

## Notes on Centro Iberico

For a collection of accounts of the Centro, including a new piece by Phil Ruff, see <https://pasttenseblog.wordpress.com/2021/03/05/spotlight-on-londons-historical-anarchist-spaces-centro-iberico/>. This is a listing of mentions of the Centro in the anarchist press, in particular when it was based at Haverstock Hill.

### **Before Haverstock Hill**

The Centro Iberico (Iberian Centre) is holding meetings each Sunday at 5.30 at the Parish Hall of Holy Trinity, Kingsway (directly opposite HOLBORN TUBE station). Those who do not speak Spanish are invited to come along about 8. or 8.30 and mix socially as this is the nucleus of an international centre. At present it is trying to integrate exiles and immigrant workers from Spain but we have hopes it will develop into a libertarian international centre. Refreshments available. (Black Flag, v.2, n.5, May 1971)

### Meetings

Nearly 200 people jammed into the small parish hall to hear Jose Peirats lecture (in Spanish). The libertarian [movement] was well represented (some 150 or so of those present) ranging from exiles of thirty years – and their children and grandchildren – to immigrant workers and students, visitors on a temporary basis and new exiles. The rest of the 200 included some communist critics. (Black Flag, v.2, n.6, June 1971)  
[José Peirats: author of The CNT in the Spanish Revolution]

May 14<sup>th</sup>: Fury over Spain (film) with Miguel Garcia Garcia speaking on Spain today at Centro Iberico.

From now on the Iberian Centre will run joint meetings with Anarchist Black Cross. Any profits above clearing expenses will go to the Spanish political prisoners. We want to make it an international libertarian centre, which subsequently will have its own premises; also a place where, separately, Spanish immigrant workers can meet.

Meetings every Sunday from about 5pm. Films will be shown about 8pm on one floor; general gas on other. Refreshments. Drop in and out.

Meetings are now held Sunday afternoon & evenings

Centro Iberico (& ABC) at Holy Trinity Church Hall, just beside church, on left, Kingsway, London, WC2 (immediately opposite Holborn Tube Station).

(Black Flag, v.2, n.12, June 1972)

### IN TOWN NOW...

Over the last four weekends we have met comrades from France, Spain, Belgium, Italy, Canada, U.S.A., Jamaica, Australia, South Africa and even some from London... We are doing our best to transform the Centro Iberico meetings into an international centre which will have its own premises. We have met a few comrades from the 'rest of England'. But the Londoners? The phoneyes have for years kept the rest away. Now the phoneyes have scuttled for cover how does one signal the 'all clear' to the rest?

(Black Flag, v.2, n.13 30<sup>th</sup> July 1972)

### **Haverstock Hill**

[This issue mentions plans to hold a Chalk Farm and Belsize Dinner on Saturdays at 83a Haverstock Hill to commemorate 'a tradition of anarchist publishing and action' in the area, and to raise funds for the ABC.]

The Centro Iberico, which is no longer holding its meetings in Holborn, will also resume in the same premises, for which we are now negotiating.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.3 June 1973)

August 1973: Public meetings : organised revolutionary anarchists in the class struggle

8 PM Thursday 23 August

Centro Iberico

83A Haverstock Hill NW3

North London ORA

[see <https://placard.ficedl.info/article7043.html> where the date is given as 1979, which doesn't match for either Centro Iberico at Haverstock Hill, or the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (ORA)]

International Libertarian Centre/ Centro Iberico, social meetings held Saturday and Sunday evenings at 83a Haverstock Hill.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.7 December 1973)

In support of political prisoners Anarchist Cabaret February 2<sup>nd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>; Cabaret of the Minorities 'Gai Chansons' February 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. [...] Centro Iberico will meet in future only on Sundays, 7pm. All welcome.

In the summer we shall be holding an exhibition of [John Olday's] drawings at the International Libertarian Centre.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.8 [January] 1974)

John Olday's Anarchist Cabaret opened with a swing at the International Libertarian Centre with three performers putting over a strong political cabaret act – with strong overtones of Berlin of the twenties – supported by others; with added support in the next cabaret a fortnight later (they are taking place alternate Saturdays). Still in its early stages and bearing marks of improvisation, the political comment in song is making its impact and despite some weaknesses may develop into the nucleus of what we hope will be Anarchist Theatre.

