

## Florentine Lombard : a Kent anarchist and volunteer nurse during the Naples cholera epidemic of 1884

Naples, 23 September 1890: “45 year old Florentine Lombard passed away today from heart disease. She was an anarchist, English by nationality. And had settled in Naples. During the cholera epidemic of 1884 she served as a volunteer nurse with the Red Cross. She spent her life close to the poor, going without in order to do so. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May last she was arrested in the Canalone district...” That is how the non-socialist press reports read.

In 1884, cholera blighted several parts of Italy, being especially virulent in Naples. According to the prefect’s statistics, cholera affected upwards of 14,000 people in the province, killing 8,000 of them, of whom 7,000 perished in the city of Naples alone. The state reacted by imposing a crackdown: the city was placed under martial law, restrictions on movements were imposed, using methods similar to those employed on the occasion of the Messina earthquake or the more recent quake in L’Aquila. The volunteers from the White Cross, Red Cross, social democrats, republicans and socialists adopted quite a different approach. Felice Cavallotti, Giovanni Bovio, Andrea Costa and Errico Malatesta, no less, were active on the streets of Naples. And not without some risk to their own health: the socialist volunteers Massimiliano Boschi, Francesco Valdrè and Rocco Lombardo caught cholera and perished. Another of the volunteers was Florentine Lombard: a native of Kent, near London “she was one of the Red Cross volunteers and exhorted the men to selfless self-sacrifice” ... “visiting the hovels of the poor, bringing with her consolation and aid and socialist charity.”

A life of propaganda and activism on behalf of the liberation of the oppressed does not leave much of a paper-trail. She turns up in the press reports of 30 April 1890 when she was arrested, as were another 78 individuals, including two women representing workers’ societies, at the anarchist club in the Canalone district. For four days the club played host to the standing commission coordinating the 1<sup>st</sup> of May demonstrations with the workers’ associations. Those demonstrations, prefaced also by the distribution of thousands of anarchist leaflets, proved a huge and solemn success, despite the ban imposed by the chief of police.

On 16 September 1890, Florentine enthusiastically gave her backing in a public letter to the suggestion from

the editorial team of the Trapani newspaper *La Nuova Riscossa*. “that we no longer call ourselves socialists or anarchist socialists, but simply anarchists. The object being to shun the bamboozlers and politickers and show all men on earth that the true salvation of Humanity lies in Anarchy, which is to say, life without government, without religion, without authority, but with real freedom.” Florentine wrote that “the word Anarchy is quite clear and perfectly encapsulates the ideal condition which alone will be able to make a reality of humanity’s loftiest aspirations by ensuring the dominion of justice and freedom”, ushering in the Anarchist Communist Revolution.

Within a few days, on 23 September, she was dead. The teacher Ciccarelli and Giovanni Bergamasco, both of them anarchists, tended to her “right up until the end, shooing away the priests who would try to gain entry every so often and of whom the deceased was a fierce enemy. No sooner had the sad news broken than the city streets were papered with manifestos” by the socialists of Naples. “The funeral rites were extremely impressive, with several socialist and republican flags following the coffin; the wreath from the anarchists bore the motto: ‘Onwards, onwards, workers of the world!’”

Both the socialist and the non-socialist press carried the news of her death and funeral and they were unanimous in their praises of her. The anarchist Giovanni Bergamasco remembered her as “a very dear comrade, a woman of lofty and noble sentiments, a brave fighter for emancipation of the oppressed.”

The renowned composer Pietro Floridia wrote a piano serenade dedicated to her in 1889.

Alessia Bruni Cavallazzi

### Library News: Ready for Revolution Published

*Ready for Revolution : The CNT Defense Committees in Barcelona, 1933-1938* by Agustín Guillamón is co-published by AK Press and the Kate Sharpley Library. It’s a story of where the defence committees came from; of barricades and bread rations – a must-read account of *how* the Spanish revolution happened.

ISBN 9781849351423

<http://www.akpress.org/ready-for-revolution.html>

Copies are on their way to the UK. We hope to have a review in our next issue.

## A voice from the anarchist underground

**El Combate, October 1955 [front page only]**

EL COMBATE

BANNER READS: THE WORKERS' EMANCIPATION WILL BE THE WORKERS' OWN DOING

VOICE OF THE GRUPOS

ANARCO-SINDICALISTAS

OCTOBER 1955

### ALL WORKERS AND ANTIFASCISTS

Wake up from the profound lethargy into which wretchedness, hunger and weariness have plunged you!

