



Bulletin of the
Kate Sharpley Library
07:2000 No23 \$1/50p

THE TRUTH ABOUT NESTOR MAKHNO

Nestor Makhno, for years the leader of the rebel peasantry of the Ukraina, died on July 25 in the Tenon Hospital after long months of illness. His remains were cremated in the Père-Lachaise cemetery, at Paris.

Nestor Makhno was one of the outstanding personalities of the Russian Revolution, a man remarkable in many regards. While still in his teens he became interested in the revolutionary movement and at 17 he was already an active member of an anarchist group in the Ukraina. In 1908 the Tsarist Government condemned him to death, but owing to his youth the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was incarcerated in the notorious Butirki Prison, at Moscow, one of the worst hells of the Russian penal system, where the naturally rebellious spirit of Makhno earned him frequent and severe punishment. In spite of it Nestor succeeded in turning his imprisonment to good account; he spent his time in studying and improving the elementary education he had received as a boy. The February Revolution opened the doors of his prison, as it did for thousands of other victims of Tsardom.

Makhno returned to his native Ukraina and there devoted himself to the revolutionary enlightenment of the masses. A splendid organizer and effective agitator, his work speedily showed results. He became particularly popular among the southern peasantry. During the occupation of Ukraina by the German-Austrian forces, Makhno organized very successful guerrilla warfare against the invaders. From a little handful of armed men, who had to procure guns and ammunitions from the enemy, his faithful band constantly grew in numbers and strength, till at one time Makhno's peasant army consisted of 40,000 – 60,000 men, including cavalry and artillery. A thorough Anarchist, Makhno waged war against all forces which sought to subject Ukraina to new tyranny and exploitation. For this reason [he fought] the Whites as well as the Bolsheviks when the latter attempted to establish an allegedly “revolutionary” despotism in the South. Makhno clearly distinguished between the interests of the revolution and of the masses as against those of Bolshevik Party rule. He and his *povstantsi* (rebel peasant) army had for their definite purpose to

free Ukraina from the tyranny and government in any form, be it white or red. *Makhnovstchina*, as the Makhno peasant uprising in Ukraina was called, was a thoroughly libertarian revolutionary movement of the masses in the South of Russia, of utmost significance. Nestor Makhno was the heart and the spirit of that great movement. His great ability as a leader, his personal courage and almost reckless devotion to his anarchist ideal of liberation earned for him the trust, respect and admiration of the Ukrainian masses. His revolutionary integrity and unusual military judgment inspired his army to deeds of almost incredible heroism and self-sacrifice in behalf of the revolutionary cause. His followers christened him “Batko” Makhno (beloved little father), which was the highest expression of popular respect and affection.

But though Makhno fought against the establishment of Bolshevik rule in the Ukraina, he never hesitated to come to the aid of the Bolsheviks when the interests of the revolution demanded it. Thus in 1919 the Makhno army practically saved Moscow from being taken by General Denikin when the latter had almost routed the Bolshevik forces. Again in 1920 it was Makhno and his *povstantsi* who helped in finally defeating Wrangel and his White armies.

The Bolsheviks always appealed to Makhno for aid whenever their own military forces failed to halt the advance of the White enemy. But in spite of being repeatedly saved from destruction by Makhnovtsi, the Bolsheviks continuously planned to annihilate Makhno and his army. True to the psychology of all despotism, the Bolshevik Government could not tolerate the fact that a large part of Russia – practically the whole of Ukraina – refused to recognise the rule of the Bolsheviks. Fully knowing that Makhno was a true Anarchist who strove to liberate the south from every tyranny, and in spite of the great services done by Makhno's army to the revolution, the Bolsheviks denounced both Makhno and his peasant followers as bandits and counter-revolutionists. They set a price on Makhno's head, dead or alive, and even stooped to sending secret emissaries to Makhno's camp to murder him.

