

# FREEDOM

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## THE MASTERS CALL IN VAIN

HOW PRECARIOUS WORKERS ARE FINDING THEIR STRIDE

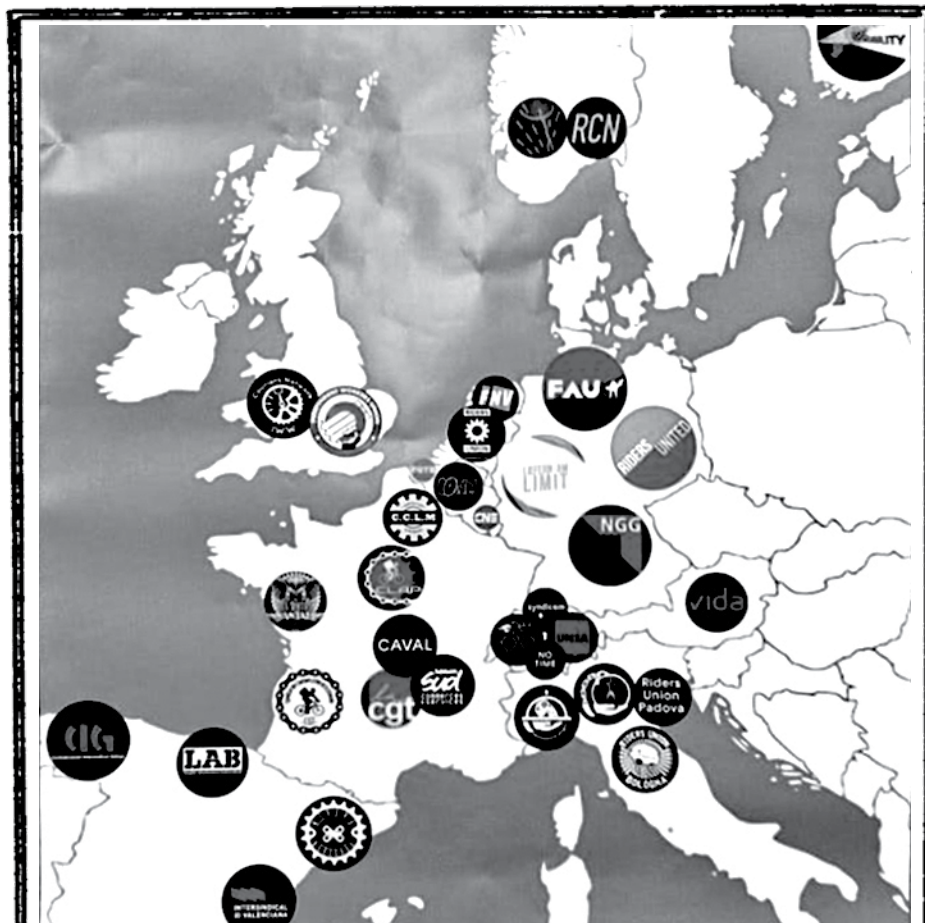


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PLUS THE FREEDOM ANNUAL REPORT



## BASE UNIONS REVIVAL

In this issue of *Freedom* we take a special look at the rising number of what in Italy are often referred to as “base” unions — smaller, independent groups loosely organised around cultures of solidarity and radicalism which are largely absent from modern mainstream union structures.

In Britain such groups have tended to be less visible with the IWW and Solidarity Federation as relatively small syndicalist examples.

With the expansion of precarious work and living however, base union models have offered a more flexible

take on organising, sparking new groups such as the UVW, IWGB, CAIWU, Acorn and the London Renters Union alongside a significant rise in IWW membership.

Europe-wide, this led to an important event in October with the formation of the Transnational Courier Federation, involving 34 syndicalist groups across 12 countries aiming to unite food platform workers (see map, above).

Inside are essays from some of these new players along with updates on training, plus a historic take on syndicalism from Iain McKay.

# I, WOBBLY

The IWW has been quietly organising couriers in cities and towns outside London, in the UK and Ireland, since January 2018. In that time, we’ve developed a presence in nearly every major city in the regions outside London. But we aren’t organising in the traditional way, of courting membership and getting membership dues. We’ve adopted a new form of organising model that we’re calling the “network” model.

When we first began organising we met with apathy and indifference from couriers when we tried to get them to join a union. Understandably, they didn’t want to pay membership dues for something that they didn’t understand and for something that hadn’t necessarily been very successful in the past. Many people had no idea what a union was, and the lack of any major success stories just served to reinforce a feedback loop of apathy.

We needed to convince couriers that collectively organising was the only way forward. And for that we needed to break down barriers to participation and prove that unionising was worth the effort.

And that’s why we settled on the network model.

A network branch is essentially a stripped-back mini-union, within a union. It’s completely free to join for any courier because it provides collective representation, as opposed to individual representation. Each network branch is partnered with its local IWW branch, which provides advice, support and logistical organising help.

The IWW Couriers Network is currently organising in cities and towns like Cardiff, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Bristol, Belfast and Dublin. Our union is utterly committed to worker self-management. The IWW has no full-time, paid officials. The IWW Couriers Network is the same and is run on a tiny budget. We are led directly by our membership, for our membership and I can’t stress that enough — no matter how cliché it sounds.

Every decision comes from the grassroots of the union, from the bottom up. Which is why our demands differ to that of other unions, particularly around limb B worker (as opposed to “self-

For people interested in this sort of thing, the main typefaces are Langdon, Alfa Slab One and Centabel Book. Dingbat symbols are taken from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman’s *Mother Earth* magazine.

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# – A NEW CYCLE OF THE IWW

employed”) status, and can sometimes differ from network branch to network branch. We don’t see this difference between the other courier unions in the UK as being a bad thing – in fact, we think both approaches compliment each other. There’s strength in diversity, in our militant, direct action going hand-in-hand with the efforts of other unions to try to change the law.

Our comrades in the IWGB for instance have been doing excellent work in pursuing the limb B worker issue through the courts. But that said, we’ve listened to what our members want and the majority would rather see immediate action around their present pay and working conditions, rather than long-term legal struggles about employment status. Those arguments still need to be won with the workers themselves. And as our members have the final say on our actions, and not union officials, that is the course of action we’re choosing to focus on.

Cardiff is the oldest network branch, forming in January 2018, and has clocked up some impressive victories in that time. Waiting times at problem restaurants are a massive problem for couriers, with each minute you’re kept waiting being a minute you’re not getting paid for. Official representation from the union, and just the threat of industrial action, has forced these restaurants to reduce these waiting times.

Our UberEats members in the city have seen higher boost payments as a result of organising together and have won our most impressive victory so far. Recently, the network branch organised a strike and boycott of the UberEats feedback session, in response to Uber refusing to engage constructively with couriers’ demands. The couriers demanded that Uber directly negotiate with their IWW union rep rather than individually, and said they would not leave until that demand had been granted.

The strike and demo that was held directly outside the office. It was noisy, colourful and effective. In a first (as far as we know) for courier organising in the UK, management buckled and invited the union rep in – the first recorded instance of a gig economy courier company being forced to negotiate with a union rep in recent history.



The Glasgow network, which formed in April this year, went on strike on Monday September 10th regarding the eradication of boost payments — one of the main ways that couriers make the minimum wage. The strike was very successful, was followed by upwards of 50 couriers, the vast majority of which have now joined the union. Uber was forced to issue a grovelling apology, blaming a “technical” error for the lack of boost payment.

We know the strike’s had an impact. In the weeks since, as UberEats have attempted to rebuild their brand with customers in the city by bribing them with £10-off vouchers and free doughnuts.

On Thursday October 4th the IWW Couriers Network held the UK’s first ever national courier strike, called the #FFS410 (Fast Food Shutdown), where courier networks across the country demanded a minimum rate of £5 per delivery.

On the same day, fast food workers in McDonalds, Wetherspoons and TGIF, organised by the BFAWU and Unite were striking. We decided to make our action the same day to show solidarity, and prove our struggles are connected, even though we may work in different roles. It was the first co-ordinated strike action in the UK fast food industry for decades.

