

John Taylor Caldwell 1911-2007

With the death of John Taylor Caldwell aged 95 we have lost the last significant link with an anarchist anti-parliamentary form of socialism/communism which flourished in the first few decades of the last century, and was part of a tradition of libertarian socialism going back to the days of William Morris and the Socialist League – a socialism based on working-class self-activity manifest in workers' councils and direct action rather than in reliance on political parties, whether social democratic or revolutionary.

This kind of anarchism is assumed to have become extinct during the inter-War period, crushed between the pincers of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Communist Party. But in a few places, notably Glasgow, it continued to flourish, thanks to individuals like John and his mentor, Guy Aldred. Aldred was the main organiser and theoretician of this movement. John's first encounter with him at the Glasgow May Day demonstration in 1934 left such a deep impression on him that later in the year he joined Aldred's United Socialist Movement (USM).

In 1938, John left his seafaring employment to work, full time but unpaid, for Aldred's movement. For almost three decades he devoted himself to printing the movement's paper *The Word* (plus a veritable mountain of pamphlets) and turned his hand to whatever needed doing. The USM took an important part in all the political actions of its time, from support of the Spanish revolutionary cause in 1936-8, through the anti-war struggles of 1939-45 (in which John himself was a conscientious objector), and on to the anti-militarist and peace campaigns of the Fifties and Sixties.

All this was achieved against a background of ever-present poverty, with barely enough money to eat, never mind provide meeting rooms or publish its propaganda. The most intense period of activity was undoubtedly 1936-38 in support of the Spanish revolutionary cause. Meetings were held every night and funds had to be raised to send two comrades (Ethel MacDonald and Jenny Patrick) to Spain. But the group was in desperate need of a printing press. Amazingly, Aldred persuaded a "Roneo" salesman to let them have a duplicator on approval, which was immediately pressed into service to produce a broadsheet, *Regeneracion*, giving uncensored news from Spain. .

In 1938 the group again became homeless and the duplicator was repossessed. But with a generous donation from one of their stalwarts, they managed to acquire an antiquated printing press at scrap value from the veteran Glasgow socialist Tom Anderson. A new paper was hurried into print ready for May Day, and following John's suggestion it was called *The Word*. It was an instant success, and as John noted, was seized on "as readily as if it were a free handbill." By 1939, with the help of the Strickland bequest, the Strickland Press was set up at 104-106 George Street. From there, *The Word*

continued to be published until, in 1962, the Press was forced to remove to Montrose Street. The George Street premises were the heart of this anarchist oasis in Glasgow, as a meeting-place, bookshop, printing press and social centre for a whole generation of Glaswegians. John managed to capture this in an epitaph for the group's old HQ written after it had been bulldozed for a new University of Strathclyde building:

When the meeting was over the chairs were replaced and the audience meandered upstairs where books were bought and fresh arguments broke out amongst small groups. The old man was tired... but he was loth to hurry them away. Some, he knew, went home to misery and loneliness. The evening in the old cellar was a rare feast of companionship for them. And for the few young ones it was good too. Not just a case of agreeing with the old master, but a challenge to read and, most importantly, to think for themselves.

In the post-war period Aldred was a candidate in a number of General Elections and by-elections – not in the hope or expectation of being elected, but purely as a propaganda exercise, a cost-effective way "to expose the farcical and false nature of parliamentarism," as John put it. In all of these, John acted as Aldred's election agent, handling key aspects of the campaigns from organising the nocturnal squads of bill-posters and street-chalkers to booking meeting-halls to printing and delivering 10,000 handbills and election addresses.

Despite this frenzy of activity, in Aldred's lifetime John took a background role. After Aldred's death in October 1963, however, he stepped forward to keep the movement going. Virtually single-handedly he continued to publish *The Word* (later transmuted to *The Word Quarterly*). But the USM fell into decline, and by 1968 John was forced to close its printing press and bookshop.

