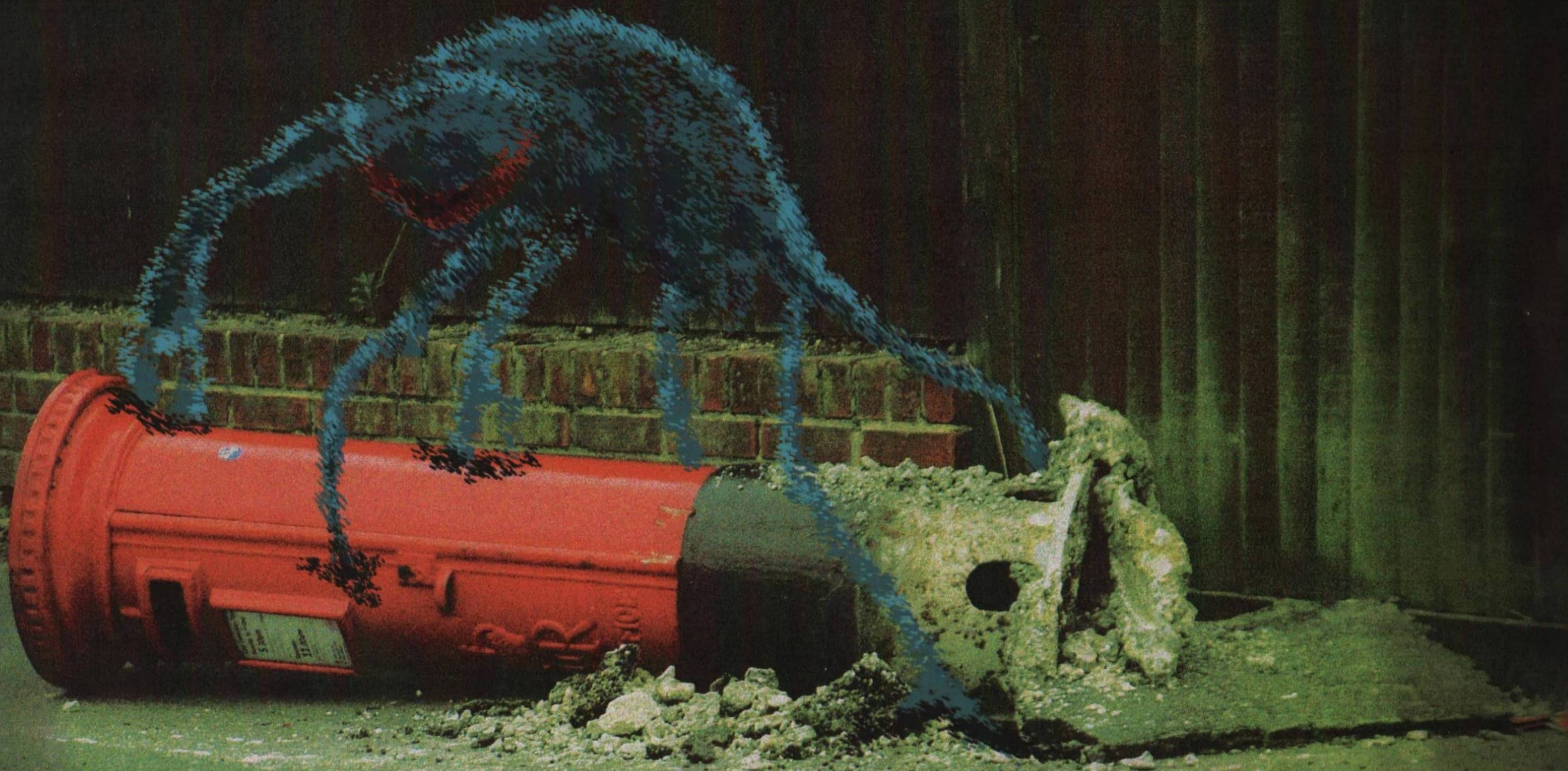


Black Flag

Price £3.00

Issue 235

Mid 2012



PARASITES.

Not content with merely exploiting the workers of Royal Mail, managers are forcing unemployed people to undercut them – aided by union bosses

ALSO
INSIDE



Fascism back
on the streets



Independance,
aye or no?



Anarchy after
World War 2

Editorial

Well it was a close-run thing in the end but welcome to the latest issue of Black Flag!

This issue saw a bit of a departure from the norm as our little team got a helping hand from Matthew Black and Rob W dealing with cutting text and laying it out respectively, thankyou both!

This shouldn't have affected the content too much, so we've got our usual mix of analysis of what's been going on over the last six months, what could happen if we actually manage to get that whole revolution thing off the ground, what did happen when we tried it before and reviews of others' work.

So, what's of particular note this issue? Well we start with an article on the shocking enthusiasm which has been shown by the leadership of the CWU union for Workfare – or more accurately, slave labour – in the Royal Mail.

This is only one case in the ongoing saga of ruling elite attempts to directly use the unemployed mass as a way of bypassing decent pay for their staff, but is among the more shocking.

We also continue our run of articles by Iain McKay explaining the economic situation with his customary disdain for the priests of bourgeois economics, and match it up with articles on inequality and Scottish Independence, two hot-button issues of the last half-year.

And as the BNP falls apart and the EDL does its best to join them through infighting and splits, anti-fascists across Britain are going to have to face up to the possibility of a resurgence of far-right violence, in a post-AFA and post-Antifa context.

In the aftermath of seriously concerning rucks in the north-west and elsewhere, we get an update on street-level fascism from Matthew.

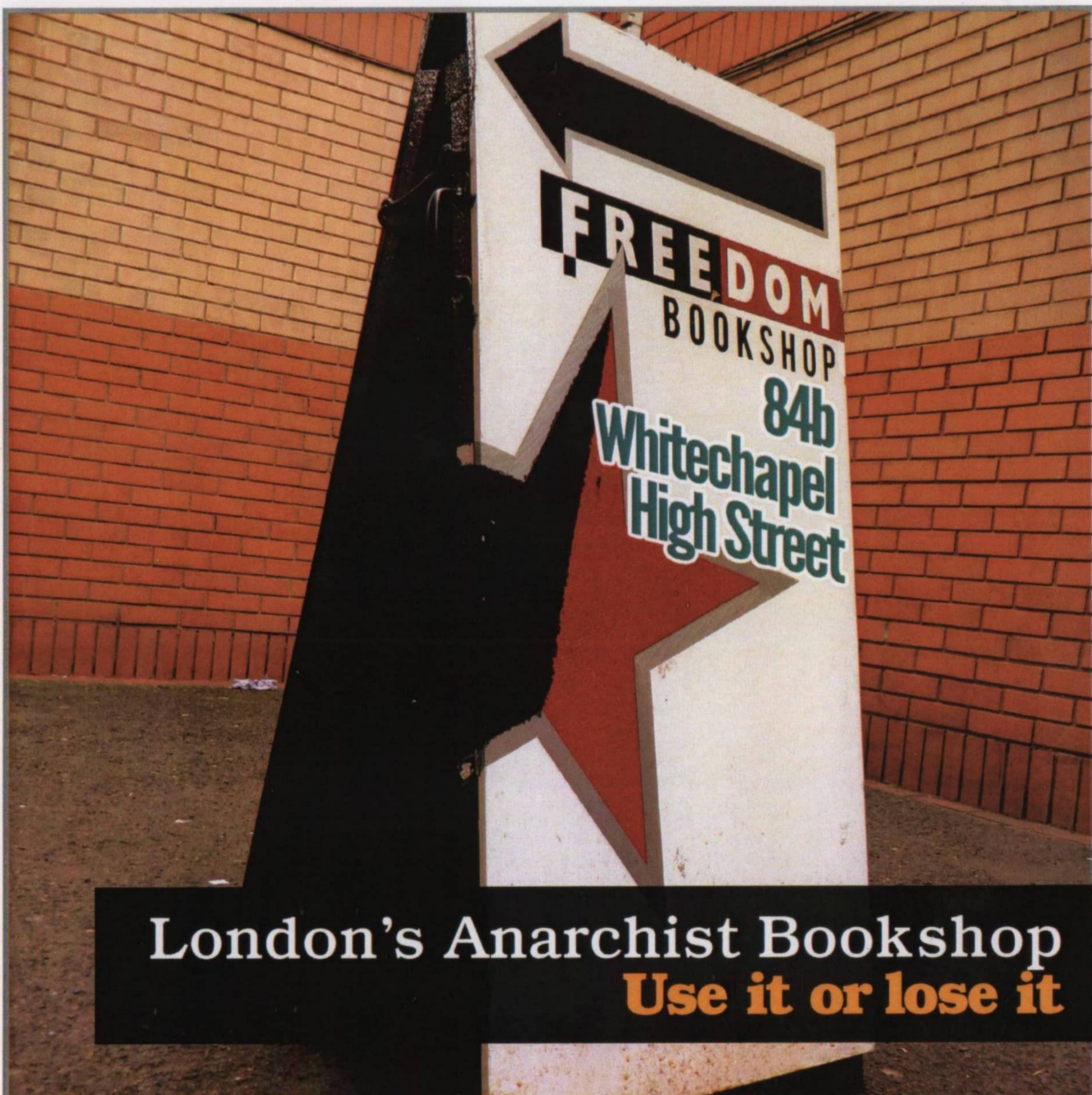
For our centre spread this issue, we've got a slightly different tack on the union question from Tom L, looking at it from the ruling class point of view, while in history we look at the Asturias and the Pentonville Five.

As always, we'd be delighted to hear from you and/or look at submissions and offers of help, the address is on the next page.



Going down: The Black Flag ladybird hangs on as neo-liberal maneuvering threatens the position of working people.

Picture: Anya Brennan.



London's Anarchist Bookshop
Use it or lose it

Content

- **Cover story:** Workfare in the post – and the union bosses enabling it Page 4
- **Reportage:** Far right is back on the streets as the BNP and EDL take a tumble Page 6
- **Theory:** The reality of inequality Page 9
- **Analysis:** Our economy roundup Page 11
- **Breathing Utopia:** Talking about how the NHS won't benefit from privatisation, but revolution... Page 14
- **Analysis:** Mike Deeson explains why the AF won't campaign for Scottish independence Page 16
- **Theory:** How the ruling class see the trade unionism question Page 18
- **History:** The Pentonville Five Page 21
- **History:** The story of the Asturias Page 23
- **History:** Giving an overview of anarchism, post-1945 Page 26
- **Radical Reprint:** Peter Kropotkin on the use of the strike Page 28

REVIEWS

- **Syndicalism:** McKay on Darlington Page 30
- **Berkman:** Petard on Russia's political prisons Page 32
- **Cancer:** Woodward on the history of a disease Page 34
- **Hob's Choice:** Shorts on radical pamphlets Page 36
- **Joe Jacobs:** Willis on the activist's days after Cable Street Page 38

Ethos

Black Flag is for a social system based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation – against state control and all forms of government and economic repression. To establish a share in the general prosperity for all – the breaking down of racial, religious, national and sex barriers – and to fight for the life of one world.

The Black Flag has been a worldwide symbol for anarchism since the 1880s. It is at base a representative of the negation of all oppressive structures.

About

Contributors/excerpts:

Nic and Bart
Ade Dimmick
Matthew M
Iain McKay
Rob Ray
Anarchist Federation/Mike Deeson
Jerome Baxter
Jack Ray
Alison Trew
Peter Kropotkin
Paul Petard
Alan Woodward
Liz Willis

Layout/design

Rob Ray (Freedom Press)
Rob W

Printing

Clydeside Press,
Scotland

☎ 0141-552 5519

Contact

✉ black_flag@yahoo.co.uk
📄 Black Flag
BM Hurricane,
London,
WC1N 3XX,
United Kingdom,

Bulk Orders from AK Press

📄 AK Press (UK)
PO Box 12766
Edinburgh
EH8

☎ 0131 555 5165

📄 AK Press (USA)
674-A 23rd Street
Oakland, CA 94612
☎ (001) 510-208-1700
📄 ak@akpress.org

Postman Pat and

The government and the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) are very much in the news at the moment regarding their controversial and largely unpopular Workfare scheme.

In essence this is a programme which floods the market with the compulsory free labour of those forced to live on benefits, while threatening withdrawal of their welfare rights if they refuse. This is not only an attack on the most vulnerable sectors of society — it is an attack on the whole working class.

Support for Workfare has come from some unlikely quarters, but is not totally surprising to many anarchists as the nature of the relationship between the trade union movement, the state and capital tends to be self-reinforcing.

The TUC (Trade Union Congress) conference 2010 reaffirmed that “compulsory Workfare schemes are in contradiction to the notion of welfare rights.” But just a year later the general union GMB endorsed Workfare and pledged its support.

In February 2012 the Communications Workers Union (CWU) followed suit. Its leadership issued a communiqué to branches pledging support for what it termed “work experience” at the Royal Mail. The scheme will allocate 10.30 hours per week, with placements in each region. This amounts to 130 forced, unpaid workers.

Black Flag caught up with two anarcho-syndicalist postal workers to hear their views on proceedings:

Are you surprised that the CWU has backed Workfare?

In truth I cannot say I was surprised, as CWU's leadership have been working with the government and the employer for years, against its own members, so why would they care about unemployed workers?

Why do you think it's supporting such an anti-working class government policy?

CWU leadership are so out of touch with the membership and would seem to be so corrupted by the “power” they have over the membership that they think they can do just about anything.

Many at headquarters hold or have held positions within the Labour Party, including CWU general secretary Dave Ward who was on the Labour Party's National Executive Committee (NEC). Although he stood down it would appear to be for his own ambitions in the union, as we were in dispute with Royal Mail and the government at the time (2007) so stepping down stopped a backlash from the membership over his role in the Labour NEC.

Ever since then he and other members of the Postal Executive Council have been

working with and giving everything that the employer “government” have demanded, including a Care pension scheme (career average devalued earnings) instead of the final salary scheme that workers had, plus an extra five years' work to get this substandard pension.

This was without even asking the members to vote on it and giving us no other choice but to vote for two dispute settlements that gave the employer all they asked for and just increased the workload whilst giving us real terms pay cuts year on year.

They then allowed the employer to steal members' money to the tune of between £600-800 last year when Royal Mail re-valued phantom shares that the employer had given us as a sweetener in 2007 to £0 overnight. Yet again, CWU's leadership did nothing other than write a few letters, and maybe enjoyed a glass of champagne with Moya Greene.

Taking on such a significant number of unpaid workers has major implications, given the nature of proposed service cut-backs. What are your thoughts?

I find it unbelievable when CWU leadership said that any mail centre closures could happen with no national ballot in support of our sisters and brothers who, whilst not being made redundant, would have to travel many miles to the nearest mail centre in order to do their work.

Although there have been no redundancies, thousands of workers across the UK have lost their jobs because of the inaction of our union and its failure to defend them against unfair dismissal for petty things like being off sick. So why would it bother those that earn huge sums of money “representing” members if unemployed workers do our jobs without getting paid?

What is the opinion about this amongst your fellow workers?

In truth most don't know about it, although most of those that do are horrified that a union would sign up to such a shit Tory scheme and yet again not consult the members. Sadly, unions control the propaganda that members pay for and the CWU sent out only three leaflets about this issue via the internet to CWU branches. I only learned about it through social networking on the internet.

Do you think that this kind of decision by the CWU reflects the relationship in general that the trade union movement has with management and the state?

I think that “trade union” bosses are just

that. Bosses. Their agenda at the beginning may have been sound but it does not take long for the lust for power and an easy life to take over.

It must be said that they are not all like that, but being few and far between there is little the better ones can do.



Out in the cold: The CWU has backed unpaid ‘work experience’ at the Royal Mail
Picture: comedy_nose

So, getting back to the union communiqué, what's been happening since then? When is Workfare likely to start?

It already has and to stop members getting annoyed, CWU leadership say that there will be no sanctions against unemployed workers.

I am in the process of getting the CWU's written confirmation from the DWP that this is the case, but they seem to be dragging their heels about it. I do hope they have not misled the CWU membership or there will be hell to pay.

The assumption is that any action by workers would be against management and union could prove interesting.

his unpaid cat

Interview: Postal workers Nic and Bart talk about the CWU's support for Royal Mail's workfare scheme



Has anything been planned?

I feel that assumption would be incorrect. If the CWU leadership have misled the membership in order to get this scheme going, then it is up to the members to bring them to heel and to force the employer to stop this scheme. Yes, we know as members what we must do but cannot cross that bridge until we get to it.

As anarcho-syndicalists and union members how do you reconcile your revolutionary perspective within the ranks of a reformist trade union?

I see no conflict of interest. A trade union is made up of individuals that are all different and whilst mainstream trade unionism has

failed consistently over a long period of time, most members can pin it down to a moment in time when union bosses sold them out.

If you talk to most rank and file "trade unionists," all they have ever wanted is a real say in how their union works for them, which they are currently denied by all mainstream trade unions. For me, anarchism is just an extension of those beliefs for day to day living.

To me anarcho-syndicalism is not revolutionary, but a label that many have either never heard of, or don't understand, in part it's thousands of years old and another part hundreds of years old, that only wishes to empower the individual to work with others for the benefit of all.

But sadly that message seems to be not getting through because of the power the bosses have over us all, be they union or government.

Before we sign off, do you have any messages for Black Flag about this situation and the ongoing struggle?

I guess I would say that workers' organisations are a tool just like any other, be they "trade unionism" or getting onto the street and doing something worthwhile for other workers.

How do "small" interventions like this fit into the grand scheme of things? By working people understanding what is going on around them and showing that we don't just have to take what is happening in our names by bosses — that we can do something about it.

By Ade
Dimmick



The new old far

Ten years is a long time in the life of the British far-right. In 2002 the BNP were riding the crest of a wave. They received unprecedented numbers of votes and had a steadily growing portfolio of local councillors. This success was most apparent in Burnley, an area in which they came within a cat's whisker of gaining overall control of the council. Other successes followed, in Blackburn, Stoke and Calderdale.

Nick Griffin's vision for the BNP was paying dividends. After two decades of fighting a losing battle on the streets, Griffin decided the way forward was to engage in a new fight at the ballot box. Out went the stereotypical racist street thug, in came the smartly dressed, less overtly racist respectable politician in an attempt to become part of the Establishment. In reality little had changed. If you scratched the surface you found the exact same fascism. It was the "put a brute in a suit" approach and for several years it took them into uncharted electoral waters.

At that time there was no other far-right group in Britain of any significance whatsoever, either street or electoral. The streets appeared to have been left behind for the foreseeable future in exchange for the promise of real power and influence.

But just ten years on from the zenith of their success the BNP are now facing oblivion.

After years of the kind of bitter in-fighting that always accompanies fascist groups, plummeting electoral support, a rapidly worsening financial situation, a lack of faith in Griffin's leadership and a return via the EDL to the street tactics of the 1970's and '80's has meant that the BNP are on the verge of becoming an irrelevance or even imploding.

Over the last few years many within the BNP have become disillusioned with Griffin and his inability to build on his early

successes. There was a leadership challenge last year that Griffin very narrowly and unconvincingly won. Despite the victory his position has not been strengthened, and the bitter fight for power between Griffin and his opponents has done seemingly

Their plummeting attendance record can be attributed to many things. Firstly, the limited shelf life of a group such as the EDL means that many individuals just lose interest over time, particularly if they have trouble with the law.



Making noise: Anti-fascists oppose an EDL protest in Leicester

Picture: Matt Neale

irreversible damage to the party.

For many on the far-right the creation of the EDL was a breath of fresh air. It meant they could get back on the streets to abuse and threaten people without being subject to party rules or discipline. The general public were on the whole "outraged" by the EDL. Not wanting to be associated with such goings on, Griffin issued a dictat stating that the EDL were a proscribed organisation and threatened to expel any BNP members who joined them.

The EDL were always destined to have a limited shelf life. They are not a party but a one-issue pressure group. Their only interest is to oppose militant Islam. Every demonstration they have called over the last two years has seen falling attendance. From a high point of 4,000 their latest demo in Leicester attracted around 500.

Secondly, many members have become disillusioned with the direction that Tommy Robinson is taking the EDL, in particular in relation to alleged financial irregularities around the EDL's massive merchandise operation, the recent link-up with the British Freedom Party and Robinson's Irish Catholic roots.

The decision to join up with the complete non-entity that is the British Freedom Party is not as strange as it may appear.

The EDL is a dying organisation and could never give Robinson the influence he so craves. He needs an electoral presence for a lasting influence on the far-right scene. He could not go with the BNP as there are already far too many big fish in an increasingly shrinking and discredited pond, and the National Front is a tainted and irrelevant historical relic.

That leaves the British Freedom Party, an



Menace: An EDL supporter
Picture: Gavin Lynn

-right threat...

In focus: What does the splintering of far-right groups mean for anarchist anti-fascist tactics?



organisation of nobodies and "crackpots" who have been expelled from the BNP. Robinson knew he can join this group and will be the only member that anyone has ever heard of.

Linking up the British Freedom Party with the EDL gives Robinson the best of two worlds. It means that he and his acolytes can be part of a legitimate political party that is able stand in elections, and they can carry on as a violent street organisation via the EDL.

Robinson quickly encouraged EDL members to take out membership with the British Freedom Party. Soon after, the British Freedom Party reported a surge in membership applications. It is expected that at the next round of local elections they will be standing a substantial number of candidates across the country. This will undoubtedly have a crippling effect of the BNP's already fragile vote.

An unwanted side effect of the EDL's new

direction is that their core membership has left in droves. They have not just disappeared into the ether; they have formed a group known as the Infidels.

The Infidels are nothing new. They are just the EDL with a different name and a different leadership. The relationship between Robinson and his opposite number in the Infidels has been strained to say the least. There have been allegations, counter allegations and rumours of hired thugs being sent round to each other's houses to threaten them and their families.

The Infidels do not start new local divisions they just take over existing EDL groups. EDL divisions are falling to the Infidels at a rapid rate, particularly in the North East and North West. The Infidels held their first national rally in Rochdale last month but could only muster around one hundred people. Whilst they have a long way to go, they are undoubtedly in the ascendancy and are more overtly racist and aggressive than the EDL.

Ten years ago on the far-right scene there was the BNP and nothing else. Now there are the BNP, the EDL, the Infidels, the British Freedom Party, alongside other associated hangers-on and weird sects such as the British People's Party, and Combined Ex Forces.

Even together, these groups do not equate to the numbers that the BNP could muster at the ballot box or on the streets ten years ago. However many on the far-right are sick of being "brutes in suits." They want the old days back, they want to throw off the shackles of party discipline, throw off the "relative" political correctness that they have been forced to endure in exchange for genuine mainstream success that never actually came.

There are increasing reports from around the country of the far-right attacking anyone they deem to be left-wing. They have attacked paper sales, meetings, several Occupy camps, radical book shops and trade union offices. Late last year, the Infidels released a statement warning "the left" that they will physically oppose them wherever they appear.

Out has gone the focus on creating legitimate policies that would carry them forward in their quest for mainstream legitimacy and back has come the old favourites. The far-right are back to obsessing about the monarchy, paedophiles, the armed forces, the IRA, Muslims, Jews, Zionist conspiracies and asylum seekers. They are no longer attempting to dress up their bile in carefully chosen descriptions, they are back to being openly fascist.

This more open far-right is growing in size

Them: Who's who



BNP: Still the biggest far-right group in Britain, but seemingly in terminal decline after a succession of financial problems and scandals



National Front: More hardline electorally than the BNP, they are largely a write-off but may benefit from its collapse



EDL: Largest street group at present, but haemorrhaging members as police kettle them and harder-right spinoffs emerge



BFP: Tiny electoral group aiming to turn EDL boots on the ground into an anti-muslim vote for Tommy Robinson

Infidels: More overtly fascist group which left EDL for being too soft on other minorities. Gaining some ground but still small



CxF: The "Combined Ex Forces" fancy themselves as the far-right's shock troops, but have shown little evidence of it so far



and confidence. The societal problems that feed their existence are only going to be exacerbated as the financial crisis deepens, and austerity measures and cuts begin to bite harder.

What do these developments mean for anarchists?

As the far-right adapted their tactics at the start of the last decade, so did the mainstream left in their opposition. To a point, confronting fascists physically was no longer as appropriate as it had once been.

The BNP started taking the moral high ground. I recall a battle outside Burnley Town Hall between the BNP and the Anti-Nazi League. The media and general public were horrified. They saw us attacking legitimate politicians who had been democratically elected, rather than attacking a rag tag bunch of street thugs.

The mainstream left wanted change and they got it. The Anti-Nazi League was disbanded and replaced by Unite against Fascism while groups like Anti-Fascist Action just faded away.

The far-right is now splintered. Rather than just focusing on one threat in the BNP there are several groups to contend with, all of whom have differing tactics and aims.

The legitimacy and success of the move away from militant anti-fascism is open to debate. However, what does not need to be debated is the need for a return to the tried and tested tactics that anti-fascists used successfully in driving Blackshirts from the streets in the 1930's and 1940's, and destroying the National Front in the 1970's and 1980's.

