



More Powerful Than Dynamite: Radicals, Plutocrats, Progressives, and New York's Year of Anarchy

Thai Jones

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In 1914 the United States was on the verge of revolution: industrial depression in the east, striking coal miners in Colorado, and increasingly tense relations with Mexico. In New York, the trouble began in January when a crushing winter caused homeless shelters to overflow. By April, anarchists paraded past industrialists' mansions, and tens of thousands filled Union Square demanding "Bread or Revolution." Then, on July 4, a detonation destroyed a Harlem tenement in the largest explosion the city had ever seen. Among the dead were three bomb-makers incited by anarchist Alexander Berkman who were preparing to dynamite the estate of John D. Rockefeller Jr., widely vilified for a massacre of his company's striking workers that spring.

More Powerful Than Dynamite charts how anarchist anger, progressive idealism, and plutocratic influence converged in that July explosion. Its cast includes celebrated figures such as Emma Goldman, Upton Sinclair, and Andrew Carnegie and the fascinating but heretofore little known, including Frank Tannenbaum, a teenager who insisted churches provide shelter for the homeless; police inspector Max Schmittberger, too honest for his department and too crooked for everyone else; and Becky Edelson, a young anarchist known for her red tights and for spitting in millionaires' faces. Historian and journalist Thai Jones creates a fascinating portrait of a city on the edge of chaos coming to terms with modernity.

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