man, London branch.[6] Anzani appears in Nick Heath’s biographies of John Humphrey and Emidio Recchioni on Libcom.org – where you can also read his biography of Silvio Corio. Finally, we have posted Vernon Richards’ tribute to Vittorio Taborelli from 1966 on our website.[7] We should remember the lives of past anarchists.

Notes

1, The Italian Connection *Black Flag* 177

<https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/41ntmk>

2, Lest we forget or never knew (TV Review) [The Dunera Boys] *Black Flag* 144

<https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/rr50kq>

3, Letter and reply re: ‘Joe the Tailor’ *Black Flag* 179

<https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/g79fjf>

4,

https://web.archive.org/web/20230502102445/https://twitter.com/_pasttense_/status/1630309748796014597

5, quoted by Hannen Swaffer, *Daily Herald*, 20 July 1940

6, see <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/9kd6rb>

7, <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/tht9b9> ■

Decio Anzani

[Extracted from Alfio Bernabei (London) “*Decio, in fondo al Mare*” (Decio at the bottom of the sea).]

Papers held at the Forli archive in Italy show that he was born – of unknown parents – on 10 July 1882 and handed over to a midwife by the name of Annunziata Lombardi. He grew up in Forli orphanage at No 45 on what was then the Borgo Vittorio Emanuele (now the main street through the city). How he came by the name Anzani is not known. He was adopted by the Porzio family at the age of 10. Later he frequented socialist and anarchist circles in the city. In 1903 he was called up into the army but deserted instead and had then to leave Italy. The State Archives in Rome show reports about him from Italian spies in Switzerland, France, Belgium and Great Britain.

His file as an émigré opens with a note dated June 1904 from the Italian Embassy in Paris at 73, Rue de Grenelle: “ANZANI, Charles – sought without success, not known in the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine.” His was amended a short time later to read: “Anzani showed up at the embassy looking for work and stating that his name was Carlo.” He was soon under surveillance from French as well as Italian spies. On 28 April 1906 he was arrested and sentenced to a month in prison for “having taken part

in Paris in anarchist preparations to mark the First of May.” Police surveillance led to his being expelled from France and he fled to Lausanne. He was tracked down by the Swiss police who informed the Public Security authorities in Rome: “He work as a tailor for a Monsieur Bianco at No 9, rue Mercier”. In February 1907 Anzani moved to Geneva for a few months before crossing back into France. Only to be arrested again, this time for “passing counterfeit currency”.

On his release he lodged initially with the anarchist Giovanni Baldazzi before living “in concubinage” with the 18-year old Marta Giorgi. He was arrested again, for stealing sheets from an inn on the Avenue Parmentier and received a two-month prison sentence, confirmed on appeal. He then returned to Geneva only to be arrested as a vagrant and escorted to the Italian border on 15 October 1909. There was a warrant out for his arrest for desertion and he was taken to Naples prison where he served a year. On 1 June 1910 he was transferred to Bologna, only to desert again.

Five months after that he turned up in Paris, this time using the name “Emile Millet”. Shortly afterwards he was picked up for breaching his expulsion order and sent to prison for three months. In March 1911, sentence served, he was moved to Chambery where he was given 48 hours to get out of France. On 7 October, from Paris, an informant told the Italian police that Anzani had crossed the Channel into England. “He has written to his comrades seeking help because Marta, his lover, is in hospital.”

The earliest note from the Italian Embassy in London stated that Anzani “has notified the police that he is living in Yeoman’s Row near Brompton Road where he plies his trade as a tailor.” The note added: “He belongs to the anarchist group at No 99 Charlotte Street, Soho.”

He was being monitored by two very active Italian informers signing themselves as “*Virgilio*” and “xy”. Anzani “quickly came to attention as an organizer of anti-war Meetings” with Malatesta and he took part in the proceedings of the “Italian Social Studies Group” which debated topics such as “the usefulness of trade unionism”. One of the lecturers was Baldazzi, Anzani’s old friend, who had been visiting England since 1907 and had probably given him some useful addresses. Baldazzi, though, would later become a turncoat and a Fascist.