Still he refused to be silenced. He devoted the rest of his long life to "guarding the movement against oblivion", depositing archival material in libraries such as the Mitchell Library and the libraries of Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian Universities, and editing a collection of Aldred's works for World Microfilms. In addition, Luath Press published his biography of Guy Aldred, *Come Dungeons Dark* (1988) albeit in abbreviated form, and subsequently Northern Herald Books published his two important volumes of autobiography, *Severely Dealt With* (1993) and *With Fate Conspire* (1999). The former, a vivid depiction of his harsh upbringing in Belfast and Glasgow, was well received and was a bestseller for three consecutive months at John Smith's historic bookshop in central Glasgow (now also, alas, defunct). Most recently, about eighteen months before his death, John had made an important contribution to a forthcoming film about "The Spanish Pimpernel", Ethel MacDon-

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Antifascists on the island of Tremiti

Alfonso Failla's Memories of Internment

In 1937 the war in Spain had swollen the numbers of active antifascists. Tremiti island which by then held a community of ordinary offenders was reopened to politicals. That July a group of internees suspected of clandestine liaison in Italy and with the outside world through some residents of Ponza, were moved from that island to Tremiti. Tremiti (in the Adriatic) was filled with cherished memories, especially for anarchists. Among the residents there were still vivid recollections of the heroic behaviour of comrade Argante Salucci from Santa Croce sull'Arno, who back in 1898 had been murdered by the prison guards charged with keeping an eye on political internees, after he had stood up to their bullying. One old woman on the island (she was born in Umbria), known as "Regina", tried to make us a present of copies of old anarchist publications such as Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* which she had obtained from comrades of ours who had been interned there in 1894 and 1898, people of whom she and other islanders still had vivid and respectful memories. Outstanding and pugnacious comrades such as Stefano Vetteroni (who had stood trial alongside Gino Lucetti) and Bernardo Melacci from Foiana della Chiana, had only recently been released from prison after serving many long years and had been dispatched to internment rather than being set free. This had already been the case with Paolo Schicchi and Filippo Gramignano. We were all outraged when, a few days after our arrival on the island, we read a notice posted on the dormitory door: it required all internees to give the fascist salute "during roll-calls, when entering offices and every time they encountered persons in authority". This was not the first time that we had had to confront this sort of insulting attempt on the part of fascist goons, black-shirted or otherwise, while in prison and in internment. On the island of Lampedusa, comrade Rossi from Rome had even been stabbed. However, on every occasion, the determination of the internees and political prisoners had carried the day.

Did Fusco, the police inspector in charge of the Tremiti settlement really think that he could bring veteran prisoners and internees to heel? Had Mussolini issued direct orders to the effect that the regime in internment should be run along the same lines as German concentration camps? Or, as word on the island had it, was the governor, prey to the whims of his wife and daughter, determined to enhance his public and private standing through the sort of "snapped orders" that Mussolini had used to write about?

The "hole"

Memories of what had happened on Ustica were still fresh.

To that island, which at the time was set aside for the internment of ordinary offenders, Vincenzo Capuana (an anarchist from La Spezia) and Menghestu, a young antifascist Eritrean studying engineering in Rome, had been transferred just a few months earlier. There they had bumped into comrade Antonio Sicilia from Agrigento.

The administration on Ustica refused to countenance Sicilia's refusal to give the fascist salute like the ordinary offenders did and so they sentenced him to lengthy periods in "the hole", an underground cell painfully remembered by any who served time on the island. But Antonio Sicilia stood his ground, just as he did right to the end, resulting in

serious and irreversible damage to his health. When Capuana and Menghestu arrived, Sicilia was no longer on his own in his refusal to give the fascist salute but after several months of sacrifice Capuana and Menghestu were transferred to Tremiti.

There were already upwards of five hundred of us antifascists there by that point. The war in Spain had breathed new life into our resistance to fascism, especially among the very young and the old timers used to life behind bars or on the island – anarchists, communists, socialists, republicans, members of *Giustizia e Liberta* etc.

