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## SACCO AND VANZETTI MEMORIAL (1977)

[1977's] annual Soil of Liberty picnic was called to observe the 50th anniversary of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. On August 21st, some 40 people gathered and Tom Copeland gave the following talk.

Welcome and thanks for coming to this anarchist picnic. Anarchist picnics are a tradition around the world, occasions used by anarchists to enjoy each other's company, to develop solidarity around political activities and to raise money for anarchist causes. Many anarchist picnics were held across this country during the 1920's to raise money for the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti. It seems appropriate, therefore, that our picnic today honor these two men.

This coming Tuesday marks the 50th anniversary of the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Vanzetti by the state of Massachusetts. They were electrocuted August 23, 1927. I have read and studied their case over a number of years. I've been interested in the cases' enormous influence and in the monumental legal injustice done to them. As a future anarchist lawyer, I am particularly concerned about the legal issues of the case. A special significance for me is that my birthday falls on the same day as Sacco and Vanzetti's execution, August 23rd. This gives me a sense of a special bond with them.

Sacco and Vanzetti were born in Italy and immigrated to this country around the turn of the century. They were unskilled laborers working long hours for little pay. Sacco eventually became a shoemaker and Vanzetti a fish peddler. Both were radicals and well known public speakers involved in local strikes and anarchist activities, hard-working members of the rank and file anarchist movement. They fled to Mexico during World War I to escape the draft.

In 1920 a pay master and his guard carrying a \$15,000 payroll were killed and robbed in Braintree, Massachusetts. Shortly thereafter, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested and charged with the two murders. In 1921, a jury found them guilty and they were sentenced to die.

The political climate in America at this time had a great impact on the Sacco-Vanzetti case. The radical movement had reached a peak immediately following World War I. There were large organizations of Socialists, Wobblies, Communists and Anarchists. In 1918 the Bolshevik Revolution caused many US radicals to believe that an American revolution which would overthrow



capitalism was just around the corner. 1919 brought a national steel strike, the Seattle general strike and the Boston police strike. The country experienced a wave of bombings supposedly by anarchist and radical groups. The power of labor and the strong influence of radicalism displayed themselves massively.

This political upheaval struck fear into the hearts of powerful business interests and the state and federal governments. The media became gripped in an hysterical passion of anti-radicalism. Congress passed the

Sedition Act, which provided for the deportation of aliens who held objectionable economic or political views. In 1920, the federal government conducted a nationwide round-up of radicals. Coordinated by J. Edgar Hoover, these "Red Raids", as they were called, netted 2,000 arrests in New York alone. In Boston, 500 men and women were marched through the streets in chains. Over 10,000 people were arrested across the country. Membership in a radical organization was the only evidence against these people. Their civil rights were completely ignored. Many were arrested in the middle of the night without search or arrest warrants. 700 aliens including anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were deported. The law they were deported under remains in effect. Today alien anarchists can still be deported for their beliefs.

It is with this background in mind that the Sacco-Vanzetti case is best understood. The government was spying on the anarchist organizations around Boston and looking to frame some radicals as scapegoats for the Braintree killings. When arrested, Sacco and Vanzetti were armed and carrying anarchist literature.

Their trial was a farce. Feelings ran high against radicals and foreigners. They were convicted on circumstantial evidence, unreliable testimony by the prosecution's witnesses, and on what the prejudiced judge called a "consciousness of guilt." The testimony of numerous defense witnesses giving alibis for the defendants was discounted by the judge and jury because their witnesses were Italian and spoke with thick accents. After their conviction the judge said to a friend, "Did you see what I did with those anarchist bastards?"

The American legal system denied Sacco and Vanzetti justice. The question of their guilt or innocence aside, the evidence presented against them should never have resulted in a conviction or execution. They suffered the agony ⇒p2

**Inside: War or Revolution; Return of the Christie File!**

## SACCO AND VANZETTI MEMORIAL (1977)

from front of waiting in jail for over seven years while countless futile court appeals were tried. The legal system operated then, as it does now, on a perverse, inflexible logic system. A defendant can be innocent and yet the law will not free him. In this case, the appeals court for Sacco and Vanzetti only ruled on whether the verdict itself was just. The courts were frankly unwilling to apply the facts of the case to free the two men.