The IWGB, who also organise couriers joined the strike, as did the GMB union. Strike actions happened in London,

Cardiff, Glasgow, Bristol, Plymouth, Newcastle, Birmingham and Leicester, with solidarity actions in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Wrexham, Swansea.

There’s a verse in an old IWW song, written in the 1910s when the union was at the height of organising precarious workers across the world, that’s become our network’s unofficial motto. It’s scarily relevant, 113 years on and it’s reverberating on our demos and strikes outside delivery company offices and restaurants across the country. We want you to make it your own motto too. Whatever your struggle. Because this fight is your fight, and your fight is our fight—the gig economy doesn’t discriminate.

“They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn, But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn. We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn that the union makes us strong.

www.iww.org.uk  
 couriers.network@iww.org.uk  
 Facebook: IWW Couriers Network  
 Twitter: @IWW\_Couriers



# RATTLING CAGES: RISE

In early August 2018 cleaners at the Ministry of Justice and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea started a coordinated three-day strike. All migrants, the cleaners joined United Voices of the World (UVW) to fight for better pay and conditions at work. They have been ignored for too long by subcontractors who pay poverty wages and work them to the bone. They were fighting for their dignity.

The cleaners chose to organise through UVW because it was unlikely that any of the more established unions would have them. They are the “unorganisable” — precarious, migrant and, mostly, female, they don't fit the traditional profile. They found out about UVW through fellow migrants who told them about a small trade union that would support them, about how workers, just like themselves, fought their employers and secured better pay and conditions at workplaces such as the LSE, Harrods, Ferrari and Bank of America.

They also heard how, earlier this year, UVW members cleaning the Daily Mail secured the London Living Wage, which gave them, effectively and immediately, a 25% pay rise. Let that sink in for a minute: migrants working for the most racist and xenophobic daily rag pushed wages up.

The three-day strike was loud, disruptive and confident. In true UVW tradition, it involved music, food, dancing and a big pig piñata. But most significantly, it featured two occupations. On the first evening, UVW members and activists barged into a council meeting at Kensington Town Hall and forced councillors to arrange a meeting. The following day, RBKC leadership, who, for many months, rejected any responsibility for their outsourced workers, negotiated with cleaners on the picket line and RBKC conceded, confirming that all cleaners would be paid the London Living Wage within three months. The victory was the direct result of a direct action.

That same day UVW occupied the Ministry of Justice and, yet again, forced senior management to negotiate with workers on their terms. But the most immediate achievement of this action



wasn't in securing a pay rise (the dispute is still ongoing). As activists filled the MoJ lobby with banners and music, security officers watched with interest. The next day the entire security force joined the union, soon followed by the receptionists, all gearing to strike. Workers who have been silenced and ignored for years were politicised through action. They found their courage by realising that they can shut down a whole government department. And they will.

How did this happen? How does a tiny trade union, which started with only a handful of members in 2014, manage to force multinational corporations to concede to workers' demands?

UVW's success is the result of its organising principles, including members working collectively and horizontally, using direct action and creating ongoing opportunities for solidarity, socialising and political engagement.

Our members are some of the most exploited and vulnerable workers in

the UK. Many work multiple jobs on the minimum wage, while others, for example, strippers and sex workers, are stigmatised and marginalised.

their extremely precarious position, the union actively encourages members to become workplace organisers, with the intention to quickly turn individual grievances into collective struggles. Ignoring traditional trade unions' rules about density and often doing away with official union recognition, UVW then supports workers to take direct action, including demonstrations, strikes and occupations, to win their campaigns. This strategy, often deemed “militant” or radical, proved incredibly effective, with disputes being resolved within weeks or months, where bigger trade unions have failed for years.

Sometimes, like at the Daily Mail, we don't even have to take to the streets — the threat of a UVW action is enough to convince employers to immediately meet the workers' demands!

# OF THE UNITED VOICES



*Pictures by Gordon Roland Peden*

Since it was formed, UVW has maintained a democratic, participatory and flexible structure, where campaigns are led by workers and bureaucracy is kept to a minimum. The executive committee, made of staff, elected activists and members, is open to anyone. At the last 2018 AGM, members took the revolutionary decision to go a step further and delete all official titles. United Voices is the only British trade union that does not have a General Secretary. In general meetings, all members have an equal say and more localised decisions are made either through the committee or through autonomous working groups. While authority and privilege have not been

fully eradicated (they never are, really), we make sure to constantly reflect on issue around the distribution of power, consensus and participation.

All this is possible because of the organisational culture that was already an important part of the union. UVW members consider themselves part of a community based on solidarity and mutual aid. Everyone is an activist and members regularly turn up to actions, often years after their own dispute has been resolved.

Externally, UVW operates as part of a growing ecosystem of groups and organisations on the wider autonomous left. Comrades from IWGB, London Renters Union, Women's Strike and DPAC, the various Justice4Cleaners groups and Class War, as well as a large number of more loosely affiliated activists, regularly turn up to actions. Our politics and practice might not always be exactly the same but, in general, we can count on other committed activists to support our actions, as we would support theirs.

At the MoJ we collaborated, for the first time, with a branch of the big trade

union PCS. This particular branch is led by militant activists, who feel a strong affiliation with UVW's workers-led, direct action-based form of organising and wanted to join in on the action. We know that other big trade unions are watching.

We work to develop and nurture all those links not just out of strategic need for numbers, but because we believe in the collective benefit of building an effective power base throughout the autonomous left and beyond.

Our organisational principle and tactics prove again and again that a confident workforce can win victories against the most stubborn bosses. This is grassroots organising, backed by a strong conviction that workers are best placed to articulate an analysis of their conditions, develop the politics and strategy to improve them and act on their decisions. In the current political climate, after years of diminishing collective power for workers and communities and with many of the large trade unions acting like insurance companies, this is considered radical.

[uvwunion.org.uk](http://uvwunion.org.uk)



## ORGANISER TRAINING: HOW TO WIN AT WORK

The Solidarity Federation runs two workplace organiser training courses which have recently been updated. The first is a general course aimed at all workers and a second is specifically aimed at women. Details are set out below.

The Solidarity Federation has been organising workplace organiser training days for a number of years. The training came about partly through disillusionment with courses offered by the traditional unions and a need to offer an alternative, and partly from the recognition that, given the dwindling number of unionised workplaces, there was a need to offer training to an increasing number of workers who have little idea or experience of how to organise against the bosses.

The SF training takes a practical, democratic approach to organising. Based on real disputes and workplace experiences, it aims to show how workers can come together, take action and win. In putting together the training, we have taken into account the fact that in many workplaces management has the upper hand, which can make organising difficult and often pretty scary.

In the course we therefore not only cover the more militant forms of action but go into detail about how workers can go about taking imaginative, but less risky forms of action, as a means of winning disputes and in the process build confidence, self-belief and a common identity among the workforce.

No experience of workplace organising is necessary as the training takes people through the whole workplace organising process.

The training takes place in a fun, relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Rather than talking at people, the course aims to get people talking to each other and to share their worries, problems and experiences.

Aware that people often feel nervous in these situations, no pressure is placed on attendees during the course, with people breaking down into small groups to discuss things making it easier to talk.

This more democratic approach has not only proven popular, it has been a tremendous help in developing the course. It allows us to take the experiences of people attending and incorporate them. This ensures that the training is constantly developing based on people's practical experiences.

Over the last year the Solidarity Federation has also developed a workplace organiser training course specifically aimed at women. The course not only covers basic workplace organising but also takes into account that women in the workplace not only face exploitative and oppressive managers, but far too often the sexism of the men they work with.

Again using a direct action approach to workplace organising and using real examples, the course sets out how women can organise and take action against, not only the problems they face as workers but also the specific problems they face as women. The course is also run in a fun and friendly atmosphere and also takes the same democratic and inclusive approach to training.