In 1916, at the age of 34, Anzani married Victoria Billen, a native of Brussels. And they had a daughter, Renee. The Italian informer sent the police in Rome this update: “Anzani has calmed down and spends all his time working. He has a shop at No 25 Great Titchfield”, near Oxford Street and Bond Street.

His daughter Renee Anzani recalls: “My girlhood memories bring me back to the parties held at home on Sundays, We referred to these as ‘music Sundays’

because people would turn up with their instruments and my parents would sing. Those invited were virtually all Italians. One was Alberto Verri who would then launch the ‘Troyes Mandolin Band’ which was very popular in the music halls and on the wireless. We moved house sometime in 1922-23 to No 3 Caroline Place in Bloomsbury. The Sunday gatherings continued. Whether there was a political aspect I could not say. I was just a girl and would not have understood.”

Two Italian lecturers at the University Of London set up a chapter of the Fascio in London: one was Camillo Polizzi. The London fascists captured control of the Italian-language paper *La Cronaca* (launched on 4 December 1920) and turned it into a fascist propaganda sheet, run by Polizzi. On 8 July 1922 the London anarcho-syndicalist group responded with the first issue of a weekly called *Il Comento*. One of its aims was to alert Britons to what was going on in Italy. The suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst, the partner of Corio who had become a friend of Anzani’s was one of the first English intellectuals to turn against fascism. Some articles were quite detailed in their references to Mussolini and Anzani as someone of the same age and from the same area was suspected as the author.

By 1924 *Il Comento* was carrying editorials about the need for “an armed revolution in Italy’s squares”. Fires then broke out at its presses and the British police pressurized the paper into closing down. In 1927, on a visit to Rome, Churchill stated: “Had I been born in Italy, I’d be a fascist.”

Renee Anzani recalls her father relocating his shop to Pollen Street, even closer to Oxford Street: “About the time he became a first call tailor. He had a superb professional reputation among some of the fashion houses which would occasionally publish their designs in *Vogue Magazine*. He also worked for the Galleries Lafayette on Regent Street, as well as taking on private commissions: on a number of occasions he designed and made dresses for the former queen of Spain.”

By the early 1930s Renee noticed that dresses were not her father’s only concern: “I remember a lot of correspondence coming in for the LIDU (the Italian Human Rights League). My father had become the honorary secretary and Alessandro Magri was the president. The League’s members would gather in our home: a lot of the correspondence was coming from France and we also had lots of Italian visitors. [...] We even wound up dining with Berneri in Taborelli’s restaurant in Soho.”

Anzani and LIDU were being monitored by Mussolini’s OVRA secret police. Scotland Yard was watching to guard against plots on Mussolini’s life. There was a London connection in the assassination bids mounted by Violet Gibson, Sbardellotto and Schirru.

On 19 July 1932 an OVRA agent in London

reported to Rome: “The subversive Anzani has been made the LIDU delegate in London. He goes by the name of D’Anzani or Dani. And has been in touch with subversive elements for some time. Becoming a fiery, dangerous antifascist.” Another note that November arranged for Anzani to be placed on a watch list on the borders of Italy. Perhaps in an effort to track his movements and contacts, the consulate in London renewed his Italian passport.

In 1935 Scotland Yard reported: “Still engaging in antifascist propaganda through LIDU”. His name was included on a list of persons to be monitored, alongside Carlo Rosselli, Max Salvadori and Filippo Turati. On 17 April 1935 Scotland Yard opened a separate file (320.FTL/254.SB) on Anzani, claiming that he was the author of the pamphlet *What Has Mussolini Done to the Italian People?* Police had established that LIDU London had about fifty members.

Renee Anzani recalls: “There was an office above Recchioni’s store in Soho which is where a pamphlet entitled *Spain Today, Italy Tomorrow* was printed. In addition to my father there were Berneri and Emma Goldman: George Orwell used to drop in from time to time.” She also states that her father was aware of the police surveillance, mounted, not least by a “Mr Cooper”, a plain-clothed police officer.

“Around about 1938 my father applied for naturalization. He feared complications with the Italian authorities and wanted to become a British citizen.” His spoken English was flawed and the application was refused.

