

# PROGRESSIVE LIBRARIAN

A Journal for Critical Studies & Progressive Politics in Librarianship

Special Supplement to #16

Fall 1999



## Anarchism & Libraries



Anarchists in Libraries:  
Anecdotes

Agnes Inglis:  
Anarchist Librarian

The School and the  
Barricade

Anarchists with a Tool:  
The Library

Richardo Mestre  
(1906-1997)

Spanish Anarchives

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Published and distributed by Progressive Librarians Guild  
2 issues per year; ISSN 1052-5726; indexed in *Alternative Press Index*  
Printed by Durland Alternatives Library, Cornell University

Cover photo: Agnes Inglis, July 1928, at her summer home "The Barn" in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Courtesy of the Labadie Collection, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan.

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Subscriptions rates \$20 individuals; \$35 institutions; \$40 overseas firstclass  
Checks and money orders in US\$ payable to Progressive Librarians Guild

All correspondence, manuscripts, subscription requests to:  
Progressive Librarians Guild  
P.O. Box 2203, Times Square Station, New York NY 10108  
Tel: 212/865-6925 or 973/623-7642  
<http://www.libr.org/PL>

# ANARCHISM & LIBRARIES

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## Anarchists in Libraries: Anecdotes

*Editors note: Progressive Librarian is pleased to publish the following articles on anarchism and libraries. Several appeared in the January 1999 issue of the Spanish journal Educación y Biblioteca: revista mensual de documentación y recursos didácticos (Príncipe de Vergara, 136, oficina 2, 28002 Madrid, tel. 91/411 17 83, fax 91/411 60 60, email edubibli@mad.servicom.es) and are translations from Spanish.*

*Immediately below are quotations from leading figures in the anarchist movement revealing their close ties with and affections for the library.*



“The first years of Proudhon slipped along by chance. He helped with the domestic chores, or took the cows out to pasture. At twelve years of age, he entered school, with notable success as a student. His parents being unable, because of their poverty, to buy him books, he borrowed them from his classmates and copied the lessons. He visited, moreover, with great frequency, the town library, and there, driven by curiosity, he would ask for book after book, sometimes up to ten at a time. One day, the librarian, Mr. Veiss, drew close to the boy and asked him with a smile: ‘But, sweetie, what do you check out so many books for?’ The boy raised his head, looked right in the eyes of his interlocutor, and simply answered: ‘What’s it to you?’”


**Pierre-Joseph Proudhon** (1809-1865) was one of the principal theoreticians of anarchism. Author of *What is property?*, *Of the creation of order in humanity, or principles of political organization* and *Economic contradictions, or Philosophy of misery*. In jail he wrote *Confessions of a revolutionary*, *The General idea of the Revolution*, and *Philosophy of Progress*. In 1965 his inheritors donated his books, manuscripts and correspondence to the Municipal Library of Besançon.



“Then my life as a prisoner began to take on a more regular pattern. I already had an immediate objective in perspective. By nine o’clock I had


already walked one hundred times around my cell and was waiting for the pencils and pens that they were to give me. The work that I had prepared for the Geographical Society contained, besides a report on my explorations in Finland, a detailed discussion of the theories of glaciers. Knowing that I had now a lot of free time before me, I resolved to redo and develop this part of my work. The Academy of Sciences placed its admirable library at my service, and a corner of my cell was soon filled with books and maps, among which could be found the complete collection of the excellent geological lists of the Swedish society of geology, an almost complete collection of the reports on all the expeditions to the arctic pole and entire years of the trimestral journal of the Geological Society of London (*Quarterly Journal of the London Geological Society*).... At five in the afternoon – at three in winter – that is to say, from the time they would bring my little lamp, they would take my pens and pencils away from me and I should stop my work. Then I would start reading, most often historical works. An entire library had been formed in the prison due to the generations of political prisoners that had been jailed there. I was authorized to enrich the library with a certain number of important works on the history of Russia and with the books that my parents would bring. I could read almost all the works and collections of deeds and documents relative to the Muscovite period of Russia history.... I also read a large number of novels and I managed to hold a little party on Christmas afternoon. My parents had sent *Christmas Carol* by Dickens to me and I spent that festive day reading the beautiful creations of the great novelist, torn apart with laughter and tears.”

**Petr Kropotkin** (Moscow 1842-1922) born to an aristocratic family. He enters as a child in the School of Pages of St. Petersburg, institution that forms the squadrons of the red army. Once an official, he is sent to Siberia. Given his knowledge of geology and geography he explores the regions of Manchuria and other Siberian regions. In 1868, he leaves the army. Increasingly interested in socialist theories he joins in 1872 the Socialist International, which he will quickly abandon to be added to anarchist groups. Arrested and incarcerated in 1874, he escapes after two years and is a refugee in England and Switzerland. He preaches libertarian communism from which collectivism is no more than a transitory stage. In the prosecution of the anarchists in Lyon in 1883, Kropotkin is condemned to five years in prison. Upon leaving jail, he returns to England where he will reside for thirty years. Among his main works, the most notable are: *Words of a Rebel*, *The Conquest of Bread*, and *Mutual Aid: a factor of revolution*.



“In the case of instituting a rational school in order to prepare with dignity the entry of childhood into free human solidarity, the immediate problem that determined its program was that of its library.”

**Francisco Ferrer Guardia** (Alella, Barcelona, 1859-1909) in his adolescence is initiated into republican ideology, freethought, and Masonry. In 1885, he self-exiled to Paris where he came into contact with liberals, republicans, socialists and anarchists. In 1901 he returns to Barcelona and founds the Modern School with the inheritance of former students. He participates in journalism, political rallies, and conferences in favor of the rational teaching. In 1906 he was incarcerated, accused of participation in the frustrated attempt against the king, perpetrated by Mateo Morral, employee of the Modern School. Absolved after a high profile trial, the government shuts down the school. In 1909, he is imprisoned again, accused of being promoter and primarily responsible for the known acts such as the Tragic Week of Barcelona. After a trial full of irregularities, he was sentenced to death. His trial and execution released an intense international campaign against the Catholic Church and the government of Maura.



“The great dream of Durruti and Ascaso was to found anarchist publishers in all the big cities of the world. The headquarters would have its base in Paris, the center of the intellectual world, and if possible, in the Plaza of the Opera or of the Concordia. The most important works of modern thought would be published there in all languages of the world. With this goal, the International Anarchist Library was founded which edited numerous books, pamphlets, and journals in various languages. The French government persecuted this activity with police force with all the means at its disposal, in the same way the Spanish government and the all the other reactionary governments of the world did. They didn't like that the Durruti-Ascaso group also attracted attention in the cultural sphere” (S. Cánovas Cervantes)

“Durruti donated half a million francs for the maintenance of the International Library. After the proclamation of the Republic, the anarchists wanted to transfer the base of their Barcelona editorial. This effort cost us thousands of pesetas. But at French customs in Port Bou the French

police lit fire to all the material. This is how the fruit of so many expenses and sacrifices were lost" (Alejandro Gilabert)

**Buenaventura Durruti** (León, 1896-Madrid, 1936), was born into a working-class family. In 1903 his father is incarcerated after having participated in a strike in favor of the eight-hour working day. Rejecting military service and wanted for acts of sabotage, he is a refugee in France in 1917 where he meets two CNT exiled anarchists. In 1919, in Spain again, he works as an auto mechanic and joins the CNT. He founds the group "The Justice Seekers" with a group of friends to fight against the gunmen, hired assassins of management. He participates in the frustrated attempt against Alfonso XIII. In 1922 he meets Fernando Ascaso, who will become his closest comrade. He founds the group "The Solidarians", embryo of the FAI. He participates in the assassination of Cardinal Soldevila, archbishop of Zaragoza and great protector of the fascist gunmen. Between December of 1924 and February of 1926, they are sent by the union to Latin America where they rob numerous banks to finance the local working-class publications. They return to Spain upon the victory of the Republic. Incarcerated on diverse occasions during the Republican period, Durruti becomes a popular hero. He perishes defending Madrid.