If you are interested in any of the above SF courses or just want to know more please contact get in touch at [training@solfed.org.uk](mailto:training@solfed.org.uk)



# SLEEPING

In 2018 Mencap, the learning disability charity with an unappealing name, took the government to court. Mencap wanted to challenge an earlier ruling on whether or not sleep shifts count as work, for the purposes of calculating the national minimum wage. They won their case and now, thanks to them, sleep shifts are no longer legally recognised as work. So if you sleep as part of your job, your boss doesn't have to pay you for it.

I am lucky; I haven't worked a sleep shift for years — they do not involve a lot of actual sleep. In my old job in a dementia unit I would work a late shift from 3pm-10pm, at 6am I would start getting residents washed and dressed, and between 10pm and 6am I was nominally "asleep" and therefore not getting paid. Even if I was getting paid, this would still be a breach of Working Time Regulations (something that most care workers opt out of when we sign our contracts).

There was no expectation that we would actually sleep between these hours. There was one other worker in the building at night, and we had residents who needed repositioning by two carers every two hours throughout the shift. Management were fully aware that sleep shift workers didn't actually sleep more than the odd nap. I would do this shift pattern (work from three, "sleep" from ten, work again from six) every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night, adding up to a 51-hour working weekend.

Care work is not easy work. It's not something you can do with half your mind on the job. Like the army, or Hollywood, it consumes your whole life. You become a carer first and everything else (a spouse, a parent, a teenager, or whatever else you might be) second. People died between ten and six and I was the last person they saw. I would sit down on my heels next to the bed, trying to find the words to comfort the client and planning what I was going to say when I called their family.

Meanwhile, part of me was still asleep, not sure if I was dreaming, and part of me was clock-watching and trying to count how much sleep I was going to get before I had to do it all again the next day.

# ON THE CLOCK IS NO DREAM



Mencap's treatment of its posher patrons was all smiles in Belfast when the Countess of Wessex showed up for a tour in January 2018

I was like a doctor off the TV, except I earned £7.20 an hour. I was 19 years old.

Whether or not care workers deserve to be paid for sleep shifts is not really the issue. It's a stupid discussion because clearly we do, and much more besides. Right now, illegal non-payment of the minimum wage is at its highest-ever level. Even before the Mencap ruling, most bosses managed to keep their bank balances intact through good old-fashioned wage theft. The care sector is one of the worst-affected industries. On top of that, the *Independent* recently reported that it's nearly impossible to actually live on the minimum wage, so if you earn that, even if your boss isn't robbing you blind, you can kiss goodbye to paying rent. In this context, "what work deserves the minimum wage and what doesn't?" is a bad question to ask.

Care work is paid poorly because it is traditionally done by women. Society generally treats care workers like angels, but when we try to assert our humanity by asking for things like sleep and wages,

people get squeamish. I suspect there are many people out there who do not think we should get paid at all; that people see care as part of the "natural" gender roles of women under patriarchy. Carers clean, feed, raise and nurture and counsel at home. Then they go to work and do it all again, and many people don't see the difference. The denial of wages to care workers is just another step away from the recognition that care work is work, and another economic shackle to keep people of one gender financially dependent on another.

And of course, the fact that care work is under-valued is a direct consequence of the devaluing of disabled people under capitalism. To the capitalist class, the consumers of care services are not a lucrative demographic to cater for, and social care must seem like a bad investment. If disabled people had more spending power then carers would be paid more.

This is an inescapable problem in an economic system that can't distinguish between profit and worth. We know that the crisis in care workers' wages is a

consequence of capitalism. We know that we need a better world; a world where we can give our care to those who need it, not just to those who can pay. But back when I was 19, I was using payday lenders to make rent. Pay us today, and we can build socialism tomorrow. Instead of asking "do I deserve the minimum wage?", try asking "could my boss even do my job?" instead, and if the answer is no, follow that thought experiment and see where it takes you.

These are revolutionary demands. First, we want our money back, and then we want our lives back. This will not stop with the minimum wage and it certainly will not stop with Mencap, but we need to fight from where we are, and if we don't stand up now we might never do so.

Sleep shifts are work. Care work is work. If you want to support care workers, here are some practical things you can do:

- Come to our demos, and tell your friends.
- Share/RT on social media.
- Share/RT some background info about Mencap, sleeping pay and wage theft.
- If you're not near Bristol, organise your own Stand up to Mencap demo in your city. Get in touch with us for ideas.
- If you or your friends work in care, get in touch with us. We can help you fight your boss, we're cheaper than a big union, and we won't sell you out.
- Or, even better, start your own DIY union. Get together with your coworkers, learn your rights, support each other and start standing up to your boss. If you don't live in Bristol but you do work in care, think about starting your own Care Workers Network. Get in touch with us for advice, or get in touch with your nearest Solidarity Federation Local.

[solfed.org.uk](http://solfed.org.uk)



# DIVING INTO OUR EARLY

It is a standard cliché of Marxist attacks on anarchism to contrast “individualistic” anarchism with “collectivist” syndicalism. “Individualists” are backward looking, reactionary and beyond the pale while “syndicalists” are almost Marxist, and so worthy of faint praise. Another, also wrong, cliché with wider acceptance is that syndicalism arose in France during the 1890s in response to the failure of “propaganda of the deed.”

Yet rather than these being two different ideas or movements, anarchism has always had its syndicalist elements. Early anarchist philosopher Pierre Joseph Proudhon argued for workers’ associations to replace wage-labour, rejecting political action in favour of workers’ economic self-organisation and self-liberation.

He was a reformist and rejected strikes as a means of change, arguing power was too skewed against workers to be affected. Co-operatives, not unions, were his means of social transformation. But Proudhon’s works were eagerly absorbed by workers across Europe. In 1864 French and British trade unionists — not Marx — created the International Workers Association and at its national congresses the practice and theory of the workers’ movement were discussed and developed. As well as extending the socialisation and association of property from industry to land, the idea that the workers’ unions would both fight capitalism and be the framework to replace it was raised and embraced.

The Belgian section were firm advocates, as shown by their report to the International’s Congress in 1868. Frenchman Jean Louis Pindy expressed it as the *Resolution on Resistance Societies* at its 1869 Congress. Influential figure Mikhail Bakunin championed it, arguing that for workers there was “but a single path, that of emancipation through practical action” which “has only one meaning. It means workers’ solidarity in their struggle against the bosses. It means trades-unions, organisation, and the federation of resistance funds.” This would create “an earnest international organisation of workers associations from all countries capable of replacing this departing political world of States and bourgeoisie.”



*The Execution of Varlin by Maximilien Luce. Luce, an anarchist, was a famed neo-impressionist painter*

So by 1870 the International had two tendencies: syndicalist and social-democratic. A fact Marx was aware of, when, unlike his latter-day followers, he noted that Bakunin had argued that the “working class must not occupy itself with politics. They must only organise themselves by trades-unions ... by means of the International they will supplant the place of all existing states.”

Yet Marx underestimated the influence of these ideas. For the syndicalist wing was the majority, as proved when he tried to impose social-democracy onto the International after the Paris Commune, expelling Bakunin. Getting rid of his rival did not nullify the Russian’s all-too accurate prediction that sending socialists to Parliament would see the “worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois ideas ... cease to be workers ... For men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them.”

This is more than reclaiming a much distorted history. We see echoes of the same debates today.

A rejuvenated Labour Party membership is in conflict with its thoroughly bourgeois MPs. Worse, the hopes and energies of these new activists are being wasted, constructive socialism is being ignored, waiting for a general election the Tories are unlikely to call so a few enlightened politicians may save capitalism from itself.

On the facing page is an all-too relevant article by Eugène Varlin (1839-1871), a leading French Internationalist. Son of a poor peasant family, he was a bookbinder by profession and organised mutual aid societies alongside unions and strikes.

Unlike many French Internationalists, he was firm advocate of equality of the sexes. An associate of Bakunin, he was active in the Paris Commune before being tortured and shot after his capture during its final week. Sadly, few writings by this pioneering syndicalist activist are available in English which hopefully this, a new and complete translation, corrects to some degree (a much edited version appeared in *The Paris Commune of 1871: The View from the Left* [1972]).