The Sacco and Vanzetti case attracted a tremendous amount of support from liberal and radical groups across the country. Thousands of dollars were raised at rallies and picnics like this one to fund the defense committee. It has become the most famous criminal case in American history. But despite the millions of people who believed in their innocence Sacco and Vanzetti were executed on August 23, 1927 in the Massachusetts State Prison. On the day before their execution, millions demonstrated, demanding that they be freed. Over 250,000 people came out for their funeral in Boston.

Sacco and Vanzetti were killed for their anarchist ideas. They never would have been tried and convicted without the prevailing prejudice against aliens and radicals. Vanzetti once said, "We call ourselves Libertarians, which means briefly that we believe that human perfectibility is to be obtained by the largest amount of freedom, and not by coercion, and that the bad in human nature and conduct can only be eliminated by the elimination of its causes, and not by coercion or imposition, which cause greater evil by adding bad to bad."

In another letter from prison in 1923 Vanzetti said, "The anarchist goes ahead and says; all that is help to me without hurting the others is good; all that helps the others without hurting me is good also, all the rest is evil. Anarchists look for their liberty in the liberty of all, for their happiness in the happiness of all, for their welfare in the universal welfare. I am with them."

That's the history of the Sacco and Vanzetti case. I think it's important for their story to be retold again and again to each succeeding generation. Their case is not an isolated example of American justice making a mistake. Similar cases and current political trials familiar to us all indicate that these are not mistakes but rather systematic attempts by the government to crush anarchist and radical dissent with state violence and official lawlessness.

We all are aware of continual government repression. At times maybe we're too preoccupied with the forces of authoritarianism. It's an immense task we face as anarchists in helping to create a free society. But let's not become cynical about our lives and ideals. Sacco and Vanzetti experienced the solidarity and love of millions of comrades around the world. They felt a joy in their own commitment to changing society. They had a great hope that their comrades would continue on with the work that was left to be done.

Two days before they died, on August 21st fifty years ago today, they wrote a letter to their defense committee from the death house of the Massachusetts State Prison. We are the descendants of those men and women who

worked so hard in their defense and to whom Sacco and Vanzetti addressed this letter:

*"Dear Friends and Comrades of the Sacco-Vanzetti Defence Committee: After tomorrow midnight, we will be executed, save a new staying of the execution by either the United States Supreme Court or by Governor Alvan T. Fuller...*

*We feel lost! Therefore, we decided to write this letter to you to express our gratitude and admiration for all what you have done in our defense during these seven years, four months, and eleven days of struggle.*

*That we have lost and have to die does not diminish our appreciation and gratitude for your great solidarity with us and our families.*

*Friends and Comrades, now that the tragedy of this trial is at an end, be all as of one heart. Only two of us will die. Our ideal, you our comrades, will live by millions. Just treasure our suffering, our sorrow, our mistakes, our defeats, our passion for future battles and for the great emancipation.*

*Be all as of one heart in this blackest hour of our tragedy. And have heart.*

*Salute for us all the friends and comrades of the earth.*

*Long life to you all, long life to Liberty.*

*Sacco and Vanzetti"*

Fifty years later, we remember these two anarchists. I think their lives should give us a greater appreciation of the tradition of anarchism in this country. And I think that we all should take the time we spend together today to appreciate our own lives and the good work we all are doing. Let's celebrate and enjoy the afternoon.