"Many anarchists were workers and took upon themselves the enormous duty of teaching to their coworkers what they did not know: they represented a real force if they were to join together: if they unite with solidarity in their work places, in their factories, and above all, in the arbitrary national borders; they were essentially educators and they preached by example; that's why they were hung or shot by the firing squads. They got to know all the refinements of the presidiums and penal colonies; they suffered jury trials, prosecutions and tortures. They formed Worker Societies, unions and on the side, schools, libraries"

**Diego Abad de Santillán** (1898-1983) historian, theorist and Spanish anarchist. Exiled in Argentina he wrote among other works *The Economic Organism of Revolution, Strategy and Tactic: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, and *About our Libertarian Objectives*.



"Not all, by far, of the specific groups that have libraries at their disposal also make good on the slogan "culture and action." The majority of them have no libraries. However, as few as they may be, this fact gives one an

idea of the low level of understanding of anarchism that there is. But its preferable to leave these pseudo-anarchists that have such a poor understanding of the doctrine that they claim to profess, since they don't bother to study in books the social and philosophical greatness of their doctrine.... The interesting fact is another. Our wanderings through the various Spanish regions have led us to many libraries of workers cultural centers and of specific groups, and in almost all of them we have observed the same capital defect: the library was homogenous or almost homogenous. The majority of our sociologists and thinkers who are anarchist theoreticians are on the shelves, but only by exception you will find the names of sociologist thinkers and economists of other schools of thought."

**Juan Peiró** (Barcelona 1887-1942) son of a working class family, he began working at age eight. He remained illiterate until 22 years of age. When in 1920 the repression against the CNT was initiated and was declared illegal, Peiró was arrested and led in a chain gang to the prison of Vitoria, covering 600 kilometers on foot and handcuffed. He was secretary of the national committee of the CNT. He wrote the *Trajectory of the National Confederation of Workers*, which would become a basic document of Spanish syndicalism and in which he combated the ideological sectarianism of some anarchists. Director of the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera* (*Workers Solidarity*) and later, *Catalunya*. Having signed the manifest known as "Los Treinta" (The Thirties"), he was expelled from the CNT. He was minister of Industry in Azaña's government. When the war finished, he chose exile in France. Turned in to the Spanish authorities by the Gestapo, he was sent to jail in Valencia, then judged in war trials in 1942 and sentenced to death.



"The theatrical union of the CNT had its offices in one of the occupied palaces, which was on Miguel Angel Street... This palace had not been dismantled, there were no signs of vandalism. The great library was kept in a perfect state, to the disposition of the union members. Not only could one read there, but one could take books home after showing a union identification and filling out a form... In that spectacular library of the CNT, I showed my red and black identification and I took home as my first book in my developing career, *Zalacain, the adventurer*, by Pío Baroja.... With the same intention of placing the books at the reach of the people, there was, in that painful Madrid, a few street newspapers stands.

One of them was on Recoletos Street, near Cibeles, in which, just by showing your union identification one could take home any book. When returning it, one had the right to pick another one. Those books were probably confiscated from libraries of right wing owners....But in those times and in that zone it was thought that culture was a good thing, served as a weapon and should not be a bourgeoisie privilege. Thanks to that system, I was able to read many books in a house where they, and the money to buy them, were scarce."

**Fernando Fernán Gómez** (Lima, 1921), writer, actor, and director of theater and cinema, has been recently chosen an academic member of the Royal Academy of Language. He always has shown sympathy and interest for the anarchist movement.



"Anarchism was important in the previous years of the war because it delivered culture, with its newspapers and journals. With them it attacked illiteracy, carrying out an important role; that needs to be talked about, not because they were anarchists, but because they empowered different methods of organization, creating cultural centers where one could go and discuss. Today, when a cultural center is created, it becomes a business. It has little to do with community."

**Abel Paz** (Almería, 1921), son of landless peasants, militant of the libertarian movement, exiled and political prisoner during Francoism. Auto-didactic historian, author of the biography *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* and *Chronicle of the Iron Column*. Besides other historical studies about the CNT, he has recently published four autobiographical volumes *Prickly pear and scorpions* (1921-1936), *Voyage to the past* (1936-1939), *In the fog* (1936-1942) and *Against the wall* (1942-1954). Recently, he declared: "I still continue myself a revolutionary that wants to fight the revolution with books and thought, something more dangerous than those who do it with guns, because with them you don't cause revolution, just deaths; with ideas you create transformations because you change the peoples minds."

*Translated by Robin Ragan and Antonio Prado*

## Agnes Inglis: Anarchist Librarian

by Julie Herrada and Tom Hyry

**A**gnes Inglis never planned on a career as a librarian. At the age of 52 in 1924, and following a period of intense work on behalf of radical immigrants facing persecution and deportation after World War I, Inglis visited the University of Michigan library to consult the collection of books, journals, papers, clippings, and ephemera donated by her friend Joseph Labadie in 1911. "Jo" Labadie<sup>1</sup> was a labor leader, social reformer and individualist anarchist who accumulated a large number of materials documenting the multitude of events and movements he had participated in over a forty-year career. Inglis found Labadie's original collection in the same condition in which it had been donated: "in fine shape...though still unbound." (Inglis 1924) She decided to spend a short period of time volunteering in the library unpacking and sorting materials. That short time turned into 28 years of distinguished and mostly unpaid service, during which she not only organized the large collection, but increased it by an estimated twenty times its original size, and raised it to the status it enjoys today among libraries documenting the history and philosophy of anarchism and other radical social and political movements. Inglis's life as an anarchist and a librarian provides an excellent case of the intersection between political ideals and librarianship.

Born the youngest child of a well-to-do Detroit family in 1872, Agnes spent most of her first three decades in a sheltered, conservative, religious family home. Her father, a noted physician, died when she was four years old. Other than a year at an exclusive girls' academy in Massachusetts, Inglis spent her youth nursing a sister ill with cancer, and subsequently her mother who died before Agnes turned thirty. With no more family obligations and a substantial income, Agnes left home to travel and attend the University of Michigan where she studied history and literature.



Inglis left school before attaining a degree and spent several years as a social worker at Chicago's Hull House, the Franklin Street Settlement House in Detroit, and the Ann Arbor YWCA. While working in these settings, she gained intimate knowledge of the unfair working and living conditions suffered by working class immigrant women and men. She also grew skeptical of the effectiveness of liberal policies and programs designed to transform the lives of working people and subsequently began to question the social, economic, and political conditions in the United States.

At the same time, Inglis continued her abbreviated education informally. She read widely and was especially attracted to and persuaded by revolutionary writers. She attended many lectures in Ann Arbor and Detroit given by a variety of social critics, many of them anarchists. She met Emma Goldman in 1915 and became friends with the famous anarchist through whom she also met Alexander Berkman, Goldman's longtime comrade and lover. Inglis organized anarchist lectures in southeastern Michigan, began associations and friendships with many local radicals, and joined the Detroit chapter of the Industrial Workers of the World. In addition to her activism, Inglis used her financial means to generously support radical efforts ranging from strike funds to bail money for those imprisoned for expressing unpopular political viewpoints.

With the onset of the United States involvement in World War I, Inglis stepped up her radical activities by participating frequently in demonstrations protesting conscription and the war. When the government cracked down on radicals demonstrating against the war in what became known as the first Red Scare, Inglis found her resources to be even more in demand. Along with tireless efforts in support of those facing deportation, she also posted bail for numerous individuals and contributed heavily to their defense funds. Her longtime support of radical causes eventually led her family to cut off her unlimited access to funds and gave her only a modest income on which to live.

When the turmoil following the Red Scare died down, Inglis began her career in the Labadie Collection. As curator, Agnes developed idiosyncratic organizational techniques that nonetheless provided a useful struc-

ture to the collection. She began by dividing assorted materials into broad subject categories that resulted in a vertical file system still in use today. She had many journals bound, including *Mother Earth*, *Regeneration*, and *Appeal to Reason*, and compiled clippings and other ephemera into scrapbooks dealing with subjects on which there existed abundant documentation, such as Emma Goldman, Haymarket, the I.W.W., the Tom Mooney case, and Sacco and Vanzetti. In addition, she constructed a detailed card catalog (also still in use) that held item level cataloging on most materials in the collection as well as information lists of individuals and groups that functioned as a low level name authority file.

Though her death left some mysteries about the arrangement of the materials in the collection, her organizational efforts restored contextual information to the materials and made them far more usable by researchers. There is no evidence that she either had or sought the assistance of trained librarians within the library system, consequently all this work was done on her own.