Anzani also had links with the TUC and the Labour Party; the party’s archive show correspondence between Anzani and its international secretary, William Gillies. When the Labour Party was asked by the government – prior to the Second World War – to compile a list of Italian antifascists in London, Anzani was asked to help with this and added his own name to the list. Italy declared war on Britain on 10 July 1940; thousands of Italians were rounded up as “enemy aliens”. He was taken away by police on 11 July but assured his family “They’re taking me to Hornsey police station, but don’t fret, they’ve told me I’ll be back shortly.”

Pankhurst, Herbert Morrison and William Gillies sent Churchill a file proving that Anzani was a committed antifascist. Renee recalls: “My mother and I went down to Hornsey police station. They told us that my father had been moved to a barracks in Knightsbridge. When we got there it was to discover that the internees had been moved on to Lingfield. Eventually we had a letter from there from my father asking for some clothes and coffee. We made up a parcel and sent it on to Longfield. After which we had another letter from my father, from the Isle of Man, saying: ‘I received nothing.’ We sent off another parcel to his new address which he had given us: but by then it was too late as my father had

shipped out on the *Arandora Star*.”

That former cruise ship was used to ship thousands of internees to Canada. It set sail from Liverpool on 10 July 1940, with 1,200 internees on board. Around 800 of these were Italians, first or second generation. 75 miles off the coast of Donegal, the *Arandora Star* was sunk by the U-boat U47. The vessel displayed no lights, no red cross marking it out as a prison ship and it was armed. Over 800 lives were lost. One of the 476 Italians drowned was Decio Anzani.

The London branch of the Italian Democratic Party is named after him.

<https://premioconti.org/?product=decio-in-fondo-al-mare-alfio-bernabei> Trans. Paul Sharkey. ■

Decio Anzani [tribute, 1946]

The name is that of one of our finest militants who had been living for years in England where he had not let up on his propaganda activity and not just on behalf of the Italian movement but also the international one. He especially targeted militarism and war, the worst two scourges of humanity, and not without having come to the attention of the British police. Now on 10 June 1940, the fascist monarchy [in Italy] declared war and at 7 o’clock the very next morning Anzani was arrested. At the time there were quite a few criminal Italian fascists and provocateurs who never seemed to be bothered. An attack by fascists was answered by the deportation of antifascists to Canada! Moreover, a fortnight after Anzani was arrested and promptly deported, his poor wife and his beloved daughter Renata were informed that the deportees’ ship had sunk in Canada. No details were offered and the catastrophe remains a complete mystery. Anzani was 58 years old at the time and had devoted his entire life to the cause of anarchism with selflessness, courage and vigour. His case is a good illustration of the queer sort of antifascism to which those ruling Britain subscribed. We thought ourselves duty-bound to invoke Anzani’s memory after those tragic years by way of paying the just homage owed by so many unwitting victims to those whose consciences were clear and who, had they only been heeded and imitated, might have made the war impossible and the world a better place.

To Decio Anzani’s wife and daughter. So sorely tried we send the heartfelt condolences of the great anarchist family which, in him, has lost one of its finest, just when his handiwork would have all the more sorely needed.

Il Risveglio Anarchico (Geneva) No 132, March 1946 (from archivesautonmies.org)

Translated by Paul Sharkey. ■

Unsettled Questions in Socialism & Anarchism at the International School

It's always interesting to read about surprising archival discoveries. Constance Bantman reported several in 'Reencountering The French Anarchists in London, 1880-1914: Archival and Historiographic Reassessments.' The one that caught my eye was this:

'There have also been many small and often striking archival discoveries over the years, for instance a bundle of leaflets advertising a series of 'Discussions on Unsettled Questions in Socialism & Anarchism', held at the short-lived International School founded by Louise Michel on Fitzroy Square in the heart of the anarchist quarter, and about which so little remains known; the topics ranged from 'Tendencies of the Present Social economy' to 'The Theory and Laws of Politics' and 'The Doctrine of Hedonism'. These leaflets had been used as scrap paper to write a translation of Edmund Burke from English into French on their back, and were archived in a file bearing no connection at all to the London French, so this was an entirely chance discovery which revealed the role of the School as a meeting place where debates were organised by the British anarchist Agnes Henry.' [1]