From Soil of Liberty Vol 3 No 5, Nov-Dec 1977

Details of Vanzetti's *Story of a Proletarian Life*, republished by KSL are on page 7

### CREDIT

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### PUBLICATION NEWS

for new KSL publications see page 4 *Fired by the Ideal: Italian-American Anarchist Responses to Czolgosz's killing of McKinley*

and page 6 *Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968* by Alexandre Skirda

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## IF WE MUST FIGHT, LET IT BE FOR THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION (1914)

**S**OCIETY has plunged into a world-wide war, but we Anarchists, we cannot shed tears over its horrors, as do the Socialists and other so-called philanthropists. WE KNOW how industriously those same weepers have been piling up the fuel which made this conflagration certain.

Governments have made this war. The Austrian government ordered its slaves to sweep Serbia with fire and sword. The German government snapped its fingers at the four million and odd Socialist voters, and ordered its slaves to invade Belgium. The American government with hypocritical sobs and sighs, ordered its slaves to seize Vera Cruz and slaughter helpless Mexicans. Everywhere it is the same. Everywhere unscrupulous manipulators, who care only for profits, power and place, pull the wires and the people have to dance.

Democratic America and England are not one whit better than is autocratic Russia. Republican France shows us precisely the same picture as does Imperial Germany. Each herds its subjects to the shambles when it suits the purpose of the few. By no possibility can it be otherwise, for everywhere the masses are entirely helpless. Everywhere power is concentrated in the hands of those who operate the government machine.

Everywhere government is a machine, run by politicians for their own selfish profit. In the hands of those who run it the masses are putty, to be molded as the molders please. Vainly we splutter in our unions. Vainly we form new parties, hold mass meetings and register our useless protests. The machine works on inexorably, caring not one jot.

Who are we, anyhow? Nobodies, for we are helpless. Only money and power talk effectively, and we have neither. Special privilege and monopoly, born of government and protected by government, have stripped us to the skin. We are helpless victims, tied up, trussed, and ready to be roasted whenever rulers are hungry.

Proletariat of the world! Thinking men and women, wherever you may be, we call on you to face the awful picture the world today presents! We bid you note the universal helplessness of the people. That helplessness must be abolished, and we tell you it cannot be done except by overthrowing, root and branch, monopoly and special privilege. We tell you that the individual will remain helpless until these huge governments, with their armies and their navies, their scaffolds and their prisons, and all the rest of their brutal apparatus for the forcible upholding of special privilege, have been abolished, root and branch.

Tears alter nothing. Hysterical protests only exhaust our strength. This is no time for running round distractedly, asking in bewilderment what it means. The fact is so plain that words on it are wasted. The powerful few, for their own private purposes, have drawn the sword and the many are being forced to cut each other's throats.

In letters of blood, which can be read, the lesson has been written, and we must master it. We must grasp one central fact, viz., that to the powerless many the powerful few have given murder orders, and that the many have had to fill them. We must wipe out this order of business.

We must wipe out the governmental condition which begets them.

Socialism, the Socialists, the whole Socialistic philosophy, have fooled us as probably this world was never fooled before. Instead of teaching us to rely on ourselves, and insist individually and collectively on equality of opportunity and a square deal, they have told us that governments are our friends; that we must strengthen them; that we must load them with power; that we must make them run our railroads and our telegraphs; that we must give them the ownership of this and the management of that; that we must work for them in ever larger numbers; that we must look to them for the overthrow of all those special privileges which clothe the few in purple and the multitude in rags. Never was there a more cruel lie. Never were the people lured by fine words and subtle theories more fatally to their own destruction.

It is government that parcels out among the few our priceless heritage, the earth, and defends, with all its military and legal forces, the privilege so granted. It is government that creates the millionaire, and it is government that throws into jail the helpless pauper it has created if he dares to take a crust of bread. It is government that creates and maintains the army of monopolists that ride us and the swarm of official leeches that suck our blood. Every new official is another stone added to that government fortress behind which monopoly and special privilege rest secure, while from it issues a devastating fire on those who question the parasite's right to gorge himself. It is government that orders the peaceful German worker to shoot down the peaceful French worker, with whom he has only interests in common; interests diametrically opposed to those of the heartless few who set the machinery of war in motion.