Inglis succeeded in greatly increasing and broadening the holdings of the Labadie Collection. After a few years of organizing it, Agnes and Jo sent a letter to 400 radicals asking them to contribute their materials documenting events and people they knew. Though the letter received only a limited response, Inglis used it as a starting point to aggressively seek out individuals to donate materials. Among the most important collections she added were papers relating to Voltairine de Cleyre, a Michigan-born anarchist and friend of Emma Goldman's, and socialist writer John Francis Bray. She used her extensive connections and correspondence with radicals of the period such as Goldman, Roger Baldwin, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Ralph Chaplin, among many others, to persuade them to contribute relevant materials. Agnes also assisted many individuals in their research and publications including helping Goldman and Chaplin with their autobiographies, Henry David with the seminal *The Haymarket Tragedy*, and James J. Martin with *Men Against the State*.

Inglis's career has historical significance for librarians concerned with issues of social justice for a number of reasons. Her story is inspiring from a political standpoint because once her political ideals were formed, she never betrayed them and she saw them as central to her work as

librarian. Her motivations came explicitly from her devotion to the ideals of the philosophy and history of anarchists and other leftist radicals with whom she labored for a better and more just world. Her political commitments often worked to the advantage of the collection, seen most explicitly in the use of her connections to acquire records from her comrades. Even recently, the Labadie Collection received a valuable set of papers from a woman who was still grateful to Agnes for bailing her father out of jail all the way back in 1917.

She also put use of the collection as a top priority, even to the extreme of lending materials from the collection. When one of her borrowers damaged or did not return an item, her genteel and generous nature would never allow her to accuse them. She was pleased enough that people were interested in the materials. One note she wrote describing her loan of a book to an Italian anarchist who lived in the Twentieth Ward in Detroit in 1934 says "the Twentieth Ward sure is hard on a rare book!"

Finally, her knowledge of the individuals and events of that history enabled her to effectively collect, arrange, describe, and provide access to the materials in the collection. Inglis once wrote to Emma Goldman, "It's no joke to take all that mass of material and fix it up so students can really use it. It is not a work everyone can do. One has to know the material. People don't appreciate that." (Inglis 1925) Agnes devoted the final third of her life to the Labadie Collection, until her death in 1952. Generations of scholars who have used the collection have appreciated the knowledge, skill and dedication Agnes Inglis brought to the cause of documenting the history of radical political movements in the United States and her contribution to that history is immeasurable.

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Inglis, Agnes (1925) Letter to Emma Goldman, March 19<sup>th</sup>, Emma Goldman Papers, Labadie Collection, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the life of Labadie, see Carlotta Anderson's excellent new biography, *All American Anarchist: Joseph A. Labadie and the Labor Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press) 1998.

## The School & the Barricade

by Marianne Enckell

"The majority of the public comes to the depositories of archives for only two reasons: the National Registry of Argentina, which allows them to verify family relations, and the Cadastral Registry, which allows them to verify property. Only these archives seem to have considerable importance in the life of a certain group. The proof of this lay in the fact that during riots or revolutions, one of the most urgent actions of the revolutionaries is to go to the archives and burn the title deeds. One might almost believe that the majority of the people never go to archives except during revolutions." (Melot 1986)

In Argentina, the tradition of People's Libraries has been sustained since the turn of the century by anarchists. There is one in every town, in every labor force. Sometimes they carry the names of great ancestors; sometimes simply the name of a street or local personality.

In Buenos Aires, for example, the Biblioteca Popular José Ingenieros has for sixty years offered to students as well as laborers scholarly books, novels, encyclopedias, general works, in addition to its two archive rooms devoted to anarchist documents. It becomes a movie club on Sunday afternoons, gatherings are held in the evenings; and one can even have a barbecue in the courtyard. It has often been forced to close, to hide itself behind a neutral façade, to decamp, and to withstand floods. If today some laborers tell its story, it is because it has nonetheless endured. (Francomano 1995)

All these libraries are the collective property of the Movement, run benevolently, open to the town, to the neighborhood people; they are by no means ghettos. Some of them are supported by organizations like the La federación obrera regional Argentina (the Argentine Regional Labor Federation) or La federación libertaria Argentina (the Argentine Libertarian Federation); others are supported by an informal group. Many have



survived in spite of the weakness of the movement, even when dictators have forced laborers to work clandestinely; and when it was necessary to relocate in haste, all the unions lent a hand or threw money in the pot.

La Biblioteca juventud moderna (Modern Youth Library) in Mar del Plata was founded in November of 1911. Veteran Hector Wollands recalls that it filled "a double function: that of a school, which offered a high level of information, and that of a barricade, the place where labor unions could elaborate their direct action plans." (*La Razón* 1996)

School and barricade: what better way to describe the work which libraries and Anarchist document centers around the world wish to do? It is not a matter of us archiving the memory of the movement in order to fix it in place; it is a matter of keeping our history alive and subversive, of affirming the existence of Anarchists ("There are not even a hundred of them...")<sup>1</sup> and their diversity against the suffocation of those in power. History with a capital "H" gleefully reduces life, ideas and disturbing experiences to anecdotes and tales. (Escudero 1996)

Through the reactivation of its past, Anarchism can reappropriate its culture. The action, which this renaissance implies, will in itself constitute an invigorating agent of cultural life. The purpose of the operation, obviously, is not for us to be able to marshal a bookish knowledge of our antecedents. It is more a matter of knowing ourselves, of restoring to our field of knowledge the valor, the dreams and ideas, which have made Anarchism a historical reality. An active past is a past mobilized by and for a present activity. It is not just doing genealogy for the fun of it. The interest lies in rediscovering what is implicit in our position, and in our lines of cohesion. The search for unity goes beyond the search for our background. This is but one aspect of the work of foundation, which for us takes place in the present. Our reading of the past, therefore, will also depend on the coherence which we will have brought to our current ideas; each of these two efforts of structuring will continually refer us back to the other. (Furth 1973)

Anarchists have always been readers; every group publishes a journal, brochures, establishes a library. Reading forms one's judgment, fosters one's autonomy, serves as a basis for discussion. (Our friend André Bösiger, who quit school at the age of 13 and served a long prison sentence in the Swiss Army, said: "Is two years of prison a long time? Well, I would have needed two more years to finish everything I had to read!")

For these groups and their militants, the circulation of these brochures is infinitely more important than their preservation – hence the difficulty of the task of the archive and inventory. During periods of intense militant activity, one is willfully unaware of copyright or returning books to the Group's library; one scoffs at the calendar and ordinal numbers, one distributes tracts and journals down to the last copy, if one can. When activity dies down, unsold stock may remain, but to restore the complete run of an important periodical is the work of busy bees.

It has been a century since Elisée Nettlau, in the preface to the *Bibliography of Anarchy* edited by Max Nettlau, said:

I swear that I have never known such riches: the importance which this still-incomplete collection has gained surprises me greatly. The Anarchist ideas, consciously developed under their current form, are of such recent origin that one could easily imagine them existing still in a rudimentary period of propaganda. No doubt the vast majority of documents cited in this collection are destined to disappear, and barely even merit being preserved, but some of these works will certainly mark an epoch in the history of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it has sometimes been difficult for Anarchists to tell what they believe to be the truth, but one would not accuse them of having hidden the truth. We have raised it as high as our hands can reach, and no one in the world, whether he loves or hates us, can pretend to ignore us. (Reclus)

Not everything deserves to be preserved? One risks much in screening what is or is not worth saving. Let us in any case avoid the collection of waste paper and the use of antiquarian booksellers; let us prefer swapping

and donations. It is necessary that libraries and archives clearly define their principles and their limits, but it is not for us, librarians and archivists trained on the job or in school, to decide what has value or not. Typically, one local group's library will not necessarily find all the editions of Kropotkin's brochure *Aux jeunes gens (To the Young)* or Malatesta's *Fra contadini (A Talk Between Two Workers)* of which dozens of versions exist in dozens of languages. But in the archives of the Anarchist movement, it will be exciting to find signs of circulation, dedications, or stamps of libraries or organizations on the flyleaf. The history of a printed work is part of the history of the movement.