From reports I hear from all over the country and from my own experiences of anti-fascism, the far-right is making a determined effort to regain control of the streets.

They are making no secret of their aims so why are we so slow in presenting a



Last dregs: An EDL supporter holds a can of beer at a rally

Picture: Gavin Lynn

proactive response?

Meetings are being targeted, protests countered, and people are being attacked. What more of a clue do we need in order to step up our game?

Anarchists should be at the forefront of a return to militant anti-fascism. We cannot and should not fall in line behind the mainstream.

We need to be far more security and safety conscious, and view any threats as serious ones. We cannot concede ground to fascists, we must confront them head-on, physically if necessary, and we must oppose them wherever they appear, meeting fire with fire.

If we are outnumbered then we need to adopt new and more creative responses. In the decade since genuine militant anti-fascism disappeared, there has been a massive increase in the use of the internet, and latterly social networking. The opportunities for communication and networking have never been so good, yet it appears that our levels of communication, co-ordination and support are at a low point.

As anarchists we need to re-examine our everyday approach to anti-fascism. The fascists are able to organise local, regional, and even national turn-outs, so why can't we?

One of the most important aspects of any response should be that of education. A new generation of activists has emerged who have little or no experience of how the far-right previously operated.

I have heard statements such as "we need to talk and debate with them" and "the police

will protect us." These statements, whilst understandable, need to be vigorously challenged. Sometimes people will only learn through bitter experience or following a smack in the face, as I did. However, education needs to be a cornerstone in our fightback.

The far-right has got an early head start on us, and if we cannot get the basics right then we stand little chance of catching them any time soon.

By Matthew Black

Time for a new worst enemy? A Unite Against Fascism poster outside London's City Hall and British National Party leader Nick Griffin (left) Pictures: Ross McRoss and mrmurray



The pay scale of oppression

The global Occupy movement has struck a cord with the 99% and the ruling class is worried. Rightly so, given that the neo-liberal agenda that has allowed the few to become obscenely rich at the expense of the rest has come under fire.

In Britain, November 30th saw a massive public sector workers' strike. In the run-up we were subject to articles in the right-wing press on "fat cat union bosses." And, yes, these union officials do have wages between four and six times those of average workers, although unlike bosses they are elected by their members. Anarchists have long argued that union officials should be paid the same wage as their average member and, moreover, that union officials have less power over their members. As any active trade unionist knows, the officialdom happily uses Thatcher's anti-union laws to clamp down on rank-and-file militancy. The right seems to have forgotten that no "union boss" can order workers to go on strike; a ballot of members is required.

Have they forgotten their beloved Thatcher already? The right, like the bosses, are a bunch of moaners. In spite of dominating Britain for 30 years, they still consider themselves as being persecuted and in need of more state aid. Hence the government running around trying to weaken further the pathetically few rights we workers have.

Maybe that should read "despite," as they spend a significant portion of their time complaining about the consequences of the politics they so vigorously advocated and saw implemented under the party they support.

Soon after the right-wing ranting about "fat cats" in the unions, the High Pay Commission's report was published. It reported how excessive the pay is for company bosses, with executive pay in the FTSE 100 rising "on average by 49% compared with just 2.7% for the average employee" in the last year alone. Meanwhile they bemoan and lobby against the 50% top rate of tax paid by those on over £150,000 while simultaneously arguing for cuts to the minimum wage.

Since Thatcher's neoliberal onslaught against the working class the report states that: "Rewards have been flooding upwards. Since the mid 1970s, the general workforce's share of GDP had shrunk by over 12% up to 2008." The top earners have accumulated more wealth at an alarming rate.

In 1980 for example the boss of Barclays was earning 13 times the average pay at the bank, but now they are earning 169 times the average, a 4,899% rise over 30 years.

The Commission's report pointed to the

In focus: What causes pay inequality and what can we do about it?



Counting the pennies: Bosses' pay has soared since the mid 1970s

Picture: Mukumbura

wider negative impact on the rest of society of this massive inequality. Therefore there is "little doubt that gross inequality affects morbidity and mortality rates, including infant mortality rates. More unequal societies also have lower levels of social mobility" while inequality "can be harmful to long run economic growth" and within-firm pay inequality "is associated with lower-firm performance."

No reputable study has shown that executive pay has been successfully linked to company performance. The body of evidence challenging the link between pay and performance has become increasingly compelling." Moreover, while it has "traditionally been argued that inequality is actively good for growth" there is "a growing body of evidence which suggests that gross inequality in income contributes to imbalances across sectors, regional disparities in investment and asset bubble inflation."

Investment in assets driven by inequality "can encourage economic instability and increase the likelihood of shocks and financial crises."

The Anarchist Theory of Exploitation

Few except the apologists of capitalism deny the obvious facts of inequality. Mainstream economics finds it hard to explain it, ignoring such trivial factors as history, society, organisations, structural hierarchies, classes, power and a host of other relevant issues, the atomistic individualist notions of neo-classical economists cannot explain why inequality has soared. Although it can, of course, rationalise it and justify it.

This is unsurprising, as neo-classical economics was developed in response to the socialist critique of capitalism. It is no coincidence that the first book written by one of the key founders of that school, Léon Walras, was a polemic against the first anarchist theoretician Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

Proudhon's critique of capitalism rested on two key concepts. Firstly, property allowed the owner to exploit its user



("property is theft"). Secondly, that property created oppressive social relationships between the two ("property is despotism"). These are interrelated, as it is the relations of oppression that property creates which allows exploitation to happen and the appropriation of our common heritage by the few gives the rest little alternative but to agree to such domination and let the owner appropriate the fruits of their labour.

Hence inequality means the wealthy few have power over the many for "it is superior strength" which "enables the manufacturer to reduce the wages of his employees, and the rich merchant and well-stocked proprietor to sell their products for what they please. Who will yield? The weaker." (Property is Theft! p128) Market power counts and so property allows the creation of authoritarian social relationships and exploitation.

The capitalist also unjustly appropriates the additional value (termed "collective force") produced by co-operative activity as a "force of 1,000 men working twenty days has been paid the same wages that one would be paid for working 55 years; but this force of one thousand has done in 20 days what a single man could not have accomplished, though he had laboured for a million centuries." The capitalist may have "paid all the individual forces" but "the collective force still remains to be paid" and which they "enjoy unjustly." (p.117)

Capitalism meant "another shall perform the labour while [the proprietor] receives the product." So the "free worker produces ten; for me, thinks the proprietor, he will produce twelve" and so to "satisfy property, the labourer must first produce beyond his needs." (p110, 124-5)

Occupy: St Paul's cathedral in London
Picture: Claudia Gabriela Marques Vieira

The massive inequality between bosses and wage-workers is explained by the nature of the capitalist production process, by the fact that the worker sells their labour/liberty to a boss who controls their labour and keeps the product of their labour. Workers work harder while the bosses decide they contribute most to production and reward themselves accordingly.

Proudhon stressed that labour did not have a value but what it created did and so labour produces value only as active labour engaged in the production process. As a consequence of this, when workers are hired wages cannot equal product as the proprietor secures a profit by controlling both product and labour:

"Do you know what it is to be a wage-worker? It is to labour under a master, watchful for his prejudices even more than for his orders. It is to have no mind of your own, to know no stimulus save your daily bread and the fear of losing your job.

"The wage worker is a man to whom the property owner who hires him says: What you have to make is none of your business; you do not control it." (p248-9)

This hierarchical relationship within production allowed exploitation to occur as the worker "creates, on top of his subsistence, a capital always greater. Under the regime of property, the

surplus of labour, essentially collective, passes entirely, like the revenue, to the proprietor.

Moving Forward

The Occupy movements across the world have successfully raised the issue of inequality. They have also shown that for all its talk of freedom, capitalism needs the state to clamp down on effective protest.

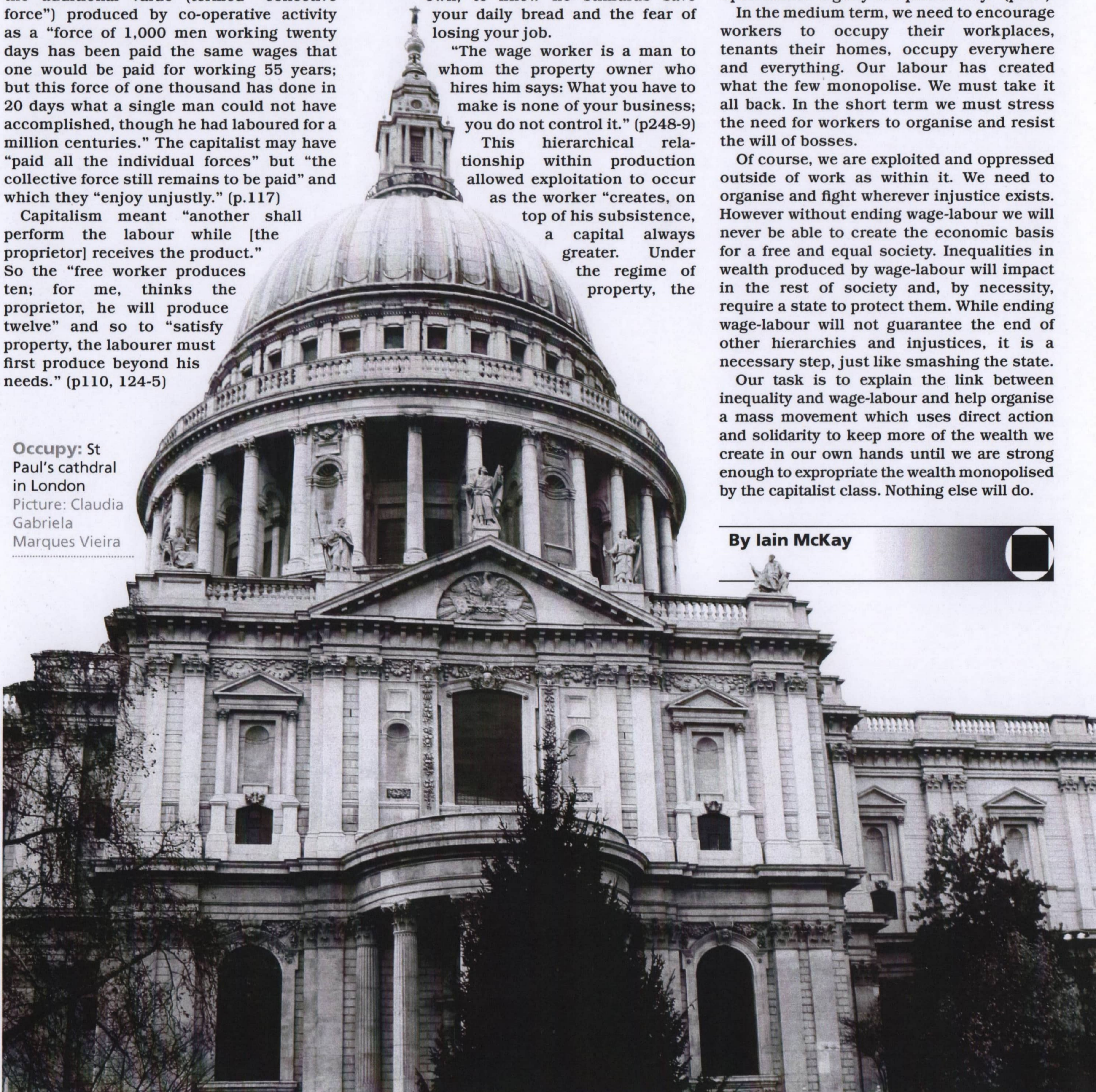
As long as there is wage labour, then bosses will accumulate the surplus value produced by their wage slaves. As Proudhon argued this means that inequality will never be ended until workers' associations replace wage labour because of "the immorality, tyranny and theft suffered" by workers by capitalists "who plunder" their "bodies and souls." Capitalist firms are "a betrayal of power, a violation of the rights of the public, an outrage upon human dignity and personality." (p584).

In the medium term, we need to encourage workers to occupy their workplaces, tenants their homes, occupy everywhere and everything. Our labour has created what the few monopolise. We must take it all back. In the short term we must stress the need for workers to organise and resist the will of bosses.

Of course, we are exploited and oppressed outside of work as within it. We need to organise and fight wherever injustice exists. However without ending wage-labour we will never be able to create the economic basis for a free and equal society. Inequalities in wealth produced by wage-labour will impact in the rest of society and, by necessity, require a state to protect them. While ending wage-labour will not guarantee the end of other hierarchies and injustices, it is a necessary step, just like smashing the state.

Our task is to explain the link between inequality and wage-labour and help organise a mass movement which uses direct action and solidarity to keep more of the wealth we create in our own hands until we are strong enough to expropriate the wealth monopolised by the capitalist class. Nothing else will do.

By Iain McKay



Who can dare suggest we are not all in it together? Cuts are being inflicted across all classes, the elite and companies get tax cuts, working class people get wage and benefit cuts.

Even better, the Tories in their drive for fairness have given the many the opportunity usually only afforded the wealthy few, by waiting until a pasty is lukewarm we can all participate in tax avoidance.

Just to prove we are all in it together, free London newspaper The Evening Standard provided an impact analysis of the budget for those unfortunate enough to read it. Obviously seeking a representative cross-section of society, we discovered how a "young professional" (£1.6 million business turnover), a "high earner" (£150,000-200,000 income), a "working family" (£50,000 income and £300,000 business turnover), a "struggling small business" (£250,000 business turnover), a "young entrepreneur" (anticipated £780,000 business turnover) and a "jobseeker" (who refuses Jobseekers Allowance) viewed Osborne's budget for the top 5%. They were quite okay with it.

Then there is the "law and order" aspect. Osborne complains he had to abolish the 50p tax-band because higher earners avoided it. His solution to this avoidance and fraud is to reward these people with a 5p tax-rate cut. We doubt that such generosity of spirit will be applied to benefit fraud, for example. Still, Osborne proclaimed that he found tax avoidance "morally repugnant" and reassured the masses

So it is one rule for the elite, another for us? Or, more correctly the golden rule that those with the gold make the rules. As for the other 95% of the population, well we are clearly are of no consequence and have most definitely been put in it together.

Osborne has on occasion noted that the IMF supported his policies rather than Labour's austerity-lite.

This ignores that the IMF were clueless on how much these policies would damage our economy. It has slashed its UK growth forecasts for 2011 from 2% at the start of 2011 to 1.7% (April 2011) to 1.5% (June 2011) to 1.1% in September 2011. Worse, the last quarter figures of GDP growth saw the fall in UK output in the final three months of 2011 revised down even more (from -0.2% to -0.3%) so the economy expanded by just 0.7% in 2011, less than in the US, Germany, France and even Italy. Last September also saw the IMF reduce its forecast for 2012 from 2.3% to 1.6% before being slashed to a paltry 0.6% in January 2012.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), whose forecasts are used by the treasury, has been just as bad as the IMF at predicting the consequences of austerity. This "independent" body was constituted in shadow form by the Tories in opposition in 2009 and was formally created in May 2010 when its chair and four members were appointed by the Chancellor.

Surprisingly its forecasts seem to mirror the hopes of the coalition and are revised downwards when reality cannot be denied. In December 2010 it slashed its growth outlook, expecting growth of just 0.9% in 2011 and an even weaker 0.7% 2012,

**THOSE
WITH
MONEY
MAKE
MONEY
THOSE
WITHOUT
GO
WITHOUT**

In focus: Six months in Britain's economic life



compared with a previous forecast of 2.5%. So much for Osborne's claims it would provide accurate estimates.

The revision downwards of the fourth quarter of 2011 growth figures as usual took the City "by surprise" - have these people not been paying attention? In the real world (where you get fired for being consistently crap at your job), 2011 saw real household incomes fall by 1.2%, the biggest drop since 1977. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has analysed the changes implemented by the coalition and have proven that the richest 10% have done better than the poorest 40% of households.

What of the deficit? Surely these policies are reducing government borrowing, their ostensible rationale? Alas, no. Net public sector borrowing in February was £15.2 billion, up from February 2011's £8.9bn last February and nearly double the forecast £8bn.

Osborne has not been slack though, as he has ensured that his plans are on course and borrowing has come in below targets by revising these targets upwards by £112bn in November. The failure to generate growth

for transnational corporations) slump by a massive 2.2%.

Ireland has gone from being Osborne's model during boom times to his model for austerity to being forgotten. It has not recovered from its depression, technically defined as a fall in the value of real output exceeding 10% between 2008 and 2009 when it suffered a 10.1% GDP decline and a 14.1% GNP fall. Unemployment is now at 14.2%, a shocking figure, where it has been stagnating around since the middle of 2011.

Rest assured, though, every time economic growth ticks slightly upwards the defenders of austerity proclaim it has turned the corner and shows why we must follow their lead. Over the 16 quarters from when the global recession hit in the first quarter of 2008, Ireland has turned that corner four times (i.e., it has had only 4 quarters of positive GDP growth).

Greece continues to get bailed out in return for more austerity measures, so ensuring that yet another bailout is required further down the line. Thus the recent 325 million Euros of extra austerity measures needed to complete a 3.3 billion Euro

cutting public sector jobs, benefits and wages in general have proven simply to make things worse, as argued here in these very pages when the crisis first broke out (Black Flag, no. 228). In a recession, unemployment rises, people and companies cut back on spending and this causes problems for other firms.

So while it may make sense for an individual firm to cut wages or staff, the aggregate effect makes the economy worse. If the government cuts its own spending then the result is further drop in total spending which further depresses the economy.

The mainstream approach ignores the demand effects from wage cuts. This can be seen from Osborne's desire to end national pay bargaining for public sector workers. To have any merit he would need to prove that the relatively higher wages of public sector are for equivalent work.

Does paying nurses a slightly higher wage stop hairdressers hiring assistants or restaurants waiters and chefs? Yet if those nurses have their pay frozen/cut will they be likely to spend as much money on local businesses such as restaurants, shops and services? So public sector employment impacts on private employment in the opposite way that Osborne suggests, the latter is dependent upon the former in many areas.

Either Osborne does not understand what happens when you depress wages or he simply does not care. Probably both, after all, he has continued with the austerity plans in spite of their negative impact on the economy. Still, it is not surprising that a cabinet full of millionaires would suggest the self-serving notion that workers in the poorer areas of Britain should be paid less.

Looking at the state of the world in the fourth year of what some have called the "great recession," which is noticeable is that was predictable and predicted came to pass. What was neither predicted nor predictable was the ability of the right to spin a crisis produced by profit-seeking by the financial elite in the private sector into one allegedly caused by too much public spending.

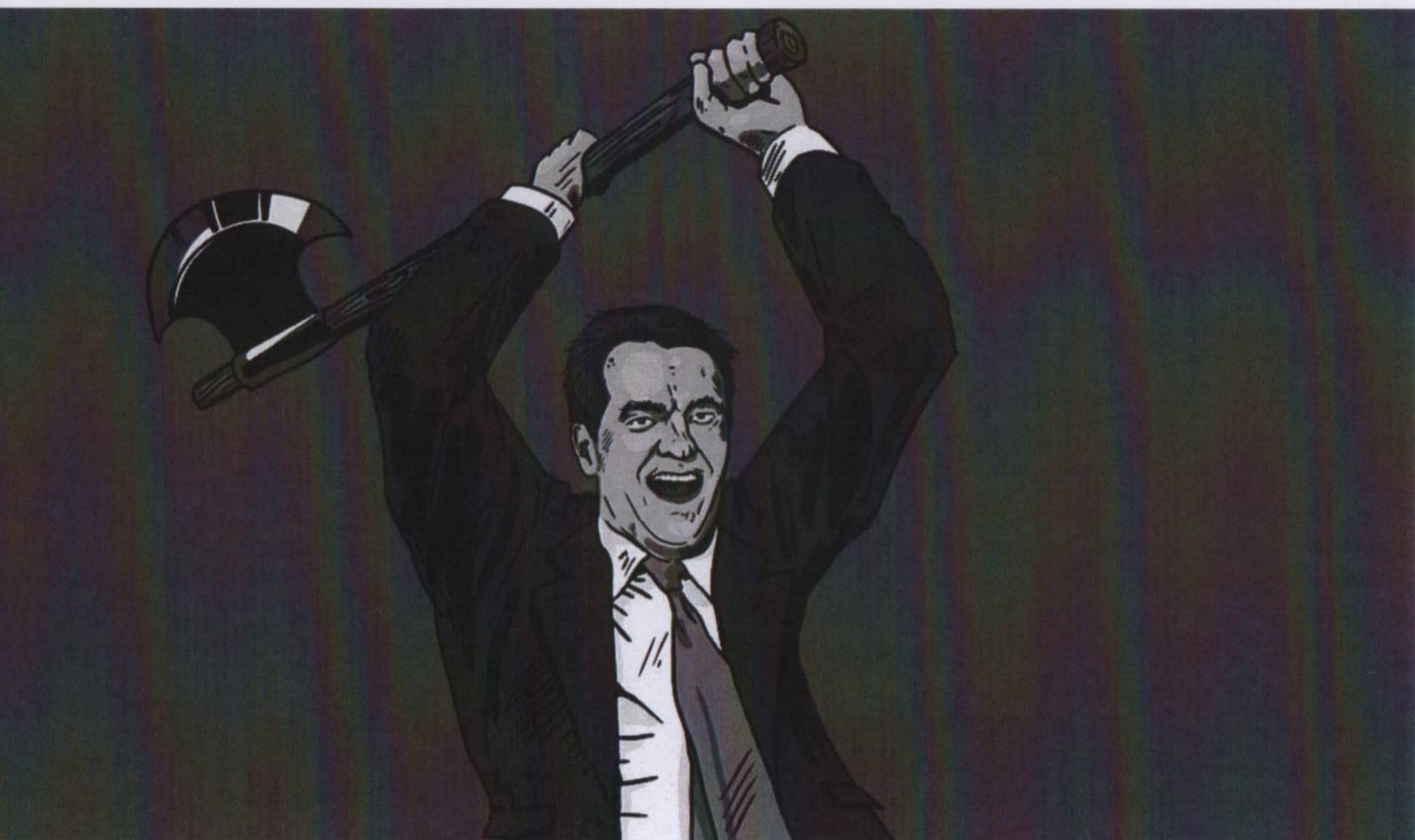
Still, there have been some slight changes. The IMF seems to be belatedly recognising that its standard recommendation of harsh austerity and coercion of governments to comply has resulted in the economy going backwards whenever this is applied. As this standard IMF outcome is being inflicted upon the western economies and so may actually impact on the ruling elites, hence the partial recognition of reality.

Policies like cutting wages and benefits are always wheeled out by the ruling elite and their parties during recessions. This ignores that the rise in unemployment is caused, in part, by a collapse in spending.

They seek to increase the fraction of national income in favour of capital yet they ignore, for obvious reasons that the distribution of income has been skewed towards capital from the dawn of the neo-liberal era in 1980.

They also ignore that this redistribution upwards provided the financial markets with the means to gamble, which eventually produced the current crisis, as well as the rising debt burden for working people required to make ends meet in the face of stagnating incomes, which was its catalyst.

Why? Simply because the ruling class



Caricatured: Osborne's cuts have prompted widespread concerns for the economy

means the government is borrowing billions more than planned, necessitating further cuts. Oh the irony, given that this standard indicator of fiscal health was used to justify austerity in the first place.

The coalition record on economic management has been pathetic. Growth, employment, investment, Britain's credit rating are all worse. Rather than be humbled by any of this, Osborne and Cameron have taken the opportunity to implement yet more wet dreams of the Tory-right like some sort of 1980s tribute act.

So the response to the problems caused by austerity is yet more austerity. This is the triumph of ideology over experience as we can see the results of austerity. Ireland slipped back into the official definition of a recession, two consecutive periods of economic contraction. The last quarter of 2011 saw a 0.2% fall in GDP while the third quarter saw a 1.1% drop.

Worse, the fourth quarter of 2011 saw its GNP (probably a better measure of real national output due to Ireland being a haven

package of cuts as the price demanded for a new EU/IMF bailout will simply produce another bailout as before.

Ironically, Cameron rejected the new European fiscal pact simply because he had to appease his backers in the City and their horror at the mild Tobin tax mooted for financial transactions.

Given that the fiscal pact based itself on austerity, resolving to end Europe's debt crisis by setting constitutional limits on national debt levels and budget deficits (with non-compliance with the pact producing hefty fines) this would (ironically) have been a good thing (albeit done for the wrong reasons) if the Tories were not committed to austerity at home.

The evidence is clear that imposing austerity in a depressed economy does not work. Yet the coalition still proclaim the need for austerity to avoid turning into Greece, skilfully avoiding to mention that Greece is plunging into the abyss precisely thanks to imposing austerity.

Why? Austerity measures, specifically



Ongoing: Production is no more or less efficient, capitalism is simply failing to allocate resources effectively



Public sector employment impacts on private sector jobs in the opposite way that Osborne suggests

know that when growth eventually returns the balance between wages and profits will be further skewed in favour of the latter. So they are using a crisis caused by neo-liberalism to bolster the neo-liberal agenda.