The other talk was 'The Possibility of Establishing a Criterium of Remuneration (value) either according to Work or Needs.' [2] Biographies of Henry can be found at <https://libcom.org/article/henry-agnes-1850-1915> and <https://irishanarchisthistory.wordpress.com/2018/03/02/agnes-henry-an-anarchist-from-tipperary-1850-1915/>

Notes

1, BANTMAN, Constance. Reencountering The French Anarchists in London, 1880-1914: Archival and Historiographic Reassessments. *Revista Mundos do Trabalho*, Florianópolis, v. 14, p.2-3

<https://doi.org/10.5007/1984-9222.2022.e89542>

2, French Archives Nationales; Institut Français d'Histoire Sociale (IFHS); Paul Delesalle collection; file 14AS20. ■

Peter Good and the Cunningham Amendment

If you've been to many of the anarchist bookfairs in the UK you'll probably recognise Peter Good: always a smile, always a bow tie, plus sweets (though I think one year it was home made wine?) for anyone who wanted to chat. Peter is the editor and printer of *The Cunningham Amendment* (named

after forces slang for mixing everything behind the bar in a bucket). The final issue has arrived (vol.21, no.2 'Thursday 4th January 2024') celebrating 50 years of publishing.

To me, *The Cunningham Amendment* is happy-go-lucky anarchism informed by a love of Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of carnivalesque power of laughter. In their own words they stand 'for independent anarchism' and 'The old solving dogmas are dead. The world is to be viewed from a bottom-up, street-level, perspective. Creativity begins in small-scale initiatives outside the control, or even the awareness, of the authorities.' Lately, they've regularly criticised communication being colonised by 'small electrical devices'. In a slightly plaintive note, they say 'most of our battles have been with our own side'; naming the 6 radical factions that have 'cancelled' them, as opposed to three (unnamed) US Houses of Correction.

Reduced in dimensions, if not in style, this issue contains colourful letterpress snippets from anarchist aphorisms and reader poetry to their spoof religion of 'Hugo the Happy Earthworm'. 'Look after Hugo's world – the top six inches of Good Mother Earth – and Hugo pledges to care for your children's children.' But this is the final issue. Peter writes 'Me and my body have had some good times. Now the bad times come. Basically I'm fucked.'

So, comrades, treasure your copies of *The Cunningham Amendment* as the virtual-reality-with-footnotes version won't be quite the same. Raise a glass or raise a smile – who can top the handmade, multicolour hedonism of the R Supward Press? Thank you, Peter!

Seymour Di Sobedience ■

A brief history of the Centro Studi Libertari/ Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli by Luigi Balsamini [Review]

The Centro Studi Libertari/ Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli is an anarchist project in Milan. Their story is not only 'local history' but throws light on anarchist activities and connections from the seventies onwards. Who was Pinelli? Giuseppe Pinelli was a Milanese anarchist who was murdered by the police becoming, in Paolo Finzi's words, 'the seventeenth victim of the Piazza Fontana bombing'. [1]

What do they mean by 'Libertarian Studies'? In this context 'libertarian' can be a synonym for anarchist, or refer to a wider range of movements (feminism, ecology etc.) but explicitly 'never to the Anglo-American rightwing tradition'. [2]

The *Bolletino Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli* [3] has published a lot of valuable material on the history of

anarchism (many of the articles on the KSL website or in our bulletin have been translated from there – and not only on the anarchist movement in Italy, or Italian anarchists outside Italy; but also Germany, or the Yiddish-language anarchist movement). They set their plan out for it in 1995:

‘We will obviously talk about History with a capital H, its well-known protagonists and sensational events, but also about less-known individual stories, people and episodes that few know about which, however, have made up the connecting tissue of History. This is, therefore, a retracing of our distant past with a few digressions into the present, that at the same time manages to go beyond traditional cultural barriers in order to investigate the manifold faces of contemporary anarchism with the help of the rich interrelation between all the libertarian movements which have sprung up everywhere in the last fifty years.’[4]

‘Connecting tissue’ is a great phrase, and ‘connections’ is a key word. Reading this pamphlet reminded me of Stuart Christie’s connections with the comrades from Milan – see his tribute to Amedeo Bertolo.[5] These connections also sent me off thinking about ‘Where do anarchist libraries come from?’ For the Milanese comrades, one important figure was Pio Turrone.