There are perhaps more archivists at heart among the Anarchists than in the great institutions. The New York Public Library, having put on microfilm the collection of posters from the Spanish Revolution, which it received, threw away the originals. At the Royal Library of Belgium, these same posters coming from the collections of Hem Day were rolled up and stored in a corridor, and ended up as waste paper. Of the dozens of posters that Hem Day brought from Spain, only six remain in small format at the Mundaneum de Mons. At the Centre internationale de recherches sur l'Anarchisme (CIRA; International Research Center on Anarchy) we have about fifty of them, brought by the union leader Lucien Tronchet, carefully mounted onto sturdy cardboard to circulate and to serve at solidarity tournaments with Spain around 1936 or 1937. They are in impeccable condition; the colors are as vibrant as they were on the walls of Barcelona or Valencia. In Spain itself, the collection and inventory of Republican posters has not ceased to this day.

As difficult as it is to complete these collections, one nevertheless finds treasures of fidelity to the cause. While renovating a house for a client, Lucien Grelaud found beneath a plank a collection of the journals of Proudhon, which he deposited at CIRA. In Brazil, the archives of Edgar Leuenroth survived dictatorship intact by being cemented inside a wall. Today one can identify a hundred journals and bulletins which appeared in Spain during the two years following Franco's death, thanks to Solon Amoros, who dated and placed them. Without him, they would remain without location or date, and therefore essentially unreadable.

For forty years, since its founding, the goals of CIRA have been global:

to collect the collective memory of anarchy, in all languages, from the beginnings to the dreams of the future... (from CIRA statement)

For our young readers: this was not an auspicious period. After a strong moment during the immediate post-war period, at the height of the cold war Anarchists hardly appeared in public. International alliances on the run had trouble maintaining themselves, and places closed. Quantities of collections disappeared during the black years in Italy, Germany, Spain, and Portugal, despite the reserves of ingenuity some exercised in disguising and preserving them.

During the fifties, when CIRA was created, the only anarchist or libertarian publications were produced by libertarian publishers. They were valiant, to be sure, but this was no longer the age when Jean Grave's *Temps Nouveaux (New Times)* was publishing more than 100,000 copies of Kropotkin in a just a few years! The first pocket books appeared in the beginning of the sixties, including the works of George Woodcock and James Joll in England, and Daniel Guérin in France, though obviously nothing in Spain or Portugal, and almost nothing in Germany, where only a few mimeographed pages appeared. A few quality periodicals appeared in Italy, such as *Voluntà*, and a few journals which courageously survived, notably among the middle exiles.<sup>2</sup>

Ten years later, carried on the wave of May 1968,<sup>3</sup> Anarchy entered roughshod into the libraries and universities; new works and scores of new editions vied for attention. Photocopies and small offsets at reasonable prices allowed publications to proliferate in every genre. Increasingly frequent travel and increasingly accessible studies shaped the youth of the movement and their readings. Commerce also entered the scene: the folklore of bombs and the black flag were all the rage for a few seasons, along with translations of novels and works leading anarchists.

The meaning and the boundaries of the library were beginning to expand.

It was then that we began to work within a network. There existed other, older libraries, which had begun to catalog their old stock, and to publish; news was being made everywhere, specialized by the march of events in

a particular language, group, country, or period. Even the major archives of the labor movement recognized our existence without a guffaw. And at CIRA, we recognized our limits: it wasn't just our shelves that could no longer contain the onslaught, it was also our limited connections, our difficulties in managing shipments, indexing works, and responding judiciously to reference questions.

Through the years priceless tools of the trade have appeared. Let us note (Hunick et al.) the indexing of the first volumes of the history *Anarchisme* by Max Nettlau, edited by Maria Hunink; the pioneering index of the Italian anarchist press by Leonardo Bettini, followed by still more inclusive indexes by René Bianco in France, Paco Madrid in Spain, and Jochen Schmück, Günter Hoerig and others in Germany; the collection of all the articles by Kropotkin in all the languages possible as a complement to the bibliography begun by Heinz Hug; the *Cinéma et anarchie* brochure published by CIRA, followed by works by Pietro Ferrua. And there are more – inventories of photos, posters, and songs will soon appear.

CIRA, perhaps one of the most important centers at the international level — something not recognized by the Institute of Amsterdam — remains generalist; but we know, should the need arise, how to refer our users to other centers or other more specialized researchers, or give the address of the nearest info-kiosk where tracts and 'zines are easily accessible.

Twenty years ago we created the Fédération internationale des centres d'étude et de documentation libertaire (International Federation for Libertarian Study and Documentation), or FICEDL. To enrich the culture of the movement, our culture, we hope to establish the most comprehensive inventory possible of all the notable locations, and tools of propaganda, of schools and of barricades, and to render it all accessible to researchers, to militants, or to the curious, to make of them a network of exchanges, a support for groups which are forming in East Europe and other countries, and to deepen their knowledge – all under the clever name of Anarchives.

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Translated by Douglas Cooke

<sup>1</sup> "Y en a pas un sur sent..." An allusion to the poem "Les Anarchistes" by Leo Ferre. The poem can be accessed at <http://www.math.umn.edu/~forsov/chansons/ferre/anarchistes/html> (translator's note)

<sup>2</sup> For example, in the United States, *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* in Italian; *Fraye Arbeiter Shitime* in Yiddish; and all the periodicals of the Spanish libertarian movement in exile.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to the student riots in Paris (translator's note)

## Anarchists with a Tool: The Library

**I**n today's Spain, unless one has been interested in studying the history of the social and labour conditions of the southern countries, it is difficult to conceive of how rural and factory workers in the second half of the past century and the first of this one used to live. At the best of times the only education obtained were life's lessons. The workday was almost double that of today. The rights of the workers were none, and labor rights were earned only with much bloodshed. The libraries, the few open to the public, were visited by a small, regular group of people. The few attempts to create popular libraries were failures, even before getting started. They failed not only due to the duration of the attempts or low budgets, but also due to the paternalistic character supporting such projects. In 1864, in his book *Estudios sociales sobre la educación de los pueblos*, Domingo Fernandez Arrea, referring to the public libraries of the provincial capitals, pointed out how books could be found there "full of instructions written for the poor people, but who do not read them; firstly because they do not fully understand them and second because they would not consider entering the beautiful, palacial rooms of the libraries in torn and sweaty clothing, to sit side by side with those cities' well-dressed and educated gentlemen. Ignorance, fear, shyness, everything stops them...That is why the big libraries — good and beautiful for people in the middle and upper classes, for the students and the erudite — are of no help to the poor people."

Four years later, 1868, Giuseppe Fanelli (1827-1877), an Italian engineer sent by Bakunin and the International Workingmen's Association, found upon arrival in Madrid anxious workers, mostly printers, gathering in coffee shops trying to create the Spanish section of the First International. There is nothing amazing about it except the speed with which Fanelli's ideas spread through the Spanish regions. (Four years after his visit, in 1872, the Anarchist Federation convened with 465,000 active members at its Cordova Congress). Without much economic help, against the power of the state (in 1896 the courts gave the right to authorities "to abolish all of the newspapers, centers and places of recreation of the anarchists"), in a world where illiteracy was widespread (in 1877 the most optimistic

figures point to 45.3% of the men older than 7 years of age and 64.7% of women having been illiterate), the Congress gathered a group of thousands of workers. To do so, the publication and diffusion of popular materials was, among other things, basic and something that until that time was a distinctive sign of anarchist groups. Most of the time, collective and public readings would be the best way to get people to know the anarchist Idea, along with the creation and extension of the libertarian reading groups and their libraries.

But who were these men and women who, despite starting work at the age of 10 or 12 years, were determined to educate themselves throughout their lives, without economic help or academic credentials, who kept editing pamphlets, magazines and books, building up libraries and, as one of them said, were skillful artists able to control their impatience and their fears, and control their ambition for power? One of these people was Ricardo Mestre. Throughout his life, Mestre (who died at the age of almost 91 years of age) published newspapers, edited books and magazines, helped diffuse ideas, and in his last years created an anarchist library, despite never having finished elementary school. However we have not brought him to these pages as a model, nor as an example or an exception. In the anarchist movement it is not difficult to find comrades who took similar paths. Vital routes where the library has been a central place: anarchists in libraries.