For example, back in 2009 when Osborne was shadow chancellor he proclaimed that the “very fact the treasury is speculating

about printing money shows Gordon Brown has led Britain to the brink of bankruptcy” and that ‘quantitative easing’ (or “printing money” as he put it) was “the last resort of desperate governments when all other policies have failed.”

It was, he stressed, necessary because of the “complete failure” of Labour’s other measures to tackle the recession: “I don’t think anyone should be pleased that we have reached this point. It is an admission of failure and carries considerable risk.” Moving forward to October 2011, quantitative easing now became an “appropriate tool” given the gathering economic gloom. Still, to be fair, it was the first resort of his desperate government.

Here in the UK, where unemployment stands at a 17-year high of 2.7 million, Osborne continues to proclaim that “the British government has run out of money.” Perhaps he should have a word with Mervyn King. Over the past three years, the Bank

of England governor has, with a mere tap on his keyboard authorised the creation of £325bn of new money, out of thin air, through a process of “quantitative easing.” This, however, has so far been used only to bail out the bankers. Why not use it to bail out millions of jobless Britons?

As strange as it may seem, the “scientific” models of neo-classical economics used to justify these austerity measures are based on an “economy” with a single-firm which is owned by a single person who consumes the product of their own labour and means of production. In short, a “capitalist” economy with no profits, labour market, classes, money or, in fact, people with different tastes and interests. Needless to say, in this unreal (indeed, surreal) model based on production-consumption units which can sustain themselves without the need to enter the (non-existent) labour market nor (non-existent) money there can be no unemployment.

In a crisis we see the contradiction between use value and exchange value come to a head. Workers are no less productive than when the crisis started, the goods and services they create are no less needed than before. The means of production are just as productive as they were. Both are just as capable as before of affording for everyone a decent standard of living. Even though people are homeless, housing stands empty. Even though people need goods, production is stopped. Even though people want jobs, workplaces are closed.

This suggests that the efficient allocation of resources promised by capitalism becomes meaningless if its reality is a cycle where consumers go without essential goods due to scarcity and high prices followed by businesses going bust because of over-production and low prices.

This process ruins large numbers of people’s lives, not to mention wasting vast stocks of productive equipment and goods. There are always people who need the over-produced goods and so the market adds to uncertainty as there is a difference between the over-production of goods and the over-production of commodities

It is question begging in the extreme to argue that if workers can no longer buy food then is it an “efficient” allocation of resources that they starve. Houses can be built, infrastructure improved, ecological project pursued, hospitals and schools built/renovated because people need them. Can such schemes really be considered a waste of resources simply because they would never have made a capitalist a profit? Does it not show the stupidity of our economic system and our masters that this is dismissed in favour of making things worse for the many?

Given the state of the world, it has led many people to conclude we are in an economic crisis. That is not the case; it is only a crisis if the ruling class is affected. If the rich remain rich, or get richer, then the pain and suffering of the working class is of no concern, it is business as usual.

Or, from a working class perspective, capitalism itself is the crisis. Our task is to make it a crisis for the ruling class by our resistance.

By Iain McKay



Breathing Utopia: After the revolution...

So if you could start by giving a brief description of what you do and how your department works?

I work in London at a diagnostics outpatients department, doing physiological measurements and we give out medical devices. We work under consultants, support clinics etc but also have our own direct patients and are branching out into the community as well with outreach clinics and visits to care homes. That's kind of an overview.

Our department has its own deputy and manager, they're both clinical people but the manager does more managing than anything else. The person above him manages three other departments as well and then above them is the general manager.

Then there's the Trust management above him. However there's a question now of restructuring, the idea is that the people at the top think the current four managing roles could become one dealing with the entire specialty.

That means there will be four specialist managers going for one job and only ours really understands our department. It would destroy our ability to be fully represented.

How do those structures affect your daily life?

At the moment in my grade I'm trusted to do quite complex and specialist things. I rely on my colleagues with more experience and our manager generally allows us to get on with it without much intervention. I think if the proposed changes go through that would change a lot. It would formalise what we do needlessly and undermine our standing.

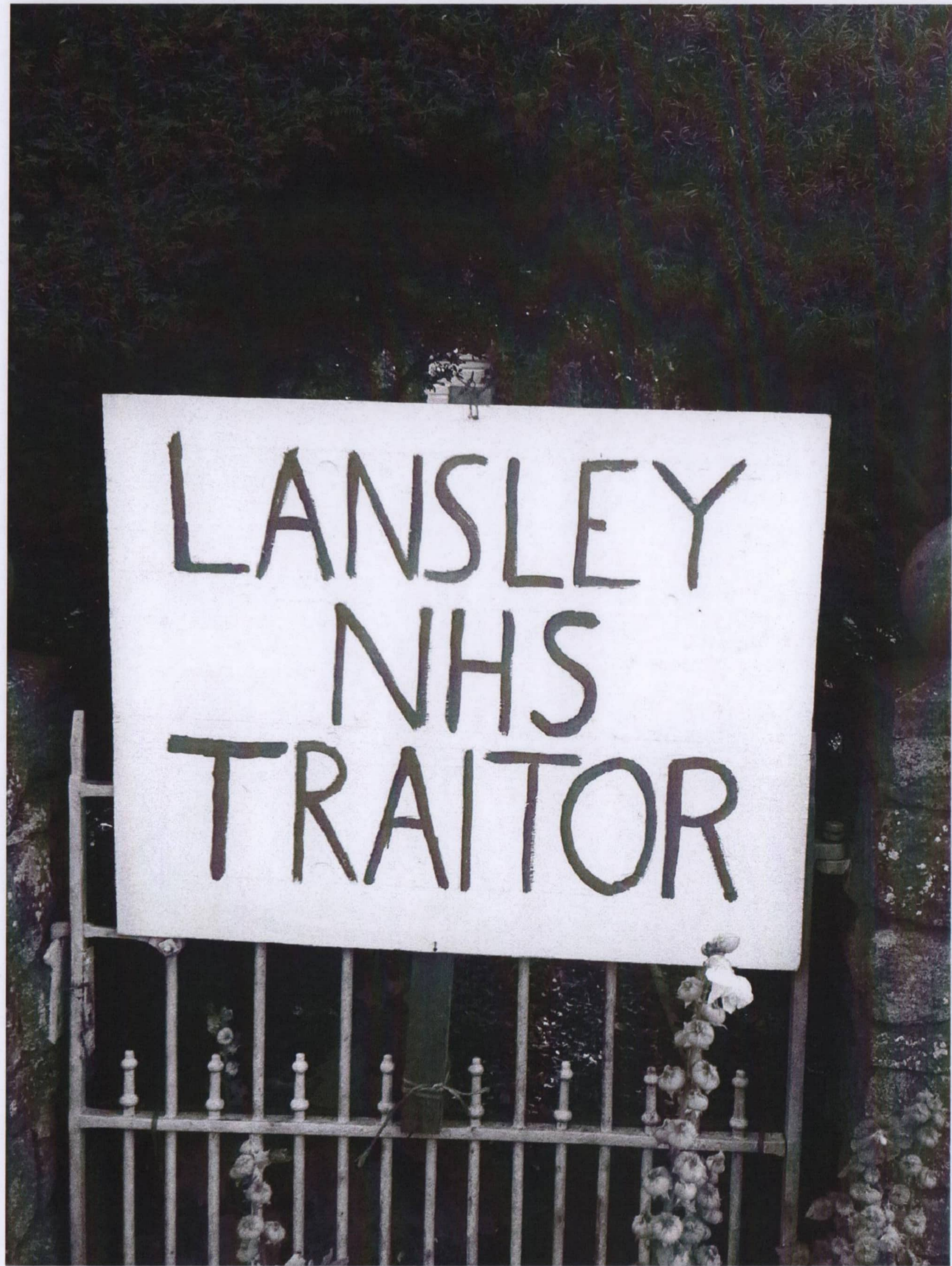
That's a big problem because top-level management never understand what's happening on the floor and they make decisions about us without our input, leading to potentially unsafe practices.

How do you think Lansley's plans will affect the department?

London is a bit of a special area because you've got so many hospitals, Trusts and bureaucracies that they overlap a lot and it gets very confusing. I think these changes will encourage fracturing as services are farmed out to private companies or clubs of staff setting up non-profit social enterprises which are still private entities. The idea is if we do this as a social service it won't end up putting profit first, it'll plough money back into the service.

But we know from other sectors that doesn't happen.

Exactly. It's already common practice in social care and what happened with Southern Cross Care Homes (where the company went bust putting thousands of



elderly patients at risk) is likely to happen more and more. These clinicians' social enterprises will get a five-year contract from government, but in five years' time they'll find that "oh, we've not done anything to prepare ourselves, we've never had to run things as a private business before, we've got no capital" and they collapse. And then what happens is they either have to be taken back in-house or have that service farmed out to the private sector.

But even if this doesn't happen, with a social enterprise there's no accountability. They are exempt from the Freedom of Information Act, the government isn't responsible for them, they can start charging etc.

A layperson on the Executive Board is the best you can hope for and that's entirely

up to them, they don't have any law telling them they should.

The other major thing is that a lot of services will become more general and unable to cope with really specialist work.

This is something which has been going on since the last government as an attack on the workforce which goes hand-in-hand with privatisation, because when you're being paid per operation it's more profitable to do something simple and cheap than specialist, expensive and maybe tied into long-term care.

Care itself is also a big issue. I'm not saying the NHS is perfect by any means, but there's no reason why the whole introducing privatisation and these buzzwords like "choice" should help. In fact competition is worse, it's a race to the bottom.

JOB 6: NHS SPECIALIST

A clinician talks about how his job works, how it could improve and... robot arms?

In the arena you work in and to an extent across the NHS as a whole, how would you see a non-hierarchical system working?

It's a difficult question to answer. Our team is democratic internally, we tend to be science and research-led rather than anything else (something which again is undermined by a privatised approach).

But when you look at the way doctors are at the top and nurses at the bottom, that's really unhealthy. A lot of decisions are being made which aren't in the best interests of the staff and ultimately, of the patients. I could envisage a hospital run on democratic principles, similar to a syndicalist outlook with delegates from different departments and job types working from a consensus or vote-on practice based on the best available evidence.

Every practice is supposed to be based on the evidence, and everyone says they do it but that's not necessarily the case – evidence can mean different things to different people and when you have one manager in charge they may not know the evidence, but they will know what's popular and what's on trend. That's why you get really weird decisions on what gets used, drugs with a 1% efficiency get bought by the NHS because people reading about a Daily Mail "wonder" drug have complained they can't get it. So they listen to the press, not to the evidence.

A more consensual approach could help stop that from happening, but of course in today's world it's very difficult not to have a bureaucracy to make things happen.

For me it's difficult to imagine things happening in any way other than it already does. I want to believe that there will be a time where we are post-scarcity, for example when talking about drugs we have companies basically setting out the profit they want to make and that's forever going up.

I believe in a society where we help people based on need and there's not even a question over whether you can get a drug, where there are structures in place to make that happen. The ideal is for healthcare to be free at the point of need, not delivery. If you're ill and you need something then help should come to you or if you need to go to a specialist centre you are brought there for free. You should decide where care should be offered.

Do you think there is a tension between the knowledgeable health worker and patient choice?

What David Cameron is talking about is a

bullshit buzzword. People want the best care, as close to home as possible – no-one should have to choose between a load of different services.

For me a communised system would simply help the patient with the same excellent level of healthcare, not have loads of different entities competing for their attention to make money.

On whether there are tensions, as a doctor you do have a legitimate authority there with your training and skill, so if the patient is asking for something that is dangerous and not in their interests you still need the ability to say "I'm sorry this is unethical and I can't do it."

But in my experience people go to me for more information, then we collectively decide what the best option is. A lot of the time patients don't realise they are, though I do try and explain things to them, whatever they want to do the choice is theirs not mine – but this is my professional advice.



Emotive subject: Left, showing opposition at home to Health Minister Andrew Lansley's privatisation Bill. Above, evidence-based care is patchy even today

I guess the same dynamic would be there in an ideal world, but there would be more direct accountability and more collective democracy about it if necessary.

So would it be realistic for a patient to have a right to ask, beyond just a second opinion, for a decision from the department's wider medical collective?

That's an interesting thing, because these bodies don't exist at the moment. If you don't like your doctor you can go to another

one, but that sort of medical tribunal is a fantastic idea particularly if you had a mix of professionals, non-medics and someone trained in medical ethics to ensure the process is democratic. It could work I think.

Final thoughts?

In the long term it's difficult to see exactly what the interactions and the psychology of that world would be.

Is it a world where we have robot limbs and live forever? Would we be able to do consultations without ever being in a room with each other? Would it be the same as now but with different structures? We just don't know.

But the structures I would immediately change would be the lack of internal democracy, the formal hierarchies. They'd be gone.

Decision-making bodies would be democratic, made up of at least one representative of each professional group and when a particular speciality is involved, that should have more so their circumstances are clear.

Accountability would also need changes – the NHS prides itself as being accountable but that's not always the case, really we're only accountable to the trust, which is accountable to the Primary Care Trust, the commissioners etc. When the NHS changes

we'll be accountable to the commissioning groups, but we're never directly accountable to the patients – there's always bureaucracy between us and them.

There needs to be a community basis to healthcare but equally, I want someone to be able to travel from across the world and get care without the barriers or borders. Care should be for all.

Interview
by Rob Ray



QUESTION OF SCOTLAND

Analysis:
An Anarchist
Federation
member looks at
independence

One way or another, the political landscape in Scotland and Britain as a whole is going to change after 2014 and it's difficult to say what course this will take. Although polls consistently show the SNP-led Scottish government is a long way off gaining majority support for independence, it's quite possible that they could bring about a swing in opinion.

But even were they to fail in achieving full independence it seems inevitable that Scottish institutions will

take on more powers and that the process itself will have a lasting impact on Scottish society.

As committed internationalists, anarchists oppose nationalism in any form. Rather than simply repeat long-standing principles, however, we need to articulate some kind of an analysis and ask ourselves how potential state reorganisation will affect us and the wider class struggle and

what exactly we should be doing and arguing as the independence debate increases in intensity. This requires collaboration and discussion among anarchists in Scotland but also with comrades elsewhere and so here I only offer a few of my own opinions on the question.

We don't deny that Scotland is a nation but nations are not something communists can support. They are always in some way defined by and tied to the state and are a means to bring about cohesion and identity across classes. Although often termed the "stateless nation," the different cultures, regions and classes of Scotland were given an imposed unity by the pre-1707 state which was thereafter maintained from above through the continuance of a number of institutions, a semi-autonomous bourgeoisie and,



Patriotic: A thistle statue in Perth and right, SNP chief Alex Salmond

contradictorily, from below by resistance to British centralised power and cultural uniformity.

When the benefits of empire had declined after the Second World War and oil wealth was discovered off the north-east coast, there was a stronger capitalist case for increased autonomy but also growing popular disillusionment with centralised British state provision – underlined by Thatcherism's attacks on the social wage and traditional heavy industries.

Together they coalesced into a resurgence of national feeling which culminated in devolution at the end of the 20th-century. This has only increased the momentum of Scottish national feeling and nationalism: more state power, in this case, encouraged and required the emphasis of the national entity and vice versa.

The SNP has been following a balancing act. Firstly, it appeals to the working class through advocating certain policies to the left of any Westminster party. In an independent Scotland, they claim that the British nuclear arsenal would be removed from the country, Scottish troops would no longer be sent to fight in places like Afghanistan, the government would prioritise renewable energy and the welfare state would be defended.

At the same time, they pander to any businessperson willing to back them, aim to cut corporation tax and make Scotland more competitive (i.e. intensify the exploitation of labour) and despite their environmental image, fully support the expansion of the oil industry through potentially disastrous deepwater drilling. This contradiction is summed up by Alex Salmond posing as he listens sympathetically to community campaigners and then hobnobbing with the likes of Brian Souter, Rupert Murdoch or Donald Trump (before that blew up in his face).

What should anarchists be doing? I've been involved in a few "don't vote, organise" campaigns in past elections but there isn't much of a case for actively campaigning against independence – especially since it's unlikely that an open Scottish border would impede cross-border solidarity. To do so would be to de facto support the Unionists and it needs to be emphasised that each side of the debate represents a different nationalism.

In truth, I don't feel strongly about people voting in the referendum. If they think it's worth the chance of, for example, finally getting rid of the nukes, rather than buying into nationalism, then I can understand that. As anarchists, we obviously shouldn't argue for voting but nor should we fetishise the act of not voting. Of far more importance is that we are outside of the narrative and critique all political managers.

The Unionists (Labour, the Tories and Lib Dems) already come across as a crowd of imperial stormtroopers offering nothing but more of the same. However, especially since the left are unequivocally backing Scottish nationalism, there's been little in the way of a challenge to the pro-independence camp's claims or rhetoric of offering a social democratic alternative. Are we to believe the SNP will be different from other politicians and live up to all they promise?

An independent government will have a substantial debt and still face the wider economic crisis; it will therefore have to rationalise its budget, drop promises and make cuts. We need only look at their current record to see this in action: although Scotland under the SNP has frequently been described as a safe haven for the welfare state in comparison to England there have been considerable cuts in NHS Scotland and an appreciable rundown in the service hospitals provide. Similarly, the SNP have been involved in cuts to services in councils across the country. This is, of course, what political managers have to do.

Scottish nationalists of all stripes claim that independence will represent a dramatic extension of democracy. But "we" will not have control over our own destiny if Scotland were to gain independence.

Talk of Scots ruling themselves and of self-determination is an appealing rhetoric which masks the continuity of the class system: the working class will not suddenly become empowered but wealth and power will remain concentrated in the hands of a few. It is possible that independence will allow for social movements in Scotland to have a greater degree of influence but there will also be new opportunities for these movements to be co-opted.

The decision-making power of the Scottish state itself will always be subject to the vagaries of global capital, the movement of transnationals, the bullying of London and controlling eye of the EU and IMF.

More importantly, having a smaller nation state won't lead to ever smaller democratic units and it won't replace representative democracy with participative, direct democracy. To suggest otherwise is simply naïve and misunderstands that working class people can only gain power for themselves through struggle.

The democratic myth is a large part of leftists' justification for supporting an independent state. The Scottish Socialist Party sees it as a means for rejuvenating their brand of parliamentary socialism which, relying as it does on electioneering and the state, is basically a vision of Old Labour in a Scottish context: nationalisation, progressive taxation etc. Capitalism, as always, isn't actually threatened, it's accepted with the hope of greater state intervention and welfare. One of their platforms, the Republican Communist Network, bends over backwards to argue that Scottish independence is part of a strategy for "internationalism from below."

In this view, secession would be a significant attack on British imperialism. But British imperialism is a pale shadow of its former self, probably doesn't require Scotland and isn't of intrinsic importance to capitalism anyway.

Simply put, there is no reason to believe that in an independent Scotland libertarian socialist organizing would be in real terms any easier or that because of its existence we would see an upsurge in class struggle. Having the political class closer to home doesn't necessarily make replacing them any more difficult. If anything, the intensification of the nationalist project championed by all apparently "progressive"

opinion could have a significant effect in mystifying power and class relations and undermining the self-organisation of the working class in favour of its passivity and support for new forms of failed ideas.

The best way we can put our case across is not through debate of abstract beliefs but through our ideas being embodied in actually existing organisation and having the ability to achieve small changes through direct action and build on them. The success of workers' solidarity in Scotland will be vilified equally by nationalists of both sides of the debate but supported by militant workers in England and the rest of the world.

Lastly, I mentioned that Scottish national identity was in part maintained from below. What I mean by this is that the working



class did experience cultural and political oppression as well as economic exploitation and that in Scotland they often reacted to this by relating it to concepts of national difference. Throughout modern Scottish history, workers' movements have used the idea of a Scottish nation, some form of home rule, or even a socialist republic as a means to advocate their own power, cultures and meanings in opposition to centralised control.

For anarchists, this was an alienated resistance which could never have challenged the real basis of their oppression in class society. Instead of writing off these movements, however, we can recognise that wrapped up in the rhetoric is a genuine aspiration for self-determination.

We need to argue against Scottish nationalists or anyone who pushes state solutions from co-opting the term 'self-determination' because it could only ever truly mean workers' directly democratic control of society.

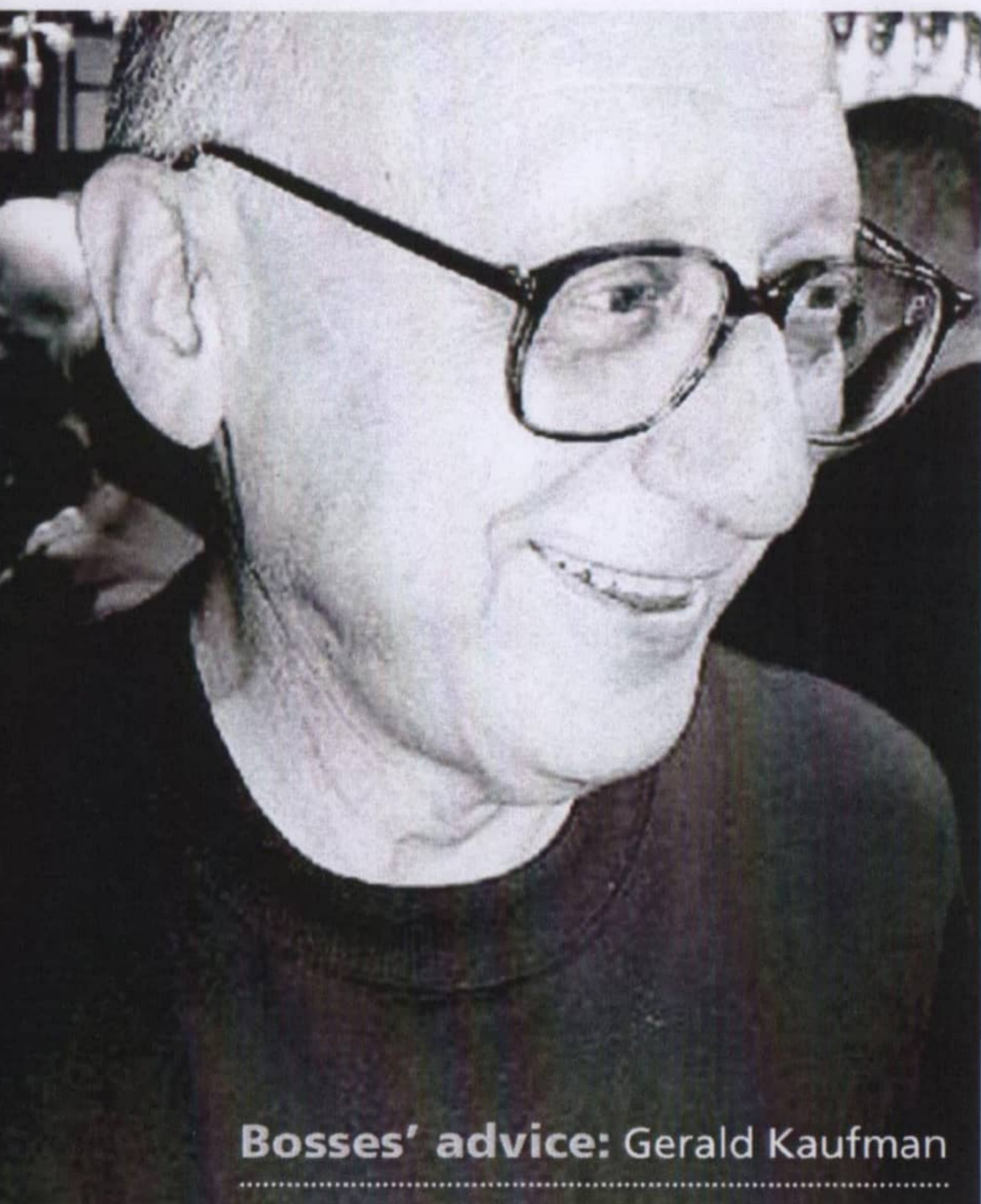
By Mike Deeson



Better than we

If your only exposure to labour issues is through the torn and tattered pages of a greasy tabloid, you might be forgiven if you believe the TUC (Trade Union Congress) actually encourages workplace militancy. Far from encouraging and even organising strikes, more often than not trade unions leave militants feeling sold out, disempowered and side-lined.

Take striking. Firstly it's a struggle to get a ballot. When the ballot is passed the union does nothing to effectively prepare for what amounts to a symbolic one-day strike. Other unions in the same workplace send out notices instructing their members to work on the day of the strike. At the last minute the bosses challenge the ballot on technical grounds. The union caves and calls off the strike. Management then presents a marginally improved offer which the union accepts with little or no consultation from the membership. Any chance of actual struggle is squashed by the same leaders who are supposed to be looking after our interests.



Bosses' advice: Gerald Kaufman

Why is the scenario outlined above repeated again and again in every country around the world throughout the history of the labour movement?