This is the hour to put on your thinking-cap; to study the appalling picture society presents and to ask yourselves its meaning. When you understand that picture; when you grasp its clear and simple outlines, you will want immediately to toss the whole business of government to the hell which is its proper destination. You will want to get rid, and instantly, of all these idlers; from Kaiser and Czar to the government clerk who wears out his life copying orders issued by his superiors in the official hierarchy. You will want to sweep away, and instantly, all these governmental props which uphold the house of special privilege. You will want to act, and act effectively. You will see that half-way steps are worse than useless.

Do not deceive yourselves! By playing round this social problem you make things infinitely worse. You have been afraid to tackle it squarely. You have been afraid to say, "I am poor because that other man has got it all. I am powerless because a few have all the power." And above all, and infinitely more important than all else, you have been afraid to say, "That other man has all the wealth and power because our government helps and protects him." That mental cowardice is most unworthy of you.

Today the press is prophesying that, as the result of this war, kings heads will fall and Europe become the

## IF WE MUST FIGHT, LET IT BE FOR THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION (1914)

Republic this country professes to be. Do not deceive yourselves! War is the grimmest of all realities and the sternest exposé of all shams. This war is showing up the lie that the vote gives power. What did the Kaiser care about the 5,000,000 Socialist votes? What did Diaz care about the constitution of Mexico, which, adopted in 1856, is even more liberal than that under which we live? The Frenchman has to march, when the governmental machine issues its orders, although France is a Republic. England is theoretically a democracy, and nowhere is so much liberty of speech allowed, yet the masses are more helpless there than ever. Everywhere things have been going rapidly from bad to worse; for everywhere we have been building up these omnipotent governmental machines which are our deadly enemies. We have to face this all-important, central fact.

Governments all hang together. They are eager to set the people warring on each other, but they are in deadly fear lest the people turn and war on them. Therefore, you will notice, our own government machine - from the White House and from City Halls - is issuing exhortations to the public, urging it not to discuss the war; urging it to remember that this country is neutral; urging it to suppress the passion it naturally feels.

Not discuss! Why, this is the one subject that most needs discussion, for never in all history has a lesson so stern been set before us. We MUST master it.

Suppress passion! Why, OUR class is being slaughtered by the ten of thousands, and OUR husbands, sweet-hearts, brothers and bread-winners, are being wiped out of existence.

It is bad enough that our governments should serve us up as food for cannon. It is bad enough that they should reduce us to helplessness. But to crush our intelligence; to stop our enquiry into a matter so vital to us; to prevent us from finding out the truth and discovering the real cause of the evils that beset us - to attempt this is to be guilty of the most unpardonable of crimes. And this is being done under orders of a professional educator - Woodrow Wilson!

We Anarchists lay this question before you boldly. We say you must discuss and arrive at an understanding of the causes of this war; you must master the true meaning of the tragic picture it shoves into your face. We call on you to bend every energy to the solution of this social problem, which means life and death to all of us. We assert, and with profound conviction, that you will have no permanent security against either the military battlefield or the still more awful battlefield of war for profits until you have done with these governments, for they are the instigators and compellers of all war. We insist that a complete social transformation must take place, and that society must so reorganize itself that the parasites, and the governments which create and defend them, shall be no more.

We have no panaceas but intelligence and courage. We do not tell you that you can make another and a better government, for you have been tinkering with that hopeless task for centuries.

We tell you that when you understand the true lesson of this war, you will be fired with the indignation that possesses us; that your indignation will give you courage, and that when intelligence and courage join hands, action will arise spontaneously and the death knell of human slavery will have rung.

Set it ringing, loud and clear! Proclaim to all the sons of men that they were born to be individually free; born to equal opportunity; born to govern themselves by mutual agreement among themselves; born to be brothers and not born to be order-givers or order-takers. Either condition is unworthy of the dignity of man, and what is unworthy of his dignity should be destroyed. Then, only then, we shall have that peace of which it is idle to talk while governments endure.