On the evening that that notice was put up there was animated discussion in all the dormitories and the various political factions resolved to reject the imposition and looked into the chances of escaping from the island under the aegis of a select action committee. The launch from Manfredonia linking the island with the mainland dropped anchor off the shore, there being no proper port on Tremiti. On the tiny Capraia in the Tremiti archipelago there was a Naval radio station, so the idea arose that we should hijack the launch and mount a massive break-out and we decided to fight to the finish. The following day, at the 9.00 am. roll-call, which coincided with the distribution of the mazzetta – as we called our daily allowance of 5 lire – the first and most serious incidents erupted. The prison guard, Varia, in charge of the roll-call, took offence when the internees answered with just the usual "Present". So, irritated, at one point he stepped down from the table from where he was calling out names, and he grabbed the internee Andrini who had given a sarcastic answer in his native Lombard dialect to the effect that he did not know how to give the "Roman" [fascist] salute and Varia tried to drag him away to the lock-up to intimidate the other internees. He was so carried away that he started to use his fists on Andrini: this was the straw that broke the camel's back. First the psychological bullying, then the attempt to offend our sensibilities and now physical violence! The first person to leap to Andrini's defence was our dear, much missed comrade Bernardo Melacci. The officers present used force to help their colleague and a general melee erupted. Within a few moments, the great square overlooked by the Tremiti internment administration turned into a battlefield: on one side, the carabinieri and guards ran hither and thither to confront the internees, several teams of whom had cordoned off the store-house where we knew that light arms, crates of hand grenades and a few machine-guns were held. At one point the internees were in control of the situation. Fusco had definitely not foreseen the impact of his act of provocation because when he stepped out of his offices and into the square he was apoplectic and could do nothing but call for calm.

Daily provocations

To make matters worse, a squad of fascist internees and provocateurs sided with the officials. They got a drubbing they will never forget: one of them, by the name of Evangelisti, was sent flying through the air. With the daily provocations they made our time on the island even more sour and that day they reaped what they had sown. After several hours of brawling we were ordered back inside the dormitories with a promise that there would be no reprisals.

Antifascists on the island of Tremiti

Instead, shaken though the provocateurs may have been in the fighting, they were even more mischievous in the repression.

On a number of occasions a hundred internees were rounded up and over the days that followed they were removed to prisons in Foggia and Lucera.

The order was not withdrawn and the police organised teams brandishing bullwhips, to strike terror into the uncooperative. As in every human grouping, some people cracked and faced up to the shame of saluting the guards – and with a slavish gesture at that. After those who had been rounded up had been charged with incitement to resistance and rebellion, that left about a hundred of us refusing to give the salute. So began a long period of passive resistance in the wake of the violent opposition of the riot. Gandhian tactics were widely employed on and off, in the struggles of antifascists. Violent revolt might be triggered by outrage at short-term provocation but ongoing opposition undoubtedly requires greater moral fibre.

And the administration switched tactics too. As soon as any internee declined to give the Roman salute he would be locked up with other resisters in the dormitories, cut off from the compliant remainder and referred to a disciplinary hearing, after which prosecution counsel from Manfredonia acquitted and dispatched back to Tremiti the first of the internees who had been arrested on charges of “refusing an order from the administration”. That courageous prosecutor reported that internees could not be required to do things offensive to their consciences. In practice, though, our circumstances deteriorated because the administration first locked us up for ten days and then sent us in batches to serve several months in isolation in a number of jails and troubled the courts no more. From time to time a few of us might be removed to other islands where the requirement to give the fascist salute did not apply, whilst the odd one who had served out his period in internment was rewarded with added years on the islands without ever having appeared before any provincial internment board. In order to break the resistance of that sizeable group of die-hards, they were even denied their ration of drinking water. The communist Ferrari from Reggio Emilia caught Typhus, was removed to hospital in Foggia, and died within days of his arrival there, without ever having been attended to. The Venetian anarchist Ferdinando Perencin, who succumbed to a very aggravated stomach ulcer, had been to the fore in the campaign and his resistance had earned him an untimely death. For nearly two years about a dozen inmates shuttled between prisons in Foggia province and the island of Tremiti.