Several entities (libraries, foundations, reading circles) with an anarchist character, and consequently, with a common pattern, namely economic independence regarding any state organization, have carried out the interesting task of collecting and diffusing documents concerning freedom and social change. For example, we bring to the following pages the Biblioteca Social Reconstruir of Mexico City, founded by Mestre; the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo, within the sphere of the CNT [Confederación Nacional del Trabajo]; and with the important job of publishing, the Fundación Salvador Seguí, within the sphere of CGT [Confederación General del Trabajo], with a considerable center of documentation center; and in Barcelona's Centro de Documentación Histórica-Social/Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular which since its foundation in 1903 has been doing a great job in Barcelonian cultural life. Remarkable characteristics, because it is exceptional in today's world of all of them to be self-financing and volunteer-based.

We didn't want to limit this introduction to the topic of libraries and anarchists to the past alone. It would be false. The anarchist movement is still alive and, in many cases, is trying more or less successfully to adapt itself to actual social developments. For the past decade in some countries (Germany, Italy and the United States, mainly) alternative reading rooms, call Infoshops, have been springing-up, supported by anarchist groups following the tradition of volunteer work and self-financing. These give people who are interested radical literature, magazines, or 'zines that are edited by similar groups from different cities or countries, as well as tools to access electronic information. At the same time, they create materials supporting the cause and coordinate common tasks among different centers.

[...] Nobody can deny anarchist libraries and librarians their anticipation of many topics of current concern (like ecology, sexual politics, etc) Anarchists merge revolution with life, open new vital paths for the emancipation of human beings, through mutual aid, volunteer work and by using publishing and the library as tools for liberation, setting a real example of concrete alternatives society has vainly tried to bury with the label of "utopian."

The intentions of this dossier are modest. A first approach to the huge topic of what anarchist libraries were and are to the anarchist movement as a tool for individual intellectual formation (which doesn't mean, compulsory schooling) and as an instrument to spread revolutionary ideas throughout society. Thanks to all those who helped us in producing this material.

*Translated by Carlos Mauricio Cely & Valerie Ann Patrick*

## **Ricardo Mestre (1906-1997): A man who died disseminating "the Idea"**

One day in April, 1997 I was hanging around the Multiforo Alicia in Mexico City, an alternative space where young people gather for rock concerts, meetings, and discussions. This particular day the event was to honor an anarchist who had founded a library in the center of town. The honoree was Ricardo Mestre, who died two months later at the age of 91, and those honoring him were his young anarchist friends. That is to say, an elderly anarchist was being honored by his young colleagues in one of the few places that could be called "alternative" in Mexico. Why? Who was this Mestre?

Ricardo Mestre was born in 1906 in Vilanova i la Geltrú, an industrial town on the Catalan coast, near Barcelona, which even then had a long-standing liberal tradition. At that time, Vilanova had some 17,000 inhabitants, and there were factories for making textiles, electrical and telephone cables, small foundries, and a cement factory.

Like most of his contemporaries, Mestre did not attend school very long; in fact, he did not complete his primary education. At the age of twelve, he began an apprenticeship in a weaver's shop, and later he was apprenticed in a cabinetmaker's shop. Everything moved quickly in Mestre's life. At thirteen he was arrested at an underground meeting and at sixteen he organized an anarchist group in Vilanova in which comrades such as Juan Peiró participated. He was a construction worker for the Barcelona subway system and a chauffeur, and at age twenty-one he married a girl of seventeen. Selling newspapers in the Minerva kiosk in Vilanova, Mestre was for years an underground CNT member during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. In 1932, he took part as a delegate in the formation of the Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias, and two years later he became a member of the FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica).

There were also the years in which Ricardo Mestre (under another name,

José Riera, which accompanied him throughout his life) initiated himself into the task which he would never abandon: disseminating ideas through the press. He was involved in the Catalán anarchist periodical *Terra Lliure*; editor of the periodical *Catalunya* (written in Catalán), which had certain similarities to the periodical *Solidaridad Obrera*, the official organ of the CNT; and at the same time he was the editor of the *Boletín Oficial de Vilanova i la Geltrú*. At the height of the revolution, Mestre was designated a judge in his town.

In the early hours of January 26, 1929, before Franco's troops arrived, he left for Barcelona. After six months in the Argelès concentration camp on the French Mediterranean, he and his companion succeeded in boarding the ship *Ipanema* bound for Veracruz. Arriving there with sixteen pesos in his pocket and a lost war, Mestre at once began his disseminating of ideas. Within a few months he had published his first Minerva Editions book, the story *Exodus: Diary of a Spanish Refugee* (with a prologue by León Felipe), by his companion Sylvia Mistral. He worked on commission, selling books for Editorial América and established the Unión Distribuidora de Ediciones.

There were failed businesses and changes of jobs during the fifty-six years Mestre lived in México. But, in spite of everything, he continued spreading anarchist ideas, no matter what happened. Before he died, he had published more than two hundred books (the first Spanish edition of *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* by B. Traven, the first edition of *Songs of the Spanish Civil War* by Pedro Garfias and, especially, the books of the greatly admired anarchist theoretician Rudolph Rocker, including his *Nationalism and Culture*), he was the driving force behind the magazines *Social Studies*, *Chaos*, and the collective *Testimonies*. Most importantly, he founded, in his own office, the Library for Social Reconstruction. It is because of this institution that his death does not end the continuation of his labors. Gabriel Zaid, the Mexican intellectual whom Mestre greatly respected for his honesty, wrote an article after Mestre's death which did a good job of describing the intellectual position of this man who, without the benefit of education, dedicated his entire life, under whatever circumstances and no matter where he was ("my country is the world and my tribe is humanity"), to spreading the Idea: "His faith in discussion, books, and the press as means of liberation impressed me, especially because he

had only a minimum of formal education. I was able to see the contrast between two institutions that both had an affinity and were opposed: free reading and the university. Formal education is of a tradition in which knowledge is hierarchical, vertical, transmitted from above, and accredited by an authority that hands out credentials. Free reading is a discussion among equals that is extended and on-going: it is knowledge that is critical, horizontal, open, and without credentials, where the only authority that matters is moral authority."

#### *From the Mouth of Mestre, an Anarchist Librarian*

(The following biographical paragraphs are extracts from sixteen interviews which Enrique Sandoval conducted with Ricardo Mestre between March and May of 1988 in México City. This extensive document, 712 pages in length, has not yet been published.)



"My parents were very modest people; my mother was a servant, my father had two jobs but never earned very much... He was a man who was basically liberal and he worked in the Pirelli factory. He was employed there and became the head of the cable section. But from a political point of view, he was a liberal admirer of the Modern School.

"At first they sent me to various nursery schools, later to a teacher, but I was very, very rebellious and I was expelled from school. Finally my mother placed me in the parochial school, where they had two sections, one for the rich kids and one for the poor kids. I had a tendency to play truant, to cut classes, although I had an ulterior motive for these truancies. I had heard my parents say that it was bad to hit children at night. Because I was being a truant, I didn't return home until night and sometimes they found me – and I believe this is so because I learned to read as soon as I left my mother's womb – reading a book underneath a streetlight.

"When I was a little older, but not much older, I began to devour books in the Library-Museum Balaguer in Villanova, and in spite of the fact that some of the books weren't for children, I was still able to check them out because when I was 14 years old I already weighed 80 kilos. It was there that I swallowed up the works of Emile Zola, who had a great deal of



influence on the development of my thoughts. I also devoured the adventure stories of Rocambole, *Le Miserables* by Victor Hugo, *Toilers of the Sea*, *The Man Who Laughs*, that is to say, most of this type of literature.”



“My father belonged to the Pirelli worker’s union and on Sundays the workers would go to pay their dues and sometimes they would pick up copies of the magazine *Solidarida Obara*. And I began to take a look at *Solidarida Obara* as well. At this stage I already owned fourteen or fifteen books, and had begun my own small library.”



“I’m not sure what the reason is, perhaps it was the fault of Tolstoy and his bit about the Yasnaia Poliana school, but I had a pedagogical and intellectual passion to be a critic of the educational methods of my time, which were punitive, involving slapping, standing in the corner, simply a series of punishments you’d have to endure. This desire I had to teach, to be a teacher, I had since my childhood, but to teach in a way that was different from the way I was being taught. In my opinion, one of the best things about school was reading. At that time, the schoolteacher priests put me in a circle of children and had me read to them. Since there was a certain amount of independence in this activity, I started telling them racy stories in which the principle protagonists were priests. And one day I was telling one of these racy stories and I didn’t realize that Father Piera was standing behind me. Anyway, I’ve always had this passion for teaching. But I didn’t even finish primary school, I read like a madman, but I didn’t get into the discipline of education.”