Trade unions have long been subjected to critiques that seek to explain how and why "our" leaders act against the interests of their members. However, instead of simply analysing the structural reasons for why unions are integrated into the management of industrial capitalism, we'll be examining the words and arguments of the ruling class itself. In doing so we can come to understand to just what extent the bosses are conscious of, and consciously encourage, this process of integration and co-optation.

To do so we'll employ the book *How to be a Minister*. The author, Gerald Kaufman, is a long-serving Member of Parliament and is

a right-wing member of the Labour Party. The self-described "most authoritative guide to the processes of government ever published," *How to be a Minister* has been recommended by successive incoming UK governments since its first printing in 1980. We'll be concerning ourselves with chapter 13, "How to Work with the Unions."

Kaufman's argument is simple: Legislators and trade unions, and particularly their national leadership should work closely with government to resolve and, more importantly, prevent industrial unrest. Of course radicals have long argued that the role of unions are to help the ruling class manage class conflict and secure "industrial peace" by ensuring disputes stay within the realm of the state-sanctioned and regulated "labour relations regime." For the unions, resolving disputes in such a manner ensures they maintain their legitimacy as privileged, representative bodies entitled to negotiate the sale of labour power.

To explore this, we'll examine five excerpts from *How to be a Minister*. The first quote lays out a general vision for the roles of unions, industry, and government.

In this together

"It makes sense for governments and unions to work together. The unions represent millions of organised workers; their assistance can eliminate problems which might have caused trouble and make easier for governments the solutions of problems that do arise, while their opposition may make existing difficulties worse and create confrontations that co-operation could have prevented altogether."

While neoliberal reforms have gone a long way towards impinging on the tenants of social democracy which used to be bedrock of British society, the framework of social democracy still largely determines the relationship between employees and employers in Britain. Rolling back the "post war consensus" may have eliminated some of the privileges enjoyed by the TUC, but this has not prevented its member unions from vocally espousing a model of organisation based on cross-class social partnership. For even those unions who employ selective militancy and use the language of social conflict, the reality of representative negotiation, collective bargaining agreements, and trade union legislation means enforced social partnership is part-and-parcel of the normal functioning of trade unionism.

Kaufman's first quote clearly reflects this reality. It acknowledges the power of "millions of organised workers" who are represented by trade unions. "Their assistance," the unions' not the workers', is needed to prevent "trouble" and "confrontation."

"We ministers at the Department of Industry had it made clear to us by the national leadership of the unions with which

we were involved that it would be deeply resented if we saw groups of shop stewards at our department without their agreement. As one of the very left-wing leaders of one of the most left-wing unions put it to me: 'I'm



No talks: Ted Heath Picture: Allan Warren

having no rank-and-fileism in my union'."

Besides the fact that shop stewards don't have any business sitting down with MPs, the above statement does give us insight into the internal functioning of unions and, more importantly, why they function in such ways. Trade unions, despite rhetoric or even best intentions are, by nature, bureaucratic, centralised, and hierarchical. In fact they must adapt these characteristics if they wish to fulfil their role as representative, mediatory bodies.

Besides damaging internal democracy, such a structure creates a situation in which the officialdom has a different set of interests from the membership. This is especially true with paid full-timers and officers on full 'facility time,' but even branch-level officials are not immune from this.

This contradiction, again, is determined by the role of unions as mediators between labour and capital. Union officials are expected to be 'responsible leaders'. This includes ensuring workers 'stick to their half of the bargain', follow the union-negotiated collective agreement, and stay within the bounds of labour legislation. If they fail to do these things union assets will be frozen, leaders could be jailed, and the bosses, with whom the 'social partnership' has been struck, will have no incentive to continue to recognise the union.

All of this is a way of bringing us to one of our most fundamental points: trade unions are mediators of struggle. Workers go to the union representative when they have a problem at work, be it legal or contractual, and the role of the rep is to

know ourselves

Theory: How to be a Minister and what it tells us about how the ruling class view trade unions

see it rectified. The union is the bargaining agent with whom the boss sits down with to resolve grievances or sign a new collective agreement. Likewise when industrial action occurs, it is done through the union and the union takes responsibility for balloting and ensuring all legal procedures are followed.

In theory this doesn't sound too bad. However, to be able to effectively do the tasks outlined above, the union must be able to "speak" on behalf of the workforce and ensure that what it says of its membership will happen.

Beyond the legal imperative to control their members, the ability to turn off struggle is necessary if the union negotiators are to maintain credibility with the employer. So if the workers have voted to strike, but the officials feel management's new position constitutes an improved offer, the union officials must be able to guarantee the strike won't happen.

We should talk

"Heath's conservative government might have survived long after 1974 if its Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry had had regular meetings with the [leaders of the National Union of Miners] well before trouble broke out. You cannot suddenly construct a close and trusting relationship during a crisis."

Despite what politicians, business leaders, and the media publicly state, the ruling class are fully aware of the conflict within capitalism.

"Trouble" and "crisis", as Kaufman labels it, are inevitable elements of class society. In an effort to reduce the scale and scope of these conflicts, capital has sought to find orderly means to resolve worker unrest. Trade unions, with their hierarchies, and "respectable leadership" have historically been a very effective means to achieve this. This is not to say that when the balance of class force makes it seem advantageous, bosses won't try to break unions.

Yet when class activity heats us, those same bosses turn to the trade unions as one of the main weapons in the arsenal of control.

The prolonged period of class conflict roughly encompassing the two world wars resulted in a social democratic class compromise which saw this process taken to its logical conclusion. Trade unionism became integrated into the very structure of capitalism.¹ The manifestations of this are clear: the trade-union sponsored 'Labour' Party; binding state-sponsored arbitration; 'management rights' and no-strike clauses in collective agreements; and the demand

that unions prevent, "repudiate," and rectify "unofficial" industrial action.

It's inevitable

"The unions may ask to see you about preventing closures in their industry [which you will have to inform them] cannot be stopped..."

Speaking from personal experience in a similar situation, Kaufman writes that: "The unions' leaders were, however, truthfully able to tell their members they had tried every possible way of saving their jobs; very important when one of the problems in trade unionism in recent years had been to maintain links between the national

no attempt made to spread struggle across and between industries in solidarity. Yet the same line is held by the politician and the union bureaucrat: "We, your representatives, we've done all we can to save your jobs. The struggle is over, but do make sure to vote for us next time an election comes round."

Force for sanity?

"Trade unionism has had its bad periods in Britain but, far more often than not; it has been a force for sanity. [So stay on good terms with the trade unions because,] by doing so, you may achieve successes that otherwise would have alluded you. And you



Effective? The union-organised November 30 pensions strike

Picture: Sam Sauer

leadership and the rank-and-file."

Here we have another nugget of truth, namely, that capital and government are very aware the division between the union officialdom and the rank-and-file. Moreover it is parliamentary policy to not only placate union officials, but to do so in such a way which shores up the leadership's supposed legitimacy in the eyes of the membership.

Kaufman writes that union leaders could "truthfully" tell their members that "every possible way of saving their jobs" had been tried an exhausted. This is, of course, untrue.

There had been no attempt made at organising industrial action and certainly

may avoid disasters that no one will ever know might have happened."

Such sentiment has been expressed time and again not only by politicians but business associations, HR departments, and trade union leaders around the world. And of course such individuals want "a force for sanity" against raw, unfiltered class antagonism. Management training courses often read like Marx in reverse, teaching managers how to deal with the conflict inherent to the workplace.





Working outside the union: Electricians at a November 2011 London protest against contract changes

Picture: Matt Salusbury

Trade unions, with their reps and hierarchies, are a fantastic means to channel worker discontent. Throw in a labour relations system based on ensuring all disputes happen through strictly regulated framework and a highly-paid union leadership based not on the shop floor and trade unions become very attractive options for handling industrial relations.

This does not mean, of course, that in low points of class struggle bosses won't try rid themselves of unions.

Self-organisation and Self-representation

We don't want to leave readers with the impression that workers shouldn't be organised. The concept of a union, one or more workers sticking together to improve their lives at work, is fundamental to not only improving our lives today but in eventually creating a new society free of exploitation.

We don't believe today's trade union leaders are bad people or even "sell outs". Trade unions and, by extension, their leaders, are trapped by their role as mediators of struggle.

As much as business leaders have to make decisions based on the needs of capital (i.e. money is invested to make more money), the union leadership has to make decisions based on mediating the inherent struggle between

the working class and the employing class.

Inevitably there will be a point in struggle when union leaders will be forced into making decisions that not only run counter to the interests of the working class, but attempt to repress the revolutionary impulse of the proletariat. Or it may take place long before that when union leaders disavow wildcat strikes and do everything in their power to keep them from spreading. In any case, "our" representatives are inevitable trapped by their role as representatives and mediators.

With this dynamic in mind, we cease to see militant leaders, improved democracy, or reform of labour law as the solution to the problems within mainstream union movement.

Such perspectives are important now that class conflict is back on the table. The trade unions, for their part, are already attempting to leverage the threat of uncontrolled working-class self-organisation. As disputes over cuts were heating up, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber issued this warning to the Tory-led coalition government in relation to tightening up anti-strike laws:

"If they do try and change the law the government would run a real risk of provoking more groups of workers to think 'We'll go down different routes - we won't have ballots. We'll carry out wildcat responses.' That would make strikes much more difficult to deal with."

Yet there is another option beyond a re-run of the sad history of co-optation and

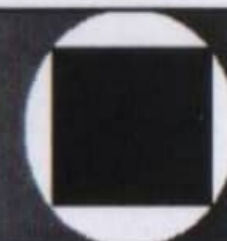
defeat and that's to take Brendan Barber's advice: Go down a "different route", don't "have ballots", and make "strikes much more difficult to deal with". Should this occur we can expect situation where capital again declares "We must give them reforms or they will give us revolution."² Yet, we know where those reforms led and the legal backing given social democratic trade unionism has proven a tool for diffusing working class anger and organisation.

Instead we must build up the capacity to "go down a different route."

We don't claim to have all the answers and, in any case, mass struggle always throws up its own forms of self-organisation. However, we are consciously trying to build a self-organised workers' movement. We do this through the creation of independent "workplace committees" made up of militant workers who seek to identify winnable workplace grievances and tackle them through direct action

The other advantage to this committee model is that it gives us, as revolutionaries, a way to reach out to and organise along our non-radical workmates. However, it is this struggle, based in the workplace and around material conditions, politicises workers and provides us, as radicals, the space to begin talking about capitalism and class struggle.

By Jerome Baxter



Footnotes

1. None of this was new, of course. Trade unions — far from the radical organs portrayed by the most sensationalist sections of the ruling class and capitalist

media — have never been revolutionary vehicles. The practices of mediation and co-optation weren't invented as part of the social contract; it merely enshrined what

was a pre-existing and on-going process.

2. Tory MP Quintin Hogg's 1943 suggestion on how to deal with increasing working-class militancy.

How to kill an Act of Parliament

History: The story of the legislation that led to the jailing of the Pentonville Five, the 1971 Industrial Relations Act

July 26th marks the 40th anniversary of the release of dockworkers Conny Clancy, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Vic Turner and Derek Watkins from prison. Better known as the Pentonville Five, they served a grand total of five days inside before a wave of demonstrations and wildcat strikes forced the government to send the Official Solicitor round with the key. Now would seem a good moment to revisit why they were sent to prison, how they got out, and most importantly, what led to the law that put them there being abolished two years later.

The Industrial Relations Act of 1971 was an attempt by Ted Heath's Conservative government to reconstruct the relationship between trade unions, employers and the state. For many years governments of both parties had set up inquiries, Royal Commissions, written white papers and put bills before parliament, all with the express aim of breaking the power of workers on the shop floor.

The problem for the ruling elite was that the industrial peace guaranteed since the 1930s by austere authoritarians like Ernie Bevin, Arthur Deakin and Bill Carron had begun to break down around the beginning of the 1960s. Taking little notice of their moderate leaders, workers in the docks, the car plants, the engineering factories and the building sites had begun setting up their own rank-and-file organisations, organised around combinations of their workplace representatives (their shop stewards). They'd spent the best part of a decade fighting to get their people recognised by employers and now they were taking action off their own bat to get pay rises and better conditions.

In the mid-'60s "experts" were complaining that although Britain didn't have a particularly high strike rate in global terms, key workplaces were "plagued" by a culture of rapid wildcats, which they called "lightning strikes," representing 95% of all the stoppages affecting industry. This in turn was preventing management from raising efficiency and productivity, that is, forcing the workers to work harder, and employing less of them. As a result the profits generated weren't fat enough to keep the investment flowing and the economy growing.

The first attempt to solve the problem was put forward by the Labour government in 1969 in a white paper written by a well-known Labour left-winger and Minister of



Picket: A warning to workers at the Chobham Farm depot in Newham in 1972 Picture: TUC Library

Employment Barbara Castle (later Baroness Castle of Blackburn). In Place of Strife proposed to give the government the right



to suspend strikes for 21 days and force the union to have a secret ballot on the outcome, with the promise of fines for trade unionists who disobeyed. Sadly for her, the trade union bureaucracy swung into action and the proposals were withdrawn after a series of back room deals.

The real fight was yet to come. The following year the newly-elected Conservative government put into action their own plans for reform. They proposed a new register for trade unions, like Castle, the right to suspend strikes and order compulsory ballots, as well as the right to sue unions and their members if they engaged in "unfair practices," such as enforcing closed shops, picketing workplaces other than their own and refusing to do certain jobs in support of other workers or to protest certain policies ("blacking"). All of this was to be enforced by a new National Industrial Relations Court which had the power to fine or even imprison workers.

The official trade union movement set about employing their standard tactics to protest the bill. On January 12th 1971 there was a trade union demonstration against it, and in March a one-day token protest strike in engineering.

And that was as far as the trade union leaders really wanted to go. George Woodcock, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon (heads of the TUC and the two biggest unions, the TGWU and the AEU), had marched their troops to the top of the hill and marched them down again.

Months passed with no meaningful resistance to the Act, until in December the Port Shop Stewards Committee called a meeting. The meeting was unrecognised by the official union and totally outside of union rules. It was organised through the connections that the most active dockers in the country had built over their years of struggle in the docks. At the meeting the stewards resolved to start an all-out war against "containerisation," a modernisation programme in the docks which would eventually see the number of dockers reduced to just a few thousand.

Their programme for action was ambitious. Without the unions' help they would organise a wildcat strike of all the dockers registered under the National Port Scheme, they'd send a delegation to lobby their own elected representatives and they'd start a "blacking" campaign against lorry companies that were taking containers straight off the docks and putting dockers out of work.

All of the above, not coincidentally, counted as "unfair practices" as far as the new law was concerned. So come March, the TGWU was being sued by a St. Helens haulage company, Heaton Transport, first receiving a fine of £5,000 and then another subsequent fine of £50,000 for contempt of court in April. But the dockers kept up their campaign of blacking, while the union leaders worried about the bailiffs coming round and ransacking their offices. The

great radical general secretary Jack Jones voted to capitulate on the advice of the TUC and decided to pay up.

Against the advice of their leaders the Shop Stewards Committee kept up the campaign, and sent out pickets to close firms that were taking advantage of containerisation. Finally it dawned on the Court that the picketing had nothing to do with the union and on June 13th summonsed the pickets themselves, on pain of imprisonment. Instead of attending, the dockworkers organised a wildcat strike over the next two days, and a further large picket of the same firm (Chobham Farm, Stratford) for the 16th (the day of the court case). Hesitant to further provoke the



dockers, the court set the case aside.

But the next day another firm, Midland Cold Storage, also victims of the picketing campaign, brought forward another complaint about the dockers "unfair practices," naming seven of the stewards committee. Conny Clancy, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer and Derek Watkins were all arrested and sent to Pentonville Prison, whilst a fifth, Vic Turner was arrested after being seen at the subsequent protest outside the prison!

The leaders of the big trade unions immediately swung into action in an effort to prevent the spread of solidarity action in support of the jailed men. The Port Shop Stewards set about organising a strike as dockers all over the country walked out in support of the Five. The next day strikes broke out spontaneously, with 250,000 taking industrial action and 90,000 on all-out strike. Because the print unions came out, no newspapers appeared the next day. Seeing the strength of the movement, the TUC and the TGWU gradually swung behind the campaign. Finally declaring on July 25th (four days after the initial imprisonment) the possibility of a general strike the following week if the men weren't released, safe in the knowledge that the disruption of the docks had already convinced the government it was more trouble than it was worth to keep them locked up and they would never have to follow through on their threat.

The following day the Pentonville Five emerged from prison after a humiliating climbdown by the government. Although the Industrial Relations Act technically remained on the statute book, it was now

clear to the government and to employers that using it to discipline their workforce was only likely to provoke further disruption and the Court was left utterly powerless. With the fall of the Heath government in 1974 (after further unsuccessful fights with the miners and the railworkers), the Act was repealed.

Forty years on and it seems that many of the lessons learnt in the campaign against the Industrial Relations Act have been forgotten. After repeal it wasn't until Thatcher that another government dared to try and reform trade union law. Even then, Thatcher's reforms had to be accompanied by a concerted effort to break the organised working class, and were only introduced

piece by piece. It's arguable that the 1971 act was far stricter, including as it did the possibility of prison for disobeying the National Industrial Relations Court. Yet still the dockers were able to resist.

The official trade union strategy for winning repeal was much the same as the modern unions have pursued in their campaigns against NHS reform, attacks on pensions and workfare. Have a big demonstration, maybe a token day of action and hope that the government decides that their policies are so unpopular that they have to ditch them.

When it became clear that wasn't going to be enough they found it impossible to imagine there was appetite for a more direct assault on the legislation, and in any case felt

any attempt would damage their Labour Party allies electorally. The reality is, the labour movement leadership was never going to set about directly challenging the state and parliament, and that was what was required to do damage to the Act.

The Act itself failed because self-organised groups set about attacking it directly, and like non-payment and the Poll Tax, this made it unworkable. It was precisely this resistance that meant it failed, as opposed to trying to win the argument in easily manipulated public debates. The Labour Party repealed it when they got back in power not because they were opposed to the basic premises behind it (In Place of Strife was broadly similar), but because of the working class offensive that killed it off as a serious possibility for controlling trade union strife.

If it hadn't been for such resistance, it would undoubtedly have remained in force indefinitely. Likewise if workfare or NHS reform are in place and not coming under significant attack, it's most unlikely that Labour will set about undoing what has already been done.

Ultimately we want more than just to undo the anti-working class laws that parliament passes, but even in defensive struggles like the fight against the Industrial Relations Act the lesson is that direct action, through self-organisation and self-management, is the key.

By Jack
Ray



ASTURIAS RISING!

History: What was the true role of the Catalan CNT in the Asturian miners' strike of October 1934?

The activities of the CNT in Spain have been a source of much discussion due to its size and influence. One of the most common myths which is not related to the heady days of July 1936 are to do with the Socialist Party-organised uprising of October 1934 and the reaction of the Catalan CNT. The Catalan anarchists are often held as betraying the revolt by remaining aloof. It is a common refrain of Marxists seeking to discredit anarchism, although some historians also make this claim. For example, Chris Ealham makes the following summary of the revolt:

"In Asturias, in October 1934, the Alianza Obrera (Workers' Alliance), launched the largest workers' insurrection in Europe since the 1871 Paris Commune. The immediate cause of the rising was the news that the quasi-fascist CEDA was about to form a coalition government with the radicals in Madrid. In Catalonia, however, the CNT leaders were locked in their local war against the Generalitat and the rest of the Catalan left. So, while the ERC-controlled Generalitat was, for many republicans, the 'bulwark of the Republic,' for Catalan anarchists devolution had resulted in 'a historic offensive' by the ERC-controlled police against the CNT.

"The repression of the Catalan CNT, which far exceeded anything the organisation faced in areas under the jurisdiction of the Spanish right, made it impossible for Barcelona cenetistas to support the Generalitat.

"However the opposition of the CNT and FAI to the development of the Alianza Obrera, the Catalan anti-fascist alliance was narrow-sighted sectarianism. The introspective Catalan CNT, thus, opposed the October 1934 mobilisation on the grounds it was a 'political' action designed to change the government of the day and not to make a genuine social revolution.

"Consequently, as Asturian workers fought for the survival of the 'Asturian Commune,' Francisco Ascaso, Nosotros member and secretary of the Catalan CRT, issued a call to the Barcelona proletariat to return to work from a radio station controlled by the Spanish army. And so the Catalan radicals remained aloof from the revolution that they had desired for so long."

This account is extremely selective and, indeed, can be considered misleading in terms of what it omits.

Rather than being called in Asturias or by the Asturian Workers' Alliance, the October rebellion was called by the national Workers' Alliance, dominated by the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) and its trade union, the UGT.

The Alliance was not seen by the UGT and socialist party as an organisation of equals. Rather, in words of historian Paul Preston, "from the first it seemed that the socialists saw the Alianza Obrera was a possible means of dominating the workers movement in areas where the PSOE and UGT were relatively weak." Only one month after the alliance was set up, one of its founder members, the Catalan socialist union, left in protest over PSOE domination. The Socialist Party only allowed regional branches of the Alianza Obrera to be formed only if they could guarantee Party control would never be lost.

uprising was intended as a workers' insurrection. This can be seen from the actions of the socialists in its traditional stronghold, Madrid. There the UGT gave the government 24 hours' notice of the general strike, allowing the state to round up the Socialist leaders, seize arms depots and repress the insurrection before it got started. As Murray Bookchin notes, the "massive strike in Madrid, which was supported by the entire left, foundered for want of arms and a revolutionary sense of direction."

Preston confirms that in Madrid "socialists and anarchists went on



Crackdown: Striking Asturian miners are marched off by government troops

UGT leader Largo Caballero's desire for trade union unity in 1936 was from a similar mould: "The clear implication was that proletarian unification meant Socialist take-over." Little wonder Preston states that "[i]f the use that he [Caballero] made of the Alianza Obreras in 1934 had revealed anything, it was that the domination of the working class movement by the UGT meant far more to Largo Caballero than any future prospect of revolution." As Paul Heywood summarises:

"An important factor which contributed to the strike's collapse and made the state's task easier was the underlying attitude of the socialists. For all their talk of united action by the left, the socialists still wished to dominate any combined moves. Unwilling to cede its traditional hegemony, the PSOE rendered the Alianza Obrera necessarily ineffective."

Second, it is debatable that the October

strike" and that "the socialists actually rejected the participation of anarchist and Trotskyist groups who offered to help make a revolutionary coup in Madrid."

Moreover, "when CNT delegates travelled secretly to Madrid to try to co-ordinate support for the revolutionary Asturian miners, they were rebuffed by the UGT leadership." As Perriats notes, "except in Asturias, the socialist leaders of the rising shunned all contact with the Confederation. The motion passed by the CNT's national plenum of regional committees, dated February 13th of that year, drew no response from the UGT."

Even in Asturias, where the "key to the relative success of the insurrection was the participation of the CNT", the socialists



were hardly non-sectarian and co-operative: "despite the provisions of the terms of the alliance to which the CNT had subscribed, the order for the uprising was issued by the socialists. In Oviedo a specifically socialist, revolutionary committee was secretly at work, which contained no CNT representatives." This attitude had disastrous consequences:

"So far as the Aviles and Gijon anarchists were concerned their socialist and communist 'brothers' were to honour the slogan [of unity] only in the breach. When Anarchist delegates from the seaports arrived in Oviedo on October 7th, pleading for arms to resist the imminent landings of government troops, their requests were totally ignored by socialists and communists who, as [historian Gabriel] Jackson notes, 'clearly mistrusted them.'

"The Oviedo Committee was to pay a

bitter price for its refusal. The next day, when anarchist resistance, hampered by the pitiful supply of weapons, failed to prevent the government from landing its troops, the way into Asturias lay open. The two seaports became the principal military bases for launching the savage repression of the Asturian insurrection that occupied so much of October and claimed thousands of lives."

Reasonable people would, surely, consider the UGT's attitude somewhat sectarian? As leading anarchist Diego Abad de Santillán put it: "Can there be talk of abstention of the CNT and censure of it by those who go on strike without warning our organisation about it, who refuse to meet with the delegates of the National Committee [of the CNT], who consent to let the Lerroux-Gil Robles government take possession of the arms deposits and let

them go unused before handing them over to the confederation and the FAI?"

Ignoring the libertarians was hardly a new development. A CNT call on February 13th 1934 for the UGT to clearly and publicly state its revolutionary objectives had met with no reply. As Peirats argues, "that the absence of the CNT did not bother them [the UGT and Socialist Party] is clear from their silence in regards to the CNT's National Plenary's request."

The Socialist Party's main aim in October seems to have been to force new elections so they could again form a mildly reformist coalition with the republicans. Their programme for the revolt was written by right-wing socialist Indalecio Prieto and seemed more like an election manifesto prepared by the liberal republicans than a programme for revolutionary change. This was the viewpoint of the CNT, for example. Rather than unleash a revolution, the October revolt was simply an attempt to pressurise the regime and change governments. The events in Asturias far exceeded the desires of the socialist leaders. As Peirats suggests:

"Although it seems absurd, one constantly has to ask whether the Socialists meant to start a true revolution [in October 1934] in Spain. If the answer is affirmative, the questions keep coming: Why did they not make the action a national one? Why did they try to do it without the powerful national CNT? Is a peaceful general strike revolutionary? Was what happened in Asturias expected, or were orders exceeded? Did they mean only to scare the Radical-CEDA government with their action?"

