

# K.S.L.

## Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library No6 50p

---

### ALBERT MELTZER 1920 - 1996

Many of you will know of Albert's involvement with the Kate Sharpley Library. He was one of the original enthusiasts for the creation of an archive that would reflect the complexities and cross-currents of Anarchism and be accessible to comrades.

This is not an obituary of Albert - they've been written - but some things do need to be said. Albert was a kind, loyal man whose essential humanity permeates the pages of his autobiography ('I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels' AK Press/KSL). Albert was always concerned about how Anarchism had drifted away from its natural base in the working class. To Albert Anarchism was not a philosophical/ intellectual idea but how working class people behaved, lived and struggled in times of calm and social crisis. The Anarchist who influenced him most was Billy Campbell (killed in the Second World War) - not by his writings but by his behaviour.

As his life moved on Albert became more and more concerned that Anarchism appeared to be a constituency that seemed more concerned with single issues or how one dressed rather than the simple humanity he had witnessed in his dealings with the Spanish Resistance and those who supported it.

All this made him aware of the importance of Anarchist history (not just the history of Anarchism!). Working class militants who had suffered emotionally and physically for their belief did not appear in any of the 'standard' histories (written by 'Anarchists' or non-anarchists alike). To forget about them was to re-write what Anarchism is, to substitute the conveniences of today's beliefs onto yesterday - an act of stalinisation of the worst kind.

As Fransisco Torres says in his introduction to our pamphlet "The Anarchist Resistance To Franco" by Antonio Tellez:

**"What is important is the attempt to wipe out from memory the generosity of spirit and physical courage of these combatants and to convert the absence of this reality into normality".**

Albert could be a fierce opponent -but always tried to make sure that his criticism was informed by his beliefs. The obituary published in 'Freedom' was disgraceful. Others around KSL had never particularly shared Albert's antipathy to this paper. The fact that the editors of 'Freedom' published such an obituary riddled with personal vindictiveness has changed that. Letters from all over the world to us have echoed our feelings of anger and disgust.

**we now know where we stand**  
KSL Collective

### ROBERT LYNN GLASGOW 1924-1996

"The Wee Man is dead" and we have lost another veteran militant. Stuart Christie's obituary (Guardian 10/9/96) says it all, but we would like to pay tribute to him: Egoist, Syndicalist agitator, author and moving spirit behind the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School.

so, with a clenched fist and a bent elbow, Bobby Lynn - goodbye.

---

## **KATE SHARPLEY'S STORY**

One of our frequently asked questions is "who was Kate Sharpley?". Many of our readers will know of her as "One of the countless 'unknown' members of our movement ignored by the 'official' historians of anarchism". We Hope this tribute, written by Albert Meltzer in 1978 will help to fill that statement out a little. There are more details in Albert's autobiography "I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels"

### **Kate's Tinwear**

Sixty-five years ago Queen Mary was handing out medals in Greenwich, most of them for 'fallen heroes' being presented to their 'womenfolk'. One 22-year old girl, said by the local press to be 'under the influence of anarchist propaganda', having collected medals for her dead father, brother and boyfriend, then threw them in the Queen's face, saying, 'If you think so much of them, you can keep them'. The Queen's face was scratched and so was that of one of her attendant ladies. The police, not a little under the influence of patriotic propaganda, then grabbed the girl and beat her up. When she was released from the police station a few days later, no charges being brought, she was scarcely recognisable.

The girl was Kate Sharpley, who had been active in the Woolwich anarchist group and helped keep it going through the difficult years of World War 1. After her clash with the police she was sacked from her job 'on suspicion of dishonesty' (there was nothing missing but a policeman had called checking up on her...) and, selling libertarian pamphlets in the street, she was recognised by the police and warned that if she appeared there again she would be charged with 'soliciting as

a prostitute' (which in those days would have been a calamity, and even today a disaster, if once convicted). Isolated from her family, and with the group broken up, she moved out of activity, away from the neighbourhood, and married.

I met her, by chance, last year in Lewisham. Twice widowed, she remembered the anarchist movement with nostalgia, and gave me a fascinating account of the local group in the years before World War 1. Unfortunately, she was already very ill, and a few weeks ago, she died, I was told by one of her neighbours.