“At this stage, when I was sixteen years old, I had already read an enormous amount of anarchist literature as well as everything else, because of course I was reading everything but at that time I was reading more about anarchism than any other thing.”



(NOTE: In the twenties, when the CNT was underground, the anarchists had a factory in Igualada where they were manufacturing bombs. One day, the mainstream press discovered the factory. But most of the bomb-making materials were salvaged. Mestre kept several boxes of these materials in his house in Vilanova.)

Here in my house some peasants gathered, small landowners of the district. All of them, each one, had his own library. And in a village called Lleger, a very small village near a larger one called Sant Jaume dels Domenys, there, under absolute monarchy, no one was married in the church, nor baptized their children, and the priest who came on Sundays was so bored that he stopped coming. And the peasants went to Sant Jaume, to the church there, and when the priest gave his talks they challenged him to a debate and created controversy. And they were just small landowners, but all of them read a lot, all of them had their libraries. When a relative died, and it came time to bury the person, they called on me, and I would give the eulogy.”



“What we had there was very good because the Federation of Local Unions had a library in my town, in which a thousand workers would always read. And in all the regions, in the unions that were influenced by anarchists, culture was held above all else. Even more importantly, in the Posito society they successfully started a circulating library, and they also read a lot. It was a semi-official organization, but the sympathetic fishermen, the few who were sympathetic to us – later there were more – also started a circulating library and so the fishermen also began to read a lot. When the revolution of ’36 came, without any committee organizing it, they collectivized the fishing industry very well and did so with a great sense of responsibility. The sympathetic fishermen proposed to the board of directors of Posito that they create a library and they agreed to it. At that time, they acquired books from cultural institutions – books that included our own ideas – and then the directors were very proud of having done something cultural, even though they were some real block-heads.

“At a social club called union Villanovense we also inspired the creation of a circulating library. Later, in the Athenaeum, we sponsored a section of sociological studies in order to camouflage ourselves and take direct action even while we were underground, and we were once again pushing to provide cultural opportunities. For example, there was the library, which was a very rich library with all kinds of literature and, naturally, a lot of literature about ideas. More than a thousand readers of one type or another were permanently there. The unions associated with the CNT had

at the maximum four or five thousand people. The UGT, the socialist union, had two or three hundred; they were more moderate... but they were people who read."

❧  
"Before, including the time when we were beginning the CNT in 1910, the workers unions which were influenced by libertarian thought always gave importance to starting rationalist schools and lending libraries. That is to say, they gave importance to the intellectual formation of the worker, who wasn't like the worker who, in the past century, would often go to the tavern on Sundays and not go to work on Mondays. The intention was to contribute to creating conscious individuals, including the workers.

"The cultural association libertarians were organized much later, about at the same time as the formation of the official CNT in 1910.

"And this got me thinking a lot about why as anarchists in the workers' movement we sometimes collaborated in actions that didn't correspond to our ideas. Because to murder, for some economic grievance, for money, a scab who has come to work because of his hunger and misery...that is to say, that's really something.... We had fallen into the trap of class struggle. We also believed that the classes were each homogeneous and that the proletariat had a collective consciousness that...It's wrong, like it's wrong to have capitalism. The capitalists fight among themselves and even provoke international wars for business reasons; they don't have any humanism. And, in spite of everything, in the anarchosyndicalist movement there is indeed humanism. In spite of numerous faults, there is humanism. What we had to insist upon was that the workers were not sheep, that the workingman had a consciousness. It was because of this that we wanted them to read, in order to form their personalities."

❧  
"With my children, I never thought to indoctrinate them, but to provide them with a completely free education. Here in Mexico, they attended the Madrid school. One day my eleven-year old daughter came to me and said, "There is a boy at school who doesn't believe in God, either." I asked her why she wanted to say "either," and she told me "Because you

don't believe and I don't either." "That's fine, but, when he was alive, my father smoked; my father smoked but I don't smoke. You don't understand that if children always did what their parents do, we'd still not have come down from the trees. Here in the library you have access to the Koran, the Bible, the Laws of Manu, all the Greek myths, etc. etc. Read them, study them, and if you want it and it's necessary for you to have a religion, chose one willingly." "Yes, papa," she said, in a humorous mood, "and when I'm older, I'll become a tobacconist."

❧  
"No, no, no. I don't have any regrets. My wife and my daughter returned to Vilanova and many people there remembered me. Also, a strange thing happened to my son in Vilanova. He went to visit the Balaguer Library. They had no idea who he was, because a great number of years had passed and my son had been born in Mexico. But they asked him if he was my son. The library director had recognized him as my son. I believe that in spite of my radical anarchism, in spite of my radical anti-clericalism, in spite of my not giving any concessions to the church, many people remembered that I was very humane, and that is what is most important.

"But I'm not sad. It's because the things that have shaped my sensibilities have been very different. Since I almost never went to school, I haven't been intellectually poisoned by the school system. Here in Mexico when, for example, I saw the civics textbooks that they gave my children, I was outraged. That's because I educated myself. Because I do not have hardly any historical influences, the part about the history of Catalonia I found ridiculous. They were talking about heroes, etc., but instead of heroes there were people who fought, not for Catalonia, but because of dynastic disputes between the Austrians and the Bourbons. This wasn't right.

"When I thought about returning [to Spain], I had already started plenty of activities for the dissemination of ideas in Mexico, I had already become very involved with the problems in Mexico, but with an eye for universal application like I had back there. The aspect of Spain that interested me was the human contact with friends. But, there were too few survivors and too much tragedy that instead of enjoying myself, I

would have gone there and opened all the old emotional wounds again. So, no.... I never had this thing about putting roots down somewhere, and also I never felt that because I was from Catalonia I had a certain status or prestige; it was merely a fact of circumstance. At times, when I'm being vulgar, I'll merely say that this is where my parents once had sex.

"Our people feel sad, though. But this is possibly influenced by the fact that they don't have close enough ties to others who share their same ideas. That is to say, the family that is most important to me is the family of friends who share my same ideas, and this family has practically been eliminated. I hold on to my natural family, who I have contact with, some of whom are here as well. But I don't feel sad now.... To the contrary, I'm indignant when people exalt the Catalan historical figures. But I'm also indignant when they exalt the historical figure of El Cid and the Castilians."

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"At certain occasions, such as social gatherings I was attending, Léon Felipe and Moreno Villa would come up and greet me. Léon almost always signed on to the things the communists were doing. But, he was a very intelligent communist, a good poet, very sectarian but easy to get along with. Juan Rejano, an Andalusian and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Spain in exile would come up and say 'sign this' and Léon Felipe would sign.

"One day my wife, my young daughter, and I were hanging out in the Paris café with Léon Felipe. My daughter was only six or seven years old and Léon Felipe asked her: "What are you reading?" "Tolstoy," she responded. This was because we had some editions of the classics that Vasconcelos had put out, and one of them was Tolstoy. Being in our home library, she grabbed this book because she liked the title and started reading it. Then Léon said to me: "Christ! You are already poisoning your daughter!"

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"Authentic anarchist periodicals can't be the least bit closed. All of the periodicals that I have worked on were authentically anarchistic, though they were collaborations by very different people. This is anarchistic.