The first night was interrupted by some of those inconsequential characters from the underground-scene-where-it's-all-at-man (whom we got well pissed off with rubbing shoulders round the Defence Committee scene), who have no point of militant action but think they can turn up at anarchist (and women's lib) meetings to take over – your supposed to listen respectfully as they tell you you're not inclined to action. In the audience were representatives of three revolutions, ten strikes and nobody could total the 'bird'... the suddenness of the heave-ho took them by surprise and alas is the only answer (they went off inevitably mumbling 'fascism'). The showing of the film 'Dawn over Spain' – in co-operation with the Centro Iberico and 'Freedom' – resulted in a packed house which raised £50 for Spanish Resistance funds (specifically for help to Salvador Puig). In future we shall have to limit attendance (hope you understand folks – but you might as well come early and see it in comfort and let us arrange a second showing for those who can't get in).

(Black Flag v.3, n.9 [March] 1974)

[Defence Committee: Stoke Newington Eight Defence Group]

Anarchist Cinema

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> of April. Nazarin by Luis Bunuel (Mexico 1958 – Spanish dialogue, English subtitles)

Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> of May. Praise Marx and pass the ammunition by Maurice Hatton (UK, 1969)

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 12 of May. Viridiana by Luis Bunuel (Spain/Mexico 1961 – Spanish dialogue – English subtitles).

At Centro Iberico at 7.30 pm.

83A Haverstock Hill, London NW.3. – side entrance by Steele's Road.

(Black Flag, v.3, no.10 [April] 1974)

## CENTRO IBERICO

We have been able, since starting the Centro Iberico – first in a church hall at Holborn, now in our own International Libertarian Centre premises in Belsize Park – to speak to many Spanish comrades who have come over to work, study, visit or make contact. We hear news of the progress of the libertarian movement in Spain: we get details of the latest arrests, the movements of prisoners, the growth of the workers' resistance.

Since the execution of Salvador Puig there has been an upsurge of interest in the anarchist movement. Most students, influenced by the place of Marxism in the university curricula, tend to turn at first to Marxist-Leninism. In the main not the Moscow variety, but the Maoist or sometimes Trotskyist varieties, yet they soon perceive that the workers in Spain automatically, in time of stress, turn to their anarchist traditions.

'What is anarchism about?' they ask, and when they know, they find it easier to integrate with the workers. But sometimes they come with cobwebs on the brain from exposure to propaganda. The other week, some young Spaniards came – keenly anti-Franco, with a usually high degree of perception. 'But is it true that Carrero Blanco was killed by the "ultras"?' they asked. (The 'Ultras' in Spain are always the ultra-Right).

'What nonsense is this?' It is the latest theory of the Communist Party (Moscow line – the 'Carrillistas'). What they cannot control, they must denounce. Nor are they all that keen on the overthrow of the regime at this stage, when they have so successfully penetrated its outer structure by an alliance of the CP-controlled Workers Commissions with the Christian Democrats (bourgeois semi-tolerated Opposition Party).

Before this theory the CP advanced the idea that the CIA was responsible!

The Spanish Police have named two suspects who would certainly be killed if found. One is Ignacio the other Aya. I know them well. They are Basques, and certainly not reactionaries: good, sincere comrades, if not precisely anarchists. The first was on a propaganda tour with myself in England, the second in prison with me. Their credentials are not in doubt. It is a great pity that it upsets the Communist Party line that they are the only source of opposition to General Franco and that this opposition is entirely of a parliamentary nature. Big business in the way of Common Market entry, Russian strategy, and foreign trade union support depends on that line being maintained. But facts are facts and these suggestions must be given the lie direct.

Miguel Garcia

(Black Flag, v.3, n.14, October 1974)

Meetings Centro Iberico and of International Libertarian Centre [...] Saturday and Sunday 7.30 pm. Rags wanted for our printshop; records (LP) for disco at centre; any scrap to raise funds useful, also jumble for next sale.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.15, November 1974)

The centre is open (with bookstall) Saturday and Sunday evenings only (after 6pm). Sorry, we have no paid officials to welcome you at other times – best not to call during the week as there's usually no-one there ... we will try to meet you if we know in advance.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.17, Jan./Feb. 1975)

Our London centre is the contact base for international activity and merits a lot more support than it gets. Also remember we can do with a lot of things besides cash: e.g. trading stamps will help us; we need clean rags for printshop and always have a demand for scrap metal which we can sell for one or other causes, likewise records, clothes etc. for jumble use.

(Black Flag, v.3, n.19 April 1975).

Solidarity seminars at International Libertarian Centre 2.30 sats.

17<sup>th</sup> May – new struggles in society.

31<sup>st</sup> May – Anarchism in Britain.

14 June – socialism and self-management.

28<sup>th</sup> June – The Economy.

(Black Flag, v.4, n.1 May 1975)

Songs of the Spanish Civil War LP, in Spanish, £2.50 from Centro Iberico

[26 July 1975 Santiago Carrillo, General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party spoke at Westminster Hall.]