Rations cut to make punishment more severe

In prison, they were placed on punishment detail by order of the internment administration for periods of up to three months, during which time their rations, already very meagre for prisoners at that time, were cut even further in order to aggravate the punishment. Weakened physically but with their morale unbroken, prisoners from these batches would no sooner be back from prison and back on Tremiti than they would be invited to give the fascist salute, would again refuse and would then be dispatched back to prison. One day, though, the usual carabinieri escort

delivered to Tremiti the anarchist Giuseppe Messinese who came from Taranto and who had been an internee since 1926. Since he had come down with TB and had a fever on arrival he was taken straight to the island’s infirmary. Governor Fusco promptly sought him out as he had every new arrival ever since the order relating to the salute had been imposed. After a few hypocritical pleasantries, he tried to get comrade Messinese to rise from his cot and give the Roman salute. Only to find his policeman’s face slapped and himself being beaten on the back with a blind. Resistance by a hard core of twelve men over a two year period had made Inspector Fusco unpopular even with the native islanders of Tremiti who had told him: “If there were any of Argante Salucci’s comrades among the politicals presently interned on Tremiti, you wouldn’t be able to break them.”

The lesson he had been taught by comrade Messinese made him reluctant to show his face in public after that. So he was transferred whilst Messinese was arrested and brought before the court and given a two year prison sentence. The die-hard group, among whom I can remember comrades Antonio Vari and Olivier (both Romans) was removed to Ventotene where there was no talk of Roman salutes. Rome must have worked things out for itself, and Inspector Coviello (who had mounted other government machinations against the internees in Ponza in the preceding years) was sent to Tremiti to take over from Fusco as administrator of the settlement. At the same time (this was August 1939) a large group of us internees were moved from Ponza and Ventotene back to Tremiti. On arriving there, overlooking the square with its vista of the Adriatic beaches and Majella, Coviello told one of the newcomers that two years previously, around the time when the order requiring the fascist salute had been issued, he had been due for release from internment after serving his seven years but two extra years had been tacked on for the refusal to give the Roman salute and told him: “So if you want to get home this time, you need only drop your refusal to give the salute.” Which drew the answer it deserved.

The veteran policeman then realised that he should expect no compromise from these new arrivals, many of whom had been “guests” on Tremiti two years before and then been transferred elsewhere because of the order in question. And he responded by saying: “Let your comrades know that you won’t be bothered by the Roman salute any more.” And from that point, in 1939, right up until internment was ended in August 1943, there were no further impositions of that sort.

Alfonso Failla, *A Rivista Anarchica*, No 294, November 2003.

Alfonso Failla (1906-1986), Sicilian-born anarchist who resisted the fascist goon squads and was interned in 1930 and was not freed (except for a short period under close police surveillance in Syracuse) until 1943. Whereas other antifascist factions were freed in July 1943, the anarchists were not. Many of them escaped while being transferred to a camp in Renicci d’Anghiari in a mass break-out led by Failla. He then joined the resistance before resuming his activities after the war and helping to refloat the Italian Anarchist Federation.

John Caldwell

[from front]

In addition, John was always willing to speak at events in Glasgow, trying to bring alive the history of the movement for a new generation of anarchists and direct actionists. This he did well into his nineties, for example speaking at Glasgow's John Maclean Centre three or four years ago.