This war is but the first labor pain of that great social revolution with which the age is pregnant. Let us speed the delivery and make it perfect. To that most holy of all tasks every one of us is called, and to flinch our duty at this greatest of all crises is to play the traitor.

from *Mother Earth* V. 9, no 8, October 1914.

### NEW PUBLICATION

Giuseppe Ciancabilla (and others)  
*Fired by the Ideal: Italian-American Anarchist Responses to Czolgosz's killing of McKinley*

Articles from *L'Aurora* of Spring Valley, Illinois.  
Additional material by Mario Mapelli from *Bollettino Archivio G. Pinelli*:

Giuseppe Ciancabilla: A Look at Italian-American Anarchism at the beginning of the 20th century;  
Italian Anarchist Groups Active in the USA 1899-1904.  
Translated from the Italian by Paul Sharkey  
ISBN 1-873605-08-0, 28 pages £5 (£1.50 individuals)

*"...we wish no tragedy because we are the foes of violence and averse to the spilling of the blood of our*

*fellows; but an iron logic, the product of brutal criminality, of the power of men exercised upon their fellow men, and of the benighted cowardice of him who obeys, means that we can see no solution to the problem of the freedom of all and of each, other than in the dogged, constant rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor..."*

*"we anarchists contend that the individual who stands highest on the social ladder and best embodies the political and economic oppression from which the labouring people suffers horribly, that individual is naturally the one most exposed to eruptions of rebellion from the oppressed and disinherited, from sufferers with emancipated minds as well as from empty-bellied sufferers. In the calling of president, king, emperor, there are professional risks and work hazards..."*

## NOT JUST SPANISH BOMBS: THE RETURN OF THE CHRISTIE FILE

STUART CHRISTIE'S greatest notoriety is for having been imprisoned in 1964 for his part in an assassination attempt on Franco. Christie points out that he was not the only Briton involved in such courier work, only the one who got caught. He himself has always said he'd rather be remembered for his role in reviving the Anarchist Black Cross than as one of the many who tried and failed to remove Franco. *My Granny made me an Anarchist*, first part of an expanded version of *The Christie File*, shows his development up to going to Spain; the ordinary life story of someone who lived through extraordinary events because 'freedom' and 'anti-fascism' were not just words to pay lip service to.

This work (and especially the appendices) provide an insight into the workings of the Spanish libertarian movement in exile making it indispensable for students of Spanish anarchism for the background information it provides on the Anarchist resistance and its operations. Not only does it synthesise information not readily available in English, some of this is new in any language. Some readers will already know the importance of people like Octavio Alberola in revitalising the resistance in the 1960s, but it's interesting to see the recognition of the

contribution of veterans like Cipriano Mera and Juan Garcia Oliver. English-speaking comrades will mainly know Garcia Oliver as Civil War government collaborator, while Mera, I suspect, is almost completely unknown.

The analysis of the Spanish resistance points out the failure of the attempt to run a clandestine armed campaign (the Defensa Interior) as part of a legal body (the CNT in exile.) This contributed to a lack of security and allowed quietists to withhold money voted for the work. Extensive information is given on the 1961 hijacking of the Portuguese liner *Santa Maria*: a protest against Europe's last two remaining fascist dictatorships by the DRIL - Iberian Revolutionary Directorate of Liberation. It highlights choices faced by the libertarian resistance: after the hijacking, the plan to sail to Africa to foment revolt in the Portuguese colonies was thwarted because the news broke once seriously wounded crew were put ashore for treatment. That they did not act as 'professionals' who can disregard 'collateral damage' but as 'amateurs' who chanced the 'failure' of the mission rather than risk innocent lives should not be a reproach to libertarians.