# SYNDICALIST HISTORIES

## WORKERS' SOCIETIES

~ Eugène Varlin

*La Marseillaise, March 11th 1870*

While our statesmen try to substitute a parliamentary and liberal government (Orleans style) for the regime of personal government, and so hope to divert the advancing revolution threatening their privileges; we socialists, who by experience know that all the old political forms are powerless to satisfy popular demands, must, while taking advantage of the mistakes and blunders of our adversaries, hasten the hour of deliverance. We must actively work to prepare the organisational elements of the future society in order to make the work of social transformation that is imposed on the Revolution easier and more certain.

So far political states have been, so to speak, only the continuation of the regime of conquest, which presided over the establishment of authority and the enslavement of the masses: Republican governments, as in Switzerland or the United State; constitutional and oligarchic, as in Belgium or England; autocratic, as in Russia, or personal, as in France since the Empire; it is always authority charged with keeping working people in respect of the law established for the benefit of a few. This authority may be more or less rigid, more or less arbitrary, but this does not change the basis of economic relations, and workers are always at the mercy of the holders of capital.

To be permanent, the next revolution must not stop at a simple change of government etiquette, and some superficial reforms; it must completely liberate the worker from all forms of exploitation, capitalist or political, and establish justice in social relations.

Society can no longer leave the disposition of public wealth to the arbitrariness of the privileges of birth or success: the product of collective labour, it can be used only for the benefit of the collectivity; all members of human society have an equal right to the benefits derived from them.

But this social wealth can only ensure the well-being of humanity on the condition of being put into operation by labour.

If, then, the industrial or commercial capitalist should no longer arbitrarily dispose of collective capital, who then will make them productive for the benefit of all? Who, in a word, will organise the production and distribution of products?

Unless you want to reduce everything to a centralising and authoritarian State, which would appoint the directors of mills, factories, distribution outlets, whose directors would in turn appoint deputy directors, supervisors, foremen, etc. and thus arrive at a top-down hierarchical organisation of labour, in which the worker would be nothing but an unconscious cog, without freedom or initiative; unless we do, we are forced to admit that the workers themselves must have the free disposal of their instruments of labour, under the condition of exchanging their products at cost price, so that there is reciprocity of service between the different specialities of workers.

It is to this last idea that most workers who in recent years have been energetically pursuing the libertarian of their class tend to rally. It is this which has prevailed in the various congresses of the International Workers Association.

But it should not be believed that such an organisation can be easily improvised in every respect! For this a few intelligent, devoted, energetic men are not enough! Above all, it is necessity that workers, thus called to work together freely and on the basis of equality, should already be prepared for social life.

One of the greatest difficulties that the founders of all kinds of [workers] societies tried for the last few years have encountered is the spirit of individualism, excessively developed in most men and even amongst those who understand that only by association can workers improve living standards, and hope for their liberation.

Well! Workers' societies, in whatever form they exist at present, already have this immense advantage of accustoming men to social life, and so preparing them for a wider social organisation. They accustom them not only to reach an agreement and understanding, but also to take care of

their affairs, to organise, to discuss, to think about their material and moral interests, and always from the collective point of view since their personal, individual, direct interest disappears as soon as they become part of a collectivity.

Together with the advantages that each of these societies can provide to its members, there is, by this fact, the development of sociability, enough to make them recommended to all citizens who aspire to the advent of socialism.

But corporate societies (resistance, solidarity, union) deserve encouragement and sympathy, for they are the natural elements of the social construction of the future; it is they who can easily become producer associations; it is they who will be able to operate social tools and organise production.

Many of their members are often unconscious at first of the role that these societies are called upon to play in the future; at first they think of only resisting the exploitation of capital or of obtaining some superficial improvements; but soon the hard efforts they have to make to achieve insufficient palliatives or even, sometimes, negative results, easily lead them to seek radical reforms that can free them from capitalist oppression. Then they study social questions and get represented at workers congresses.

The congress of the international association held in Basle last September recommended that all workers should group themselves into resistance societies by trade in order to secure the present and prepare for the future. I propose to make a study of the various forms of corporative workers' societies, and their progressive development, in order to make known to workers who are not yet associated the present advantages which they can gather from their organisation, and to make them benefit from the experience bitterly acquired in these past years by other corporations.

It is necessary that the new groups get in step with the old ones, for it is only through solidarity, widely understood, by world-wide union of workers of all professions and all countries that we will surely arrive at the suppression of privileges and equality for all.

# BOLSONARO IS JUST A

*In this analysis, the Coordenação Anarquista Brasileira (Brazilian Anarchist Coordination) look at the situation which led to the election of proto-fascist President Jair Bolsonaro in October 2018 following the ousting of Worker's Party (PT) leader Dilma Rousseff.*

Since 1988, until its recent breakdown, the so-called New Republic pact has maintained a social exclusion of those at the bottom, while at the same time guaranteeing minimum legal rights, in a coalition involving bourgeois politicians, corporations, the armed forces and part of the reformist sectors of the Left.

The construction of the Brazilian State, however, has always been closer to the interests of imperialist powers than to its own population. The State has always criminalised the poor as a norm of institutionalised bourgeois democracy. PT-led governments since Lula have increased the criminal machine of public order operated by the entire legislative and judicial apparatus, reproducing the super-incarceration of the poor and Black population, as well as sustaining a repressive apparatus that attacks social struggles.

This so-called pact of class reconciliation was broken and the collaborationist agenda [of social compromise] was torn apart to be replaced by an agenda of financialised capitalism. These have replaced things such as social rights, relative freedoms and public services — historical achievements of popular movements.

## **The Empire Shows Its Claws**

We cannot understand the current historical moment in Brazil in isolation from the broader geopolitical reality of Latin America. We need to calibrate our analytical tools and better locate Brazil as a peripheral nation within the world-system to understand what is at stake.

The country has continued to maintain its primary industry of agro-exports and has aligned itself with the IIRSA Plan (Initiative for the Integration of South American Regional Infrastructure, now called COSIPLAN). This plan sought to maximise exploitation of our natural resources and speed up the process

of supplying international markets to benefit transnational corporations. It is a new offensive aligned with free-trade treaties, established between the US and other regional powers. It's an attempt to expand the neoliberal model in South America, supported by progressive and center-left governments.

The crisis of 2008 created major difficulties for the US in maintaining its international agenda which, since the World Trade Centre bombing in 2003, began to present as its main objective the guarantee of global hegemony (evident from numerous aggressive military interventions). It's also clear that imperialism guides itself by the idea that "where Brazil goes, Latin America will follow." Our continent, Latin America, is seen as a strategic reserve of resources (political, natural, energy) for US use, which makes the political situation of Brazil important to Washington.

The coup of 2016 did not only disassemble small gains from the previous period as it strengthened the hand of finance capital and international control of Brazil's economy, by purchasing "assets." These adjustments were required by the judicial class, especially the judges themselves, such as through anti-corruption investigation 'Operation Car Wash.' This "lawfare" strategy serves imperial needs and increases control of infrastructure, renewable energies, service, health and education by North American and Chinese corporations.

In regards to oil, 13 multinationals have already appropriated 75 % of the pre-salt [oil below the ocean surface], especially Shell and BP, whose last auction rounds took place in October 2018.