Wake up and open your eyes, worker.

You will realise the injustice and criminality being visited upon your children who are falling ill from want of sustenance and compelled, even at their tender age, to carry out demanding work just for a crust of bread, unable to go to school and receive a basic education.

You will see the injustice and criminality visited upon your parents who, after spending all their energy on their work, are sent packing and condemned to poverty or beggary.

You will see the injustice and criminality visited upon yourself who, having exhausted all your energy on wearisome work because you have to carry on your shoulders the full brunt of the police state that Franco-Falangism imposes upon the entire Spanish people by means of violence and criminality.

Awake from the lethargy generated by the countless hours you have to toil without having your needs catered for: YOU who are the producer of everything and who have nothing, unable even to sustain your children materially or spiritually; which is what your oppressors want so that tomorrow they can make them capitalism's slaves the more easily and, once they have been reduced to grown-up paupers, wrench them away from the arms of their mother, wife, families and marshal them into the divisions whose praises they sing, turning them into cannon fodder and hawking them to the highest bidder just like Franco did yesterday to Hitler in order to further the triumph of Nazism and which he is trying even today to do as well, by hawking Spain and Spaniards, not to the democratic American people but to the US millionaires who represent world capitalism, and who only yesterday could not find insults enough for its lackey Franco, when it thought it had a mightier master, and which today supports and praises him so that he will help it defend its baser interests in a shameful prostitution of the words Freedom and Democracy which they purport to champion.

Intellectuals, workers, men of liberal and libertarian sensibilities, let us all come together in the clandestine struggle against Franco and his henchmen and against the regime that rules us through tyranny.

Rally around the anarcho-syndicalist Resistance groups and the CNT groups. You all know us and you

now that we will always be in the breach. We who write you these messages are workers who, whilst we are adept in the handling of tools .. [PAGE STOPS HERE]

Francisco Sabate Llopart.

From the cover of El Combate found at

<http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/>

[blogs/imanol/grupo-quico-sabate.html](http://blogs/imanol/grupo-quico-sabate.html) Translated by Paul Sharkey.

### 2014 Bottled Wasp pocket diary

The Bottled Wasp Pocket Diary is a new not-for-profit prisoner support fundraising project. The 2014 edition covers the history of radical arts and artists, focusing on the importance of anarchist and libertarian thought on the Arts, revealing its lesser known and hidden histories in the areas of the plastics arts, music, literature, photography, film, dance, etc.

2014's Bottled Wasp contains short introductions on Anarchist detective fiction, science fiction, Berlin Dada, Russian Anarcho-Futurism and its Italian counterpart, the Czech and Japanese artistic anarchist avant gardes, Néo-Impressionism, Octave Mirbeau, Nancy Cunard and the anarchist magician Mystag. Also the hidden libertarian connections of Franz Kafka, August Strindberg, Georges Simenon, Mark Rothko, Hans Richter, Luigi Russolo, Pablo Neruda, Marcel Duchamp, John Cowper Powys, Lawrence Durrell, Lucien Pissarro, Albert Camus and many more.

2014 Bottled Wasp pocket diary £6

[www.brightonabc.org.uk/bottledwasp.html](http://www.brightonabc.org.uk/bottledwasp.html)

[www.actedistribution.org](http://www.actedistribution.org)

### Wealth of negations, Terms and conditions: Management edition. (Selected highlights)

CONTAGION: (2.) Any danger emanating from the lower orders, be it cholera, strikes, riots, or ideas beyond their station. Seen to have greater rhetorical force than the 'falling dominoes' metaphor of the Vietnam War period, but bloodletting is prescribed in either case.

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY: Backdated proof that 'failure' is your own fault.

SACRIFICE: (3.) A rare case of consistent historical usage over centuries and through all stages of secularization. In modern economics as in ancient religious ritual, 'sacrifice' implies renunciation of a material interest in favour of an abstraction, which turns out to be a euphemism for an opposed material interest.

WEALTH CREATION: Self-glorifying abracadabra by people who by virtue of owning capital make more of it without reference to those who do the actual work to make this happen, then present it as a contribution to the common good: without them there would be no resources, no necessities ever produced.