‘Turrone, born in 1906, emigrated first to Belgium and then to France, in order to escape fascist repression, and there participated in antifascist activities organized by exiles. In 1936 he fought in Spain with the Italian division of the Ascaso column; he then escaped to Marseille where he was arrested just as the second world war broke out, subsequently escaped and sought refuge in Mexico. He returned to Italy in 1943 and actively participated in the revival of the anarchist movement: he was legally responsible for the periodical “Volontà” from its first issue in 1946, established in the early 1950s L’Antistato publishing group in Romagna, and was among the promoters of Anarchist Initiative Groups (GIA). From the time of “Materialismo e libertà”, he had established connections with the young Milanese libertarians and, subsequently, supported and followed the activities of the Centro Studi Libertari with great interest, acting as an intermediary for the acquisition of many important donations. As recalled by Amedeo Bertolo:

“He presents himself with his laborer’s beret, his mason’s face, and his ‘old-fashioned’ anarchist wisdom. He is initially a bit wary of these enterprising anarchist youngsters, but soon afterwards demonstrates a great openness toward us”.

‘Even before his death in 1982, Turrone had gifted the Centre his library of around a thousand books relating to anarchism and other political doctrines that he had collected during the postwar years. Later his private archive was added, consisting of ten portfolios containing more than one hundred

dossiers, recently catalogued by Lorenzo Pezzica [... These archives contain] the dense network of epistolary exchanges with exponents of the Italian and international anarchist movement, particularly with the Italo-American militants connected with the periodical “L’Adunata dei Refrattari”. Another integral part of the archive are the documents compiled by GIA, the editorial staff of “Volontà”, “L’Antistato” editorial group, writings by Raffaele Schiavina, letters by Luigi Fabbri to Gigi Damiani, and from Sébastien Faure to Armando Borghi. All of this material was personally gathered and kept by Turrone, thus probably avoiding dispersion.’[6]

We are given a glimpse of the challenge of maintaining any library that’s not hermetically sealed: ‘there is the fellow with money problems who pinches the rare antique in order to sell it on to the highest bidder, the bibliophile who nicks the rare item to gloat over in his personal library, the student who literally cuts out the photo or newspaper article he needs for his dissertation (in an era in which reproductions of text and images are readily available), only then to throw the cutting in the bin when the job is done... basically the typologies are infinite but the result is the same: something is lost to the community for petty personal gain.’[7]

One other connection (not mentioned in the pamphlet) is that the Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli has sent duplicates to other libraries, one of which is discussed at length in Andrew Hoyt’s ‘Hidden Histories and Material Culture: The Provenance of an Anarchist Pamphlet’.[8]

Much of Balsamini’s pamphlet covers publishing projects (*A Rivista Anarchica*, *Volontà*, Edizioni Antistato, Elèuthera) and other activities outside the library walls, including the Venice gathering of 1984: ‘Thus the Venice Gathering represented an important point of reference for anarchic and libertarian culture, a new-found maturity which enabled it to disengage from the burden of *belle époque* anarchism and helped the movement to interpret modern society in its own way. The shift was so important that many militants, following this wave of enthusiasm, even saw a line of rupture between “pre-” and “post-” Venice anarchism, the first dying and limited, while the second was headed toward a radical renewal’.[9]

I’m not personally sure about that either/or option – but see what you think. You can read the pamphlet online at <https://centrostudilibertari.it/en/csl-history> (hard copies are available).