Regardless of the activities and aims of the revolt, the question of the reaction of the Catalan CNT remains. Ealham claims that, despite recounting previous massive state repression by the rebels of October 1934, the actions of the Catalan libertarians "was narrow-sighted sectarianism" as they "remained aloof from the revolution that they had desired for so long." The reality of the revolt is somewhat at odds with this summary.

First, we have the strange paradox of how the CNT both "remained aloof" from the revolt and "issued a call to the Barcelona proletariat to return to work." If the CNT workers were on strike, then how could the CNT be "aloof" of the revolt?

Second, ignoring this obvious contradiction, we know from libertarian sources that the CNT did seek to take part in the rebellion, and was repressed for its troubles by the bourgeois Catalan nationalists who lead the revolt of October 1934.

This was just the latest in a long series of attacks on Catalan syndicalism by that party. The repression the CNT was suffering from the Catalan nationalists was very real and unsurprisingly "the anarchists bitterly resented the way in which the Generalitat had followed a repressive policy against them in the previous months. This had been the work of the Generalitat's counsellor for public order, Josep Dencas, leader of the quasi-fascist, ultra-nationalist party Estat Catala." In short, during the Catalan revolt, "the CNT had a difficult time because the insurgents were its worst enemies."

During the revolt itself, the Catalan nationalists continued their policy of crushing the CNT. "On the eve of the

Monument: A statue in Asturias to commemorate the mining community



rebellion," Peirats recounts, "the Catalan police jailed as many anarchists as they could put their hands on" while "union offices had been shut for some time." On the day of the revolt, "the CNT daily newspaper was several hours late in appearing owing to the mutilations caused by censorship. As a result of that censorship, the CNT regional committee sought recourse to a clandestine handbill to offer guide to the Confederation's workers." When workers tried to take steps to implement this handbill they were met with repression:

"The first to act were the militants of the Woodworkers' Union. After they had seized their union premises the security forces promptly appeared on the scene, and a fierce gun battle broke out. The workers were forced to beat a retreat and the premises were sealed again. A propos of this clash, the Generalitat minister of home affairs, Dr Dencas, issued a memo in which he extorted the police and those armed citizens who had begun to patrol the city against 'anarchist provocateurs in the pay of reactionaries.' At 5pm that day uniformed forces of the Generalitat government shot their way into the editorial offices of Solidaridad Obrera. The police intended to surprise a regional plenum that was then in session, but fortunately on different premises. The newspaper's administrative offices and workshops were shut down."

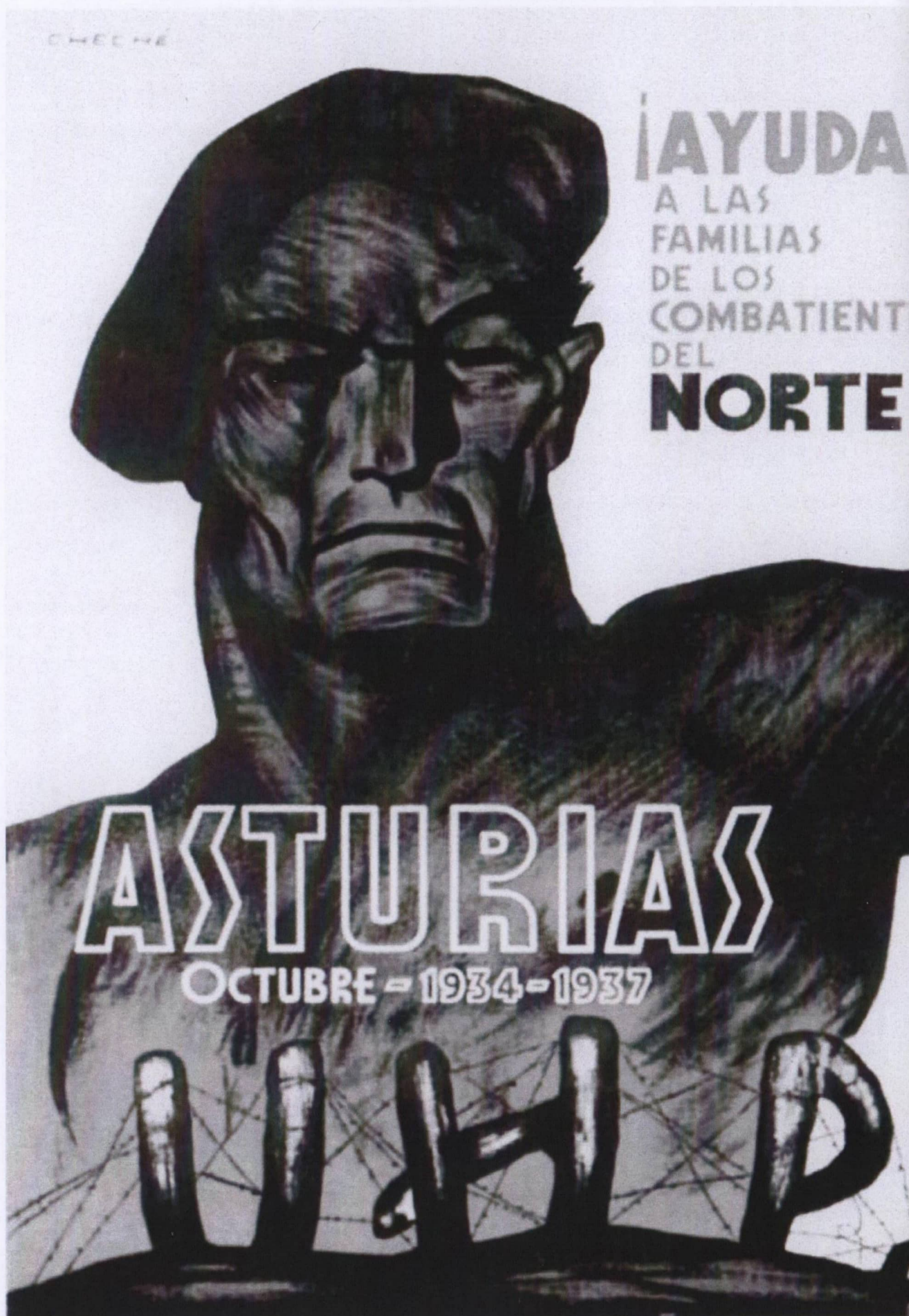
"It is ironic," notes Stuart Christie, "that the first shots to ring out in Barcelona were aimed against the CNT by those in revolt against the central government." Hence the paradoxical situation in which the libertarians found themselves in during this time. As Abel Paz argued: "For the rank and file Catalan worker the insurgents were actually orienting their action in order to destroy the CNT. After that, how could they collaborate with the reactionary movement which was directing its blows against the working class? Here was the paradox of the Catalan uprising of October 6th, 1934."

Suffice to say, why these actions of state repression by the October rebels against the CNT are not "narrow-sighted sectarianism" is not explained by Ealham, perhaps arresting people, censoring their press, shooting at them, closing their offices and trying to arrest their committees is not sectarian?

Moreover, the Catalan CNT did not remain "aloof" of the revolt as Ealham states. As Christie notes, "in spite of this hostility, which verged on a state of war, the CNT declared a general strike in support of the rising." In addition, as noted, the CNT Regional Committee issued a leaflet on October 6th calling upon workers to join the revolt:

"The CNT must enter the battle in a manner consistent with its revolutionary anarchist principles. Our attitude cannot be one of contemplation, but rather one of strong and decisive action. This is no time to theorise, but a time to act and to act well, a time for independent action by the revolutionary proletariat.

"The revolt must acquire the characteristics of a popular act through the independent actions of the proletariat. We demand the right to intervene in this struggle and we will take this immediate opening of our union's buildings and the concentration of the workers on those premises, activation of the district committees all the region's unions are to



Conflict period: A poster for the Socialist Party-linked UGT union in Asturias

liaise closely with this committee which will oversee the revolt by coordinating the belligerent forces."

It was acting on this leaflet that led to the police attacking CNT workers trying to open the hall of the Woodworkers' Union. Thus the first shots of the revolt were directed at the members of the CNT simply because they were trying to take part in the revolt in an organised and coherent manner as urged by the CNT's Regional Committee itself.

Given all this, can the failure of the revolt be laid at the "narrow-sighted sectarianism" of the CNT? Is "sectarianism" the appropriate word to describe the actions of people who were being arrested, having their press censored, being stopped opening their union halls and being shot at when they tried to take part in a revolt by the very people organising the rebellion?

A complete account of the October revolt

raises the obvious question: "Why was it necessary to prevent the CNT from engaging in the rebellion?" The answer is all too clear. The organisers of the Catalan revolt did not desire a social revolution and did not want the CNT to be involved as it would have created one.

Needless to say, the attitude of Company's had not miraculously changed since October 1934 and explains the repression directed against the CNT which made it effectively impossible for that organisation to participate in that revolt even though it tried. In short, Ealham's account omits too many relevant facts to present anything but a distorted account of how the Catalan CNT responded to the October events.

By Iain McKay



This is the first in a two-part series by Alison Trew exploring the relationship between new social movements and post-1945 anarchism. Part two will be published next issue.

In our current epoch of neo-liberal capitalism, hierarchical and authoritarian systems of government are prevalent in every corner of the world. Even in the era of the Cold War, which ended with the collapse of the USSR in 1991, in the supposed "alternative" to the plutocratic rule of capital, there was no real qualitative difference in the modes of production or accumulation by a small power-wielding elite, nor in the alienating and de-humanising conditions of work, leisure and existence that were present in the so-called "worker's state."

But since the nineteenth century anarchism has existed as a theory and practice opposed to all systems of domination, even if these systems hide oppression under the mask of socialism.

Anarchist philosophy has been critiqued and developed since its beginnings in the theories of Godwin and Proudhon, and has had considerable influence in the recent growth of new social movements in the post-industrial stage of capitalist development.

Post-1945 anarchism, which draws on ideas from a wide spectrum of modern progressive thought, has had a definite impact on the aims, ideals and actions of these New Social Movements that offer 'hands-on' alternatives and modes of direct action to electoral politics and the limits of representative democracy.

Classical anarchist theory certainly had profound influence on the international labour movement pre-1945, especially as a leftist alternative to the "statist" socialism proposed by Marxist and early social-democratic thinkers.

Since the early schism between the proponents of "libertarian" and "authoritarian" socialism in the late 1860s, the culmination of a philosophical battle between the anarchist factions of the first international, largely represented by Bakunin, and the various socialist and communist parties under the banner of Marx, anarchists have instigated revolutions and working-class, syndicalist movements that have shunned the parliamentary road to socialism and gradual or reformist revolution preached by members of self-styled revolutionary parties with hierarchical command structures. The Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm comments that, 'in the generation after 1917, Bolshevism absorbed all other social-revolutionary traditions, or pushed them on to the margin of radical movements.'

Before 1914, anarchism had been far more of a driving ideology of revolutionary activists than Marxism across large parts of the world. However anarchist politics took its roots in revolutionary activity throughout Europe and the Americas in the late 19th and early 20th century's right up until World War II.

In the Spanish Civil war of 1936-39, workers of the anarcho-syndicalist trade unions Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) took power in entire regions and cities, revolutionising them from the bottom-up guided by anarchist principles

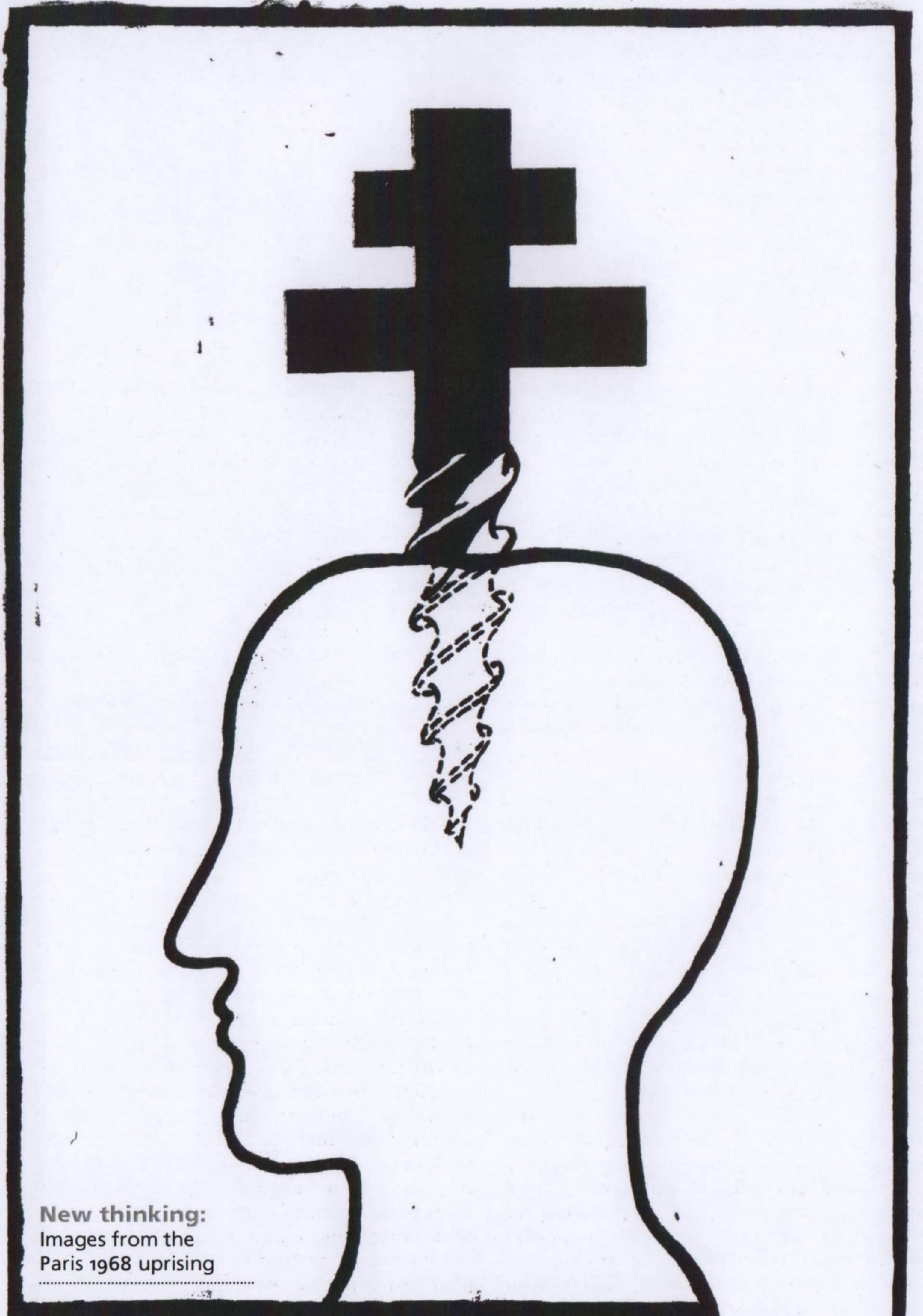
After that

of worker's self-management and radically decentralised and participatory decision-making in the form of neighbourhood assemblies and village councils.

Catalonia and Iberia's three-year experiment was prematurely crushed by the forces of the Popular Front government, and the movement suppressed by its "progressive" allies. The unquestionable influence of pre-1945 anarchism on pre-war social movements even after 1917 is demonstrated in the theories' practical realisation in Ukraine's guerrilla uprising during the Russian Civil War. Organised

by Nestor Makhno's revolutionary insurrectionary army of Ukraine, the black army, the establishment of free Ukraine, an anarchist enclave in the Bolshevik Russian Federation, gave rise to federations of peasant and worker co-operatives operating through anarchist forms of production and exchange.

According to Emma Goldman, "Makhno was an anarchist seeking to free Ukraine from all oppression and striving to develop and organise the peasants' latent anarchistic tendencies." Ukraine's communes, people's assemblies and land



New thinking:
Images from the
Paris 1968 uprising

war, we changed

History: Alison Trew takes a broad look at how theory and practice evolved for anarchists, post 1945

and factory expropriations lasted only until the Red Army quashed the revolution, after which, 'anarchists filled Bolshevik prisons; many had been shot and all legal anarchist activities were suppressed.

Priority shift

In post-1945 anarchist theory there is a clear tendency to break away from some of the materialistic pre-occupations of classical anarchism, the essentialist basis of its principals, and even make sweeping condemnations of industrialisation, civilisation and technological advancement or organisation itself.

In contrast to the classical anarchists, post-1945 anarchism has tended to shift focus away from traditional economic notions of class and criticisms of the state as the one monolithic instrument of class rule, towards examinations and critiques of other, (perhaps more subtle and sophisticated), modes of oppression that draw upon the ideas and methods of other schools of thought. Post-structuralism, post-modernism, situationism, feminism, environmentalism and ecology, autonomism, 'post-leftism', Nietzschean philosophy and the writings of the neo-Marxist Frankfurt school have all influenced post-1945 anarchist thought.

New social movements highlight the ineptitude of political agitation within the confines of government power and its reformist tendencies and outcomes utilising direct action and grass-roots, community-based activity to its full effect, prioritising horizontal structures of power, open debate and decision-making, inclusive action and organic, spontaneous growth.

The events of May 1968 in Paris represented a period of major social upheaval and all-out insurrection that couldn't be contained by the structures of authority on either the left or right. The ruling government of Charles de Gaulle was presiding over a period of relative economic stability and high levels of consumer spending; post-war France had, in material terms, "never had it so good."

And yet the "baby-boomer" generation in France, despite their supposed affluence, were particularly attracted to the radical ideas of Maoism, anarchism and the Situationist International, turning their backs on the perceived backwardness of the bureaucratic institutions of the General Confederation of Labour (CGT) and its close affiliate, the "Stalinist" French Communist Party (PCF).

The uprising of 1968 was a new social movement of students and workers united

against the system as a whole, not for or against any single issue or reform, but in favour of a total break with the past, a radical and complete overhaul that obliterated the status quo in its totality. The situationists, led by Guy Debord offered a radical new vision of society and the individual that drew massive inspiration from the libertarian ethic of anarchism, the self-fulfilling and empowering philosophy of Nietzsche and the early work of Marx that focused attention on theories of alienation and commodity fetishism.

Debord and his intellectual associates were critical of the prevailing ultra-materialistic "mass culture" of capitalism and its consumerist logic, a situationist cartoon once described culture as, "the ideal commodity, the one which helps sell all the others."

The 1960s was a decade of huge significance in terms of cultural and social change that was driven at least in part by counter-cultural youth movements in North America and Western Europe. In the US, in the climate of the Vietnam War, the hippies, like their precursors, the beatniks, launched themselves on rebellious voyages of self-discovery, rejecting the views and the moral order of mainstream society, dodging the draft and organising communes, rock-festivals love-ins, be-ins and sit-ins.

Without being explicitly anarchist, or even always explicitly political, the counter-culture movement consistently followed libertarian principles and many of its participants associated themselves with anarchism or the New Left.

Like the overtly political New Left movement, the counter-culture was fundamentally anarchist without being conscious of it. The counter-culture strove to replace the morally conservative and often religious values of their parents with a new "spirituality" and individualism that emphasised the importance of play, creativity, love, feelings and sensations and were perhaps influenced by situationist texts in their advocacy of a "radical subjectivity;" "Creativity, love and play are to life what the needs for nourishment and shelter are for survival."

Growing their hair, taking drugs, wearing bright clothes and promoting free love, the youth in the counter-culture embarked on an experiment of individualist lifestyle anarchism that worried the establishment. In his essay Listen, Marxist! Murray Bookchin commented that: "The most promising development in the factories today is the emergence of young workers who smoke pot, fuck off on their jobs, drift into and out of factories, grow long

or longish hair, demand more leisure time rather than pay, steal, harass all authority figures, go on wildcats and turn on their fellow workers."

From the movement sprung a number of organisations and affinity groups that took their message of liberation to the streets. Anti-war and anti-nuclear protests were attended by thousands, and the counter-cultures' message of free love and equality gave rise to "second-wave feminism" which addressed the unofficial de facto inequalities and position of women in the family, workplace and society at large.

These groups often employed radical and anarchic rhetoric and means to great effect. The 'Yippies' used political pranks and "symbolic politics" to spread their



anarchist message.

They had no formal membership, hierarchy or organisational structure, but several of them gained celebrity status when they were charged with conspiracy, planning to teach people how to make incendiary devices and incitement to riot outside the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. They had hoped to co-ordinate a six-day Festival of Life to counter the Democratic Party's "Convention of Death," a temporary commune (or Temporary Autonomous Zone) that would host music, theatrics and political stunts that were designed to highlight the absurdity of the status-quo whilst the Party convention went on just down the road. The ensuing riot (instigated by the police) shut down the short-lived festival and eclipsed the nomination of the Democratic national candidate in the media.

By Alison
Trew



This rare article from the long-running anarchist newspaper Freedom looks at the importance of the picket line...

The workers of England have been bestirring themselves again during the past few weeks. This is a good and encouraging sign, although the demands made are comparatively trifling.

It shows a healthy discontent with existing conditions, a kind of feeling that the capitalist is not doing quite the square thing by the worker.

We are sure that at the bottom, this movement is due to the impetus of the energetic revolutionary nucleus of socialists, which now exist in every large industrial centre and amongst every large body of workers in the country.

It is our work to fan the flame by increasing the number of those who strive for a really fair division of the profits of labour, that is to say, for a total abolition of exploitation.

Let us hope, and we have every reason to feel that our wish will be realised, that the growth of those little groups of energetic men, scattered amongst our miners and our artisans, will equal, if not surpass, the growth of socialism, which the recent political census has shown us in the case of Germany.

We use the words "political census," because we cannot regard that election as useful in any other way than as a numbering of the workers' army, although it is of course an incomplete numbering. From the action of Messrs' Babel & Co., in the Reichstag we expect little, but from the 1,341,587 men who registered themselves as uncompromising enemies of the existing order, we hope much.

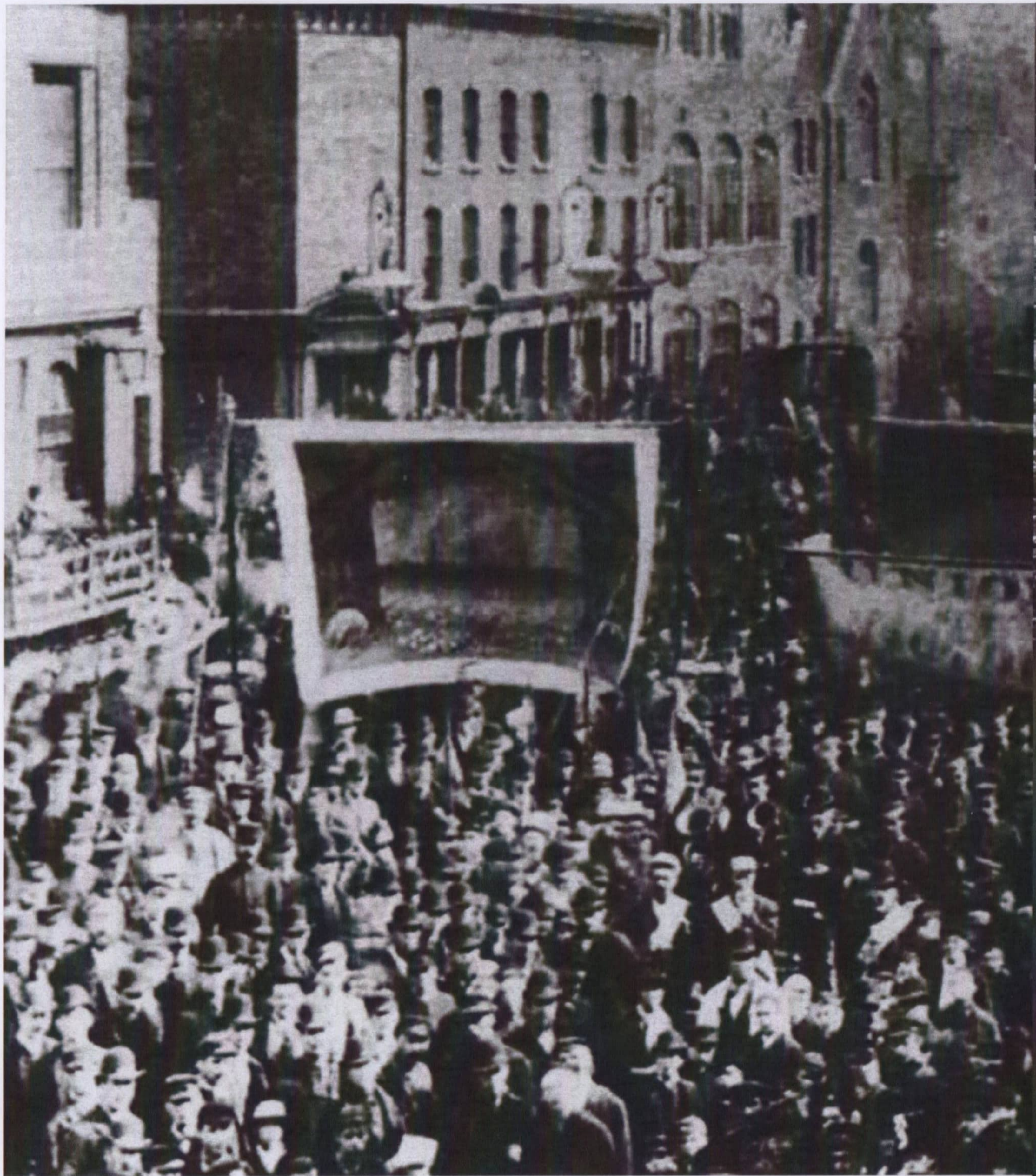
Doubtless the effect of this political census in Germany has been and will be great upon William Hohenzollern and his associates, but far greater was the effect of the miners' strike in Germany last year, and it is to that more than anything that the Berlin Labour Conference, of which some English Socialists make so much, is due.