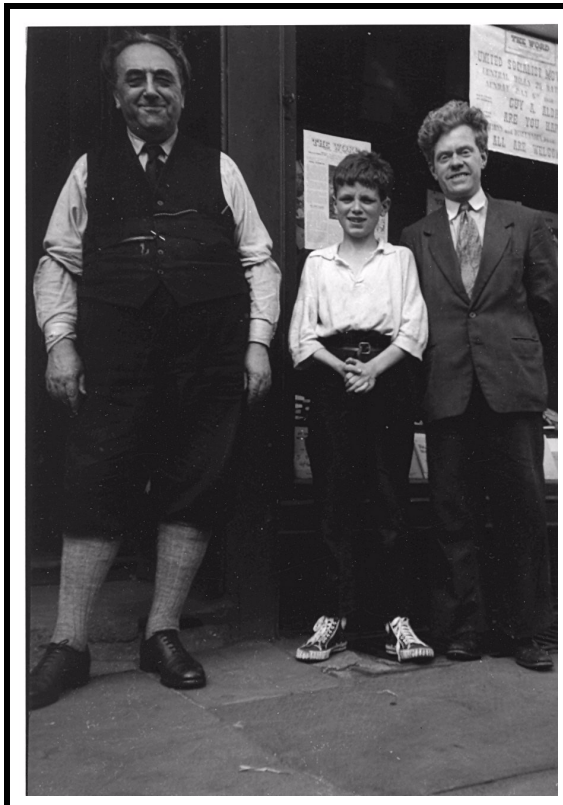
Born in Whiteinch, Glasgow, the third child of a family of six, John moved to Belfast at the age of three, but following his mother's death, in 1925 the family moved back to Glasgow, where he and his younger siblings endured semi-starvation and frequent beatings at the hands of their father and stepmother.

Beyond a knowledge of the three Rs acquired in a Belfast elementary school, John was completely self-educated. He had the insatiable thirst for knowledge which until fairly recently was a characteristic feature of working class radical movements. Stimulated by the striking picture of Neanderthal Man featured in an instalment of Wells' *Outline of History*, he went on to read widely in history, literature, poetry, philosophy and political ideas, contributing his knowledge of these subjects to the discussion groups which were an integral part of USM activities.

He was also a writer of no mean talent. Occasionally he would contribute an article for *The Word*, but he also wrote a series of children's stories for the *Daily Mirror* and *The Comet*. He was even invited to join the staff of Amalgamated Press but characteristically put his unpaid political work first. He had a deep love of poetry, and from his adolescence an abiding fascination with the life and work of Thomas Chatterton, but most of his own poetry remained unpublished.

To some extent this may have been due to his self-effacing character. He was, as he put it, "*a humble and obscure actor*", and working with the domineering personality of Guy Aldred did nothing to alter this. Yet after Aldred's death his many talents blossomed. He was always ready to assist fellow workers with their research, especially if it promised to "*spread the word*" to new audiences and to shed new light on the movement to which he had devoted his life.

Aldred's 1961 tribute to Ethel MacDonald is equally applicable to John: "*...it seems rather odd that we should have the desire to struggle forward and to change the world and to put it right. Yet for some strange reason a contradiction arises within us. We do struggle, we do change the world. One generation emerges into another. The hopes of yesterday's heroes and martyrs become the inspiring slogans of the martyrs and heroes of today, and*



Guy Aldred; Robin; John Caldwell July 1958

by them are passed on to the heroes and martyrs that will be tomorrow... I must be bold in mind and spirit so as to play my part in bringing about the new world in which [John Caldwell] believed, and to create which [he] toiled and struggled."

John Taylor Caldwell, seaman and anarchist, born 14 July 1911; died 12 January 2007.

Bob Jones and Gina Bridgeland

Reviews – New Books

Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms, Benjamin Franks
It's not always pleasant (or profitable) to read academic studies of anarchism. Fortunately, Franks is no archaeologist and tries to make his specialised philosophical language accessible. Also, he writes from a class struggle perspective, so we're spared being told 'old anarchism' was stupid or

monolithic. Inevitably, he goes some things in anarchist history wrong, but the book's main strength is to critically examine anarchist ideas. How do we bring about a free society? This book is both a useful contribution to the debate and a good introduction to the modern anarchist movement. £15 AK Press. ISBN: 1904859402.