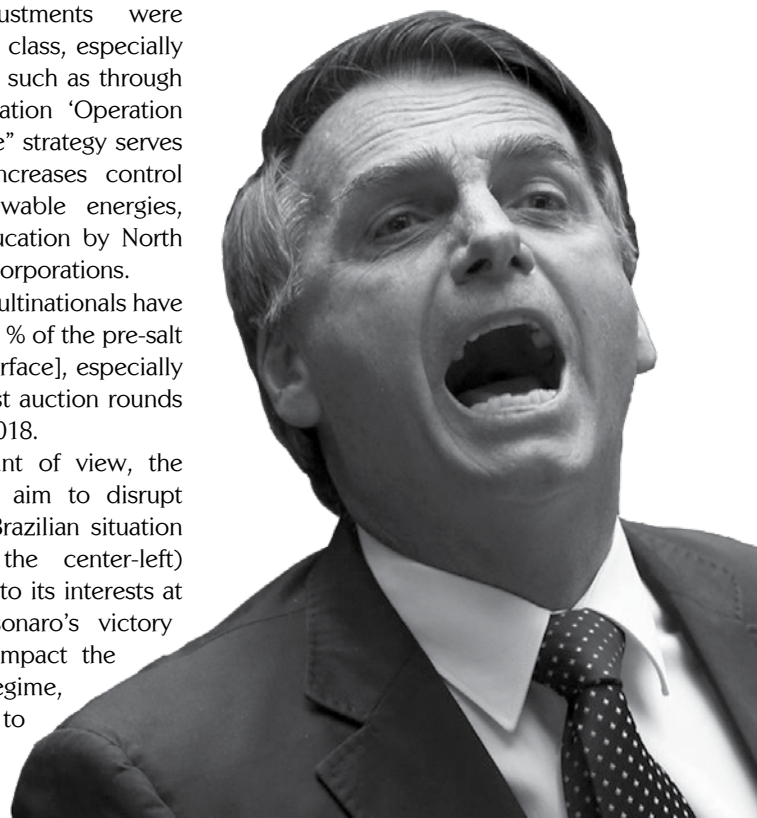
From a political point of view, the actions of imperialism aim to disrupt any possibility of the Brazilian situation (even governed by the center-left) representing any threat to its interests at continental level. Bolsonaro's victory will also significantly impact the crises of Venezuelan regime, possibly contributing to political destabilisation, or even the possibility of military intervention.

## **The New National Security Doctrine: Politics and Military Threats**

Some years ago, under the Lula's Workers Party government, a new National Security Doctrine was inaugurated with General Etchegoyen of the Brazilian armed forces [later appointed as Secretary of Security by outgoing President Michel Temer]. This doctrine sees groups linked to drug trafficking, human rights or environmental NGOs, "ideological" government agencies, and social movements linked to a left vision as new internal enemies.

Other elements are the emptying of university and research roles, a tougher stance of the penal code, continuity and expansion of mass incarceration, and adoption of counter-espionage measures.

The doctrine uses social communication control, the spread of rumors, discrediting of accusers and the use of false documents. The promotion of strikes, road closures, occupation of lands and buildings and the struggle for social rights for political minorities are characterised as "terrorist actions."



# SYMPTOM OF WORSE

This new doctrine was responsible for the anti-terrorism bill approved by Dilma. Its goal was to create a new pact, a “new democracy,” where the military play an active role in the geopolitics of the continent and national politics.

To summarise: The “Democratic State of Law” is mounted on top of a state of exception for the “dangerous classes” and is now in a process of reconfiguration through the power plays of the dominant classes (in some places, the narco-state), and emerges from both internal State needs and its relations with the interests of imperialism. Under these circumstances, reactionary factors operate as a police State.

It’s an adjustment that cuts deep into the flesh of the people and steeply increases the ambitions of the capitalist class and its lackeys, sooner or later, calls security in their favor and redefines what had been a “state of exception” into the new normality.

## The Center-Left Goes All-In At the Polls

The Brazilian left and center-left’s bet on the ballot box, expecting bourgeois democracy to come to their rescue, protect their rights, and limit the strangle and defeat of imperialism. While the system lifts the gun sight and wears the toga or the uniform to exercise power however, it is always with support from the US government. The opposition movements on the left which emerged after the legal-parliamentary coup, and which took the streets, unfortunately entered into this logic of government where the enemy of the far right would be supposedly beaten by the vote.

The center-left strove to channel efforts into an electoral build-up by spending all its energy on institutional disputes and the rotten game of electoral parties, to the detriment of class struggle. The Brazilian political scene is tainted by the fraud of representation, which for the bourgeois liberals has always been a mechanism for usurping collective forces and common goods for the powerful will of minorities. But we know that the system twists the constitution and melts the rule of law when it comes to defending the interests of its dominant classes.

We must build a long-term work that points out the unions and popular organisations as the best way for people to defend their rights and participate in political life, by deepening direct democracy, repudiating the reconciliation of classes, and waging war without truce against proto-fascism.

## Proto-Fascism as a Super-Dose of the Elite Program

Such configurations of political power are also supported by propaganda tactics and direct action from reactionary sectors and ideologically affiliated groups on the far right, generally backed by law enforcement. Everything suggests that presence will continue to grow, making space for its agents to repress the national political scene and align it with what is happening at continental level.

But there is more. Alongside this is economic frustration, a failure to find political solutions through representation, and the destabilisation of values associated with positions of power in family, culture, and education. We’ve also seen a conservative groundswell using religious evangelicals as a popular base for distribution. This new right transitioned from anti-PT rhetoric to a radicalised anti-political and anti-system rhetoric, setting itself up as a right that does not speak only to the elites, but also to popular and peripheral sectors. They act in the social vacuum left by the center-left, which puts itself only in defence of bourgeois democracy.

The despicable figure of Bolsonaro is part of this attempt to deepen the destruction of social rights and patriarchal violence against women, LGBT, indigenous, blacks and maroons. Violence that materialised in several attacks throughout the country led by Bolsonaro supporters, among which one that resulted in the brutal murder of Capoeira Master Moa of Katendê in Salvador.

Far from minimising the barbarity that Bolsonaro represents, it is necessary to place him within the logic of the acceleration of neoliberalism desired by imperialists.

Elections would not have resolved the complex context posed by the correlation of forces opposed to the working class. All scenarios only serve to deepen the class struggle and against oppression. The “useful vote” against the Bolsonaro slate could only have extended the status quo, leading to a “third shift” decided outside the polling booths. The struggle is long-term to build a class and mass alternative that does not surrender to the reasoning of State and empire. But it must also be a social force capable of defeating the bourgeoisie, imperialism and its attacks.

Our class flags need to be lifted up at this time of proto-fascist and enoliberal attack. We must not succumb to the panic and fear caused by reactionary elites. Our role is to actively resist, strengthen class solidarity, ensure the fight in the streets, and permanent mobilisation from below. Therefore we defend:

- Unity of anti-fascism beyond the polls, at the base level and on the streets – struggle is what will define it. This will manifest in actions and mobilisations against neoliberal attacks and the barbarity promoted by Bolsonaro and his supporters.
- Fight for social rights. Fight against privatisation and attacks on the bottom. Fight against attacks on education, welfare reform, fight against rising cost of living, criminalisation of social movements and the process of genocide of the black, peripheral and indigenous people.
- Building of a general strike against the advancement of fascism and the attacks on the rights of the workers which is the agenda of imperialism of the next period and of the business elites and independent policies of the elections.

The Strength of the People Can Stop Fascism! Against the Neoliberal Barbarism, Struggle and Organise!



# A SIDWAYS LOOK

In Ireland, a 2010 structural adjustment programme ordered the country to start charging domestic customers for water, where previously it was included in local taxation. This was met by resistance to the installation of water meters and charging (eg. rally pic, right) and mass demonstrations. The Irish government backed down in 2016. Sadly, the British government has succeeded in something very similar, by a process of stealth.

In the 1970s, water supply and sanitation was run by local councils or public boards. Less water was used for washing, because of the cost of heating a bath — showers were rare and everything smelled of tobacco anyway.