It is the Strike and not the ballot box which terrorises the exploiter and makes him see the shadow cast before by the coming revolution.

Here in England, there are many amongst the exploiting classes who see dimly the danger ahead, and the capitalist press (and more especially that portion which circulates exclusively amongst the capitalist class, such as the trade journals) contains many articles just now urging the most drastic measures against their slaves who dare to rebel against their will and feebly ask for a higher wage or a shorter working week.

The interference of the state is loudly demanded to put down these troublesome strikes and labour unions. The strong arm of the law is to be invoked not for but against the worker. "We have too much liberty," one trade journal of the highest class shrieks in terrified tones; and indeed we shall not be surprised if the workers speedily have to guard against attempts upon such feeble rights of combination and free action as they possess.

There is perhaps no safer rule of thumb for the worker than to do that which his enemy most denounces and to avoid that which his enemy least objects to.



The use of the **STRIKE**

From Freedom Anarchist Newspaper, April 1890

To be a state socialist, to advocate legislative restriction and to pass resolutions at mass or other meetings is sneered at generally and sometimes faintly praised by the capitalist press, but hold an unemployed meeting or two in Trafalgar Square, organise a strike, or initiate a no-rent campaign, and the enemy unmask himself and charges the workers, who do these dreadful but practical things, with being anarchists, enemies of society, disturbers of the public order.

Long screeds are written, showing the terrible loss entailed on the community by this action, the selfishness of the strikers, the awful suffering of their families

(which is never thought of under other circumstances) and so on.

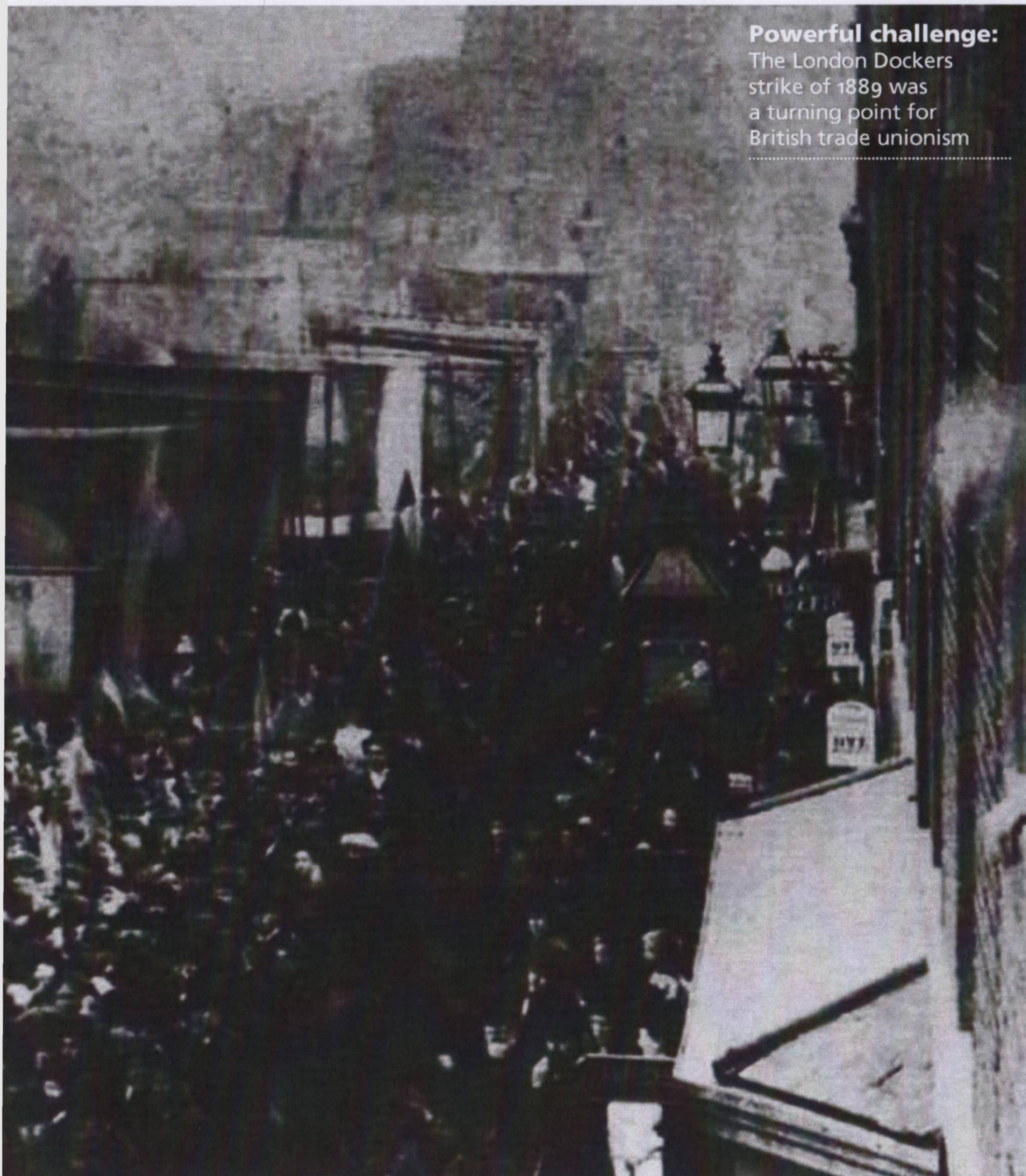
This unmeasured abuse on the part of the capitalists should convince even social democrats that the strike is a useful weapon, which will help the workers much in inaugurating the revolution.

Moreover, it is a weapon which the workers are learning to use with greater and greater effect.

The association of unions, national and international, makes it possible for us to have strikes over a whole country and in more than one country at a time. The recent successful coal strike included about a quarter of a million of men and practically

Powerful challenge:

The London Dockers strike of 1889 was a turning point for British trade unionism



Radical Reprint: Kropotkin's ode to radical action was written as the era of the mass industrial action began

covered England, Wales and a part of Scotland.

The workers are beginning to learn that not only is solidarity needful amongst the members of a trade and amongst all workers, but that the strikes which affect the greatest industrial necessities are the most important.

Coal, the indignant capitalist press tells us, is of the greatest importance to our industries, few of them can go on long if the coal strike lasts.

How delightfully true this is. Why do not our candid enemies go still further and tell us point blank, "if you want a general strike first stop the coal supply."

Dock labour is also a very necessary commodity, at least the capitalists tell us so, and we are quite prepared to believe them.

In fact the capitalist Balsam, in cursing the despised worker at the lowest rung of the ladder is really blessing him; he is

declaring to the entire world that everything would come to a standstill but for the man whose capital is in his hands.

More, he is telling the worker that, if he will but organise himself effectively and freely, make common cause, with his unemployed brother and demand the whole, instead of merely a portion, of the proceeds of his labour, there is nothing to stop him.

Let us, fellow-workers, thank friend Balaam and act upon his advice; let us spread the light in every corner of the land, infusing the spirit of revolution into every mine, factory and workshop.

By so doing, we shall soon have the workers of England no longer asking for trifling increases of wages, but demanding in sturdy tones a cessation of the system of robbery which obtains today.

By Peter
Kropotkin

Strikes: What you should know

Industrial action is defined as any action committed by an employee or employer that means your contract is not fully operative. This could include:

- Strikes.
- Go-slows.
- Lockouts.
- Overtime Bans.
- Work-to-Rule.

"Unofficial" actions such as wildcat strikes and solidarity strikes are technically illegal. In such cases, you are no longer protected by the law and your contract. However, this does not mean that you will be automatically dismissed, since this is up to the discretion of your employer. There have been many instances of wildcat strikes being effective and getting changes made very fast. This is a tactical decision that only you and your fellow workers can make.

Legal striking

To go on "legal" strike workers need to jump through a series of hoops:

- The action must be work-related
- It must be preceded by giving notice to the employer
- The action must be instigated by an officially-recognised trade union
- The union must be the recognised bargaining unit in a given department
- The union must call a secret ballot and accurately list every member in the affected bargaining unit (in larger workplaces, this involves the appointment of an overseer and often leads to legal challenges)
- The secret ballot will usually take around four weeks and publicly states the intended action.
- Industrial action must take place within four weeks of a Yes vote to be valid
- Only balloted members of the union are eligible for protection under the law, non-members can be sacked
- In the event of parallel unofficial action, the union is legally required to publicly voice its opposition

Once on strike, there is a twelve-week threshold beyond which your protection against dismissal ends. Protections then only apply if:

- You personally have been on strike for twelve weeks or less.
- The strike is continuing but you have stopped striking within twelve weeks.
- You have been on strike for over twelve weeks and your employer has not made a 'reasonable' effort to settle the dispute.

While on strike, your employer is not obliged to pay you.

REVIEWS

Failed by dogma

Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism

£70

ISBN: 978-0-75-4636-175

Ralph Darlington

Pub: Ashgate

Theory: Iain McKay strips myths from Darlington's history work

Ralph Darlington's *Syndicalism and the Transition to Communism* seeks to explain both the rise of syndicalism and why Leninism replaced it within the revolutionary left. As such, it is in two parts. The first is an attempt to explain what syndicalism is, its origins, its internal discussions, its growth and decline. The second presents the Leninist critique of syndicalism, based on the Bolsheviks' attempts at "trying to win [the syndicalists] over to Marxism" (183) in the Comintern.

Sadly, his book fails on both counts. With his Marxist prejudices, Darlington fails to seriously investigate obvious sources on the origins of syndicalism in the libertarian wing of the IWMA and instead postulates Marxism as one of its core elements. Yet to proclaim that syndicalism had "core elements of anarchism, Marxism and trade unionism" (76) cannot be done once Bakunin's ideas on the labour movement are acknowledged. His account shows the usual Leninist ignorance about anarchism, is squeezed into the ideological straightjacket that the Bolsheviks were, by definition, right. Sadly, this book will undoubtedly become the standard work used by Leninists to critique syndicalism. Given this, it is worthwhile to document its problems and show how they express preconceived assumptions rather than facts.

A key problem with Darlington's work is that he completely fails to question his Marxist assumptions about anarchism. This can best be seen when he references SWP publications as if they were unproblematic works of scholarship. The flaws in this are exposed when Darlington discusses Italian Anarchism in the 1870s and proclaims that anarchist support rested "in the towns and countryside of the South and had relatively little following in the northern cities." (70) To provide some academic respectability to this claim, he references an SWP book. Consulting that book shows that its author makes no attempt to bolster the claim with anything as trivial as empirical evidence. This is unsurprising, given that Marxist ideology assumes anarchists reject proletarian organisation and so, by definition, they must have been based in the peasantry. In reality the "real stronghold of Italian anarchism was north-central Italy" and "salaried workers, journeymen artisans, and independent artisans predominated" while the peasantry



Street communications:
Urban art in Moscow, 1917

had "the least representation." (Nunzio Pernicone, *Italian Anarchism: 1864-1892*)

This blindness to the reality of anarchism is repeatedly shown. He writes of how with the creation of the CNT "syndicalist principles of revolutionary unionism combined with anarchist notions" (53) but then later admits the Spanish anarchists in the 1870s "organised mainly in working men's associations" and "recommended their supporters to join trade unions and take a forceful role in their activities and direction." After proclaiming that "anarchists increasingly began to look to trade unions as a potential base for support" in the 1890s, he admits that in "Italy anarcho-syndicalism became a potent force after the Russian anarchist Bakunin had arrived in the country in the late 1860s," that Malatesta "became an almost legendary figure for his advocacy of revolutionary action by the trade unions" and the Chicago anarchists in the 1880s "contributed to the building of a Central Labour Union which won the support of most of organised labour in the city." (70-3) So Darlington himself shows how revolutionary anarchists had raised "principles of revolutionary

unionism" decades before the term syndicalism was coined.

So keen to bolster his assertion that syndicalism "was far from an anarchist invention" (73), Darlington proclaims that "[u]nlike the classical anarchists, who sought a social basis for the revolutionary movement amongst the peasants, lumpen-proletariat and petty-bourgeois elements, syndicalists looked to mass working class collective action at the point of production in the workplace to change society" and "to transform the trade unions into revolutionary instruments of the proletariat in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, in the process making the unions, rather than communes, the basic units of a future socialist order." (73-4)

Sadly for Darlington, it is easy to discover that anarchists held the positions he labels syndicalist and did not hold the ones labelled as anarchist. In the works of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta and a host of other "classical" anarchists we discover a focus on the working class, economic class struggle and unions as both a means of struggle and as an unit of a (libertarian) socialist system.

We need more long thinking on the heavy reading that so rarely gets a full hearing

of SWP Marxism

As Kropotkin summarised the anarchists “since the foundation of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864-1866... have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital” and “its protector, – the State.” Workers would become “the managers of production” in a system “of independent Communes for the territorial organisation, and of federations of Trade Unions for the organisation of men in accordance with their different functions.” Unions were both “natural organs for the direct struggle with capitalism and for the composition of the future order.” The clear similarities of the ideas expressed with the syndicalist positions Darlington lists shows the weakness of his case.

Darlington notes that the rise in syndicalist influence across the world was “reflecting a widespread disaffection with parliamentary politics and reformist socialist parties” (57) but he singularly fails to note who argued that workers should organise in political parties and take part in “political action” in the IWMA – Marx and Engels! So if, as Darlington notes, Social Democracy had become reformist this suggests that Bakunin, not Marx, had been vindicated. Even worse for Darlington’s case, both Marx and Engels explicitly opposed syndicalist ideas when they were raised by libertarians in the IWMA.

Darlington praises the Bolsheviks for recognising the necessity for insurrection,



A key problem is that he completely fails to question his Marxist assumptions

“[u]nlike the syndicalists, who identified the general strike with social revolution.” (249) Yet we are not indebted to the Bolsheviks for this insight, given that Malatesta had raised it in 1907 at the International Anarchist Conference. He quotes Pataud and Pouget’s 1909 syndicalist novel *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution* while proclaiming that syndicalists aimed to “circumvent the state” (41) before admitting that for these French syndicalists “the concept of the general strike merged gradually with the older concepts of insurrection and revolutionary seizure of power.” (42) Pataud

and Pouget themselves write of how the general strike “very soon changed into an insurrectional strike.”

Darlington states that for Marx and Engels “the capitalist state had to be replaced by a new and transitional form of workers’ state, founded on workers’ councils.” (253) For Engels, though, the “democratic republic” was “the specific form for the dictatorship of the proletariat” and did not write of anything close to a soviet republic, as expressed by Bakunin:

“the Alliance of all labour associations... will constitute the Commune... [with] a Revolutionary Communal Council... [made up of] delegates... invested with binding mandates and accountable and revocable at all times... all provinces, communes and associations... [will] delegate deputies to an agreed place of assembly (all... invested with binding mandated and accountable and subject to recall), in order to found the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces... and to organise a revolutionary force with the capacity of defeating the reaction...”

This reflects the local federation of unions and Trades Unions Congress in *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution* or Darlington’s account of how the soviets were formed. (254) So the vision of socialism being based on workers councils is found in Bakunin and not Marx.

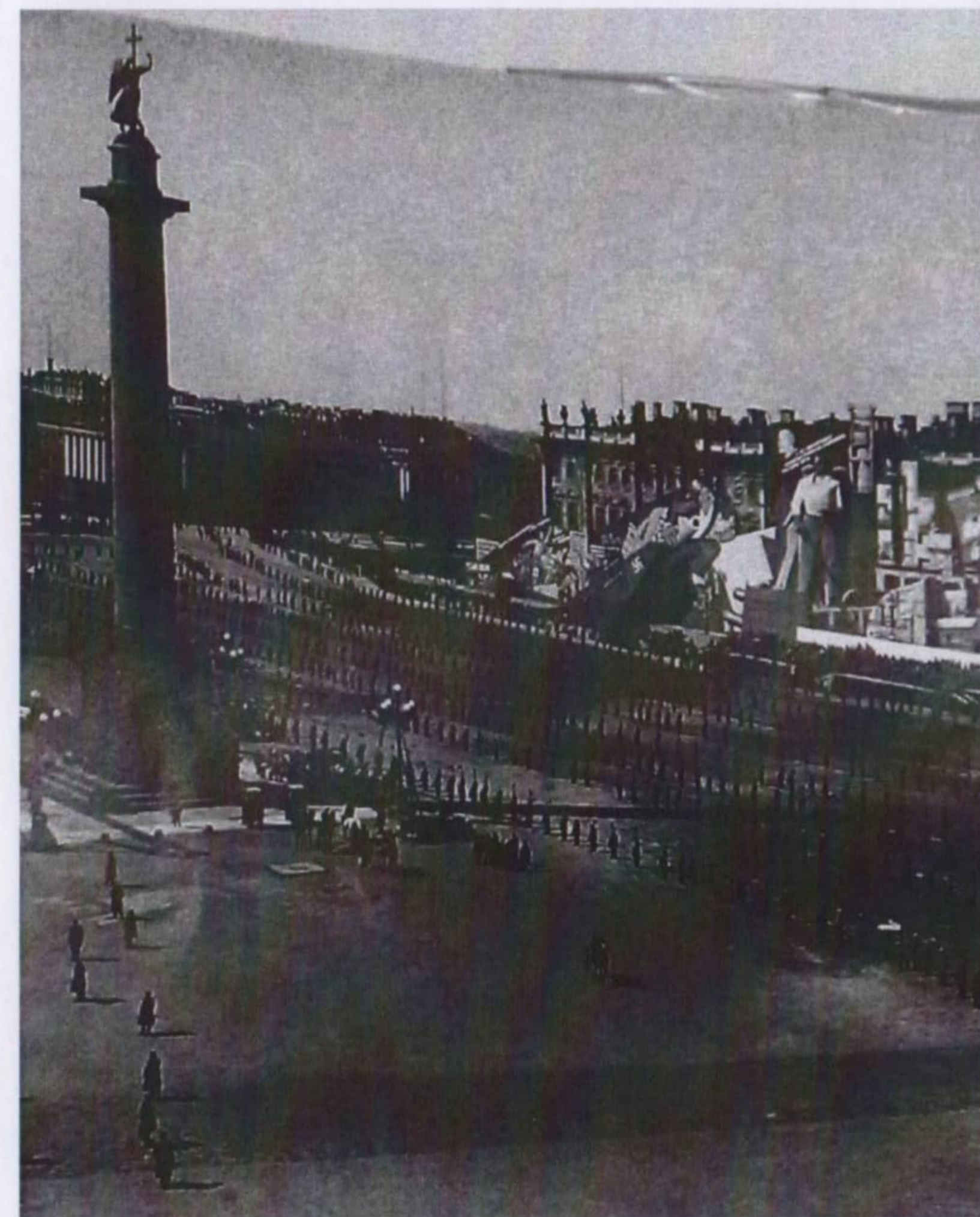
For Darlington there must be “a transitional period... during which time the working class would have to arm and organise itself against the threat of counter-revolution through the establishment of a workers’ state.” (252) Yet when Bakunin argued against Marx’s “dictatorship of the proletariat” he did not deny the need to defend a revolution. The same can be said of syndicalists, with Pataud and Pouget writing a chapter entitled “The Arming of the People” and the CNT’s 1936 resolution on Libertarian Communism having a section entitled “Defence of the Revolution.” Anarchist rejection of the Marxist “transitional” state lies in our analysis of the state.

The so-called “workers’ state” would produce a new ruling elite simply because it was a state and, consequently, a centralised, top-down social structure. As the Russian Revolution showed, the Marxist “transitional state” was only transitional from one form of class rule (capitalists) to another (party/bureaucracy).

Darlington fails to discuss the realities of Bolshevik power, refusing to mention that leading Bolsheviks publicly advocated party-dictatorship and tried to turn it into a truism for the revolutionary movement at the Second Congress of the Comintern. He does recognise that something

eventually went wrong in Russia yet soviet democracy, a workers’ militia and workers’ self-management of production were all destroyed under Lenin and Trotsky. We get a similar superficial analysis of the Spanish Revolution, with Darlington failing to mention the social context for the (flawed) decisions of the CNT-FAI. Instead, he blames it on syndicalist theory in spite of that arguing the opposite.

As far as critiques of syndicalism go, those seeking a real one are best served by reading Malatesta’s 1907 speech than Darlington’s book. Every valid aspect of the Leninist critique of syndicalism Darlington defends was first formulated



far better by Malatesta – whether on the reformist pressures on trade unions, union bureaucracy, the need to turn the general strike into an insurrection and for political organisations to work within unions to introduce and maintain a revolutionary spirit.

Yet this short but powerful critique of syndicalism is summed up as “Malatesta challenged [the syndicalists] for not being sufficiently ‘revolutionary.’” (73)

So we get a Leninism cleansed in a bath of democratic niceties which is contrasted to an account of syndicalism which, at time, goes into caricature. While this would be expected in a SWP rant against libertarian ideas, it is unacceptable for a work seeking academic acceptability.

By Iain McKay



Not forgotten,

Review: Book of prisoner support bulletins keeps their memory alive

The Tragic Procession — Alexander Berkman and Russian Prisoner Aid, 1923-1931

£8
ISBN: 978-1-873605-90-5
Pub: Kate Sharpley Library &
Alexander Berkman Social Club
96pp

The Kate Sharpley Library and Alexander Berkman Social Club collectives have recently produced a beautiful book containing complete facsimile reprints of the Bulletin of the Joint Committee for the Defense of Revolutionists Imprisoned in Russia, and the Bulletin of the Relief Fund of the International Working Men's Association for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned or Exiled in Russia, which were originally published from 1923-1931.

These bulletins were produced and edited over the years by Alexander Berkman, Mark Mratchny, Milly Witcop, Rudolf Rocker, and others. They were part of the campaign to record and highlight the plight of a whole generation of anarchists and revolutionists imprisoned, exiled, or executed by the Bolshevik regime in Russia.

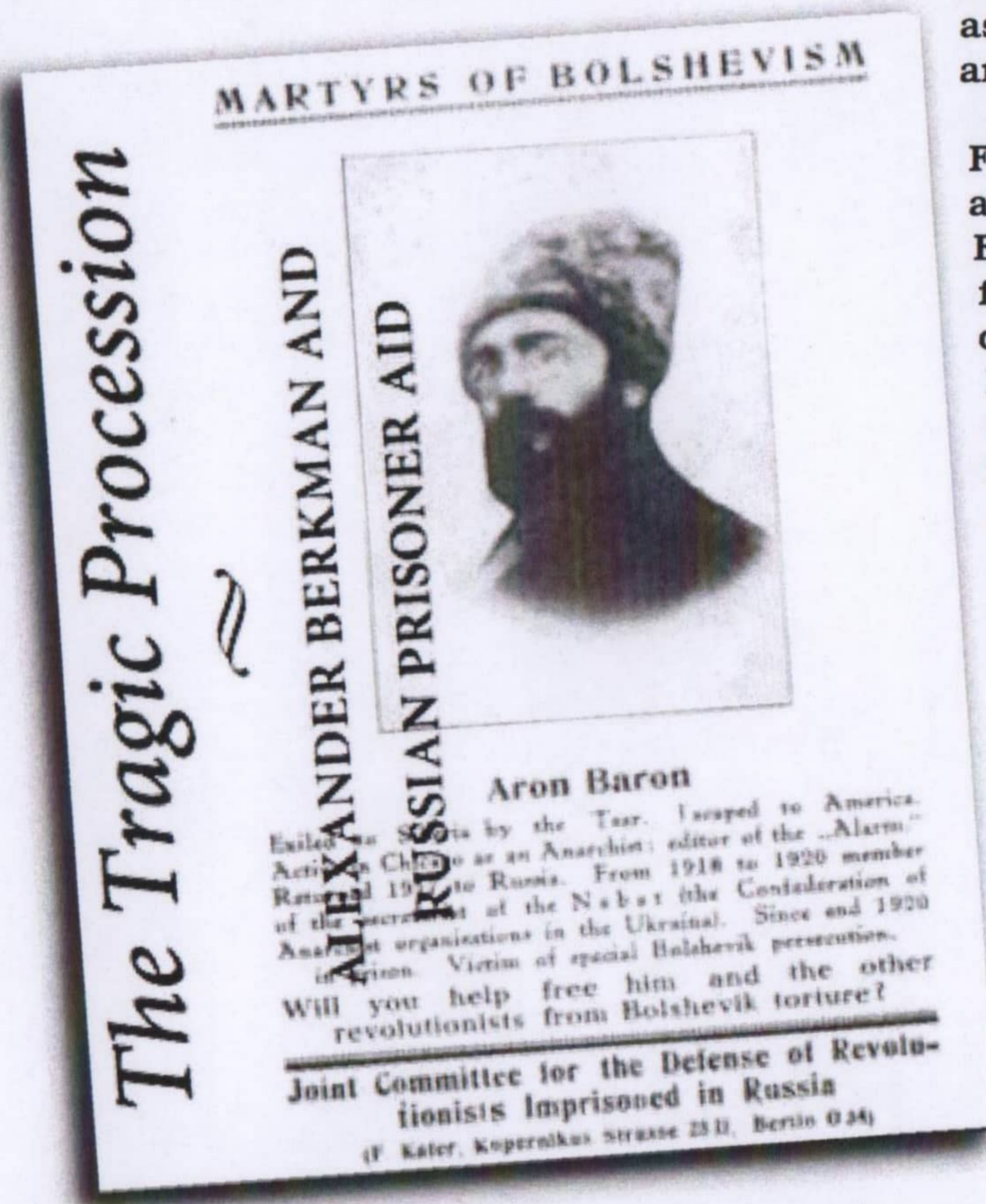
The bulletins themselves have also come to illustrate the tireless efforts of those outside Russia who, often living in very difficult circumstances of their own, struggled to maintain contact and provide material aid with their imprisoned and exiled comrades within Russia, and to publicise their fate.