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Inside: The history of “Direct Action”; Prison Memoirs (Berkman)

NESTOR MAKHNO

Notwithstanding all the dangers and difficulties of that revolutionary period, and in spite of repeated Bolshevik treachery, Makhno continued for 4 years (1917-1921) loyally to serve the revolutionary cause. He had fought the German invaders and he continued his fight against every reactionary force which sought to subjugate the people of Ukraina, including the armies of Denikin, Skoropadsky, Petlura, Grigoriev and others.

...was not the very existence of the Makhno movement a challenge and a defiance to all governments and oppression?

Whites as well as the Bolsheviki hated Makhno and his peasant army with a deadly and irreconcilable hatred. Justly so, for was not the very existence of the Makhno movement a challenge and a defiance to all governments and oppression? In the denunciation of Makhno the Bolsheviki went even further than the whites. Secret conspiracies and open military attacks failed to destroy Makhno and his followers, the Bolsheviki decided to kill him morally. It was they who FIRST SPREAD THE LIE that Makhno was a pogromshtchik, a Jew baiter, and that his army was guilty of pogroms against the Jews. But the people of Ukraina knew better than that. They knew that no Bolshevik general ever protected the Jews against pogroms with the energy and zeal of Makhno. They knew that Makhno was an Anarchist and internationalist, and that he was ruthless in suppressing the least sign of racial persecution. Some of his closest friends were Jews, and a number of well-known Russian-Jewish Anarchists were his most trusted advisors and members of the educational department of the Makhno army. It is true that occasional, though very rare cases of assaults on Jews had happened in the territory occupied by Makhno's forces. But in every case it was proven that such excesses were committed by individual members of the army, and that Makhno was merciless in punishing such offenders. In this connection it is well to remember that the Bolshevik red Army was also not free from such excesses, yet no one would think of accusing the leaders of the Bolshevik army of encouraging pogroms. As to Makhno, he personally and publicly shot Grigoriev, the chief of a White band of notorious pogromers, as an object lesson for his entire army and the entire people of Ukraina.

A true anarchist, a great revolutionary mass leader was lost to us by the death of Nestor Makhno. He died, poor, alone and almost deserted far away from the people he so loved and served so faithfully. But his

spirit always remained with the masses of Russia, and with his last breath he confidently hoped that some day the oppressed, much-suffering people will rise in their might to sweep away forever the tyranny and despotism of Bolshevism.

Published by the Libertarian groups of Toronto (1934)

Makhno's *The Struggle Against the State and Other Essays* is available from the KSL - see p.7 for details

Letter

Dear Friends,

In his Autobiographical notes (*Bulletin* No 22, pp4-5), Raffaele Schiavina AKA Max Sartin forgot to mention that he is also the author, under his own name, of a book he published in France in September 1927, before he returned to the US: *Sacco e Vanzetti, Cause e fini di un delitto di Stato*. [Sacco and Vanzetti: The Causes and Ends of A State Crime] In spite - or because? - of the fact it had been written without any respect towards fifty years of hindsight, it still remains, as one of the best ever written about the political background of the case.

Sincerely, LN

Review: The Heckler

Available from Red & Black Club (Send them a donation or at least a couple of stamps)

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London

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This local freesheet is well worth getting – if you live in South London you'll appreciate the agitation and stirring all the more – and if you don't, worth looking at for how a political piece of work can be well produced, useful and funny in equal measures.

Credits

This number of *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library* brought to you by the KSL collective in July 2000.

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We welcome orders for our publications (see page 7), letters, enquiries and donations of materials or money

The History of “Direct Action” (Australia)

Direct Action, then a monthly, was first published by the IWW in Sydney in January 1914. They borrowed some dough from a member and bought themselves an archaic printing press so that all restraints upon expression of ‘clear cut revolutionary principles’ were removed. In a statement of principles it set itself as being: “For the first time in the history of the working class movement in Australia, a paper which stands for strait-out direct-actionist principles, unhampered by the plausible theories of the parliamentarians, whether revolutionary or otherwise.” With the new paper, they declared: “Every contributor, every supporter, is a member of the wage-earning class, who is conscious of his slave status in modern society, who is imbued, therefore, with motives stronger than mere sympathy or sentiment in voicing the aspirations of his fellows.”

