

Anarchism in Australia



BULGARIAN ANARCHISTS IN SYDNEY

George H. came to Sydney in March, 1951 and Jack G. arrived in January, 1952. A Bulgarian Anarchist group of about 19 people formed. It began a small, duplicated paper in Bulgarian, and held weekly meetings. George H. worked in Port Kembla, and came up to Sydney each week. The paper was sent overseas. The group also held social gatherings and some members spoke in the Domain at the Rationalists 'spot', but this Society was controlled by the CPA so its was difficult to officially join. George H., Jack G. and Chris E. were most active of the group, and most outward-looking. They contacted the IWW and met Norman Rancie, last editor of Direct Action, and Bert Armstrong who also spoke in Domain.

There was also a small Spanish group. The Bulgarians wanted an International group but the Spaniards weren't so keen. George H. also remembers Joseph , an independent Spanish anarchist sentenced to death in 1939 by Communists in Spain, and arrested by Sydney police for interrupting a CP speaker in the Domain [late 1950's]. He wanted to blow up the Catholic Cathedral but no-one else was interested in this approach.

The Bulgarian Group joined others to become the-Sydney Anarchist Group of about 12 people in 1957, including:

Don Webb, and his wife, aged 25-30, both active. Don was unionist, had been in Communist Youth. Became A-Syndicalist. George H. influenced him to visit South American Commune in Uruguay [Comunidad?]. He later disappeared in Europe when working for this Commune. His wife still lives in Europe.

Keith Smith, came to Domain meeting after reading Kropotkin pamphlets. Madeline and Roger Lafuer [~.] who later left for New Caledonia [?]

Edna Dash, who edited the group's english, and was interested in Esperanto.

Audrey, from the English Freedom group, who later married Bob Gannon.

For May Day, 1957, they produced a pamphlet which caused panic among the marchers, especially among Marxists and police, who after six months or so tracked down some members and interviewed them.

The group was active at CP meetings, interjecting and interrupting until thrown out. They sold Freedoms on trains and threw them to coal miners waiting for other papers at side of track. They maintained contacts through the Bulgarian Union in France with the CNT in Spain, to where they sent donations. They claim some influence on the CNT at this time. They exchanged their publications with others overseas.

On one occasion George H. wrote to 200 or so Rationalists suggesting a radical discussion group, but

gained little response.

He and Chris E. went as Anarchist observers to the first Trotskyist conference at Jannali. This contact led to the formation of the Socialist Forum, for which a room in the Park Street was rented but when the Trotskyists tried to dominate proceedings, the anarchists left.

George H. and Don Webb also went to Melbourne in 1957-58 to see Kenafick, who had just married, and Pannizon, and a few others. There was little happening in Melbourne and nothing came of these contacts. George H. remembers John Olday in a barn studio there. Back in Sydney, he met Harry Hooton, but, unimpressed, he dropped him.

The SAG had attempted to combine with the Sydney Libertarians (he remembers George M., Jim B., and others) by hiring a room, 'Liberty Hall', near the Haymarket, above the Australian- Italian Club. The anarchists were holding 2-3 meetings a week. but the 90 pound bond was lost because of the actions of 'crazy Libertarians' who threw bottles, rubbish into the street and around the room.

Subsequently, George H. and Chris E. began 'The Cellar' just off Oxford Street. A printer and seaman, Australian - born Greek - Scot Nestor Grivas, printed the Hellenic Herald there among other things. He owned the house and the group had dug out 'the cellar' under it at least 6' deep, put in steel girders, and built facilities for meetings, etc. Nestor was a Guy Aldred-pupil of anarchism. This 'Club' worked for a while as the only anarchist group with organised activities, although the Sydney Libertarians also met there for a while. Then the SAG broke up.

While George H. was overseas, for 4 months in 1966 [?] Bill Dwyer arrived, and full of enthusiasm began building a new group. George H. joined them and re-opened 'The Cellar' where a library was also begun.

Dwyer was an exciting speaker and attracted many people; he worked on *Anarchy Now* with George H., who 'improved' some of the ideas. After six months or so in Australia from New Zealand, Dwyer began selling LSD and taking groups on picnics. Jack G. dropped out again, but George H., Chris E. and Col Pollard tried to work with him and the young 'hippy-Beatles' types who increasingly infested 'The Cellar'.

George H. was very much against 'The Cellar' being used as a 'crash-pad' and for selling drugs. Dwyer brought in mattresses, music and psychedelic lights, to cater for 1-200 youths. He built a cage, curtained so that only his hand was seen, from which to sell the drugs and put sentries on the wall. George H. told him the police were already inside, disguised. George told the police that this wasn't an anarchist group and had nothing to do with anarchism, and told Dwyer he was crazy to take the police to see his drug supplies, or to sell to the police, which he was doing.

George H. says that Dwyer found a cheaper source ('a professor?') at the University and dropped his other supplier who had police 'protection?' 'The Cellar' was raided by police 1 1/2 weeks later! George H. didn't wish to help or be involved, but paid the bill for *Anarchy Now* which was still at the printers (700 pounds). Dwyer was held in jail for 12 months then deported to Britain where he involved himself in Free Festivals.

In any event, partly because of Dwyer's charisma and because of world events, the anarchist presence in Sydney was quite marked, especially at May Days, where George H's red and black car shared a procession with 200+ marchers, with many flags. Wollongong saw similar processions. In Sydney the Trades Hall tried to stop the anarchists. As an example of the effect on the movement of Dwyer's activities, George remembers 100 or so people waiting at a meeting, some had come more than 50 miles, in response to paid advertising, to hear Dwyer speak. He turned up stoned, mumbled something and walked out. George H. was very angry, ran after him and abused him, but Dwyer just pushed him away.

George H. thinks Dwyer could have been very productive if there had been no drug involvement, but doesn't absolve the other anarchists at the time who also 'walked away' and made no attempt to pressure Dwyer, 'to save him from himself'. Perhaps Dwyer was not sufficiently acquainted with anarchist ideas and perhaps many others were not either, but he could have been influenced to channel his talents into

more effective paths.

'The Club' collapsed after the police raid, and the media sensationalism, and Nestor brought a farm, became an alcoholic and was killed by a semi-trailer when on the wrong side of the road.

From 'The Cellar' to Jura Bookshop there was a gap for George H. He did go to the Glebe Point Rd house once, but there ail the 'anarchists' were stoned, so he just walked out again. Similarly with Tharunka and the like, George H. thought there was too much obscenity, and emphasis on 'fuck' which must alienate people. He wanted a more serious, committed approach.

**Notes from interview with George H.
by Bob James, 1985.**

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