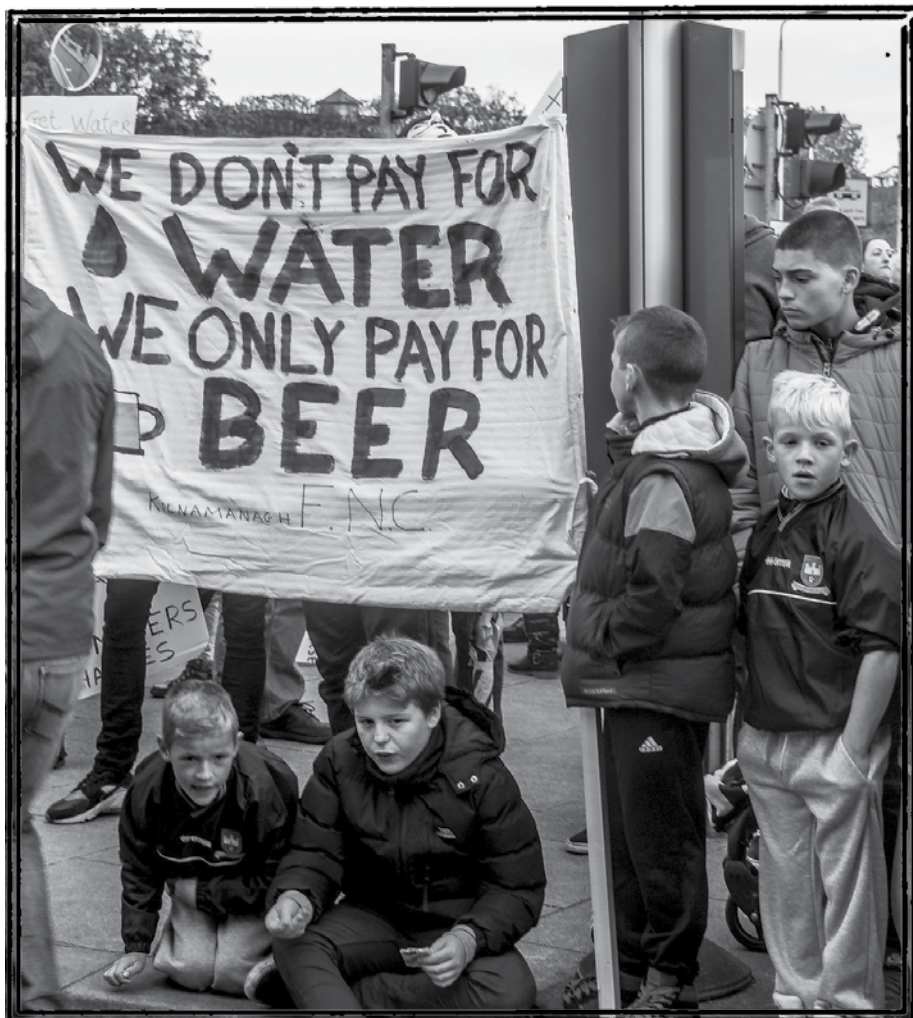
I don't think there's a causal link, but since then smoking has declined and water usage has increased, as people usually now shower daily and wash clothes more often. In parallel, water boards were privatised into giant conglomerates that sit around waiting for the cash to roll in. Water is a relatively low risk activity — the worst that these companies face is getting fined if they leak sewage into rivers; rarely does the fine reflect the crime.

In the first decade after privatisation, charges to customers increased by 46%; profits more than doubled and investment was cut.

In 2006, under a Labour government, the Environment Agency announced that water meters would be compulsorily fitted in homes in the south of England to aid in conservation. The Labour Party had previously described compulsory metering as a “tax on family life,” which is exactly what it is.

About two years ago, Thames Water put in a water meter. I'm more than happy to do my bit for the planet but this is just nonsense when up to a third of all water supplied by the utility companies is lost through leaks. Domestic users cutting down on water usage is a drop in the ocean in comparison.

They have been in regular contact with me, asking me to switch over to the meter



before the date when I am forced to. We don't use what I regard as an excessive amount of water — in this rainy island at least, it would be completely different in somewhere semi-desert like Andalusia or Southern California. Showering, cooking and washing up and laundry for a family of four, no hosepipes or watering the garden. At no point has the projected metered cost fallen below the current water rates.

This is effectively a tax increase: people who use more will pay more and this means the larger your family the more you will pay.

The gradual implementation of this tax along with its “green” credentials has

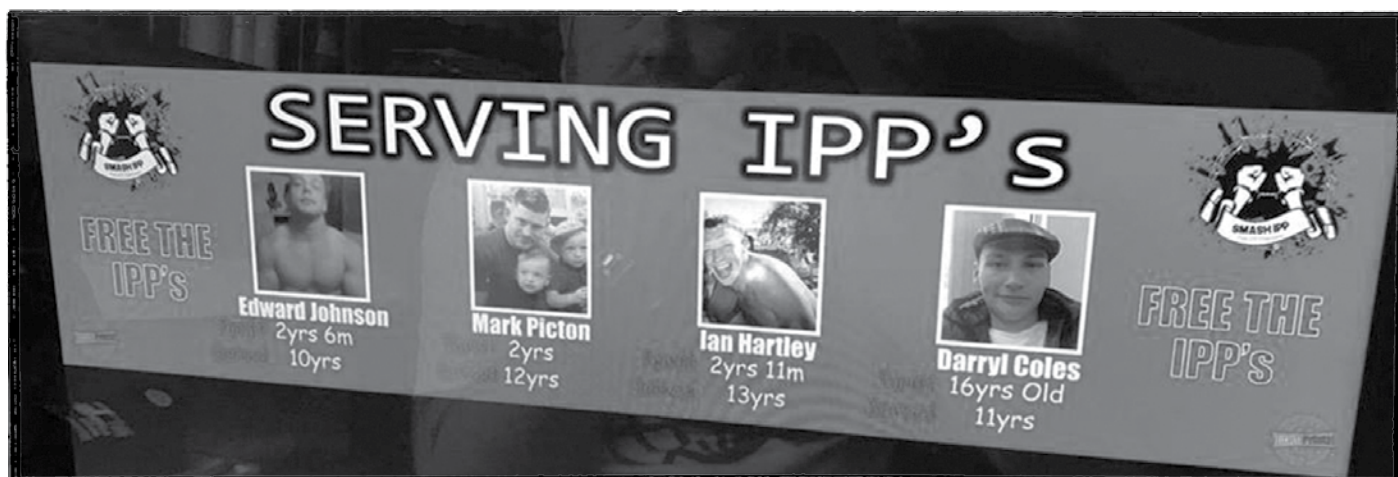
meant there has not been a campaign against water metering in this country.

Meanwhile, the privatised water companies sit by, counting their massive profits and continuing to under-invest in their infrastructure as befits a natural monopoly.

It's just one of the many ways money and resources are being taken out of working-class communities. It's too late to fight this battle. The continuous drip, drip, drip of things costing more and stagnant wages can only be overcome by a sustained, inflation-busting pay rise for all. Let's get to it.

~ Svartfrosk





# THE HMP KIDS

## CHILDREN HURT BY IPP SENTENCING

Darcey Hartley's dad, Ian, has been in prison for over 13 years, even though he was only required to serve two years and 11 months. Darcey and Ian still don't know when Ian might be released.

Sentenced to "imprisonment for public protection" (IPP), along with around 3,000 others, Ian is serving an indefinite sentence, at the mercy of the parole board.

Given that prisons are bureaucratic rabbit warrens that systematically neglect and abuse those whom they incarcerate, IPPs are denied access to the (useless) courses they are required to complete in order to make parole; they lack adequate legal representation; and parole hearings are constantly deferred. Such extensive periods of uncertainty have detrimental impacts on mental health both for the IPP and their whole family.

And even when IPPs are granted parole — as Ian was earlier this year — they live in constant fear of recall, as an IPP sentence comes with a 99-year licence. IPPs can be recalled for no reason at all. Ian was recalled to prison because probation couldn't find him a bed in rehab. Months later, he's still waiting to hear when he will next get the chance to appear in front of the parole board and be re-united with his family.

Meanwhile, Darcey is expected to be getting on with her GCSEs, even as she's gone through the highs and lows of having her dad back, just for him to be recalled.

Records of the numbers of children and young people affected by having a loved one in prison aren't kept officially, but given that there are over 80 000 people in prison in the UK at any one time, the number of family members affected is huge.

In response, in August 2018 Darcey founded a peer support group called HMP Kids, where children and teenagers could offer one another advice and support when trying to cope locked away from a loved one. After establishing a Facebook group and a website, Darcey also decided to fundraise to supply others with materials to write to their family in prison, and also to ensure other young people have the means to go on prison visits, which can put financial strain on families.