As well as acting as an inspiring memorial to those many countless comrades who struggled and became martyrs under Bolshevism, these reprints help serve as a warning today of the potential dangers if, for example, contemporary "anti-capitalist" struggle and revolt were to fall victim to unlibertarian tendencies.

As the Alexander Berkman Social Club put it in their introduction: "When we talk to any Marxists, these dead should never be forgotten, never mind that the Bolshevik beast ate its own children as well"

Writing together in January 1922 in the English-language anarchist paper Freedom, Alexander Berkman and Emma Golden, probably with Alexander Schapiro, accused the Bolsheviks of putting "the best revolutionary elements of the country" in their prisons. Anarchists, Left Socialist revolutionaries, Maximalists, members of the workers' opposition, were all rotting in the prisons formerly used by the old Tsarist regime.

In 1917 Berkman had been enthusiastic not just about the Russian Revolution but even about the rise of the Bolsheviks.



His deportation to Russia from the United States in 1919 gave him a chance to see and experience the realities of the revolution at first hand. By January 1922 he was in a state of disillusion and anguish at the repressive way the revolution had gone, and he left Russia with Goldman and Schapiro. His pamphlets *The Russian Tragedy* and *The Kronstadt Rebellion* were published later that year when he had moved to Berlin.

Soon the focus of his work shifted to publicising the cases of those comrades in Russian prisons or in Russian internal exile, as well as fundraising and material support for those facing hardship as external exiles and refugees. Many international anarchist groups sprang up at this time to support the Russian prisoners, and the Anarchist Black Cross still operated as well as it could inside Russia up to 1925 before being suppressed. The first Bulletin was produced by a joint committee of Anarchists, Anarcho-Syndicalists, and Social Revolutionaries, and came out in Berlin in October 1923. Recording the names of anarchists and revolutionists arrested and exiled in Russia, and their whereabouts, proved to be a huge task.

The Bulletin was primarily the work of Berkman and Mratchny, with I.N. Steinberg contributed material on imprisoned left Socialist Revolutionaries. Other contributors included Rudolf Rocker, Augustin Souchy, and Fritz Kater. Kater published the Bulletin,

as well as Berkman's pamphlets on Russia, through Der Syndicalist printing group. Berkman replied to concerns expressed by some anarchists about the Bulletin's support for non-anarchists by stating: "Supplying bread to Maria Spiridonova (who is a Left Socialist Revolutionist) is just as imperative as to aid Baron (who is an anarchist)."

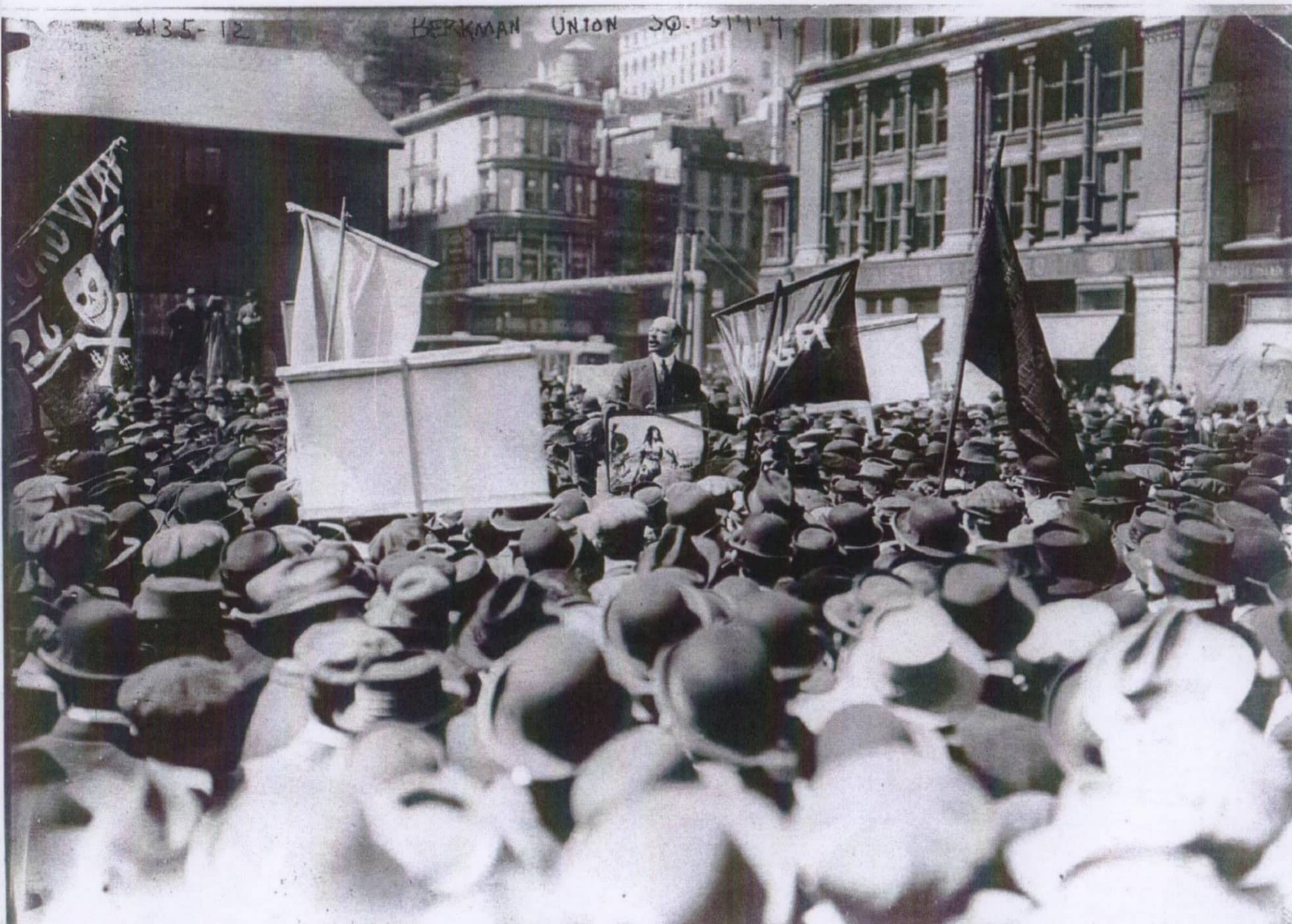
The Bulletin was issued in English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian, and also, sometimes in Dutch and Esperanto. It carried constant appeals for money, and printed scrupulous detailed accounts. By the end of 1926 the Bulletin was taken under the wing of the anarcho-syndicalist International Working Men's Association and became the Bulletin of the Relief Fund for Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists Imprisoned or Exiled in Russia. Prominent figures Mollie Steimer, Senya Fleshin, and Volin took on more prominent roles in the Relief Fund.



As well as being exhausting, obsessive, and time-consuming, Russian Prisoner aid left its activists isolated from the mainstream political movements, and reliant on a dwindling anarchist support base. In a letter to her nephew in December 1924, Emma Goldman complained that the leading English anarchist newspaper Freedom only had eighty-three subscribers. By that time the situation in many countries was just as dire.

In the early 1920s maintaining contact with prisoners in Russia and sending them aid was difficult but still possible. But problems grew with the increasing numbers

then or now



Anarchist rally: Alexander Berkman addressing a crowd in New York's Union Square in 1914

of those being arrested, and obtaining information became more difficult. Contact with prisoners began to seriously deteriorate around 1935, and by 1939 had ceased altogether.

Political activists today who are concerned by police "kettling" tactics, FIT team harassment, and so on, should consider that nothing is new. The first Bulletin in October 1923 reports that: "On July 9, 1923, 41 anarchists were arrested in Petrograd, and 16 "Zassadas" took place in the city. A "Zassada means that police surround a house, permit no-one to leave it, for hours or for days, as the case might be, and arrest everyone who visits the place.

Fascinating detailed lists of names of many comrades arrested are accompanied by illuminating brief descriptions of their work or trade, and their political histories, together with reports on their sentences or exiles.

Prison overcrowding is nothing new either. Correspondence reports: "All the prisons and concentration camps in the North are so overfilled that new arrivals are refused admission. In August 1923, the left S.R. Lida Surkova was sent by the Petrograd GPU to the Petcherski Krai for three years. Owing to the overcrowding she failed to be accepted"

Later, in March 1928, the commentary in Bulletin no.5 reports on the growing irony of Bolshevik repression, as the juggernaut of the dictatorship ends up rolling over its own creators, including the purging of Trotsky and Zinoviev; crushed by their own paranoid Marxist theory.

The November 1927 Bulletin summarises

the "achievements" of the first ten years of Bolshevism in comparison to the desires of the Russian Revolution: "The workers wanted the opportunity to use the tools and machinery they had themselves made; they wanted to use them to create more wealth and to enjoy that wealth. The peasant wanted free access to the land and a chance to cultivate it without being robbed of the products of his hard toil.



For anyone interested in radical history and social history this is a book of many gems

But "under the cover of the motto, 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', it [the party] began to build a centralised, bureaucratic state." And "freedom of thought, of the press, of public assembly, self-determination of the worker and of his unions, the initiative and freedom of labour, all this was declared old rubbish, 'bourgeois prejudices'. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' became the absolutism of a handful of Bolsheviks in the Kremlin."

This same Bulletin gives a long list, with brief details about them, of just a

small part of the known imprisoned and exiled anarchists amongst the thousands of political prisoners. This selected list in small type, almost requiring a magnifying glass to read, already contains nearly a hundred entries. You begin to realise that what you are seeing here is not just the convulsion and wrenching and fragmenting and dispersing of individuals, but of partners, relationships, extended families, friendship networks, and whole communities. The process begins to approach a cultural genocide.

By the way, for today's romantic ultra-communists, it should be pointed out that the disappearance of the value of all money is not in all circumstances something to be welcomed.

And here we see evidence of a deliberate imposed starvation policy, as a correspondent exiled in Russia's far north describes (p40): "In the Spring I was transferred to a little hamlet that contains only 60 huts. The hamlet is about 200 versts from the nearest village and more than 1,000 miles from any railroad station. The poverty here is incredible. You can't buy anything.

"With my woman companion I go every day to the woods to search for any berries left from last year, such as vakcinio and oksikoko (red whortleberry and mossberry). This is our food. Unfortunately, there will soon be none even of that."

And they continue: "In the novels of Jack London I have read of the gold-seekers in the Canadian primitive forests who some time lose their way and have to subsist on berries, mushrooms and similar things. But I can tell you that it sounds much better in the novel than it is in real life." Exiles such as these were also often stripped of their Party-controlled union card, depriving them of access to work and income.

For anyone interested in radical history and social history, this book is a mine of many gems, helping tell the story of unfolding political events, struggle, and tragedy, in the 1920s and early 1930s, both in relation to Russia, and to the wider international scene.

But this book isn't just for the historians. It proclaims loudly for today that we should not forget our martyrs, and we must always stand by our imprisoned comrades around the world, however difficult the circumstances. And it proclaims that the lesson of past revolutions and their sacrifices is that the masses should never again trust their fate to any hands but their own. Only the self-organisation of the workers and their communities, and their organised libertarian solidarity can carry struggle and social revolt to a liberating outcome.

By Paul
Petard



But just where is

The Emperor of All Maladies,
a biography of cancer

£9.99

ISBN: 978-143910-7-95-9

by Siddhartha Mukherjee

Pub: Fourth Estate

400pp

Review: A decent history of cancer which misses out the social side

As someone who had cancer 25 years ago, I was intrigued by this book and while reading it, many of the forgotten details of my long chemotherapy treatment came vividly back. However, I found the subtitle misleading, for this is not the story of a dreaded, often-fatal illness but an account of the attempts by hundreds of doctors to find an effective medical cure.

They can be described as courageous, conscientious, dedicated and indeed fascinating but it does neglect the full social description, consequences and suchlike. The book is written as a narrative of the characters and activities of this international band of research doctors, a clever technique which keeps the reader's interest through the complex tale. Many sufferers will be interested I'm sure in the unfolding account of the treatment as it is discovered and applied, as I was of Hodgkin's disease, or lymph node cancer. The gap is around the social content.

The book opens with some historical accounts going right back to 2,500 BC in Egypt. It skips though the Greek physicians and the blundering of doctors in the middle-ages to arrive at the last 100 years, not much further forward. Mukherjee takes us though the Curies partnership and dyes for cell staining to the serious research, mostly in the USA where money for potential drug manufacture was used imaginatively. One pioneer was Dr Sidney Farber but many others followed.

Adverts and public relations exercises were promoted whilst the research laboratories struggled on, recording both big and small successes following the Second World War. Millions of dollars were collected and used. Eventually, legislation and a national centre became operational. Cancer causing agents such as, carcinogens, animal experiments, and academic histories all feature in the story which focuses on the heroic doctors, their long winded trials, and depressing personal accounts of cancer victims.

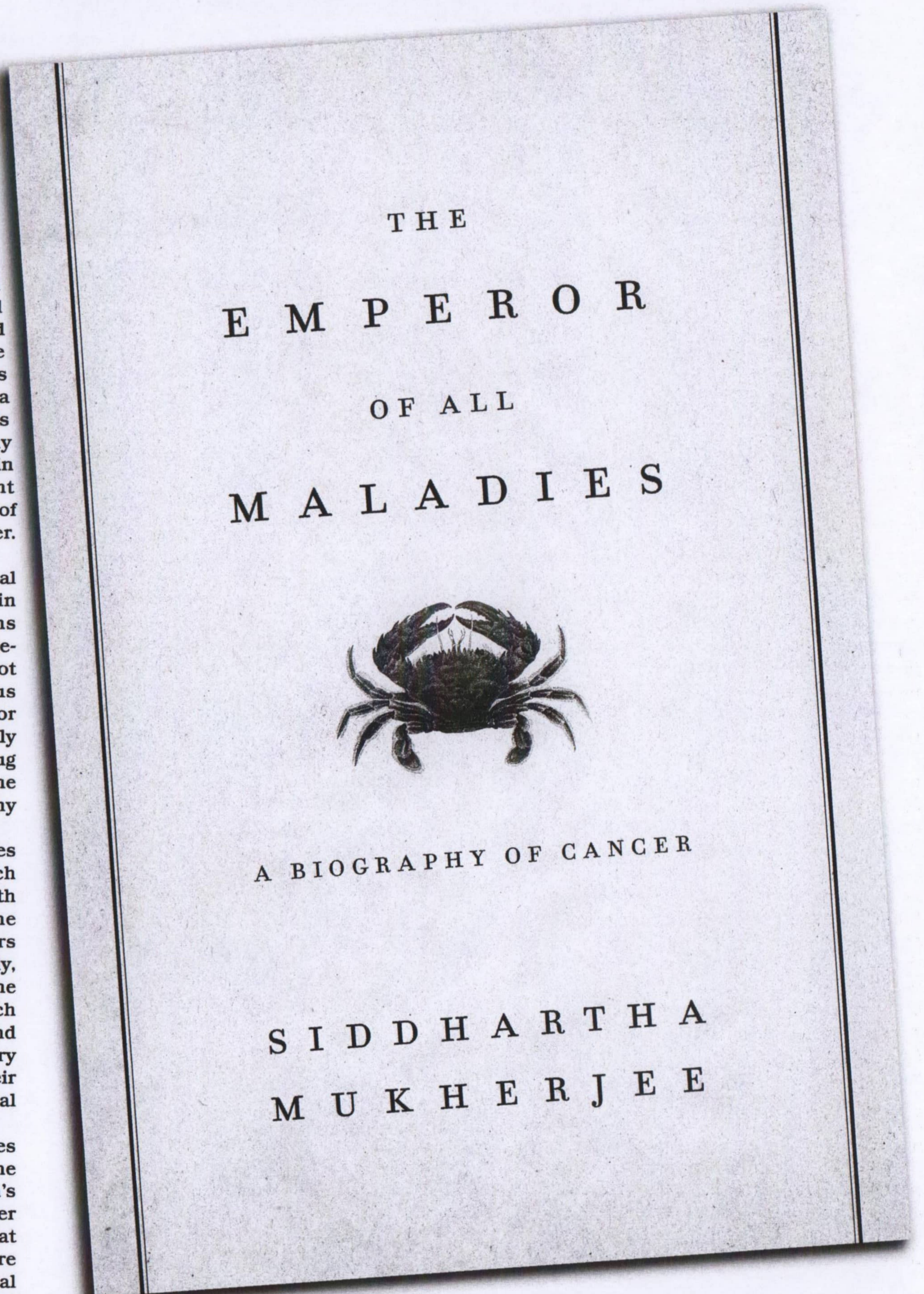
However thousands of successful cases are described, and the story ends in the present day, where victims of Hodgkin's disease, childhood leukaemia, breast cancer and others are in long-term remission, that is more than five years. Despite a failure to find the "magic bullet" or universal cure, some positive results are recorded due to the diligence of the doctors in their laboratories in advancing treatments for specific cancers.

The main approach is historical, but there is also an autobiographical element as the author relays some cases from his

years of experience. These include some examples of advanced stage cancer that had spread from its original site to other areas of the body. This is called metastasis and presents a bigger challenge to the doctors. One such example is Carla, who survived

acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, despite very adverse social conditions.

My own case had reached Stage four, so I was subjected to a lengthy and severe regime of chemotherapy at the North Middlesex Hospital, under the excellent haematology



the killer crab?

department of Dr Kumaran. The book itself takes us through the mysterious and threatening AIDS period and into the era of research into viruses, the use of screening and palliative care. The struggle is projected beyond the present and future updates will be required.



The major element is the weakness of the text regarding our exposure to carcinogens in society

Readers are likely to be impressed with this Pulitzer Prize-winning volume, which has plenty of supplementary explanations like a glossary, interview with the author, extensive notation and literary references as well. Personally, I must admit that the complexity of processes and medical terminology became a bit too much at around page 350, and I skimmed some pages after that. However, I cannot but recommend it for the valuable work it does.

So what can be said of the missing social content? The whole project is perhaps flawed from the start as the search into medical solutions for the disease has been overshadowed in the past by more effective social solutions.

Even so, the major element is the weakness of the text regarding our exposure to carcinogens in society. Whilst there is ample evidence of smoking and lung cancer, the story of the tobacco bosses' anti-social subversion of health for corporate profit is a familiar one. More crucial is the way that capitalist industry recklessly uses chemicals in workplaces with no more than nominal regard for consequences for those so exposed. This is the domain of occupational cancer, where the law is weak and the dominant motivation even weaker. Avoiding compensation seems to be the main target.

Again my own experience comes into play. For several decades I was engaged in working on courses for trade union representatives. One section of which was concerned health and safety at work. My illness then became a theme, as it was probably caused, as are many cases, by workplace exposure, in this case to benzene.

Of course the outstanding case of this specific aspect is asbestos. A model of employers' irresponsibility and evasion, asbestos was extensively used in various forms throughout industry, construction and even in protective equipment. See Alan Dalton's classic *Asbestos Killer Dust* (Dalton). While this substance was the

pioneering example, other carcinogens have been discovered in use in dozens of products, processes and workplace environments. This was often the result of bodies like the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, SSRS, and associated hazards at work campaigns.

This resulted in many local centres promoting serious work round health and safety at work, such as the London Hazards Centre, and was welcomed by many union members in the workplaces but not the institutionalised union leadership — too much like upsetting comfortable arrangements.

Such is the invasion of capitalist values that while information of profitability and investment are common, there was, and is also now, no serious or systematic investigation of the ill health of employees and their exposure in work to carcinogens. Investigation is left to voluntary initiatives. Official state bodies are often too tied up in procedures and routine.

Mukherjee glosses over the workplace link. It is possibly too close to hardcore commercialism and its funding role in the work of doctors. His text concentrates on the personalities and activities of the experimenters, a more pleasant and acceptable aspect. His pages on prevention and exposure to hazardous agents are brief and superficial.

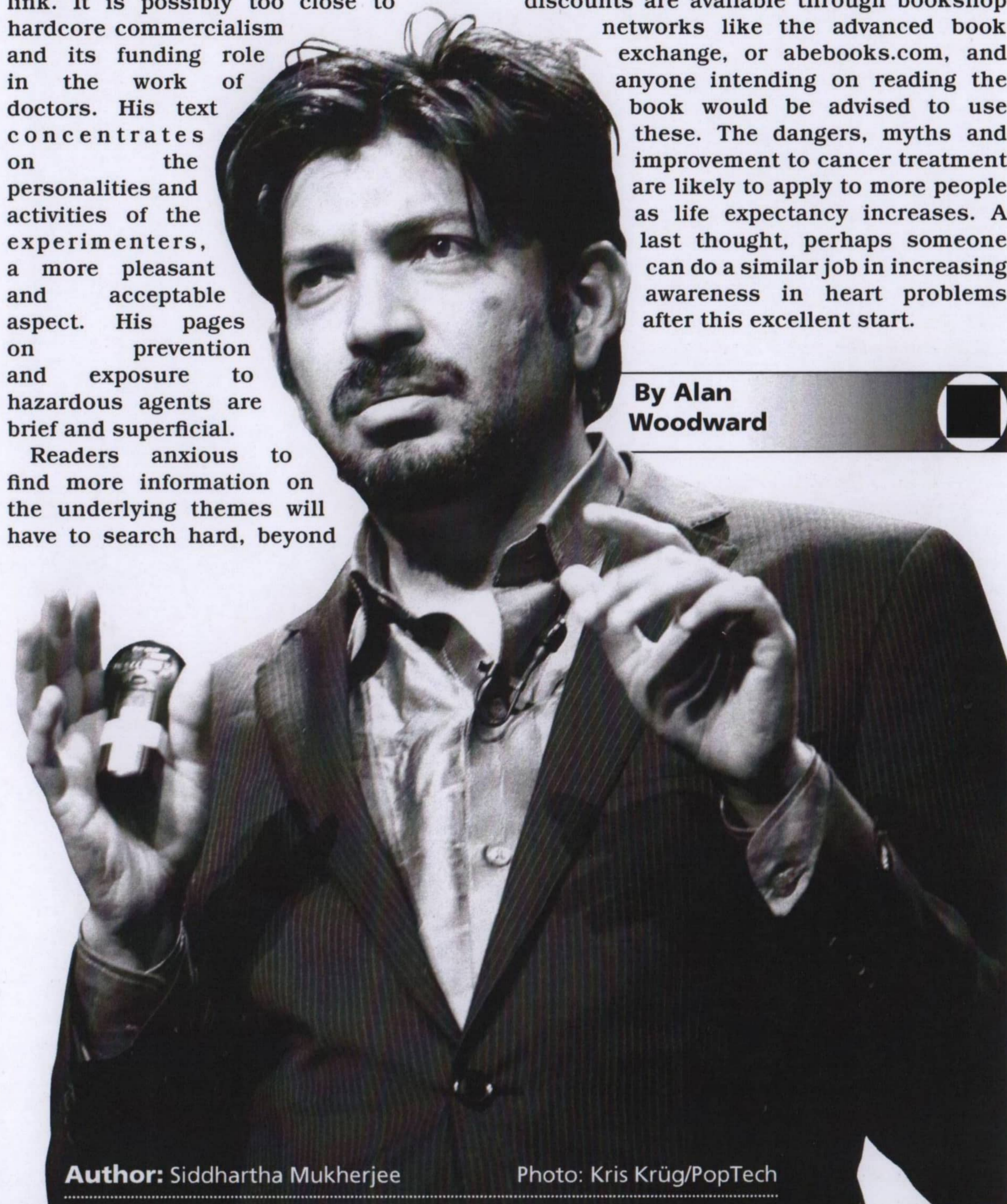
Readers anxious to find more information on the underlying themes will have to search hard, beyond

the reports of the privately-owned health management organisations. Research from Canada on the barriers to the recognition of occupation cancer, for example, is both wider and more detailed (Brophy and Keith).