### DEFAMING THE DEAD : THE BOLSHEVIK TRICK

Not satisfied with slandering and libelling their political opponents in life, the Bolsheviki resort even to the vilification of the dead. Thus Bunch-Bruyevitch, one of Lenin's closest friends who during his lifetime held the important position of Manager of Affairs of the Soviet of People's Commissars, in his recently published "Memoirs" deliberately defames the character of Anatol Zhelezniakov, the sailor who had dispersed the Constituent Assembly in 1918. Bruyevitch refers to Zhelezniakov as a bandit who lost his life in an armed conflict with the Red Army.

In the interest of historic verity we protest against this cowardly defamation of our heroic dead. Anatol Zhelezniakov was, as thousands in Russia know, one of the most devoted and loyal workers in the revolutionary cause. He was an Anarchist of long standing who always championed the cause of the oppressed and persecuted. In 1917 he organised great mass-meeting and demonstrations of the Kronstadt sailors to protest against the execution of Thomas Mooney, the labor victim of the San Francisco capitalist "frame-up", as well as against the extradition to California of Alexander Berkman whom it was planned to convict on the same perjured evidence as Mooney. In the October Revolution Zhelezniakov, though an Anarchist, wholeheartedly cooperated with the Bolsheviki, because he had faith in their revolutionary integrity. He participated in numerous fights against counter-revolutionary uprisings, playing a prominent and effective role in the campaigns against the Don Cossacks led by Kaledin, as well as against Generals Krasnov and Denikin. When Trotsky organised the Red Army to displace the volunteer Red Guard, and put Tsarist military officers in positions of high authority, abolishing the

system of self-government of the rank and file Zhelezniakov protested, as did many other revolutionists who realised the reactionary significance of the return to old military methods. For this the Bolsheviki outlawed Zhelezniakov. He returned to Moscow *illegally* and there discussed the matter with Sverdlov, then Chairman of the All-Russian Soviet Executive. Sverdlov assured Zhelezniakov that the action against him was due to a misunderstanding and offered him a high military position. Zhelezniakov declined and left for Odessa where he worked illegally against the Whites. This was in 1918. The following year he was appointed by the Bolsheviki chief of the armored train campaign against Denikin, organised by Zhelezniakov. In an engagement against the counter-revolutionary General, Zhelezniakov lost his life.

The Bolshevik government, notwithstanding that it had outlawed Zhelezniakov, exploited him – when he was dead – as one of "its own" heroes : his body was brought to Moscow and was buried there with many speeches and much pomp. The entire Bolshevik press published eulogies of the dead, proclaiming him a hero of the Revolution.

And now Bunch-Bruyevitch, the timeserver of Lenin, calls Zhelezniakov a bandit! May history pillory the defamer!

From *Bulletin of the Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned or Exiled in Russia*, No 2, Paris – Berlin, March 1927. (Edited by Alexander Berkman). More information is in Paul Avrich's article 'Stormy Petrel: Anatoli Zhelezniakov' (in *Anarchist Portraits* and also *Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review* #5)

## NOT JUST SPANISH BOMBS: THE RETURN OF THE CHRISTIE FILE

This raises the larger question of the effectiveness of the resistance, though it doesn't pretend to offer the last word. It's interesting to see the extent that the revitalised resistance of the 60s echoed popular discontent; discounting the 'vanguardist' image that some people (and not always statist academics) give to any armed struggle. No-one believed that illegal activity brings freedom on a plate, but that it operates alongside popular struggle, influencing and being influenced is obvious. Symbolic attacks maintained pressure on the regime already trying to contain a new series of struggles. More detail could have been given on why Franco was targeted - the fragility of authoritarian regimes being that the 'great leader' balances the competing sections of the ruling class. Had Franco been assassinated would there have been just a change of figurehead or the carefully choreographed 'regime change' of the 1970s which saw 'democracy' return on condition the proles were kept in their place - or something much more challenging?

It's a pity we have to wait for volume two ('General Franco made me a terrorist' out Feb 2003) for the detail of Christie's Spanish mission. This is where Christie's sense of humour - which here is really the humour of horrors survived - makes the tension bearable. His account of entering Spain, carrying explosives strapped to his body - in a woolly jumper in a Spanish August - and having to push a broken down car is truly terrible and amusing at the same time.