I had, though, asked her for a message to the Anarchist movement today. Her answer: 'Tell the kids they're doing all right, they don't need any advice from me.' Especially she praised the young women of today: 'I wouldn't have had to take cover like I did if women of my day had any guts.' she said. But she did have guts. A few only in 1917 dared take any action in bereaved England. AM

## NEWS FROM THE KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY

### Matters Arising

Friends, subscribers and librarians will no doubt be aware of the length of time since our last bulletin. This issue is produced by a new design team on a new machine. Hopefully we will resume regular quarterly publication from this issue. Subscriptions to the Bulletin cost £2.50 (home) and £5 (abroad) -this includes postage and is for five issues - so you can't lose. Our address is:

KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY  
BM HURRICANE  
LONDON  
WC1N 3XX

Not only have we been involved in cataloguing the materials we have, but more have arrived.



### Appeal

Please do not forget that the Kate Sharpley Library relies on comrades to donate suitable material. Our running costs, and the cost of buying unobtainable or academic material, are borne by real cash money donations and the sale of spare donated books, our own pamphlets and bulletin. We will gladly accept offers of stationary (especially A4 folders), and suchlike vital equipment.

We would also welcome correspondence for the Bulletin and relevant anarchist research for future issues.

### KSL Publications

The co-publication with AK Press of Makhno's The Struggle Against The State And Others Essays has gone ahead - as has the publishing of I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels by Albert Meltzer.

Our list of pamphlets is printed on the back of this issue - an sae to our address will get you an up-to-date publications list

Of course, we have large ammounts of material that we'd like to publish, if only the money was there. We are also glad to see manuscripts from other toilers in the same field with a view to publication. We hope the following pamphlets should soon be added to the KSL stable:

Simon Radowsky And The Peoples Justice by Osvaldo Bayer  
The Anarchist Secret Service In The Spanish Struggle  
A Work On Anarchist Literature

As well as these we are involved in various joint efforts - in varying degrees of completeness - With AK Press of Edinburgh & San Fransisco:  
Albert Meltzer's Essays

A collection of from 1935 onwards  
No God No Master -

Daniel Guerin's famous 4 vol. anthology newly translated

The Black Cossack

(Biography Of Makhno)- A.Skirda

The Friends Of Durruti

- the definitive study

Complete Works of Bakunin

- for the first time in english

@—————@

This issue of the KSL Bulletin was produced in September 1996, by the KSL Collective.

## FORGOTTEN ANARCHISTS NO1 - ANDRE PRUDHOMMEAUX

ANDRE PRUDHOMMEAUX- profile by Charles Jacquier - Translated by PS

This profile first appeared in Itineraire No 13 , 1996, pp.61-62. The piece was primarily about Voline which explains some of the focus of the article.

Posthumous fate is often curious. Whereas everybody, inside the anarchist movement and some outside knew the name Voline (1882 - 1945), the same cannot be said of Andre Prudhommeaux (1902- 1968).<sup>1</sup> However in the years between the world wars, they were most certainly among the handful of anarchist militants whose thinking was grappling most directly with the great issues of the day. In the few years that saw the failure of a flurry of working class movements and social revolutions in Russia, Germany and Spain, they were the clear-sighted observers as well as the enthusiastic militants, always swimming against the tide.

Yet there was nothing to suggest that the path of Vsevolod Mikhailovitch Eichenbaum (aka Voline) should intersect with that of Andre Prudhommeaux, who was born in the Phalanstery in Guise (Aisne Department) in 1902. When the young Voline was embarking upon his career as a militant, Andre Prudhommeaux was still wet behind the ears. His mother, nee Marie Dollet, was niece to the second wife of Jean-Baptiste Godin, a late convert to and practitioner of Fourierism and founder of the familistery. His father, Jules, author of a remarkable thesis on "Icaria and its founder, Etienne Cabet" was not merely an historian of the social movement but a dyed-in-the-wool pacifist and active co-operator as well.

Andre Prudhommeaux became an activist at a very early age, but unlike Voline, his choices did not bring him quite so directly to anarchism, in that he first was an habitue of opposition communist circles. Thus he contributed to the monthly Clarte , using the pen name of Jean Cello, and was active in Albert Treint's group Redressment Communiste, finally breaking with that in 1928. He was then involved with a short-lived Communist Vanguard Group that published Le Reveil communiste, which, after August 1929, turned into L'Ouvrier communiste, organ of the Communist Workers' Groups which were close to the German and Dutch currents subscribing to council communism. Thus Andre Prudhommeaux was the translator of Hermann Gorter's Reply to Lenin (published in 1930 by the librairie ouvriere) which Voline reviewed for the Revue anarchiste (No 17, February 1932) run by Fernand Fortin. According to Voline, the document was an interesting one but "**Lenin had turned into a counter-revolutionary** long before 1920", in that, as early as February 1918, he had made peace with the German imperialists in defiance of the views of most workers' organisations. Prudhommeaux replied to this review in a letter of March 1932, which was subsequently published by the review in question (No 20, August-September 1934), in which he mentioned that Gorter's disciples, whilst critical of "**The original sins of Leninism** as Russian practice" had stopped "**muddling the empty formulas of State and dictatorship of the proletariat with their proletarian conception of the social revolution**".