Notes

1, ‘Giuseppe ‘Pino’ Pinelli (1928-1969): the 17th victim of the Piazza Fontana bombing’ <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/f7m14m> The Centro Studi Libertari have just posted the English translation of Lucio Lanza’s book *Secrets and bombs: Piazza Fontana, 1969* at <http://omeka.bida.im/s/pinelli/item/6428>

- 2, p.5
 3, https://centrostudilibertari.it/en/solo_bollettini
 4, p.44 quoting *Bollettino dell'Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli* n.1.
 5, <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/rv170j>
 6, p.19-21
 7, p.49-50, from *Bollettino dell'Archivio Giuseppe Pinelli* 1997, no.4
 8, <https://zapruderworld.org/journal/past-volumes/volume-1/hidden-histories-and-material-culture-the-provenance-of-an-anarchist-pamphlet/>
 (the pamphlet itself is at <http://www.anarchyarchives.org/bright/nettlau/ara000012.pdf>)
 9, p.32 ■

For a Future Made By Us All [Book Review]

Rebel City are a London anarchist group who ‘give talks to anyone interested in Anarchism’, students in particular. *For a Future Made By Us All: Questions and answers about Anarchism* is a direct result of these conversations. Anarchists have always been keen on the dialogue format. Rebel City break theirs up into ‘What is anarchism?’, ‘What would an anarchist society look like?’ and ‘How do we get from here to there?’

I enjoyed reading it. I recognised the anarchism they talk about: that revolutionary social change is necessary, and that it won’t be instant. The questions (and helpful glossary) made it feel current (climate crisis, social media, transformative justice) but so did the layout (colour illustrations with some good stickers and graffiti, pull quotes, generous use of white space). Finally, it felt like a dialogue: respectful and the opposite of preachy. The collective are clear about what they think (‘Representative democracies. Casting a vote every 4 or 5 years after which you have no further say in any decision making, and the so-called elected leaders then do whatever they want.’) but provisional about how things might or could change, rather than giving blueprints.

Inevitably, several of the questions could have a booklet of their own. I would have liked a page on how we ended up here (in Thatcher’s ‘no such thing as society’ society) or more on how class works (see ‘Is class still relevant’ on their website). But this is not supposed to be the final word on anything. It might be the start of something, though! *For a Future Made By Us All* is a quick and refreshing read. I wish I’d ordered more than one.

For a Future Made By Us All: Questions and answers about Anarchism

Rebel City, 2023. 92 pages. £5

<https://rebelcitylondon.wordpress.com/2023/07/21/d>

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Georges Levezan, a Rumanian Student in the International Anarchist Movement

Born in Bacau in 1867 (other sources say in 1869) into a well-to-do family, Georges Levezan (aka Gheorge Livezean) arrived in Paris in 1887 to study mathematics. There he founded the International Anarchist Students’ Group and wrote a *Manifesto to Students the World Over*. 10,000 copies of this were printed and were distributed alongside *La Révolte*, the Paris-based anarchist publication run by Jean Grave.

Besides being a contributor to *La Révolte*, Levezan was also close to the group back in Focșani in Rumania that was publishing the anarcho-communist paper *Răzvrătirea* (Rebellion). At the beginning of 1889, en route to Rumania to visit his family, he was arrested on the Swiss-Austrian border. In his luggage the police discovered various issues of *Le Revolté*, the paper that Peter Kropotkin published in Switzerland and of *La Révolte*. He was however released since the Austrian authorities learnt that Levezan was the son of a Rumanian parliamentary deputy.

He was arrested again, in France on the eve of a demonstration to mark May Day 1890. Levezan was accused of “incitement to revolt” and “socialist propaganda” for having published that student manifesto and on 28 May 1890 he was issued with an order for his expulsion from France. In a letter published in *La Révolte* (14 June 1890), Levezan recounted his expulsion:

“On the Monday we left the jail by carriage handcuffed in twos. I was with comrade Consorti. When we reached the Gare du Nord we were brought down from the carriage to be taken to the prison carriage. No sooner had the doors closed behind us than the cuffs were taken off us and we were escorted to our cells. We could scarcely move. We were left like that from the Monday evening to the Wednesday morning! On the Wednesday morning we disembarked from the train and, cuffed together in pairs once again, we crossed the city to the Tourcoing gendarmerie post, where we spent three and a half hours. Cuffed again and escorted by a gendarme and a brigadier, we were brought to the Belgian border. There, we were handed over to some Belgian gendarmes who then questioned us [in a wineshop]. The Belgians among us were allowed to stay in Belgium but the “foreigners” were sent back to