Anti-fascist, Martin Lux

Phoenix Press make a welcome return with a personal account of militant anti-fascism in 1970s Britain. Anyone who enjoyed 'Bash the Fash' should read this. It may not get through to anyone who thinks Gandhi, Trotsky or Kropotkin have all the answers, but it's also an intelligent (if exasperated) criticism of the cult of non-resistance: to some 'we were as bad as the nazis. Our insistence on aggro was "macho" and therefore sexist. The police and nazis were human beings and maybe even the fucking police horses as well. But were we?' It all ends happily with the 'master race' getting a kicking and the prospect of an even more turbulent decade ahead. £5.95 Phoenix Press, PO Box 824, London, N1 9DL ISBN-10 094898435X

Bending the Bars

John Barker's excellent set of prison stories *Bending the Bars* (both rebellious and lyrical, reviewed in *KSL* #33) is now available in a small format paperback, published by Christiebooks, also available from us for £6

Vicente (Vincent) Marti 1926-2006

Vicente Marti was born in Madrid in 1926. His parents were anarcho-syndicalist militants who had to move abode because of their activities.

At the age of 10 he witnessed the revolution in the Levant. He saw the creation of the collectives and the burning of money. After the Francoist victory the family had to live underground. In 1948 Vicente and his family fled across the Pyrenees on foot in deep winter to France.

Vicente settled at Avignon and became a turner, learning French of which he was totally ignorant. He became a total master of French as well as Provencal slang words.

He discovered anarchist ideas and militated in the CNT, FAI and FIJL. He felt most at ease in the FIJL. At the beginning of the 60s he participated in underground activities against the Francoist regime: the handling of vehicles and arms, bomb attacks on Spanish tourist offices. He knew Delgado and Granados, who were garrotted by the Francoist regime in summer 1963, for an act that they had not committed. Vicente campaigned hard for their rehabilitation, still not granted at this point in time.

Vicente was also a workplace militant, particularly in 1968. A week after the riots in Paris, he met together with other militants in Avignon and organised the strike that quickly led on to the occupations in Avignon and the surrounding area.

Between 1961 and 1976 he actively participated in the organisation of libertarian summer camps in the South of France. Young and not so young from all over Europe met together. He often installed toilets at these camps before the arrival of the campers.

At the end of 1976 King Juan Carlos of Spain made an official visit to France. Several militants were put under house arrest at Belle Ile en Mer in the Morbihan district. Vicente was one of them. The film *Vacances Royales (Royal holidays)* directed by Gabriel Auer in 1976 deals with these events, which had their amusing moments.

In retirement Vicente remained active. He took disadvantaged and disturbed young people on sea cruises. He put his know-how as a worker at the service of the CIRA in Lausanne and the Comunidad del Sur in Montevideo in Uruguay, as well as a lot of renovation and repair work for the Italian Anarchist Federation printshop Tipografia, at Carrara (he was a good friend of Alfonso Nicolazzi). He built most of the house he lived in at Le Pontet near Avignon and even built a concrete boat in his garden! I remember visiting him there one hot summer in the early 70s and the delicious apple sponge cake cooked that afternoon.

Part of the story of his life is recounted in *La saveur des patates douces (The taste of sweet potatoes)* edited by Atelier de creation libertaire (1998)

In the last few years health problems limited his activity. He died on 14th June 2006. NICK HEATH

Diary date: book launch and joint fundraiser

On Saturday 14 July 2007 at the 1 in 12 Club, Bradford The Kate Sharpley Library, Leeds Anarchist Black Cross and 1 in 12 Club present a joint benefit plus book launch/ fundraiser for 'The story of the Iron Column' by Abel Paz.