Success came quickly for their efforts under the initial editorships of Tom Glynn, J. B. King and Tom Barker. The paper was cheaply priced (1 penny) and full of short, humorous, irreverent and stinging comments upon events of the day. In 1915 the paper had moved from a monthly to a fortnightly by May and to a weekly by October. It quickly became an important organising tool for the group. Its sale, together with cheap pamphlets, became an important source of finance for both the locals and the central organisation as dues were often “very light.” A regular weekly circulation of 8000 copies made it by far the most impressive revolutionary paper in Australia to that date. And of course radicals in those days tended to pass their papers along when they had finished with them so a single paper often counted for many more than one reader...

Their militancy and anti-war sentiment quickly brought them into conflict with the state and large sections of the community misled by the current war hysteria. Generally, the paper did not conceal the dim view it took of developments and, in the middle of 1915, its editor was arrested for producing a poster advising the Australian working class to “Let those who own Australia do the fighting - Put the wealthiest in the front ranks; the middle class next; follow these with politicians, lawyers, sky pilots and judges. Answer the declaration of war with the call for a General Strike ... Don’t go to Hell in order to give the plutocratic parasites a bigger slice of Heaven. - Workers of the World, Unite! Don’t become Hired Murderers! Don’t Join the Army or Navy!” - which put this attitude rather well.

During September and October of 1916 twelve leading militants within the organisation were arrested and charged with treason - a hanging offence. Many of them had links with *Direct Action*. John Hamilton, a miner, had put up the original cash to buy the press while Glynn was editor and J. B. King a former editor. The charges, later changed to conspiracy to commit arson, were a police frame-up. The most dramatic case in a broad suppression, the twelve were brought before a right wing judge already famed for the viciousness of sentences he imposed upon working class activists. Upon a technicality the press *Direct Action* was printed upon was confiscated.

Sentences imposed upon the Sydney fellow workers by Justice Pring (three varieties - five, ten and fifteen years of hard labour) tended to put most other things into shadow for a while. *Direct Action*, however, refused to be suppressed just yet although it had to be put out to a commercial printer.

Late in 1916 Australia’s Prime Minister pushed through the first Unlawful Associations Act designed to banish IWWism once and for all. “This organisation”, he said, talking about us, “holds a dagger at the heart of our society, and we should be recreant to the social order if we do not accept the challenge it holds out to us. As it seeks to destroy us, we must in self defence destroy it.”

However, we proved more difficult than expected to destroy and in the first three months of 1917 seemed to be, if anything, expanding. May saw *Direct Action* prohibited from being sent through the post. Tom Barker remembers that: “We had to seal and stamp every one of them separately, then the men would go out all over the place and put them through the post boxes. As a matter of fact, it’s said that the paper was better delivered in the time when it was illegal than it was before, because people took a pride in getting it and a pride in posting it, and the postmen were largely on our side. A good deal of our stuff went to places like Goulburn by train or by boat to Western Australia, so it didn’t come into the postal system. We just made them up into rail parcels to go that way...”

In the winter of 1917, again with the support of the Labor Party the original Unlawful Associations Bill was strengthened and its loopholes effectively plugged. All members of the IWW not cutting ties with the group were condemned to six months imprisonment with it left pretty much up to the individual to prove that s/he was not a member. The last edition of this first series of *Direct Action*, dated August 18, was stolen by the state when police made their final raid the IWW Hall in Sussex Street on 27 July 1917. The union responded variously to the repression with many adopting the civil disobedience

“DIRECT ACTION”

tactic of proclaiming themselves true to their ideals and taking the consequences. So was this first incarnation of the IWW in Australia suppressed.

Direct Action re-emerged briefly in 1921 as the organ of the Industrial Union Propaganda League a grouping that consisted of several leading Wobs leading a tortured relationship in and out of the Communist Party. Different styles of action between the Wobblies (always trying to stir the rank and file) and the political sects that coalesced to form the CPA [Communist Party of Australia] (out to capture structures) formed stumbling blocks to this co-operation.