France. Since neither country wanted us, we were to have remained in the neutral zone, assuming that the gendarmes would allow us to remain there. The solution to the problem was devised by the Belgian gendarmes themselves: try to re-enter Belgium by a different route, the obvious risk being capture by different gendarmes. And so, that afternoon, the gendarmes picked up their rifles and escorted us part of the way to the border before telling us solemnly: “France is over yonder and that is where you should head back to”; and then they headed back to the wine-shop. We, on the other hand, took a different route in order to reach Moucron and from there we caught the train to Brussels, arriving there that evening.”

In the end Levezan made it to Geneva in Switzerland. His name appeared in a list of anarchists drawn up by the railway police in charge of “border surveillance”. In Geneva he took part in various anarchist rallies and demonstrations and worked for a time as a mathematics teacher.

In the summer of 1891, with some other anarchists, he tried to take part in the Brussels Socialist Congress. But the anarchist delegates were prevented from participating in the congress which was dominated by social democrats and in the end they were expelled from Belgium by the police. The incident was reported in the last edition of *Răzvrătirea*. In January 1893 his name featured in a list of correspondents with anarchist newspapers that was compiled by the French police. In 1897, Levezan, by then back in Rumania, forwarded to Max Nettlau a number of corrections to be made to the *Bibliography of Anarchy* that that libertarian historian had published in Brussels. In fact, the book contained a chapter on anarchist publications in contemporary Rumania. After that, Levezan dropped out of sight for a long time before popping up in Paris again in 1935. In the interim, he had managed to acquire French nationality and seems to have been making a living by working for a range of French publications. Nevertheless, the final years of his life were spent in poverty; having lost his home, he lived in increasingly difficult circumstances with Carmen Mathieu, a Parisian artist who was to take her own life in 1935 by jumping into the Seine. Levezan was to be questioned by the authorities in connection with her death and would afterwards be arrested for vagrancy. How and where Gorges Levezan died we do not know; there is every likelihood that he stayed on in France until the end of his days.

Adrian Tătăran

Bollettino Archivio G. Pinelli, No 61, 2023

Translated by Paul Sharkey

https://centrostudilibertari.it/sites/default/files/materiali/bollettino_61.pdf ■

March 2024 KSL Update

New pamphlet: José Xena Torrent: A Contribution to a Necessary Biography by Víctor García

Both García (pseudonym of Germinal Gracia) and Xena were lifelong anarchists and activists in the CNT in Spain and in exile. £3.35 inc. UK postage see <https://abcwithdannyandjim.substack.com>

Correction ‘Trouble in Moscow: From the life of the “Liesma” [“Flame”] Group’ from 1918 wasn’t written by Jan Birze. Details, and biography of Birze are at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/tmpj8q>

David (Dave) Poole, editor of *Land and liberty : anarchist influences in the Mexican revolution*, died in 2023. There are some links to reviews at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/3xskp4>

London Rebel History Calendar 2024

From our comrades at Past Tense, see <https://pasttensehistories.bigcartel.com/> or <https://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/PastTenseHistories>

New on the KSL Site: Articles

The Sten Gang (Jean Marc Rouillan on the MIL)

De-constructing the Lies and Nonsense on the Monolith on Display in Puigcerdá by Agustín Guillamón

How Libertarian Memory was Hijacked South of the Pyrenees. The Story of a Theft by Imanol

Ephemera and Treasures

We have just bought another selection of anarchist ephemera – thanks to our Friends and others who have made donations to the KSL.

Meeting in Memory of Louise Michel [Leaflet, 1905]

Youth – who gains from war? [Leaflet, 1938]

Freedom Publications Committee [Leaflet]

Letter to Spain and the World re: the movement in Australia

Letter From Allen Pope to Tom Keell re: Spain and

the World and Relief work for Republican Spain

Marie Louise Berneri Memorial Committee Circular

Letter no.2 (November 1950), postcard and leaflet.

The German Emperor – Damn Him – and the

flunkeys who cheer him [Leaflet, 1891]

Read via <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/9320sp>

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