Volume two provides plenty of tips in this story for those wanting a 'how not to do it' of illegal activity: hang out with radical exiles so the secret police can photograph you, go to a country not speaking the language, and make sure to have the instructions for your rendezvous written down ...

Even those with absolutely no interest in Spain will find plenty to keep their minds busy. Christie's account of his political awakening in the dying years of consensus politics (which the nostalgic reformists see as some sort of golden age, but one clearly based on everyone knowing their place - rather like the updated version Blair is trying to sell us now) rings many bells for the here and now. Where the Cuban Missile Crisis threatened the world, we now have the War On Terrorism. It's easy to think that peace movements are made from the great and good, but Christie thankfully gives voice to the stropky buggers: "we are not in this movement to opt out of a burden on our consciences, but to fight for what we believe in" (p146, from the poetically titled 'Beyond Counting Arses'). Where CND in the '60s struggled with the problem that however liberal the democracy was supposed to be, mere mass protest had little effect ('we reached the point where demos were more damaging to us') the more radical wing was reaching for new tactics - often the same tactics - that activists now have used from sabotage to mass blockades.

If the title doesn't give it away, the making of Anarchists is a major concern of this book - not of course, that his granny used to slip pictures of Bakunin under his pillow, but that the dissenting Protestant tradition can lead to a concern with social justice rather than dour conformism. It's safe to say that the rebellious heritage of

the Scottish working class also played its part in turning him toward the struggle for a better world. He shows a trajectory through the Left marked by his impatience with the petty tribalism of packing committees as a revolutionary strategy; but his portraits of the many true rebels he encountered is both a tribute and an inspiration.

The first edition of 'the Christie file' is hard to find, and this version, written with both Franco and his secret police safely out of the way, can be less sketchy about details. This is a very limited edition, and deluxe in both price and size. As such it's unlikely to reach those activists (as opposed to academics) with most to gain from it. Like farmers pray for rain, activists should pray for a cheap (and portable) edition. And if you don't put your trust in prayers? Make plans for the reprint.

Stuart Christie, *My Granny made me an Anarchist, The Christie file part 1 1946-64*. ISBN 1-873976-14-3  
A4, 257 pages. £30 plus postage: [www.christiebooks.com](http://www.christiebooks.com)  
or PO Box 35, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 2UX, UK

### A Romp Through Anarchism

Facing the Enemy: A History of Anarchist Organization from Proudhon to May 1968 by Alexandre Skirda  
AK / KSL ISBN: 1902593197 £12.00 \$17.95

**A**NARCHISM is not well served by its histories, at least the English language ones. We have good studies of particular countries, groups or individuals but general ones are most often written by puzzled, dazzled or hostile outsiders.

This history of European Anarchism asks how the movement goes from the initial negative of opposition to taking steps to bring about the new world we want. How do we increase our effectiveness without surrendering initiative and freedom to authority and bureaucracy? Skirda clearly sees thought, organisation and action as parts of a whole, not separate or contradictory specialisms.

It's tempting to describe this as a romp through Anarchist history, with its short punchy chapters and especially Skirda's acid style. Can you beat this as a book review? "Jacques Duclos, a GPU-loving messenger boy who had strained his constipated bowels to bring us his *Ombres et Lumiere - Bakunin et Marx* (Shadows and Light - Bakunin and Marx) better forgotten."

Skirda puts his cards on the table in favour of the platformist approach, so some 'anti-organizationalists' are unlikely to like the message, but he's not daft enough to take the "it's an organisation, it must be good" line, either. Still, the biographical details of all the activists he discusses, quotes from original materials and primary documents produced in the appendices make it obvious this is not just a rant.

Anyone wanting a punchy introduction to where Anarchism comes from, what it wants and how it tries to get it now thankfully has an alternative to Woodcock's 'Anarchism'. Comrades involved in debate on what we do now also get 120 years of condensed experience to help carry the discussion forward.