Darcey says, "My Dad's a kind, caring, warm-hearted man who would do anything to help anyone else out. He's a warrior, he fights no matter what. He's the bestest dad and even though prison has taken him for all of this time, he still does everything in his power to be the bestest dad he can be and I love him more than

anything. He protects me with his life and is always honest with me.

"We have so many funny memories even down to the smallest things, where we was in Aldi and dad was buying a frying pan, he loves cooking so much. This was one of his first times going through the check out and on the sign next to the till it said 25 and over and dad paused, so I asked him what he was doing and he said we couldn't use that till because it was for £25 and over and his pan wasn't that amount. We explained that was for wanting to buy cigarettes and things like that.

"Another time was dad's top had just been in the washing machine and it wasn't dry so I told him he could borrow one of mine and we both laughed and I gave him my crop top and he put it on haha. He would do anything to put a smile on all of our faces.

"Just small things that we all take for granted but I would do absolutely anything in this world to get those back.

"Dad not being here impacts on us all so much, badly on my mental health and day to day life. We live dad's life as well as our own.

"I decided to start HMP kids to offer children/teens help and support because this is not easy, when people think of prison they never think of the children involved and it's the children who suffer massively too."



# HOW TO GIVE

*In the following extract from Invisible: A Diary of Rough Sleeping in Britain published by Freedom Press, Andrew Fraser writes on the phenomenon of “angry charitable giving” which many homeless people experience.*

## November 8th | East London

I was sitting at a freezing cold Tube station with my friend Andreas the other night when this smartly-dressed fella walked past and literally hurled some loose change at him. As Andreas scrambled to pick up the coins from the gutter, a younger lad had seen what the first man had done.

“Oi, that’s no way to give to homeless people!” he shouted after him.

Instead of being shamed, the first guy marched back, menacingly, towards Andreas.

“Well give us me fucking money back then,” he demanded. Andreas sheepishly emptied the 62p he had collected in a paper cup back into the man’s hands. The second bloke reached into his pocket, found a shiny new pound coin, and handed it to him. ‘I’ll be back with more next time I see you,’ he told him. His kindness was the Alka Seltzer neutralising the acid aggression of the first passer-by.

I’d experienced it myself. A kind of angry form of giving which is actually an act of self-sabotage because it denies the giver that fleeting moment of satisfaction you get in knowing that you did something, not much, but something to make this shitty world a little less toxic.

When I used to sing up at Newbury Park station, I did get some who would fling a penny at me. I can’t read their minds but I think it’s fair to assume they were trying to disrespect me.

But what they hadn’t realised is that you can only disrespect yourself and if their intentions were cruel, then they surely succeeded. Anyways, I always picked them up. It meant I was a penny richer than I had been five minutes earlier. I

would keep them in my back pocket as “lucky pennies”. I still pick up pennies if I see them lying on the ground. It’s my way of demonstrating to God that I don’t take for granted anything that I have and I never assume I will have money in my pocket. Because material security is just an illusion. I leave it to the universe to look after me and so far, it always has. I might have had a lesson or two to learn beforehand, mind.

It shouldn’t be a surprise that we as a society are so fucked up about giving. At Christmas, look at all the effort that goes into making sure that you’ve bought a present for everybody who bought a present for you. That’s not how to give. You don’t give to get back. I know that the people who I give to, these days, will almost certainly never be in a position to give anything back and I wouldn’t want them to anyway. I always say to them, if your fortune turns, then pass on this kindness to another. As others have done to me.

But this world is warped. There are those who give with malicious intent. My mate Big Baz was given a sandwich which turned out to have glass in it. Luckily, after 30 years on the streets, he’s an old hand at the homelessness lark and he knew to check before he took a bite.

It was the sheer anger and hatred that certain people felt towards you for being broke which was really shocking. I’d love to know the psychology behind it. I suspect it’s because those people feel they are losing in the rat race and fear you because you represent what they may yet become. And they resent us when we smile because although we have nothing and they apparently have everything, yet they’re more miserable, anguished and resentful than we are. Gentle Andreas told me how a man had deliberately ground the heel of his boot into his foot the other day.

It doesn’t help that Andreas looks East European and it’s been open season on

people from that part of the world, from people of all communities, ever since Britain voted Brexit last year. White, black and asian Britons seem finally united in their disdain and often undisguised hatred of Romanians and others. Thank God Bonfire Night is out of the way, so Andreas will hopefully be able to sleep without having fireworks thrown on him. Still the celebration of the persecution and torture of millions of Catholics serves as a reminder that the UK is never more United than when it has a minority in its sights, be they homeless, East European, or both.

Which is why, more than anything, if you see us sitting in the streets, give your humanity to your fellow human beings, as well as a sandwich or a quid if you can afford it. Help them feel less alone, less exposed. Just by being there those few minutes chatting, you’re setting an example to those with sheeplike minds to whom you are either invisible or the outright enemy. You might even afford them some protection in those moments.

And if you see someone getting harassed by the public or the police, don’t get beaten up or arrested, but make your presence known. Shame them if you have to. Maybe take the side of life’s ultimate underdogs, like the second guy did the other night. Give them a hug afterwards and if it’s the police, politely ask them what they are up to (or do as I do and enquire how the fight against terrorism is going!). If they are acting aggressively, film them.

Without the advantage of a locked door, which everybody else takes for granted, homeless people need the protection of the community which passes by. Just as that man showed in his short-lived and spontaneous reaction the other night. I don’t know who he is, but I consider him a true hero.

*Invisible* is available from [freedompress.org.uk](http://freedompress.org.uk)



# BOOKS TO BEAR IN MIND

For this brief round-up I've only included books that have been advertised as having a price of £30 or less in the paperback edition in the UK.

I've not put an actual price as that may change between it appearing here and release, and as there is no resale price maintenance on books, if you shop around you can probably get it cheaper than the publisher's price.

There's no kindle or other e-books, no expensive academic hardbacks, etc. Also I've kept it to explicit anarchist-related materials. There are a lot of other books that may be of interest but they didn't make the cut. Arrangement is by publisher.

~ Richard Alexander

AK Press will be publishing the fourth volume of Malatesta's writings soon.

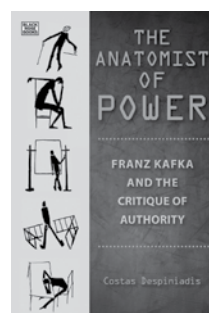
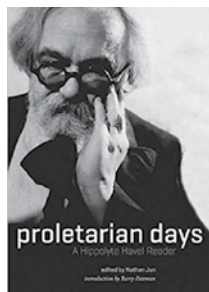
This series will be the definitive collection of Malatesta's writings available in English and contains many previously untranslated pieces.

The newest offering is Errico Malatesta (auth) Davide Turcato (ed) *Complete Works of Malatesta Vol IV, Towards Anarchy. Malatesta in America 1899-1900.*

Also from AK is a new collection of Hippolyte Havel's writings.

Havel is best known as an associate of Emma Goldman and as a contributor to the anarchist press. Hippolyte Havel (auth) Nathan Jun (ed) *Proletarian Days. A Hippolyte Havel Reader.*

Finally from AK there's also a new collection of articles by one of the lesser-known Mexican anarchist activists from the revolutionary 1900s, Praxedis G Guerrero, titled *I Am Action: Literary and Combat Articles, Thoughts and Revolutionary Chronicles.*



A little further north, Canadian publisher Black Rose Books have announced the forthcoming publication of Costas Despiniadis's *The Anatomist of Power: Franz Kafka and the Critique of Authority.*

Freedom Press have recently reprinted Albert Meltzer *The Anarchists in London, 1935-1955*, and towards the end of the year also announced two new books by Rob Ray (auth) *A Beautiful Idea: History of the Freedom Press Anarchists* and Andrew Fraser (auth), Rob Ray (ed) *Invisible: A Diary of Rough Sleeping in Britain* [see Freedom update, page 16].