Continues over

**ANDRE PRUDHOMMEAUX - CHARLES JAQUIER**

Continued

**FROM COUNCIL COMMUNISM TO ANARCHISM**

Earlier, in the last edition of L'Ouvrier communiste (No 11, August 1930), one editor, almost assuredly Prudhommeaux himself, had wondered about "the anarchists and us", following the appearance of an article in Lotta Anarchia the organ of the anarchist-communist groups affiliated to the Italian Anarchist Union (UAI), suggesting that ongoing dialogue be opened with the monthly of the Communist Workers' Groups. He remarked that, as events gathered pace, there was a need for an "overall clarification" if the revolution was to draw its militants among the members of the various tendencies, whatever their past labels might have been.

Between September 1932 and May 1933, along with Jean Dautry, Prudhommeaux issued a bi-monthly bulletin, Correspondance internationale ouvrier, the object being to offer an "unsystematic, non- doctrinaire view of the proletarian movement and of social revolt in all its guises". Hitler's advent to power and the Reichstag fire finally drove him into the arms of anarchism, as a result of the manifest powerlessness of the old workers' movement. Dutch council communists and some anarchists, particularly individualist anarchists rallied to the defence of the alleged arsonist, Marius Van der Lubbe against the calumnies of the Stalinists. After having **"weighed up twelve years of the 'bolshevisation' of the German proletariat"**, in a series of articles in Le Libertaire (Nos 90 to 92, 17-31 March 1933), he stopped writing for it when the paper labelled Van der Lubbe "Hitler's agent". He reserved his co- operation for other publications

committed to defending Van der Lubbe (publications like La Revue anarchiste or Alphonse Barbe's Le Semeur) and was one of the labour stalwarts of the French section of the International Van der Lubbe Committee.

From then on, Prudhommeaux was to contribute to the same publications, especially, in addition to La Revue anarchiste, La Voix libertaire and Terre libre, and had a hand in the setting up of the French- speaking Anarchist Federation (FAF) at the congress in Toulouse on 5-16 August 1936. In the view of Henri Bouye, who was to be a member of it, the FAF embraced those anarchists "who, in their notions about militant activity, their analyses of potential social revolution, of the transformation of society and of the new human relationships which the latter were to make possible, placed the emphasis upon the primacy of a freedom of the individual that was never to be sacrificed, without thereby lapsing into a twee humanism overly forgiving of the inequalities, injustices and cruelties of this world"<sup>2</sup>

In response to events in Spain, with anarchist ministers involved in the Generalidad government in Catalonia and the Central Anti- Fascist Militias Committee being abolished "Andre Prudhommeaux was, along with Voline, one of those who most forcefully articulated the dissenting current within the French anarchist movement".<sup>3</sup> According to them, "instead of pursuing a policy of compromise, it would have been better to restore to the Spanish conflict its social importance, and proceed with the complete liquidation of politics and press on with producer-consumer administration of things." But Spanish libertarians refused to "win as anarchists"...

Continues over



and agreed "to go to their deaths as governmentals, as defenders of the state's legitimacy". "The completion of the Spanish defeat in March 1939 did not, for Prudhommeaux, spell the failure of the anarchist idea: quite the opposite. That defeat offered confirmation of the libertarian contentions about the necessity of destroying the state if one wanted the social revolution to succeed".<sup>4</sup>

With the Second World War, both men were separately swept up in the storm. Voline, a Jew and a freemason, stayed in Marseille until 1944. There he lived in some straightened circumstances, but nonetheless carried on being active with a clandestine group made up of anarchists of a variety of nationalities. Worn out and stricken with TB, Voline passed away on 18 September 1945 in the Laennec Hospital in Paris

Andre Prudhommeaux fled to Switzerland to his partners family after war was declared. Finding it impossible to engage in any open political activity, he specialised instead in literary translation, but kept in touch with personalities like Louis Bertoni, the publisher of the weekly Le Reveil anarchiste or the First World War French war resister Jean-Paul Samson

To launch The Unknown Revolution in an edition published by Jaques Doubinsky and a group of Voline's friends, the anarchist movement organised a "Voline Commemoration" on 2 November 1947 at the Salle des societes savante in Paris. Andre Prudhommeaux spoke there, alongside Fontenis, Franssen and F.Granier, whilst Le Libertaire the following week carried a tribute to Voline, stressing the significance of his contribution to The Anarchist Encyclopedia and to the French-

language libertarian press. As far as Le Libertaire was concerned, certain of his essays such as "Real Social Revolution" figured "among the most important writings of the inter-war period".