With the end of the war came the end of the repressive legislation with which the ruling classes had silenced the IWW. It was reformed in Australia although it never regained the strength or vivacity of the earlier period but maintaining itself as a thorn in the side of Labor politicians, corrupt and complacent craft union officials and the master class in most states from this time, through the depression years, until the second world war.

Direct Action re-appeared again as our mouthpiece a couple of times in the late ‘twenties. Printed then in Adelaide it was not without its effect. Tony McGillick remembers that “in those times, the IWW was most active. Its newspaper *Direct Action* was sold on the job, at Employment Centres, and in the Botanic Park on Sunday afternoons.” This series had less resources to draw upon than its predecessor and was terminated by legal proceedings against one of its editors.

The good name of *Direct Action* was sullied between 1970 and 1990. The Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist grouping took up our title although it did not promote direct action at all. At best it only proposed action mediated by the party and at worst tried to mislead the workers to do ridiculous things such as “vote for a labor Party pledged to socialist policies” without bothering to explain much how such an (in any case pointless) exercise could be accomplished or even where such a strange creature could be found. IWW members during this period were therefore forced to adopt the title *Rebel Worker* for their publication. The fellow workers concerned, feeling that their aims could better be promoted through an Anarcho Syndicalist Federation cut their ties with the IWW though continued to produce *Rebel Worker*. The SWP changed the title of their paper to the more trendy monica of Left Greens or something.

So we are back and, the working class willing, here to stay until the toilers get their dues - everything.

- Mike

From *Direct Action*, Australian paper of the IWW, Number 10 PO Box 78 Bellingen, NSW 2454

Review Extracts:

Des Patchrider **The Couriers are Revolting: The Despatch Industry Workers Union 1989-92**

Dave from *The Riders Digest* June 200 p53:

The DIWU was “...loosely based on the anti-bureaucratic anarcho-syndicalist type of union that they have in Spain, France and elsewhere.” This in short seems to mean they didn’t fuck about. They certainly had more in common with direct action groups like Reclaim The Streets, than the postal ballot and block votes for Frank Dobson unions like UNISON and the TGWU.

The-24-page booklet is exactly what you’d expect from the title: a history of the DIWU between March 1st 1989 and July 20th 1992. However the blurb on the back makes it abundantly clear that it hasn’t been written as a simple nostalgia piece for DR’s - far from it.

Like the DIWU itself, this booklet has a wider cause beyond the tawdry ghetto of despatching; which in a nutshell is: “...a desire to set free the working class.”! It is aimed at security guards and sweat shop workers as much as any of you; being published in the hope they could: “provide an example or inspiration for workers to organise similarly in other industries.”

It is well written and easy to read and at £2 should be required reading for all downtrodden workers of the world Whether or not you agree with their politics or their actions, you’ve got to admire any group who tried to stand up to the despatch business.

Absent friends / Review

Beaten Up, Fitted Up, Locked Up; Mark Barnsley and ‘The Pomona Incident’ - A Miscarriage of Justice

Drawn from eye witness accounts and other evidence this 44 page pamphlet explains how Mark Barnsley became the victim of a gross miscarriage of justice.

Starting on June 8th, 1994 it shows how he was viciously assaulted by up to 15 attackers, was fitted up and incredibly given a 12 year prison sentence. Exposing so-called ‘British Justice’ as a sham, this pamphlet is also a testament to Mark’s determined fight for real justice. It contains previously unpublished material as well as information about the campaign

Beaten Up... is available from the usual KSL address for £2.

Further details on the case are available from Justice for Mark Barnsley c/o 145-9 Cardigan Road, Leeds, LS6 1LJ (UK)

Review: Berkman's Prison Memoirs

I first read 'Prison memoirs of an Anarchist' twenty years ago while serving time in Maidstone prison for possession of explosives. Having attempted to obtain a copy many times since then, I was thrilled when a good comrade recently sent me one.

Berkman's tale begins with an account of the background to his attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick, and of the act itself. It then chronicles the 14 long years he spent in prison as the State exacted its revenge.

