

Review: The Meaning of Anarchism

The Meaning of Anarchism. By Captain Jack White. Organise!-International Workers Association, £1.00. 12 pages.

Anarchist Communist Federation

1999

At last the comrades of Organise!, the Irish anarcho-syndicalist group, have reprinted this long out-of-print pamphlet. Jack White, founder of the Irish Citizen Army, was an enigmatic character on the Irish left who has tended to be marginalised in Irish Labour history. This slim pamphlet is unfortunately his only written work presently available and it dates from the period after he had embraced anarchism. His 'conversion' occurred during his time as a volunteer in the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. The essay contained in this pamphlet is divided between a defence of anarchism against its Marxist critics and a discussion of the events in Spain from a libertarian perspective. White makes some odd comments about the "Spanish racial characteristic of human dignity"(?!) and his notion that the Easter Uprising in Ireland in 1916 was more important than the Russian Revolution a year later (and more in tune with the spirit of anarchism!) is somewhat controversial. However, White's unorthodoxy was famous; his autobiography was even called 'Misfit', and this shouldn't detract from what is an interesting read. With a new introduction by an Organise! member, 'The Meaning of Anarchism' should hopefully be a useful tool in connecting anarchists in Ireland today with those of its past.

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