More at [www.wealthofnegations.org](http://www.wealthofnegations.org)

## Book reviews

### **Anarchism and Worker's Self Management in Revolutionary Spain By Frank Mintz [Book Review]**

My father-in-law worked for most of his life as a digger driver in a building worker's co-operative. Nothing too remarkable in that, you might think. Some businesses in our society have an element of co-operation or collective-ownership built into them. The vast majority don't. What *is* remarkable is how in 1936 in Spain perhaps as much as half of the economy, both rural and urban, was transformed almost overnight into an experiment in co-operative economics. The army had just risen in revolt against the democratic government, aided and abetted by fascists and other right-wingers, intent on destroying any and all anti-establishment political movements. Ordinary people resisted wherever they could and succeeded initially in defeating the army in most of Spain. They then embarked on the collectivisation of society, without any encouragement or guidance from the powers that be or political leaders. They acted on their own initiative and in the face of actual and potential antagonistic violence from army, landowners and employers. Many of these co-operative enterprises would continue in existence until the fascist triumph in 1939. How could this happen and how could its importance have been neglected and overlooked by so many for so long? Frank Mintz attempts to come to grips with these questions in this volume.

This volume is a revised edition, and I must own up to not having read the previous ones. Nonetheless, the impression that you get is that Mintz has moved away somewhat from explaining and justifying the collectives to exposing how the middle-class republicans, the communists and the government attempted to undermine them almost from their very beginnings. That this very government contained self-appointed anarchist representatives is hard to credit, were it not so uncontestedly true. Mintz points out that at no time was their appointment voted on by either the F.A.I. or the C.N.T. Instead the rank and file were presented with a *fait accompli*, which they then had to decide to accept, reject or ignore. All of this in the middle of a genocidal civil war. In the circumstances few were in a position, or felt themselves to be in a position, to put up too much resistance to the incursions of the new state authorities.

Mintz emphasises, and comes up with examples to back up his case, that the move towards collectivisation was an uncoordinated, grass-roots affair supported by people from many walks of life and nearly all political sections on the republican side. There was initially as much support from socialists, communists, the non-aligned and even traditionalists as there was from anarchists. He argues persuasively, however, that the impetus was anarchist, that decades of anarchist propaganda had permeated throughout all strands of working-class and peasant politics and that when the time was

right collective-ownership seemed the natural route to take.

The increasingly communist-dominated government, acting under orders from Moscow, was opposed to all of this and by degree attempted to overturn the collectives and return the appropriated lands and businesses back to their original owners. This met with resistance in many areas, which was put down by a mixture of deception, threats and brute force. The anarchists in government went along with all of this. They firmly believed that the war needed to be won first before the revolution could proceed. To be fair to them, they tried to rein in the worst excesses of the counter-revolution but in the end they became the prisoners of their own decision to play the game of governmental politics. Throughout the Levante and in Aragon and Catalonia collectives were disbanded or destroyed, particularly those of a more anarchist bent. The Stalinist Lister commanded troops in Aragon in particular who inflicted enormous harm to the rural economy by their actions. After the wreckers had done their work and departed, in many cases the collectives were reinstated, but the damage had been done, both to the physical fabric of many collectives and to the morale of workers and peasants and of militiamen at the front.

Mintz is not always the most objective of writers and you do get the impression that he has gone looking for proof of his thesis to the exclusion of all else. Having said that, he didn't have too far to look, and ever since the events of the Spanish Civil War anarchists have had real difficulty explaining away the failure of the leadership to see their own folly and the failure of the rank and file to remove that leadership and resist consistently. Mintz gets a bit carried away at times. When he tells us to devote our lives exclusively to the revolution and stop wasting time with "excessive drinking, drug use, empty-headed books, obsession with animal rights, Esperanto, sexual communes and so on", there is a strong temptation to tell him to mind his own business. Even a small amount of unnecessary moralistic lecturing can have an adverse effect upon a readership quite capable of making up their own minds about the benefits of an evening's drinking or Esperanto.

One of the best aspects of this book is to be found in the appendices, where we are given examples of widely disparate collectives, from farmers to locksmiths, fishermen to fruit growers. They were all beset by huge practical difficulties caused by the war, disruption of the economy, blockades and boycotts, absence of manpower and political interference. Mintz tells us at one point of the importance of women in the running of the co-operatives, in part owing to the absence of so many men on the front lines, yet we are given relatively little information on the problems of equal pay, of anti-female discrimination in an often misogynistic society and of



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how all this was overcome in the collectives, if indeed it was.

In some respects I found this book a bit unstructured and directionless, but its subject matter rises above such criticisms. Taken in conjunction with works by Gaston Leval, Jose Peirats, Sam Dolgoff and others it helps provide a picture of a quite spectacular time and place in human history which has been neglected, distorted and forgotten. Let us hope that the example of worker's self-management in revolutionary Spain will be remembered once again.