Accounts of the social role in ill health go back many years. A lifelong British anarchist doctor John Hewetson published a searing account in 1946 and in more recent years, New York doctor, Samuel S Epstein, gave a long account of *What You Can Do To Prevent Cancer* in his encyclopaedic book [Epstein]. A British writer from the SSRS school, Pat Kinnersly, produced a trade union representative guidebook on *The Hazards of Work*; how to fight them, written in non-technical language, which is packed with relevant and comprehensible information. This episode of challenge to the existing authority in the workplace can be viewed as a forerunner for the bigger problem of climate change. Both involve a polluted atmosphere due to the unplanned and haphazard use of resources.

This book is quite expensive. Of course discounts are available through bookshop networks like the advanced book exchange, or abebooks.com, and anyone intending on reading the book would be advised to use these. The dangers, myths and improvement to cancer treatment are likely to apply to more people as life expectancy increases. A last thought, perhaps someone can do a similar job in increasing awareness in heart problems after this excellent start.

By Alan Woodward



Author: Siddhartha Mukherjee

Photo: Kris Krüg/PopTech

Hob's Choice

Hob's Choice was born out of a radical publishing project called Hobnail Press, which published, amongst other things, a regular review zine called Hobnail Review, which ceased publication in 2008. (For further information on HR and small press publishing in general refer to BF229 and BF228 respectively).

The focus of Hob's Choice is to mini-review new and recently published pamphlets.

Each review includes publishing details, contents summary and occasional comment. Publishers, groups and individuals are invited to share their pamphleteering endeavours with Black Flag readers.

Since Hob's Choice first appeared in issue 229 almost 50 pamphlets have been subjected to Hob's scrutiny.

In this issue thanks go to SmothPubs, Past Tense and the Kate Sharpley Library for kindly submitting material.

and insisting on the need for public-sector workers to except a lowering of living standards, extending even to the armed forces, in the national interest... the year was 1931, and one of the first and most effective shows of resistance came in an unexpected quarter."

This is the story of how the Royal Navy mutinied in protest against the cut-backs and worsening conditions – and won! The pamphlet is based on the various sources available and is probably one of the best overviews from a libertarian socialist perspective written to date.

Past Tense

May Day in South London: A History

Neil Transpontine. 2011.
A5 format. 50pp.
Price £3.
c/o 56a infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, UK

for the eight-hour day and the Chicago Martyrs.

Local statistics tell of up to 500,000 marchers making their way from Westminster Bridge to Hyde Park on May Day 1892. The pamphlet then proceeds to plot the course of various radical May Day activities up to the present day south of the river and beyond.

Unwaged Fightback: A History of Islington Action Group of the Unwaged 1980-86.

2011.
A5 format. 54pp.
Price £3.
c/o 56a infoshop, 56a Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE, UK

This is a reprint of a pamphlet first published in 1987 by the Campaign for Real Life. It appears in its original format, (including reproductions of leaflets and texts), the only changes are re-typesetting and some explanatory notes; important as memories fade over the years- times, dates, places and names become forgotten. It also helps a new generation of activists put things into perspective.

What's important about re-publishing material that's 30 years old is the similarities of the economic climate then, with today's harsh realities of austerity, cuts and rationalisation programmes.

It is also useful to look at models of class resistance and struggle for the battle we face today.

The political landscape has changed somewhat today, but the struggle against the state and capital is, in essence, the same.

In the words of the editors: "Our motive for reprinting this text, as with all past tense projects, as struggles around the dole are likely to become hugely important, but to take lessons, inspiration, ideas from struggles and movements of the past.

"By this we don't mean slavishly following old models, but taking what's useful and adding to it with our own experiences."

The story of Islington Action Group of the Unwaged is the story of unwaged workers organising their own struggles, without the dictates of professional politicians, self-styled leaders and vanguardist political groups.

Again, in the words of the editors: "As we said we're not offering answers, just contributions to debate.

"We hope reprinting this text forms part of that process."

Well worth a read.

Kate Sharpley Library

A Grand Cause: The Hunger Strike and the Deportation of Anarchists from Soviet Russia

Grigorii Petrovich Maksimov. 2011.
A5 format. 34pp.
Price £3.
BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX, UK

We can always rely on the KSL to continue



SmothPubs

Invergordon 1931. Shipshape and Mutiny Fashion: How they fought the pay cuts.

Liz Willis. 2011.
A5 format, 12pp.
Price 70p.
SmothPubs.blogspot.com

This is the unedited and extended version of the Invergordon Mutiny feature that appeared in the last issue of BF. In 1931 the National Government announced pay cuts which included the armed forces.

In the introduction the author writes: "Financial crisis, national (coalition) government imposing a programme of drastic cuts in wages, supposedly forced on them by the state of the world economy,

A seasonally apt pamphlet based on a talk originally given in 2003 by the South London Radical History Group, on the origins of May Day and how it was celebrated in South London.

It traces its roots back to early pre-Christian pagan times and the spring festivities and frolics associated with the Celtic festival of Beltane, progressing to medieval pageantry while taking in the folkloric aspects of Jack-in-the-Green, Robin Hood, May Poles and the like. Popular celebrations were often suppressed by the authorities as subversive and lawless assemblies, which often culminated in days of rioting.

The pamphlet eventually brings us to the late 19th century with the origins of International Workers Day, the struggle

The printed word and the art of radical pamphleteering must be kept alive. It is a revolutionary tradition that cannot be allowed to die



biography of Grigoriy Maksimov (1893-1950) written by Anatoly Dubovik (2005).

In 1921 the prisoners embarked on hungerstrike in an attempt to secure their freedom, co-inciding with the International Congress of Red Trade Unions (Profintern), which many anarchists were scheduled to attend, hoping to draw attention to their plight.

A conference delegation, including luminaries such as Alexander Berkman and Tom Mann, lobbied both Lenin and Dzherzhinsky, founder of the Cheka secret police, regarding the plight of incarcerated comrades. After 11 days the hunger strikers won.

The government bowed to pressure and declared: "In the name of the government I have the following to announce to you: if you give up your hunger strike, you will be released and deported abroad."

After a 10-minute consultation the terms were accepted.

However a number of months passed before they were released and issued with the necessary travel documents allowing them to leave Russia.

Eventually though, in Maksimov's words, "life had triumphed over death..."

Not only would I recommend readers to get hold of this pamphlet, I would also recommend the work from which it was taken, *The Guillotine at Work*.

Free Society: A German Exile in Revolutionary Spain

Werner Droescher.

Introduction Farrell Cleary. 2012.

A5 format. 30pp.

Price £3.

BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX, UK

Werner Droescher was a German teacher and libertarian, who fled Nazi Germany to Spain in 1933 as a "non-political radical" and opponent of Nazism but soon to find himself caught up in the Spanish revolution.

Joining POUM, he was later attached to the Durruti Column.

The pamphlet is divided into four parts. It starts with a biographical introduction to Droescher's life.

Droescher left Spain in 1938, eventually ending up in New Zealand via Germany and England.

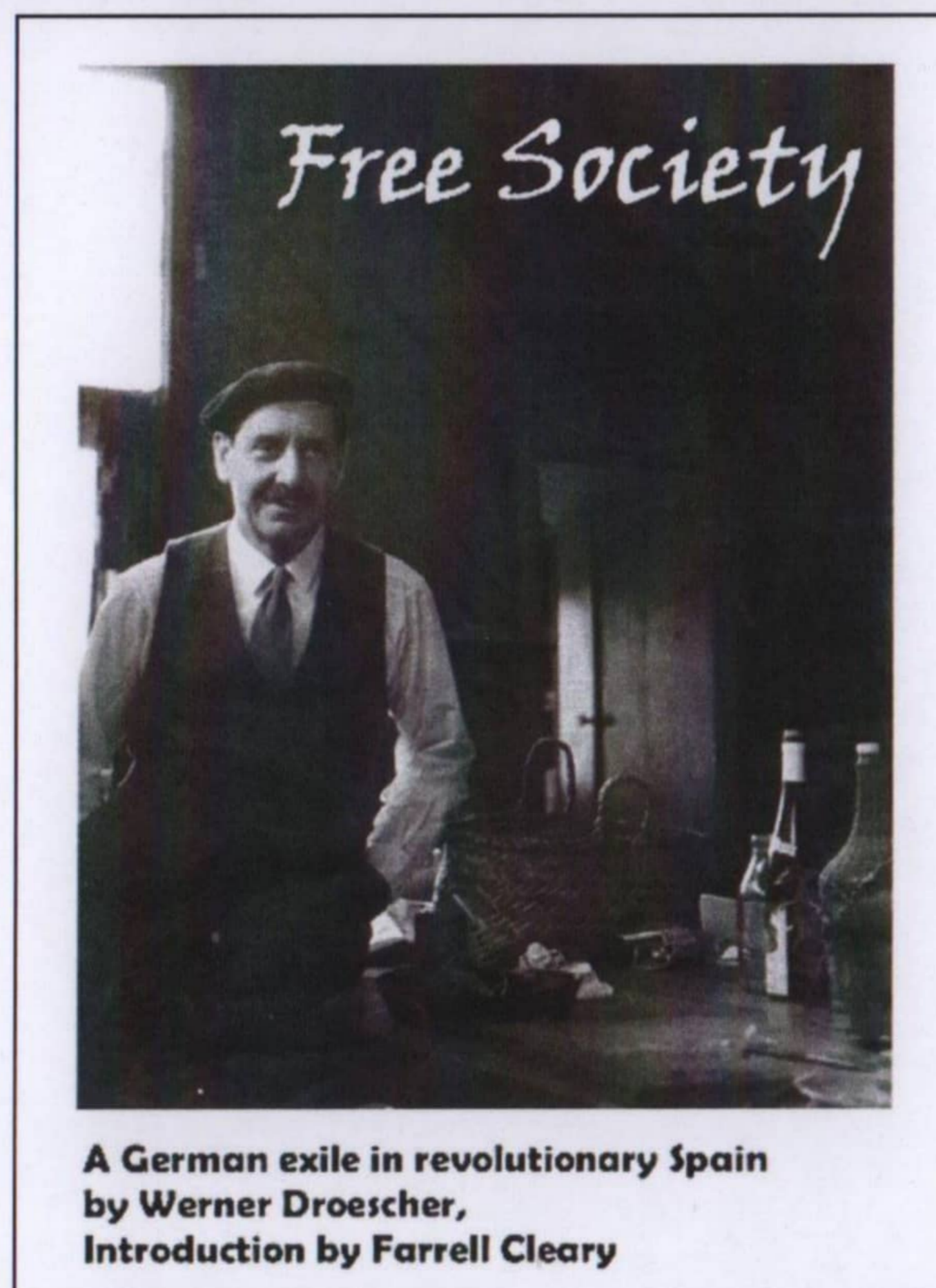
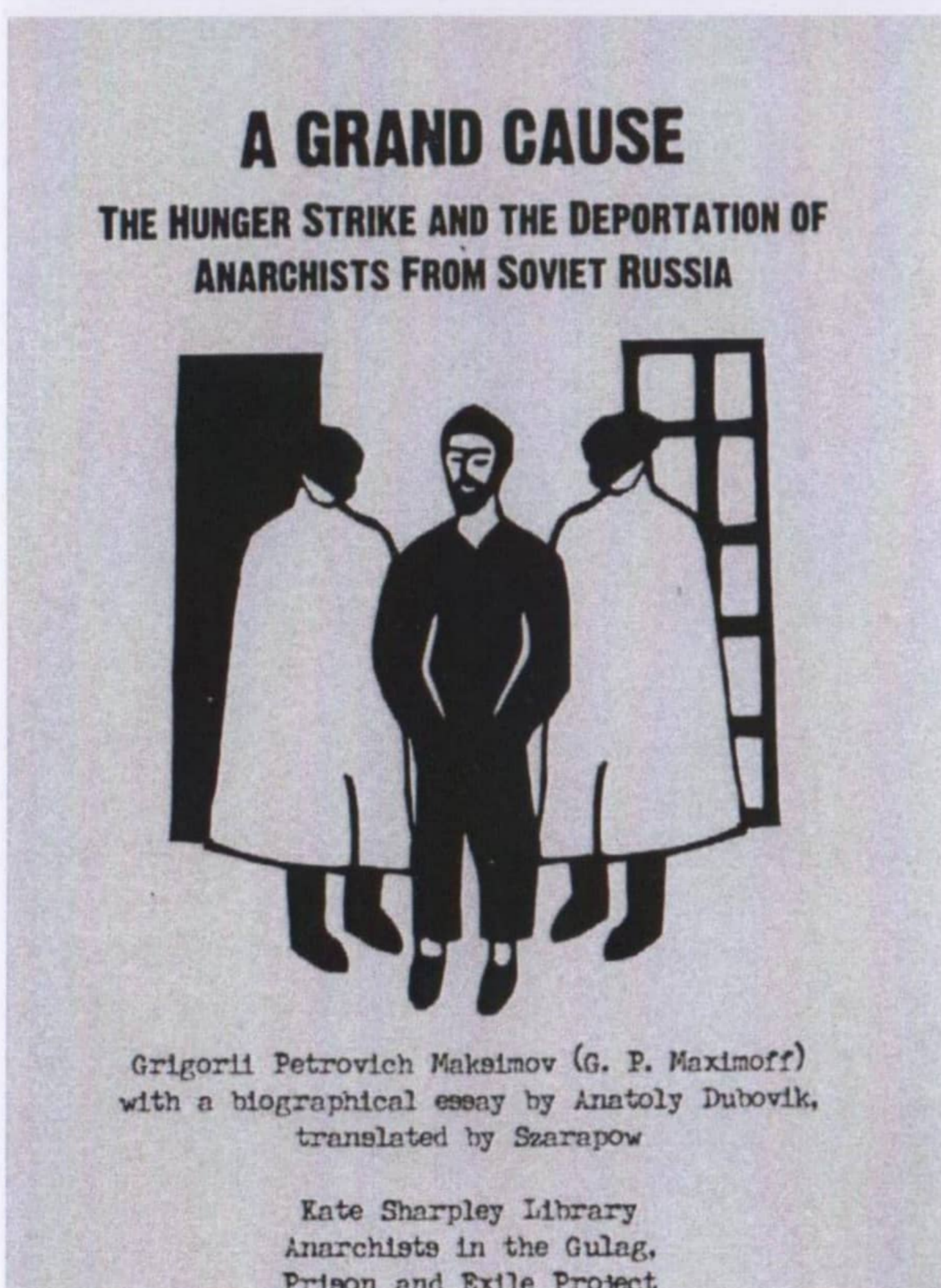
He lived in New Zealand from 1940-1949; Australia till 1956; Spain till 1960, before returning to New Zealand, where he lived until his death in 1978.

Droescher's became an influential figure in the New Zealand anarchist movement, remaining active until his death.

The second part is a section taken from Droescher's autobiography entitled *The Spanish Civil War and the Anarchists*.

The third is entitled *The Aragon Front*, and lastly a report on a lecture given by Droescher, entitled *Spanish Anarchists Made Ideas Work*.

By Ade
Dimmick



History of a movement: London Mayday (left), Grigory Maximov (top) and two front covers

to churn out a seemingly endless supply of high quality titles on anarchist history.

The following is no exception.

A Grand Cause, as the sub-title suggests, is the story of the hunger strike and deportation of anarchist prisoners in the embryonic Soviet state.

The text includes an excerpt from Maksimov's (better known as Maximoff) *The Guillotine at Work: Twenty Years of Terror in Russia* (1940).

It tells the story of the persecution of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists.

In particular it highlights the organised hungerstrike in Moscow's notorious Taganskaya Prison.

Prisoners not only included the anarchists but also other "politicals," namely social-revolutionists and social democrats, in fact any 'left' or liberal opponents of the Bolshevik government.

The pamphlet also includes a fascinating

Biography: Life of Joe Jacobs makes for an inspiring read

After Cable Street – Joe Jacobs 1940 to 1977

by Alan Woodward
 Pub: Socialist Libertarians
 Available from Housman's
 bookshop and at meetings

Alan Woodward has done another service to radical history in producing this well-researched booklet, continuing the narrative of a varied and active political life begun in its subject's posthumously published autobiography (Joe Jacobs, *Out of the Ghetto*, 1978).

Using Joe's letters and other papers, backed up with reference to a range of background sources, he places the life in the context of its times, showing how Joe's political ideas developed after his days as a Communist Party activist in the 1930s. Those ideas were repeatedly applied in support of working-class struggle; and against those who Joe believed would take over or sell out that struggle for their own ends.

The core chapters are: Joe and the war; shop stewards, workplaces, unions and the occupation; Joe and the international dimension; Strike reporting; Politics and organisations. Key events; confrontation with military authority, industrial strife and organising, political debates and clashes. Joe's role in each is recounted along with their effects on his thinking, with frequent quotes from his own writing, some of it based on previously unpublished notes.

Relevant theories and their more notable advocates are discussed in detail, displaying Alan's impressive knowledge of the history of leftist ideas in the 20th century. The helpful lists of dates, sources for each section, and index are further added value.

In the concluding section, expulsion and conclusion, Alan discusses Joe's association with Solidarity (For Workers' Power was the subtitle of the magazine,

later For Social Revolution, not part of the group's name) in the early to mid-1970s, which was amicable and mutually beneficial for several years but terminated in sadly downbeat fashion, in one last "expulsion" for Joe.

Alan devotes perhaps a disproportionate amount of space to the Solidarity group, or



**After Cable Street -
 Joe Jacobs 1940 to
 1977**

Alan Woodward

his own (in my view) somewhat idiosyncratic picture of it, and to one of its publications in particular, as if this was an article of faith to which we all subscribed. It wasn't and we didn't, as the introduction to the pamphlet in question itself makes clear.

As a member of the group during and for quite long after Joe's time in it, I have to say, at the risk of adding to the disproportion, that this is not exactly Solidarity as I knew it. Alan makes us sound too big, organised and party-like, and he will insist on labelling us "Marxist," without making it sufficiently clear that this is his assessment of its nature rather than what the group called itself ("libertarian socialist" was the preferred term).

There is a longish list of supposed local groups (p54, two men and a dog, or a couple and a cat, might have been about the strength of some of these) and a particularly jaw-dropping assertion (p64-65) about Solidarity using "the political yardstick, in their case of basic Marxism."

Sometimes he qualifies the brand as "libertarian Marxist" (which some would consider a contradiction in terms) whereas Solidarity's long-drawn-out analysis was concerned specifically to show the inherently non-libertarian tendency of essential elements of Marxism.

This extensive critique meant that Marx was indeed quoted much and often in Solidarity publications, as Alan points out (with the misleading implication that such references are in themselves evidence of Marxism).

Given that there are problems with all labels, it seems perverse to slap on one which was not used and would, I believe, have been rejected in no uncertain terms by most members over the years.

Apart from anything else, it goes against the libertarian grain, and is ahistorical, to derive a complete worldview from one individual, and a dead white male at that. One day the "insiders history" may appear. In the meantime, readers can judge for themselves from numerous texts still around on the internet.

But the half-dozen Solidarity years form only a small part of the Joe Jacobs story and the account here of his interactions with the group and eventual parting from it in the notorious (or deplorable, or farcical) "expulsion" episode seems fair, to the best of my first-hand but long-ago recollection.

Reservations aside (these may or may not include Alan's trademark proofreader's-nightmare typing, already familiar to fans), the booklet contains a lot of good stuff which deserves to be more widely known.

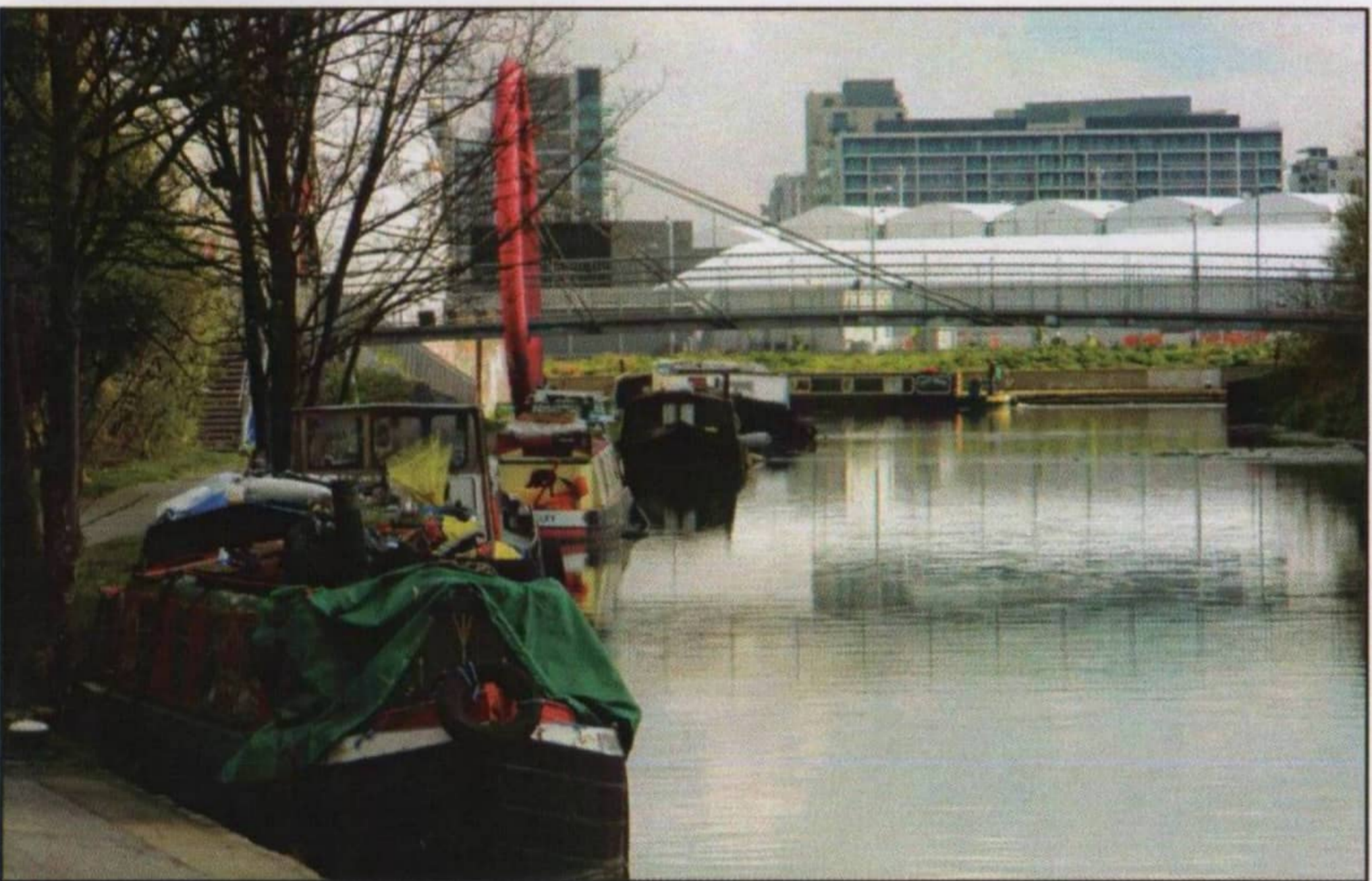
To end on one more note of dissent, however: I can't entirely agree that "the story of Joe Jacobs is a sad one" (p5).

There are grounds for hope and encouragement in his overcoming of difficulties, his will to resist oppression and authoritarianism in all situations, receptivity to new ideas, and determination to remain his own man to the end.



By Liz
 Willis





In colour: On edge

Last bit of life: As the Olympics come to London, sanitisation and gentrification of the area around the main site have displaced thousands from footballers to Travellers and seen working class people moved out of the area. In these photos, one of the last groups not to have been removed, the houseboat community, park up on the Lee just yards away from the building site, loomed over by new build luxury flats, with graffiti from local art collectives festooning the surrounding area.



1909-1912

THE GREAT UNREST



Solidarity squared: This year is the 100th anniversary of the high point of British syndicalism, when the efforts of organisers such as Tom Mann (above) and Rudolph Rocker (left) came to fruition with a wave of strike action which tunred back years of right-wing dominance. At its heart was a 10,000-strong textile worker walkout which all but ended sweatshop labour in London on May 23rd. Keep an eye out for events being organised to commemorate the milestone