**New Pamphlet
Alcatraz – Uncle
Sam’s Devil’s
Island:
Experiences of a
Conscientious
Objector in
America during the
First World War by
Philip Grosser**

Philip Grosser was sent to Alcatraz because he didn't want to murder anyone, even on government orders. He was a Boston anarchist and anti-militarist who refused to be drafted into the slaughter of World War One. He was, in his own words, 'not a very good example to other drafted men', and stayed a stubborn rebel who could not be turned into a soldier. As an anarchist he denied the government's right to run or throw away his life. For that reason he had to face the inhumanity of authority defied.

Grosser's account of his time inside is an early exposé of official brutality in America's most notorious prison. It's also a powerful account of resistance and endurance.

The original pamphlet was first published by Grosser's friends after his death in the 1930s. It's been expanded with letters by, to and about him from the Alexander Berkman papers at the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. They shed a little more light on the life of a rebel who could be counted on in the struggle for human freedom.

"Phil was one of the finest comrades it has been my good fortune to meet. And well I remember his stand during the war. I know all the humiliation and tortures he had to go through because of his loyalty to a high ideal." – Alexander Berkman

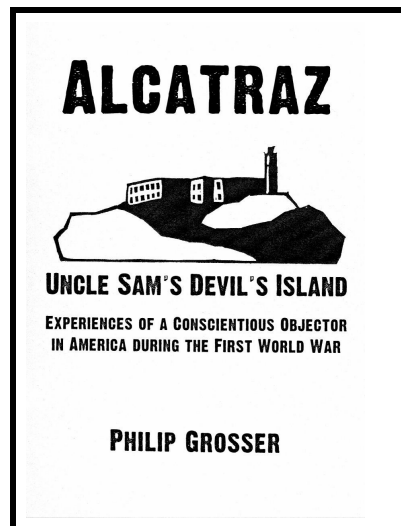
ISBN-13: 9781873605240 ISBN-10: 1873605242
32 page pamphlet with portrait. £3 pounds post paid (£2 to KSL subscribers) USA: \$4
Friends get a copy with this issue – let us know if not.

Another new book

Bash the Rich: True Life Confessions of an Anarchist in the UK, Ian Bone

This is an insider's view of the history (and prehistory) of Class War: a personal and partisan account. Bone is not so much interested in settling old scores as celebrating the good fight itself. Thankfully as well as funny and entertaining, he also manages to be pretty honest (and reflective) so it has 'how not to' as well as 'how to' lessons in it. From taking down the 'Swansea mafia' to the Miner's Strike, this is history at its most inspiring. Unfortunately he stops in 1985: roll on volume two!

£9.99 www.tangentbooks.co.uk ISBN-10: 0954417771



IN THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

The Story Of The Anarchist Red Cross by B. Yelensky

[Published] A. Berkman Aid Fund, Chicago. 96pp.

Human beings make events and historians record them for the guidance of coming generations. Both are needed. The honest historian always tries to get information from original records, or if possible from the people who witnessed or took part in the events themselves. All too often the actors in the drama of history leave no written record of the parts they played. Significant pieces in the historical puzzle are lost forever and the missing parts are filled in by outright lies or unintentional distortions. In either case a false picture is projected.

Our fellow worker, Boris Yelensky, understood this and decided to set the record straight. With the help of his friends he has written a provocative little book – *In The Struggle For Equality*. The title is well chosen. It describes the struggle and the part he played in it. Yelensky tells about his fifty years of unceasing activity to help the victims of oppression and injustice. He dedicated his life and his book “to the Fighters for Freedom, Humanism and Justice, to those who endeavored to help these fighters by applying the principle of mutual aid.”

The book begins by sketching the history of the Russian Revolutionary movement and the part played by the Anarchists. Then Yelensky gives the history of the Anarchist Red Cross which was founded in 1905.