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### **The Floodgates of Anarchy by Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer : some thoughts**

Any work on anarchism must respond to a century-plus of arguments and myths. *The Floodgates of Anarchy* was written when the Vietnam war and Communist Party rule were current facts, not historical events. Some of the arguments here, like debunking the media notion that the struggles of the 1960's were purely a 'youth revolt', are of their time. But challenging the myth that anarchists are 'enemies of society' is still necessary.

The strength of *Floodgates* is that it talks about anarchism as a current movement: 'If nowadays we have a little more to lose than mere chains, so much the more reason for making sure of victory.' [p19] If you want to discuss anarchism and society now, you might realise that some things have changed since 1970. But not everything: 'When the ambitious have power, they preach self-sacrifice by others.' [p32] Some lines, for example, 'The theme of politics is always the same – that one must work harder and get less' [p76] could have been written yesterday. Economics is used to make choices appear natural and change (or at least change for the better) unthinkable. This book is valuable for attacking such notions.

*Floodgates of Anarchy* also asks what anarchists should do. Christie and Meltzer stood in the mainstream tradition of class struggle anarchism. For them, 'class struggle implies not merely collective action but the breaking down of that sequence of events ingrained in our society as *command-and-obey*.' [p15] They emphasise that social change is the result of social conflict: 'It is not possible for the revolutionary to shift people from deliberately induced apathy, within a framework acceptable to the Metropolitan Police or the capitalist press. [...] Nor can one change the economic basis of society to approving nods from the judiciary.' [p112] Inevitably the issue of violence arises. Christie and Meltzer clearly point out that the true question is often not violence but legitimacy: 'they deplore the type of violence that the State deplores and applaud the type of violence that the State practices.' [p111]

*Floodgates* reflects the divide between class struggle anarchists and 'militant liberals'. 'It is absurd to speak of anarchism as a doctrine of love, non-violence, even of freedom. This is a description of the society at which we are aiming [...] the assertion of these ideas as high ideals but devoid of practicality for lack of economic change in society, or used as a criterion by which to reform present institutions, we have here described as militant liberalism.' [p103] The terminology does not matter as much as the widely differing principles and practice. Christie and Meltzer opposed the idealising view that 'there must be a revolution in men's minds before there could be a change in society.' [p128] This 'sectarian' desire to distinguish themselves from 'liberals' or 'perfectionists', to have anarchism as a program for action, not a safe ideal, is possibly the most important idea in the book. As Phil Ruff says in *The Albert Memorial* 'it was the discovery of class struggle anarchism through the 'sectarianism' of *Black Flag* under Albert's editorship that convinced so many anarchists of my own and subsequent generations to become active in the movement.'

*The Floodgates of Anarchy* by Stuart Christie and Albert Meltzer

Originally published by Kahn & Averill, 1970. Republished PM Press, 2010. ISBN 9781604861051. *The Floodgates of Anarchy* and the Spanish translation, *Anarquismo y lucha de clases*, are available on Kindle from Christiebooks.

### **Pano Vassilev's 'The Soviets idea' - call for help**

Pano Vassilev's 'The Soviets idea' was published in Sofia in 1933. It's an anarchist analysis of the origins of Soviets, and how anarchists related to them in the revolutions of 1905 and 1917.

It is in three chapters:

- 1, The Soviets idea not a Bolshevik notion
- 2, Precise origin and historical development of the Soviets idea
- 3, Appearance and evolution of the councils idea in Russia and the anarchists' relationship with it.

The Kate Sharpley Library has a neatly-handwritten translation of 'The Soviets idea' which we have scanned and put online. We are now asking for help in typing it up. You can see the PDF files and add to the text at <http://katesharpleylibrary.pbworks.com/w/page/71816963/Pano%20Vassilev%27s%20%27The%20Soviets%20idea%27%20-%20call%20for%20help>

A brief biography of Vassilev is available at <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/02v7sn>

## Biographies of troublemakers

### **Review: The Albert memorial: the anarchist life and times of Albert Meltzer (1920-1996) an appreciation by Phil Ruff**

A review of Philip Ruff's book *The Albert Memorial: The Anarchist Life and Times of Albert Meltzer (1920-1996)*. Albert was described as "Printworker, writer, troublemaker, but above all a tireless anarchist activist, Albert Meltzer is one of the most important figures in twentieth century anarchism. Scourge of Liberals and tyrants, he never stood aside from the struggle for a better world" by the Kate Sharpley Library.