Berkman commences his imprisonment as a 'fresh fish' beached on an utterly alien shore, abandoned by the Anarchist movement, contemplating suicide, and isolated from his fellow prisoners. The prison environment is so harsh that like many prisoners before and since Berkman is incredulous of living for mere days in such conditions, let alone for years.

But Berkman survives, growing as the story progresses, learning the prison slang and protocol, and meeting plenty of colourful characters along the way. As Berkman grows and matures, and they come to know him, he gains the respect of his fellow prisoners, and they his. While these men are unversed in the principles of Anarchism, most are victims of the rotten system Berkman despises, and many become like comrades, dear friends who will risk their all for him and vice-versa.

Despite the initial antagonism of the Anarchist movement (only Emma Goldman and a few others rally behind him), Berkman wins solid support from a new generation of comrades 'outside', people who are willing to risk their liberty, and even their lives, to end his nightmare. Unfortunately the daring escape attempt that results is no more successful than Berkman's bid to kill Frick.

There are plenty of episodes of tragedy and human suffering in the book, of incalculable cruelty, and of daily grinding injustice. Yet above all it is an intensely inspiring read, a story of great heroism and courage. Berkman's tale shows us that these qualities survive, indeed flourish, even in the face of the most forbidding adversity, and among those whom society condemns as the lowest of the low. Against insurmountable odds the unvanquishable human spirit triumphs, and resistance to tyranny still endures.

While Berkman leaves prison a very different person to the one he was when he entered, he remains unbroken and unbowed, still tirelessly devoted to his Anarchist principles. His sentence completed he is anxious to renew his links with the movement, yet its changed nature at first leaves him disorientated and

depressed. Then he hears that the Police have broken up an Anarchist meeting, clubbed the audience, and arrested a dozen comrades under the new 'Criminal Anarchy Law'. The attack immediately rouses Berkman from his depression, "The news electrifies me. I feel transported into the past, the days of struggle and persecution... The enemy is challenging, the struggle is going on!" Berkman finds his 'resurrection'.

Any prisoner reading the book will, for better or worse, find much to identify with, and even separated by time and space, feel almost 'at home' [See '**prison slang**' below]. For the revolutionary, whether inside or outside prison, there is much to be inspired by, and much that the modern Anarchist movement could learn about prisoner solidarity.

Written at a time before prison memoirs were ten a penny, Berkman's book is still for me the best of the genre. That such a towering classic of Anarchist and prison literature has been in print so rarely is as inexplicable as it is tragic.

Mark Barnsley 22 June 2000 Woodhill Prison

Prison slang

English Cons will be entirely familiar with the nineteenth century American prison slang, since most of it is still in use in English gaols today. Presumably it was 'taken over' to the States by ex-cons from over here. They use words like 'screw' for example. This word comes from when turn-keys were responsible for turning the screw which made the Treadmill harder - they didn't have the Treadmill in the States. English words like 'stir' (much the same as 'porridge') were still in use in American prisons in the 1930s, though this began to be corrupted into 'stare'. What I find interesting is why we still have most of these very old words, and yet they've disappeared from use in US prisons.

Other indications of the fact these words originated here are words coming from cockney rhyming slang like 'Peter' for a safe or prison cell, a peter-man is a safecracker. Berkman uses 'Pete-man' for the same thing.

It's the same with criminal slang outside prison, for example 'copper' seems to have been in use in America until the 50s or 60s. Yet it's disappeared now. Maybe they just revise their slang more frequently.

Of course English prison and criminal slang is constantly being revised, as is the Scottish equivalent, but many old words never change - 'Screw' being an obvious one, a 'stiff' (a smuggled letter), which Berkman also uses, is another. MB

[See also *Absent friends* - page 4 - ed.]