As an editor with Le Libertaire Prudhommeaux rejected the conversion of the Anarchist Federation into the Libertarian Communist Federation (FCL) and was one of a circle of militants which reverted to the FA initials after a foundation congress on 25-27 December 1953 and brought out Le Monde Libertaire after October 1954. Prudhommeaux also contributed to numerous French or French-language ( Cahiers de Pensee et Action, Contre-courant, Defense de l'homme, L'Unique, Le contrat social, Preuves, Temoins ) or foreign ( Freedom, L'Adunta del Refrattari, Volonta ) publications. Among his translations pride of place must go to French translations of Czeslaw Milosz's The Captive Mind (Gallimard 1954) and Milovan Djilas's The New Ruling Class (Plon 1957). One need only read the pamphlets he published with the aid of Rene Lefevre to appreciate the importance of this anarchist whose career was as original as it is little known.<sup>5</sup>

#### NOTES

1. For further details see under 'Prudhommeaux' in the Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier Francais (Paris, Editions Ouvrieres, 1991) Vol 39 pp. 250-252.
2. See Bulletin du CIRA (Marseille branch) no 26/27, 1986, p.60
3. Jean Maitron Le Mouvement anarchiste en France.ii De 1914 a nos jours (Paris, Maspero 1982) p.33
4. *ibid* p.35
5. Lefevre's Cahiers Spartacus published or reissued Catalogne libertaire 1936-1937 (No 11, November 1946), Spartacus et la Commune de Berlin 1918-1919 (No 83 August/September 1977) - both of these being jointly written with his wife Dori Prudhommeaux - and L'Effort libertaire i Le Principe d'autonomie, with introduction by Robert Pages (No 99, October/November 1978)

---

## K.S.L. BULLETIN

### REVIEWS & REQUESTS

---

#### nul points section

Double Lives. Stalin. Willi Munzenberg and the seduction of the intellectuals. Stephen Koch - Harper Collins 1995. It has an interesting title. It has interesting things to say about Stalinist policy in Spain. It could be a good book. But how on earth can you trust the research skills of someone who can write a sentence like this:

"By June the slaughters in Barcelona were shrieking forward in full cry. Many thousands of Spanish anarchists, organized under an umbrella organization known as the POUM, were executed" (p285)

Maybe the poor fellow has been over-exposed to Stalinist gibberish? Disregarding the fact that the POUM were Marxists and that the Anarchists could organise quite well on their own, the figures strain the 'umbrella' to breaking point: Bolloten estimates CNT membership at between 1.5 and 1.75 **million** during the Civil War (The Spanish Revolution. 1980. p526 n20). Whereas "The POUM had 6000 members in Catalonia on the eve of the Civil War, and perhaps another 1000 in the rest of Spain" (The Spanish Civil War- The View From The Left. Revolutionary History Vol 4, No 1/2, p52 n111)



#### Halldor Laxness (1902- )

we have a few works by this Icelandic writer ( The Fish Can Sing, Independent People, Salka Valka) and would be grateful for any more in depth biographical detail - or a copy of Peter Hallberg's Biography (New York, 1971) - particularly anything about his involvement with politics. He apparently produced a memoir in 1963 (" a writers schooling") - does anyone have friendly contacts with an Icelandic studies department?

#### Kate Sharpley Library: Accounts

At 8/9/96 KSL Account =£683

#### breakdown as follows:

Donations from AK Press and other friends on the death of Albert Meltzer =£280

from sale of our pamphlets and second-hand material =£403

Expenditure will begin soon for

-some furniture

-a new range of pamphlets

-money to AK Press for various publishing projects

There will be further details in the next issue of the KSL Bulletin

#### The Meltzer Press

This has been set up to publish works that would have been close to Albert's heart. Their first offering is:

**sentenced to death under Franco** by Juan Busquets Verges, translated by Paul Sharkey - the story of Busquets' involvement with the post-war libertarian resistance, arrest and imprisonment.

-Including prison protests, escape attempts and a Glaswegian hospital orderly. price- £12.50

further details from: TMP

PO Box 35, Hastings  
East Sussex, TN 34 2UX