I wasn't aware of this book, initially published in 1997, until its author, Philip Ruff, tweeted a link to the newly published e-book format. I saw it almost by accident whilst scanning through the countless irrelevant tweets that had arrived within the previous two minutes. Two bits of text jumped out at me, the first was 'Albert Meltzer', and the second was the price-tag of £1.08.

Albert Meltzer was a bit before my time, in fact, when he died in 1996 I was only 18 months out of school and busy sticking pictures of Chairman Mao above my bed, but that's a different story.

Since my discovery of anarchism a few years back Albert Meltzer has been someone that I wanted to know more about. I read his book on anarchism 'arguments for and against', but I wanted to know more about the 'man'. I purchased his autobiography 'I couldn't paint golden angels' two years ago but have yet to make a serious attempt at reading it. So when I saw that there was a 56 page biography available, written by someone who knew him, and at the crazy price of little over £1, it seemed rude not to buy it. It quickly transferred to my e-reader and was I was engrossed for the next hour or so of my train journey.

The book kicks off when Albert is 15 when he discovers anarchism at a boxing gym via a young Glaswegian anarchist seaman, Billy Campbell. Radicalised, Albert immediately immersed himself in solidarity work, helping Emma Goldman and the Polish Anarchist, Leah Feldman, in collecting money and clothes for Spanish anti-fascists. The book portrays Albert as someone who was focused very much on practical work and action, even in those early days of activism in his late-teens; he joined a group that was 'gun-running' to Spanish anarchists.

Still in his teens, Ruff describes how Albert formed an affinity group who gained some notoriety by burning down a stand glorifying Franco at a fascist exhibition. It was due to this act that Emma Goldman referred to Albert a 'young rascal and hooligan'.

At this point of the book I started thinking that he had managed to fit more into a couple of years than most people do in a lifetime, then I read about how he published a bulletin called 'The Struggle, and how he

found time to travel to Germany with false papers and get involved in the pre-war anti-Nazi underground movement who plotted to assassinate Hitler and Goering.

Remarkably Albert still found time for the more mundane aspects of life – paid work. He left school in 1937 and worked for a gas company, a greyhound track, a brewery, a fairground, and as a film extra, often being dismissed for his trade union activities. Still not 20 years of age, Albert started a newspaper called 'Revolt', and made a failed attempt to organise a UK wide anarchist federation.

Ruff then focuses on the war years and his involvement with Syndicalist Tom Brown, the 'Freedom' editorial group, and 'War Commentary'. At this point an anarchist federation had been formed with Albert as its secretary. They produced a regular bulletin entitled 'workers in uniform', which was distributed inside the armed forces and had a circulation of 4,000. Unfortunately Albert was arrested and gaoled on charges of desertion.

The book spends a few pages detailing a 'bleak' period for British anarchism in the decade following the end of the Second World War, and briefly touches on the ideological and personal differences he had with the group based around Freedom Press. Ruff then describes a period of 'wilderness' for Albert. Despite putting himself in the wilderness he still managed to find time to set up an Asian prisoner's aid committee, edit a newspaper, take part in rent strikes, and contribute countless articles of various publications. Some wilderness!

By now the book is up to the 1960's and Albert has taken a holiday to Spain where he meets up with some old comrades and starts getting involved in intelligence work with the 'First of May Group'. It was soon after that he met Stuart Christie who was to be a close friend for the rest of his life. There are a few pages covering much of Albert's work in Spain, the friendships he made there, various kidnappings, the book he wrote with Christie 'The Floodgates of Anarchy', and the formation of the Anarchist Black Cross, Black Flag Magazine, the Angry Brigade, the DAM, and the miner's strike.

Albert retired from work in 1987 but continued to play an important role in the DAM and latterly, the Solidarity Federation. Ruff highlights how Albert became critical of the CNT and attitudes within the wider IWA, and how his relationship with Vernon Richards and the Freedom group led to accusations of him being sectarian. It was at this point in his life that he formed the Kate Sharpley Library and saw the publication of his autobiography. Albert suffered a fatal stroke in 1996.

Following what feels like the tinniest snapshot of an extraordinary life, Ruff provides extensive notes, an in-depth obituary written by Stuart Christie, a tribute

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written by Stuart Christie that was read at Albert's funeral, a communique from the CNT, and some thoughts from Albert's friends. There is also a postscript by 'Acrata' that discusses Albert's relationship with Vernon Richards and Freedom Press. Whilst I am well aware that there was conflict, I did not know or meet either of them, so to comment further would not be necessary or appropriate.