Les Égorgeurs (Cut-throats) by Benoist Rey: Censored Memories of Algeria

We were brutes under the orders of bastards, What Benoist Rey witnessed in Algeria¹ when he was called to the colours in September 1958, he will never forget. As a tradesman volunteer, he was assigned to an elite unit, the pursuit commandos, with whom he was to take part in operations mounted in the Constantinois area. He was just twenty-one years old, For a full year's orgy of crime he was to bear impotent witness to that war, which, if it had a name, was barbarism itself and, if it had a face, was the face of terror. Go ahead and rape but exercise a little discretion, one of the torturers, Officer Cadet P., told his section before they entered the villages. And it was the very same P, who added: That's what pacification is all about. Be that as it may, the only good Arab was a dead Arab. Returning to base on that first evening, Benoist Rey was to discover that one young Muslim girl, aged fifteen, had been raped by seven troopers, and another thirteen year-old by three men...

Out of a duty to remember and in an effort to escape this nightmare, the young conscript kept a daily journal of an army butchering and torturing in systematic fashion, torching and cutting throats with laughter on its lips, annihilating everything that fell within reach of its delirium and its rationale. He returned to Paris physically spent, his heart wounded beyond repair. This sense of collective guilt no doubt accounts for the silence maintained by the conscripts after their return to France.

First published in 1961 by Éditions de Minuit, Rey's story, *Les Égorgeurs*, was promptly banned by the authorities and impounded at the printers. Why the censorship when Henri Alleg had already published *La Torture* four years before and when other documents of the same sort had been allowed? Neither Benoist Rey nor Editions de Minuit were ever to discover that. Be that as it may, his first-hand journal has now been republished, unaltered, by Éditions du Monde libertaire - Los Solidarios and deserves to be read.

As we know, France, faced with the painful labours of remembering, opted instead for the official amnesia prescribed, so to speak, by a flurry of amnesty laws², Thirty eight years on, the butchers who officiated in Algeria still go unpunished. We know their names, but they have never been called to account by anyone at all. They have even been feted, honoured and invited to parade on 14 July. Which of their names will bring us shame? What sort of remorse will we feel? the

young Benoist Rey used to ask back then. And nobody said a thing, but they closed ranks. No one owned up to his responsibility. We lost every vestige of dignity, of honour. Who can ever gauge the impact of such barbarity upon the Algerian people?

Florence Beaugé *Le Monde Diplomatique*,
January 2000 - p. 29

1 Benoist Rey, *Les Égorgeurs – Guerre d'Algerie, chronique d'un appelé, 1959-1960*, Editions du Monde libertaire - Los Solidarios, 145 rue Amelot, 75011 Paris, 1999, 120 pages, 60FF

2 In 1991, with *La Guerre sans Nom*, Bernard Tavernier and Patrick Rotman, however, reminded everyone of these still-open wounds

Mexican bandits [1914]

I should like to know why a self-respecting peon, living in Mexico should not turn bandit. I should like somebody to explain to me why it is not braver and nobler for a man to help himself freely than to cringe beneath the whip, working from sunrise to sunset for a beggar's pittance, and at disgusting tasks, with the knowledge that his children after him must pass through the same hideous hell.

I should like to know what people mean by ironing out their faces over the girl who deliberately prefers prostitution to the brutal existence inevitable if she becomes a common laborer's lawful wife in the United States or Europe. I should like to know why men should not choose any way of earning money rather than that of sticking pigs ten hours a day for Armour, or shovelling ore into white-hot furnaces for the Guggenheims, or becoming flunky to empty-headed dudes who regard them as sticks of furniture.

I should like to know why modern man should not be on fire with the spirit of revolt, and why it should not exhibit itself in what are called 'criminal' tendencies of the most socially destructive type. Indeed that is exactly what is happening. the herd is breaking through the legal corral at every point, to the frantic alarm of all the goody-goodies who think man was brought into this world expressly to be corralled.

William C. Owen in *The Toiler*, Volume 2 number 1, January 1914

New Pamphlet

Juan Garcia Oliver **Wrong Steps: Errors in the Spanish Revolution**

A leading Spanish Anarchist militant and CNT member gives his (controversial) account of the Revolution - and it's mistakes: £1.50, usual address.