Because if something is purely dogmatic, if we only have our own causes in mind, we are being selfish."

~~~~~  
"When I was eighty years old, I had an attack of an ulcer that I didn't even know I had. It was so bad that they had to operate on me the same night in the hospital. They told my wife that it was quite possible that I wouldn't come out alive. It was very serious to be having this operation at the age of eighty. But, I tricked them and managed to get out of there. While I was recuperating from this, I remembered various friends of mine who had developed their concerns for freedom by disseminating publications, books and pamphlets. When they died, their work stopped and was unable to continue. I had edited many books and I told myself that when I died I wanted to make sure my work continued, and this is the reason why I founded the Library of Social Reconstruction."

*Translated by Alison Lewis*

# Spanish Anarchives: A Directory

## Biblioteca Social Reconstruir

The Library of Social Reconstruction (BSR) has its definite origin with the anarchist Ricardo Mestre. Even at eighty years of age he was still bringing books to its office. He edited books and journals (*Caos*, *Testimonio*) and sold them. Surrounded by young people, Mestre continued to collect and a collaborative project always followed him. In 1994, it was decided to open his library to the public, at first two days a week, then Sunday through Saturday, from 10am to 2pm.

The BSR consists of two sections – anarchist and general. The anarchist section is composed in part of donations from four old exiled militants of the CNT-FAI: Marcos Alcón, who, along with others, contributed Italian anarchist books; Cano Ruiz, who donated monographs, magazines, photographic documents, and correspondence, which are still in the process of being catalogued; Ricardo Mestre himself; and Eliseo Rojas. The collection is quite valuable; one can find books several decades old and now difficult to obtain, books edited by little groups of anarchists from many countries. It also has first edition books of the Mexican anarchist Ricardo Flores Magón, and nineteenth century books by Proudhon and Eliseo Reclús. The library has about 600 anarchist books—more than any other in Mexico. Héctor Hernández and Marta García, the ones in charge of running the library, are in contact with old anarchists in order to propitiate the donation of their collections to the library. The number of volumes will probably grow quickly. The library boasts 53 periodicals, many of them now discontinued, with few copies surviving, but there are also complete runs with more than 400 issues. Many of them are historical, such as the excellent *Revista Blanca* (*White Review*), edited by the family of Federica Montseny; *Inquietudes* (*Discontent*), from the Libertarian Youths of Spain; and *Mundo* (*World*), edited by Spanish anarchists in Mexico since the early forties. Among current series, the majority come through an exchange with *Germen* (*Seed*), a magazine produced by the Library, now on its fifth issue, with a circulation of 3000 copies.

Héctor Hernández puts it clearly: “This library is not just a library, but rather a center where new forms of communication and dissemination of anarchist ideas are generated. Whereas in the beginning the library was considered a reading room, a rather selective one, and the librarian’s main task was cataloging, now it is more a center of gathering for the development of new initiatives (groups with agendas for promoting vegetarian cooking, the spread of the libertarian movement, defense of the press, etc.) They often show videos, and displays of comics and posters. Institutions and universities, colloquiums, indigenous groups, all come to wherever they are invited, to spread the anarchist ideal. The library goes outside. And when they receive petitions for help they do what they can – donate books, give advice – for the founding of other anarchist libraries.”

They do all this almost without resources. When Mestre was alive, he brought what he could. A born propagandist, he established contact with certain Mexican intellectuals to explain his ideas and solicit financial assistance. Mestre was the magnet who had a great talent for fomenting libertarian ideas among dozens of Mexicans. When he died, his daughter decided to continue his work as far as possible.

Money is a problem, as it always has been in anarchist movements, but this is not an excuse for a lack of action. With more solid finances, the library would have fewer distresses, more opportunities to rescue the oral tradition of old anarchists, resources to edit texts not yet published, and better facilities for contacting kindred groups from other places. But the BSR, living on the edge, welcomes a young public (many of them highschool dropouts, who read here, grow and develop), answers a hundred reference questions a month for free, keeps the library open and alive, provides electronic access to information for people and groups who cannot do it on their own, and produces ‘zines and magazines on their old computer. And in the purest international sense they welcome as comrades Czech, Japanese, American, Canadian, Italian, etc., who open the library door. Salud!

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Ciudad de México

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512-0886

## Salvador Seguí Foundation

A group of militants from the CNT (the National Worker Federation), who gathered in 1985 to prepare an exposition for the 75th anniversary of the founding of the CNT, set out to organize a space for reflection upon libertarian history and thought. This would be the seed which months later would give rise to the creation of the Salvador Seguí Foundation for Libertarian Studies (Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Salvador Seguí, or FSS). Its objectives were to collect, preserve, and circulate the books, newspapers, and other documents of the Spanish labor and libertarian movements and collaborate in the modernization and diffusion of libertarian thought and the intellectual development of its laborers, especially those connected to organizations with a libertarian and anarcho-syndicalist tendency.

After the first FSS office was established in Madrid, another followed in Barcelona, then others in Valencia and Granada. Besides donations and gifts from friends, and exchanges with similar organizations, it began to organize an archive which today comprises 10,000 monographs and a newspaper library which includes more than 2,500 newspaper titles, about 800 of them current. The document room gathers numerous documents from 1936-1939 and the Franco era and, in storage, the archives of the Comité Confederal and various local and regional divisions of the Confederación General del Trabajo. Let us add to this an audiovisual room with holdings of 4,000 posters, 3,000 photographs, 200 audiocassettes, and 300 videos. The archive is currently in the final phase of digitization (the FSS maintains sections of its archive in each of its four offices).

In addition to its own archive, the Foundation, in collaboration with the CGT, has created in four years an inventory of the surviving libertarian materials in the Civil War section of the National Historic Archive in Salamanca, which contains more than 25,000 documents, 600 pamphlets, newspaper items, and posters. It has also dedicated its efforts to the elaboration of a *Guía de fuentes del anarquismo español* (Guide to Sources in Spanish Anarchism) and a *Bibliografía del anarquismo español* (Bibliography of Spanish Anarchism). The FSS forms part of the FICEDI (Federación Internacional de Centros de Estudios y Documenta-

ción Libertarios) which collects European and American materials and, twice a year, organizes conferences of a technical character (the creation of databases, coordination, translation, and publishing of anarchist texts destined for the countries of Eastern Europe, exchange of duplicate stock, etc.). Other organizations of which the Foundation forms a part are the IALHI, the international organization which collects the most relevant archives of the labor movement in each country, the SEGUEF (Sociedad para el Estudio de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo) and the AEMIC (Asociación para el Estudio de los Exilios y Migraciones Ibéricas Contemporáneas).

Membership dues of the FSS, the sale of publications – FSS Editions – and the Mail Order Bookstore, which distributes the publications of almost all the libertarian publishers and itself publishes anarchist materials, are the channels for the financing of the Foundation, which in its first ten years served more than 1,500 researchers from 22 countries. The team that works in the FSS is comprised of 25 people, who work for free.

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## Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo

Anselmo Lorenzo (Toledo, 1841-Barcelona, 1914), anarchist leader, friend of anarchist educator Francisco Ferrer, was, after the *Semana Tragica* [The Tragic Week, in which Francisco Ferrer Guardia was executed, October 13, 1909] and the dismantling of the Modern School, the principal educator in the anarchist movement in Barcelona. After educating himself in the library of the Fomento de las Artes, an association for labor party education, he collaborated on various anarchist periodicals and was the author of numerous pamphlets of anarchist orientation. His most important work is *El proletariado militante* (*The Militant Proletariat*). Conference lecturer, biographer of Kropotkin, and translator, Anselmo Lorenzo once said that if the bourgeoisie achieved the revolution thanks to the *Encyclopedia* of Voltaire and Diderot, the proletariat should have made his work triumph not only through its anarchistic combativeness but also, and more profoundly, by means of the extension of the cultural task of creation of schools and cultural societies (and federations of societies) in united action. Some echo of his words must have remained since one of the principal anarchist foundations carries his name.

La Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo (FAL) aims to collect documents on the libertarian movement and spread anarchist ideas through all mediums at its disposal. First of all, it partakes of a rich document center formed from the donations of private individuals (the anarchists Progreso Fernández, Félix Álvarez Ferreras, Abraham Guillén, etc.), associations (Asociación Isaac Puente and Fundación Aurora Intermitente – which donated its library of social ideology and its collection of posters from different libertarian organizations not affiliated with the CNT), and unions. The bibliographic collection exceeds 10,000 titles (one fourth of which is now cataloged) and its collection is rich in periodicals: some 2,500 libertarian titles, many of them before 1940. Also noteworthy is the microfilmed material of the historical archives of the CNT deposited in Amsterdam. The FAL also consists of an interesting video library comprised of diverse resources, especially material deposited by the Sindicato de Espectáculos (Entertainment Union) of the CNT. Also outstanding is the videographic material, 64 hours in length, recorded for the documentary *Vivir la Utopía* (*To Live in Utopia*), by

director Juan Gamero and Francesc Ríos, on the constructive revolutionary process since July 1936, especially on socialist self-governing organizations. This television documentary was broadcast on the program “La noche temática” on channel two of TVE, November 7, 1997.

The public using the documentation center is mainly comprised of historians and academics. In turn, now that the Foundation has become an entity independent of official organizations, it is financed autonomously by means of economic donations from private individuals, contributions from affiliates, and the sale of books.

If one of the fundamental objectives of the FAL is the diffusion of anarchist ideas, the publication of books, pamphlets, and videos is the way. In recent years they have edited some thirty titles organized into various collections (Current Events, Documents, Research, Economic Theory, Libertarian Notebooks, Testimonies, Biographies, and Memoirs), such as Durruti and the *Spanish Revolution* by Abel Paz, *Viviendo mi vida* (*Living My Life* – the autobiography of Emma Goldman), or the video *Arte y anarquía*. Furthermore, the FAL distributes numerous books on anarchist themes edited by other publishers, such as Tierra y Libertad, Lucina, Júcar, La Piqueta, Virus, Huerga & Fierro, Libertarias Prodhufi, etc. The foundation publishes annually a bibliographic catalog now accessible over the Internet which reviews all these titles and, like the *BICEL* (*Boletín Interno del Centro de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo*), is free and available to all interested parties.

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## Centro de Documentació Històrico-Social/ Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular

The future founders of the Centro de Documentació Històrico-Social (CDH-S) gathered regularly in the famous pizzeria "La Rivolta" on the Calle Hospital in Barcelona. In 1978 their meeting place was changed to La Rueda de San Pablo no. 42. Towards the end of 1979 it was moved to La Calle Reina Amalia, in the old neighborhood of Raval, a place of great literary tradition. A fire on the upper floor made it necessary to abandon this location. Negotiations with the city council and congress allowed them to occupy the old section of the Casa de Caritat (House of Charity) on the Calle Montalegre for about 15 years. Today this restored building is the Centre de Cultura Contemporània (Center for Contemporary Culture) in Barcelona.

In 1989 it was decided to reestablish the Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular (founded in 1902 by people originating from the lower classes – laborers, office workers, and some students, among others Francesc Layret, Luis Bulfi, Josep Tubau) with the eagerness to help in building up the most under-privileged class of society. With the AEP a new form for organizing cultural societies was born — on the one hand, education (library, classes, lectures) and on the other hand reaffirmation (civic campaigns, popularization, etc.), not to mention entertainment (field trips, sports, etc.). Its moment of splendor was during the Second Republic. When the Civil War ended it was shut down and ransacked.

During this time, the CDH-S/AEP was dedicated to making contact with exiles, particularly libertarian exiles, arranging trips to France, Switzerland, etc., in search of older militant libertarians who donated as much as they thought fit. Most outstanding was the donation of the F. L. de la Ariege (library, newspaper collection, and primary source documents).

Thus the archive, library, and newspaper collection of the CDH-S/AEP, after many purchases, donations, and exchanges, has at its disposal a library of approximately 23,000 books and 7,000 news items, periodicals, magazines, 'zines, etc., in addition to countless archival documents, such as pamphlets, proclamations, reports, vignettes, discourses, epistles, post-

ers, some of them still unclassified, all related to social movements of this country, particularly from the First International [The International Working Men's Association, established in London in 1864] to the present, and with the libertarian movement and reading circles in particular.

Among the noteworthy documents we find various police records pertaining to the Trial of Montjuich in 1896, and the postcards of Tàrrida del Màrmol addressed to Baldomero Oller, printed in Montjuich. The collection of the *Boletín de la Escuela Moderna* (*Bulletin of the Modern School*) of Ferrer i Guardia, the *Suplemento de la Revista Blanca* from the beginning of the century. Collections of publications like *Tramontana* (*NorthWind*) by J.L. Lluas; *Ruta* (*Route*); *Tierra y Libertad* (*Land and Liberty*); *Solidaridad Obrera* (*Worker Solidarity*, with a copy from 1907); the complete *Umbral* (*Threshold*); *Boletín de Militares del frente de Aragón*, *Acción* (Asturias), *Castilla Libre*, *Revista Blanca* (in both its stages); secular humanist reviews such as *Ética* (*Ethics*), *Iniciales*, *Pentalfa*, etc. All these were in collections from the Civil War or earlier. Some of the titles are also available in retrospective collections of periods of underground, exile and transition. The documentation of MIL also stands out, donated by the militants of this organization early in the Seventies, the abundant documentation on underground movements, Spanish exile and the democratic transition, and the complete collection of the periodical *Las Noticias* from 1896 to 1939.

The current home of the CDH-S/AEP is in the Paseo de Sant Joan 26, in the same building as the Biblioteca Pública Arús (founded and opened in 1895 as a people's library, modeled on very progressive liberal and democratic criteria in the epoch of Rosend Arús i Arderiu; it has been converted into a research center specializing in the history of anarchism and the workers movements of the 19th century). An agreement with the Centre de Cultura Contemporània and the BP Arús will in the future enable us to create a networked catalog among the BPA and the CDH-S/AEP.

Financed by about 150 membership dues, a grant from the Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya amounting to 600,000 pesetas annually, various other contributions, and tax-exempt rent, its functioning is made possible by

the voluntary work of qualified personnel who work at CDH-S/AEP.

In recent years they have collaborated with various television stations to make documentaries. With TVE they made *50 años de la guerra civil* (50 Years of Civil War), *Los niños de la guerra* (Children of War), *Vivir la utopía* (To Live in Utopia), and *Ferrer i Guardia y la Escuela Moderna* (Ferrer i Guardia and the Modern School), which has not yet been released. With TV3 they made *Los Maquis*, on the Resistance against Franco; with TV Japan, *La otra cara de Barcelona 92* (The Other Side of Barcelona 92); with the Art Channel, *El último solidario Antonio Ruiz, Durutti*. They also loan out footage for movies like *Libertarias*.

With the Universidad Pompeu Fabra and the group from Teatro els Joglars a documentary on Durruti is now underway.

The other patrons are usually professors from the University, students writing a term paper, and often people interested in learning about the history of anarchism.

The center is also dedicated to initiating cultural activities and spreading the news about the footage available in the library-newspaper collection by organizing travelling thematic exhibits like "Iberian Anarchism" from World War One to the Civil War, expanding to the present; "International Anarchy" which assembles a historical display on anarchism from other countries; "Ferrer i Guardia and the Modern School," with a catalog in Catalán, Spanish, and English which has visited all of Spain and Italy, and may possibly visit Switzerland. Another exhibit of note is "The MIL and Puig Antich, Twenty Years Later."

Recently there was a travelling exhibit called "The Pistol Years: Barcelona in the Twenties." Other non-travelling exhibits have been: "Libertarian Press: the Underground from 1939 to 1966," with the publication of facsimile editions of more than 80 periodicals from Spain; "Images of the Civil War with Carles Fontserè i Agustí Centelles," "Postcards from the Civil War," with the reproduction of two postcard drawings by Carles Fontserè; "80th Anniversary of the Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular: Cultural Societies in Catalunya," "The Pistol Years, 1917-1923," "50th Anniversary of the Spanish Revolution," and other

activities consist of conferences, debates, potluck dinners, excursions, and poetry readings, which are recorded in the trimestral *Enciclopèdic Noticiari*.

Projects scheduled for this year include the publication of a catalog of the libertarian press (bulletins, periodicals, etc.) from the transition to today, and the publication of a book which assembles the history of the Athenaeum People's Library from 1902 to 1998.

Hours of the library, archive, and newspaper collection: Tuesday and Wednesday, 6 to 9pm.

CDH-S/AEP

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*Translated by Douglas Cooke*

## **NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS**

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**Douglas Cooke** is a librarian at Brooklyn Public Library. He has an MA in Classics from SUNY/Buffalo, is a freelance writer and translator of Spanish, French, Latin and Greek.

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**Alison Lewis** is currently managing an automation project for the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**Valerie Ann Patrick** is the librarian at the Language Institute, University of Regina in Saskatchewan. Her interests include library services for the poor, community development, and human rights.

**Robin Ragan & Antonio Prado** are graduate students at the University of Illinois-Urbana, each studying Spanish literature and culture. Robin is writing her thesis on women writers in Spain 1880-1920. Antonio is from Barcelona and is interested in past and present anarchist movements in Spain.