In telling why a special Anarchist Relief Organization became necessary he calls attention to a neglected aspect of revolutionary history – the sabotage and discrimination of many social-democrats against their fellow-prisoners and in the outside relief organizations. Of the vast sums collected all over the world, from Czarist times up to the present, very little reached the Anarchist prisoners. Yelensky quotes H. Weinstein who was jailed in Czarist times for radical activity:

“In July or August of 1906 I was placed under arrest in the city of Bialostock. When I arrived at the prison in that city, I met there, Jacob Krepleich and a friend of his, a Russian teacher; they likewise informed me that the organization which then existed in Russia, set up by the social-democrats to extend aid to all revolutionary captives regardless of political affiliation was refusing to help the Anarchists; and during the brief period that I remained in the Bialostock prison we received letters from the Grodno jail which gave confirmation of the truth of these statements.”

This discrimination still persists. As Yelensky points out in telling about the conduct of the social-democrat relief organization, The Jewish Labor Committee in the United States. It is not a pretty tale, but it had to be told.

The Anarchists have continued relief activities all this time. The bulk of this work is now carried on by the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund, which is not limited to Russian or Jewish prisoners. Aid is being sent to Spanish, Italian, Bulgarian and other prisoners all over the world. The fund also published a documentary history of Bolshevik terror against revolutionists, *The Guillotine At Work*, by G. P. Maximov.

In relating the relief activities, Yelensky gives us a picture of the great contribution made by the Eastern

European Jews to the radical movement in this country. This book should be read not only for its factual contributions but also because it demonstrates that people of meager means in a strange country, against great obstacles, can carry on great work. It is the people who do the unglamorous but indispensable tasks, who are the true life's blood of every worthwhile movement.

This book was published by the Alexander Berkman Aid Fund, a non-profit organization and all proceeds from its sale “Inure to The Fund For Political Prisoners and Refugees”.

S.D. [Sam Dolgoff]

from *Views and Comments*, n.31 (October 1958)

[Computerised comrades can read an edited, expanded edition (with Matthew Hart's new introduction) published by the Los Angeles Anarchist Black Cross at:

www.abcf.net/la/pdfs/layelensky.pdf

It would be nice to think hard copies will appear sometime... KSL]

Death of América Scarfó

América Scarfó, the sweetheart of Severino Di Giovanni and sister of Paulino Scarfó (Paulino and Severino were both executed, after enduring torture, by the Uriburu regime in Argentina in February 1931) has died at the age of 93 on 26 August 2006. América was only 17 when she left home to live with Di Giovanni who was then in his 30s. Within months, Di Giovanni had been tracked down by police after a spree of bomb attacks on US and fascist targets. As Osvaldo Bayer, Di Giovanni's biographer has put it: “Severino was an antifascist and he was convinced that the only counter to violence from above was violence from below.” Love letters exchanged between Severino and América were confiscated by the police. For years they formed a prize exhibit in the Police Museum in Buenos Aires. Many years later, América later went into partnership with a like-minded comrade to run the Americalee publishing house specialising in anarchist and libertarian materials. Thanks to lobbying by Osvaldo Bayer, during the Menem government (1989-1999) the love letters from Di Giovanni were returned to América Scarfó by the police authorities. Her remains were cremated and her ashes buried in the small garden adjoining the HQ of the Argentine Libertarian Federation (FLA) in the southern part of Buenos Aires.

Source: www.alasbarricadas.org

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A large number of films and documentaries on anarchism now available via <http://www.tvhastingschristiebooks.com>

Credit

This Bulletin produced by the KSL collective January 2007, thanks to everyone who helped with the Bulletin and the Alcatraz pamphlet, feedback welcome. If you like it, tell people: either in print or Amazon, Worldcat.org and Librarything.com all let you post up your own reviews...

Oh, and Happy new year! We have pamphlets in the pipeline on Emilio Canzi, anarchist partisan, the MIL, Anti-Fascist Action, so there's plenty to come.

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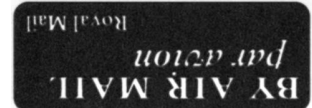
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