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The Great Anarchist Conspiracy

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26 July 2019

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Retrieved on 22 March 2024 from
thetransmetropolitanreview.wordpress.com.
The video this essay accompanies is available online at
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We are happy to present our latest work, *The Great Anarchist Conspiracy*, a documentary that charts anarchism's resilient survival from the 1890s all the way up the 1970s. The fact that you are reading this, and are most likely an anarchist, is proof that our international movement has survived every attempt to crush it. Against impossible odds, and without wielding state power, the anarchist movement continues to spread across the planet, even as you read this.

This film centers first on Sante Geronimo Caserio, the Italian anarchist who assassinated Sadi Carnot, the French President, in Lyon in 1894. His act was just one of a long sequence of assassinations aimed at the ruling powers of the earth, most of them still kings and emperors. After the assassination of Sadi Carnot, the Italian state convicted an anarchist named Pietro Gori of inspiring Sante Geronimo Caserio's momentous act. Rather than spend five years in jail, Pietro Gori fled north to Switzerland and lived in Lugano for several months before ultimately being deported for his beliefs in 1895. Although he's no longer well known outside

of Italy, Pietro Gori was one of the most famous anarchists of his time, a songwriter, musician, orator, actor, writer, and lawyer who knew how to convey the anarchist idea to tens of thousands of people. Expelled from both Italy and Switzerland, Pietro Gori made the most of his exile and traveled to North America in 1896 where he gave over 400 lectures and performances. In every city on this tour, Pietro Gori left behind a new anarchist group, each of them connected to comrades from across the world.

One of Gori's most important stops was in the distant port town of San Francisco, California. It was here that he helped rally the local anarchists after years of repression and inspired them to begin several new initiatives after he left town. His lectures and performances were chronicled in the San Francisco daily newspapers, giving the movement even more publicity, and Gori was described as an exotic foreign celebrity. At his side was a woman named Bianca Gaffe (not her real name), a skillful public speaker, actress, and anarchist organizer who shared the same stage. Two years after these events, Bianca would go on to found a commune called Nuovo Ideal just up the coastline from San Francisco. Seventeen years later, her niece Isabelle Lemel Ferrari gave birth to her daughter there, a baby girl she named Fulvia, and left shortly after to fight alongside the Ukrainian anarchists.

In his classic work *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, Alexandre Skirda cites the testimony of a man who watched the anarchist Black Army seize the city of Dnipropetrovsk in 1919. According to him, there were "some young Amazons, dressed in black, entering the town along with the bulk of the Makhnovisc troops; he described them as 'intellectual anarchists.'" In October 1919, Isabelle Lemel Ferrari was one of these "young Amazons, dressed in black," who took over a city of almost 200,000 people. At the time, "the insurgency was at its highest point, numbering almost 80,000 fighters and controlling nearly the whole southern Ukraine." Two years later, their insurgency was crushed by the Red Army and the surviving anarchists rode eastward towards Romania, an enemy

of the Bolsheviks. Nestor Makhno was captured at the Romanian border along with less than two hundred fighters, all of them soon placed in a concentration camp. Hundreds of others who escaped the slaughter in the Ukraine “were to appear later in Romania or Poland. Some emigrated even further afield, to Germany, France, Canada and elsewhere.” While the Bolsheviks were on the radio begging the Romanian authorities to extradite Nestor Makhno back to Russia, Isabelle Lemel Ferrari was still fighting, somehow.

It’s hard to say what happened to her during the 1920s. According to legends, Isabelle was responsible for every missing Red Army soldier, every murdered Party official, and every burning tank. 300,000 anarchists had just died in southern Ukraine along with over a million of its inhabitants, and Isabelle’s desire for revenge must have been boundless. Fearful that Ukraine would rise up in the future, the new rulers of the USSR openly encouraged cultural nationalism, allowed the formation of a Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and permitted more freedom than in other regions. There were many Ukrainians who would have sheltered and supported Isabelle, although there’s no record of who they were, given she was never captured. It is known that an armed uprising began the winter of 1930 that spread across the whole of the Ukraine, triggering a wave of military repression later that spring. Isabelle was said to be involved in this uprising, somehow managed to survive, and made her way to Kiev just before Stalin unleashed a wave of terror on the Ukraine. Hundreds of people were arrested, disappeared, put on show trial, or executed in the months that followed the uprising, although no one will ever know how many. Between 1932 and 1934, millions of Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death as punishment for their continued rebellion. At some point in 1931, before Stalin’s genocide took place, Isabelle disappeared from Kiev, appeared in Romania, and was last seen in Poland, the country where her daughter Fulvia eventually came looking for her.

It isn't known what Isabelle was doing between 1931 and 1938 and not even Fulvia was able to find her. In this quest to locate her mother, she witnessed the terror of Stalin's dictatorship, saw what the government had done to the Ukraine, and followed a trail of whispers across the border first into Romania and then Poland. Fulvia was in Warsaw when the Nazi's invaded in 1939 and was ultimately captured without finding her mother. After being shipped off to a German concentration camp, Fulvia spent the next years surviving behind the barbed wire, never once finding a chance to escape. After the camp was liberated in 1945, Fulvia invented a new Italian identity for herself, was resettled in Rome, and then returned to San Francisco in 1947. By then, the world of her mother Isabelle had been almost totally destroyed by the war. Fulvia was 32 years old.

As we have attempted to show in our film, the post-WWII anarchist movement exploded across the world during the 1960s and 1970s, a time when Fulvia was very active, along with thousands of others. Our film centers mostly on the anarchist forger Lucio Urtubia, anarchist guerrilla Francisco Sabate, anarchist militant Octavio Alberola, the First of May Group, and the Angry Brigade, people who kept the flame of anarchism alive and ensured it still exists today. Fulvia Ferrari was one of these people and she lived in San Francisco continuously from 1962 to 1978 when she was forced to flee California. At the age of 63, Fulvia disappeared from her mother's city and was never seen again. By that point, international anarchism had emerged from the fires of WWII and would continue to grow through the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s. Against all odds, the anarchists kept the flame alive, and most of their names are now forgotten to history. Isabelle Lemel Ferrari and Fulvia Ferrari are both known today only by their fake names, the ones deliberately chosen for public consumption, and we are lucky to have even the slightest glimpse into their uncanny and tumultuous lives. We hope our film reveals just how strongly

the heart of anarchism has pulsed for over two hundred years, fueled by the actions of these normal men and women.