It is interesting to consider that Albert not only lived through the most momentous events of the last century, but also involved himself to the point of risking his life and imprisonment for his beliefs, meeting along the way some of the most important contributors to anarchist theory and action during the 20th century

The book is a brilliant and easy to read introduction to the remarkable life of Albert Meltzer and left me wanting more. As I am writing this review I have just pulled my copy of 'I couldn't paint golden angels' down from the shelf, and looking forward to tomorrow's train journey.

If you want to know more about Albert Meltzer but don't want to read a 400 page book, then this is for you, and at £1.08 it's as cheap as a cup of tea. Highly recommended!

Available via Christie Books -

<http://www.christiebooks.com/ChristieBooksWP/2013/10/the-albert-memorial-the-anarchist-life-and-times-of-albert-meltzer-7-january-1920-7-may-1996-an-appreciation-by-phil-ruff-with-a-postscript-by-acrata/>

Working Class Self Organisation

From: <http://libcom.org/blog/>

book-review-albert-memorial-anarchist-life-times-albert-meltzer-1920-1996-appreciation-phil.

### **Ghost dancers: the miners' last generation by David John Douglass [Book review]**

2014 sees the 30th anniversary of the start of the 1984-5 miners' strike, one of the most important milestones in recent British history. David Douglass was a significant figure in the strike, and this book builds on his other writings on it. He critically engages with academic histories, and can challenge some of the myths round the strike (like the government line that it was all the doing of Arthur Scargill). The particular strength of *Ghost dancers* is that it examines the 'long war' and deliberate destruction of the British coal industry: "I am now certain that the basic plan, with two or three variants, was laid back in the '70s [...] A full-scale massacre had not initially been on the cards, only a systematic culling and neutering. When this had proved inconclusive then a 'final solution', by the planned destruction of coal's markets, was consciously and deliberately planned – that is, for political not commercial, economic grounds or those of fuel efficiency, still less care of the environment." (p314)

The coal did not "run out". Douglass is understandably angry recounting the consequences of "pitracide".

Political biographies have two possible faults: leaving in too much detail or sanitising the story by leaving out the interesting bits! *Ghost dancers* is a big book, and there *is* plenty here on internal rulebook debates and the fight for more democracy in the National Union of Mineworkers. But the whole book is leavened with jokes and stories. Not much tidied away, either: this is not a celebration that avoids difficult points like "redundancy fever" after the strike. The book is incomparably better for the grassroots view it brings: "There are 150,000 individual stories of the strike. That year, how it impacted on individual families in all of its tragic, proud, gut-wrenching, comic, exhilarating, fearful, desperate, heroic and indescribable emotional variants is another story. That story, told well and in the necessary detail, would fill volumes and every page would resist the gross stereotyping of the strikers which the media, sympathetic as well as hostile, have made out for us *since* the strike ended. Very few strikers or their families ever went near a picket line. For those that did, few pickets were ever violent, and most were humdrum and boring, at least until the government decided to open up a second front by seeking to put a scab into every pit. Then an occupation army arrived and all the paraphernalia of flying pickets and confrontation landed on the doorstep every day." (p46) *Ghost dancers* presents the strike from the perspective of those who lived it in a way that we rarely see – and not just the strike. It's part of a tradition of working class writing that shows working class culture be a rich and complex experience.

David Douglass is one of a kind, so if you don't find something to disagree with here, you're not paying attention. I expected the Marxist-Anarchist combination, but I find it hard to agree that some doddering Stalinist spy is the guardian angel that keeps Douglass out of prison despite his revolutionary convictions (p474). Surely that honour belongs to his fellow Hatfield miners? To me, *Ghost dancers* is both a primary source and vital piece of history from below. But I'll leave the final word to Barry Pateman: "David Douglass has a very engaging style of writing that's passionate and takes no prisoners. It's a worthy successor to the works of Jack Lawson, Bert Coombes, etc. Anyone anywhere on the left who ignores this voice does so at their peril."

Bookunin

*Ghost Dancers* (ISBN 9781873976401, £12.95) is published by Christiebooks. Available direct from the author: <http://www.minersadvice.co.uk/dave.htm> Also available on Kindle <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Ghost-Dancers-Generation-C-oalminers-Mahabharata-ebook/dp/B007T93926>



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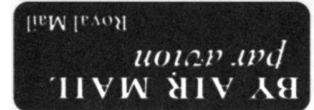
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