Centro Iberico had prepared 250 copies of an article by Fernando Gomez Pelaez (*Santiago Carrillo o la historia falsificada*). All were sold.

(Black Flag, v.4, n.3, August 1975)

The International Libertarian Centre remains open [...] daily 4-8; Sats. & Suns. 4-11pm.

(Black Flag, v.4, n.4, Sept./Oct. 1975)

### **After Haverstock Hill**

Our London centre at 83a Haverstock Hill, London N.W.3. is now permanently closed. We hope to open a new London centre soon. As sporadic letters still get sent to 10 Gilbert Place, and are lost, we hope that the occasional letters and persistent libertarian newspapers that never revise their addresses will take heed that “83a” has passed us and now houses a swish gambling club unlikely to be interested. Letters for the Centro Iberico can be sent to Miguel Garcia, 123 Upper Tollington Park, London N.4.

LONDON CENTRE: There is supposed to be a libertarian presence in London other than ourselves. Maybe it ought to emerge a bit more noticeably than it has done. For four years we have borne the expense and problems of a ‘centre’ without any support providing not only a meeting place but an international centre. Rising costs beyond any hope of meeting them, with the total absence of contributions towards the upkeep, have forced us to give up the International Libertarian Centre. Ideally such a centre demands far wider support than that of one or two people, who are already fully occupied with other matters – and on whom descend like locusts ‘revolutionary tourists’ from the Continent wanting a ‘holiday on the cheap’ which to say the least, is discouraging.

We will however do our best to get another London centre within the next six weeks ... But don’t leave it all to us friends.

(Black Flag, v.4, n.10, September 1976)

Centro Iberico/ Int. Libertarian Centre are now meeting every Sunday at 5-11 pm at Community Centre, Archway Rd., London N19 (converted church directly opposite Highgate Tube). For libertarian contact and social meeting.

(Black Flag, v.4, n.11, November 1976).

Centro Iberico

address: 421 Harrow Road, London W9. (near Portobello Road: Tube Westbourne Park.)

Saturdays & Sundays 3-11 pm.

(Post: Miguel Garcia, 123 Upper Tollington Park, London N.4)

[Spain]

[...] The CNT locals are mostly open all day, but particularly frequented in the evenings. Each union is producing its own bulletins, in addition to which some produce newspapers, as well as the national and regional newspapers. Then too there are numerous local publications of the grassroots type – for this purpose as many offset lithos and especially duplicating machines as possible are needed. There are many comrades who learned to use a litho thanks to the Centro Iberico in London: supplying lithos and duplicators will help preserve that traditional diversity of publication that always characterised our movement in Spain – and keep alive our many years of international co-operation.

Miguel Garcia.

(Black Flag, v.5, n.2, 1977)

[11 November]

Evening, Saturday 11, Centro Iberico, 420 [ie 421] Harrow Road, London W11. Public meeting, 7.30 pm followed by joint Anglo-Spanish social.

(Black Flag, v.5, n.6 October 1978)

#### Anarchist Clubs

The opening of a new Anarchist club (the Autonomy Centre at Wapping in London) is more than an occasion for self-congratulation – though it certainly isn't every day that it happens. There has in fact not been one in this country since we had to close down the old centre at Haverstock Hill (apart from the Centro Iberico squat in Notting Hill),

(Black Flag, v.6, n.9 November 1981)

The Centro is mentioned in Luis Monferrer Catalán – *Odisea en Albión. Los republicanos españoles exiliados in Gran Bretaña (1936-1977)*, Ediciones de la Torre, Madrid, 2007.

In 1974, the Centro Ibérico (at 83 Haverstock Hill, London NW3) produced a cyclo-styled pamphlet by Víctor García *Juicio contra Franco* (24 pages) with a foreword by Manuel Corral. In it, it was claimed that the situation in Spain in 1974 was the same as it had been in 1962 when the incidents covered by the pamphlet had occurred. It argued that lawful, peaceful protest was useless and thus it argued in favour of recourse to “emphatic actions” in order to destroy Francoism’s machinery of repression. [*Juicio contra Franco* was about the Italian anarchist solidarity attack on the Spanish Embassy in Genoa. It turned into a show trial with Franco in the dock. ]

Monferrer states (pp. 452-453) that: The PCE in London organized Saturday dances and talks in a church in Holborn. “Later, they had a larger premises for dances and lectures in a church in Portobello. And so they set up the Centro Machado in 1968 in Notting Hill Gate (London)”

Thus it was the Club Antonio Machado that the Communists moved on to, rather than one named after Garcia Lorca (as recounted in Albert Meltzer’s *I Couldn’t Paint Golden Angels*, chapter 14)

[Thanks to PS].