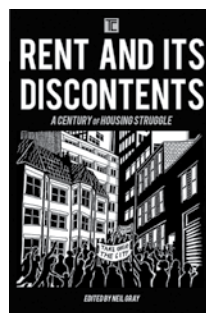
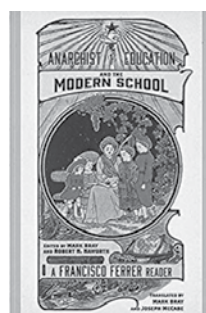
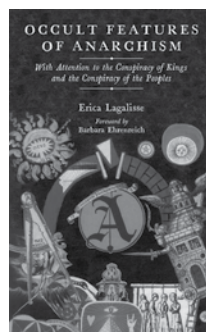
Hedgehog Productions are publishing Gary Miller's *Anarcho Punk Music: The Band's Story Behind Anarchist Punk Music.*

Meanwhile Merlin Press have the first in several volumes planned by A W Zurrugg. The first is *Anarchist Perspectives in Peace and War, 1900 - 1918.*

Minor Compositions have already put Daniel Colson *A Little Philosophical Lexicon of Anarchism from Proudhon to Deleuze* online, the print edition follows in the New Year. This has already sparked some lively debate.

Peter Lang Publishers have a new work by Anthony J. Nocella + others (eds) all ready to go, *Contemporary Anarchist Criminology: Against Authoritarianism and Punishment.*

It should be interesting reading for anyone concerned with how to take an anarchist approach to working through anti-social behaviour.



PM Press have Erica Lagalisse and Barbara Ehrenreich *Occult Features of Anarchism* listed as one of their new works. This looks to be a short but intriguing book, which shows how the development of leftist theory and practice within clandestine masculine public spheres continues to inform contemporary anarchist understandings of the 'political.

They also have a book on Francisco Ferrer edited by Robert H. Howarth *Anarchist Education and the Modern School. A Francisco Ferrer Reader* which should be fascinating.

Another reprint is a co-production between PM Press, Freedom Press and Jura Books. It's Gaston Leval's classic *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution* but with the addition of an index, a new introduction and preface.

It has also released a US edition of *Why Work?* following on from Freedom Press's 2016 UK edition and is taking on the task of republishing Colin Ward's writing.

Rowman and Littlefield are publishing a lot of books of interest to (some) anarchists at the moment, the latest is edited by Neil Gray, titled *Rent and its Discontents. A History of Housing Struggle*, which focuses on UK events.

Stockholm University Press are following up volume one of its anarchism and religion analysis title with volume two. Matthew S Adams (auth), Alexandre Christoyannopoulos (ed) *Essays in Anarchism and Religion: Volume II.*

And finally Zero Books are issuing a book by Jacob Blumenfeld entitled *All Things Are Nothing To Me: The Unique Philosophy of Max Stirner.* Which may be of interest to all memesters out there.

# FREEDOM UPDATE

The latter half of 2018 has seen some good progress at Freedom Press, leaving us at the end of the year with many vital repairs done, new books out, a solid increase in audience for the website and, fingers crossed, good prospects for the next year.

## The building

Two years ago we started a fundraiser for Phase One of our repairs project for 84b, which a surveyor had estimated as costing upwards of £40,000. The headline figure was intimidating but having broken it all down we came up with a figure for the absolutely vital stuff of about £13,000.

Thanks to the solidarity of Freedom's many wellwishers we actually raised £16,000 without a single penny of grant money, which enabled us to not only commission the key work but put cash aside for Phase 2 (forthcoming). Our friendly builders started work in August and have now fixed up the parapets, roof, gutters, damp-proofing and re-pointed the walls, meaning we will be fully watertight for years to come.

The next phase, for which donations would be well appreciated (see below) will focus on internal parts of the building, such as fixing up the stairs, replastering, floor and wall repairs, possibly even insulation for the winter months! Hopefully we can continue improving Freedom as a welcoming space for the anarchist movement.

Beyond repair works, have also welcomed a new group into the building with Dog Section Press taking up residence in the small office, and our open social-office area Decentre is looking much more comfy for if you want somewhere to hang out and plan your next action.

## The shop

Many people will have noticed some fairly dramatic changes to the shop space over the last year or so, and much credit goes to the hard work of volunteers and two of our outgoing co-ordinators for that. We have a bundle of new stock in, from

pamphlets and books to T-shirts, and even some plantlife (which has, miraculously, survived). We have more plans for the space (depending on budget) from bringing in insulation for the winter and spring to expanding our offerings.

For 2018 the shop group went above and beyond by being core organisers of Not The Anarchist Bookfair, a decentralised series of talks and celebrations which took place on October 20th-21st. The shop itself hosted several talks and the events were extremely popular with every venue packed out.

We're always looking for volunteers to help the place stay open seven days a week, 12pm-6pm, particularly on weekends, so do get in touch with our co-ordinators via [shop@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:shop@freedompress.org.uk).

## Freedom News

This year has been a rollercoaster, at least according to our reader statistics on the website, but we have been consistently increasing our reach, with an average of 14,000 unique users every month over the course of 2018 (up from 7,700 in 2017). On top of that we have been increasing our paper readership, printing (and quickly running out of) 1,200 copies in May and similar this issue.

There is clearly an appetite for consistent, active anarchist media. We are very much looking to expand these numbers and could potentially increase the frequency of the paper, but need additional subs, editors and especially distributors to make it happen, so email [editor@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:editor@freedompress.org.uk) to get involved!

## Publishing

Freedom's output over the last few years has been relatively well received despite our lack of marketing and haphazard approach to distribution, with books such as *Why Work?*, *deep ecology and anarchism* and *Slow Burning Fuse* selling steadily. What we had been doing with these was reprinting and updating existing books,

but this year we've stepped up a little by producing two all-new titles alongside a reprint of *The Anarchists in London 1935-55*.

The first of these, launched in October at the Not The Anarchist Bookfair, was *A Beautiful Idea* by Rob Ray. It's the first attempt since the 1980s to bring together all the varied pieces of Freedom's history into one volume, and the first ever to try and string the last 130 years of anarchist publishing into one narrative.

The second book in November is *Invisible*, a combined diary and retrospective on a key year of the homelessness crisis, 2017. Alongside reports of squatting autonomy and homeless self-organising is the story of recently housed rough sleeper Andrew Fraser, who walks East London for a year narrating his experiences and dealings with his friends from the streets, their troubles with charities and government institutions, and the generosity/hostility of the public.

Our next job will be looking into how to do the dread marketing and distro more effectively. All help welcome, email [distribution@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:distribution@freedompress.org.uk).



## ABOUT US

Freedom Press is an independent, non-sectarian, non-profit publishing house and bookshop collective dedicated to preserving and promoting anarchist ideas.

First established in 1886 by Charlotte Wilson as a voice for the anarchist tradition, Freedom has published more or less erratically ever since, making it the oldest such organisation in Britain, and possibly the English-speaking world.

Alongside our own extensive back catalogue we stock thousands of books, papers and pamphlets, as well as the latest magazines, periodicals and newsletters from all the major anarchist and radical groups.

## DONATING

Online || [paypal.me/fbuildingcollective](https://paypal.me/fbuildingcollective)

Direct banking || S/C: 09-01-55 Acct: 82946913

Cheques || Payable 'Freedom Press' 84b Angel Alley E1 7QX



# PERSUASIVE PESSIMISM

It is a truism to say that we live in interesting and scary times. With far, or alt-right, groups gaining ground, influence, and increasingly real political power everywhere we look, Brexit looming over all of us in the UK and beyond, thousands of people dying on the Mediterranean Sea while desperately trying to reach the safety of Fortress Europe.

Children are being kept in prisons for the crime of being born to the wrong parents, climate change is affecting us all, rapists are being elevated to the supreme court of the US, fascists have been unashamedly marching across both bigger and smaller cities, anti-migrant, bigoted and xenophobic sentiments have been growing under the pretence of “freedom of speech.”

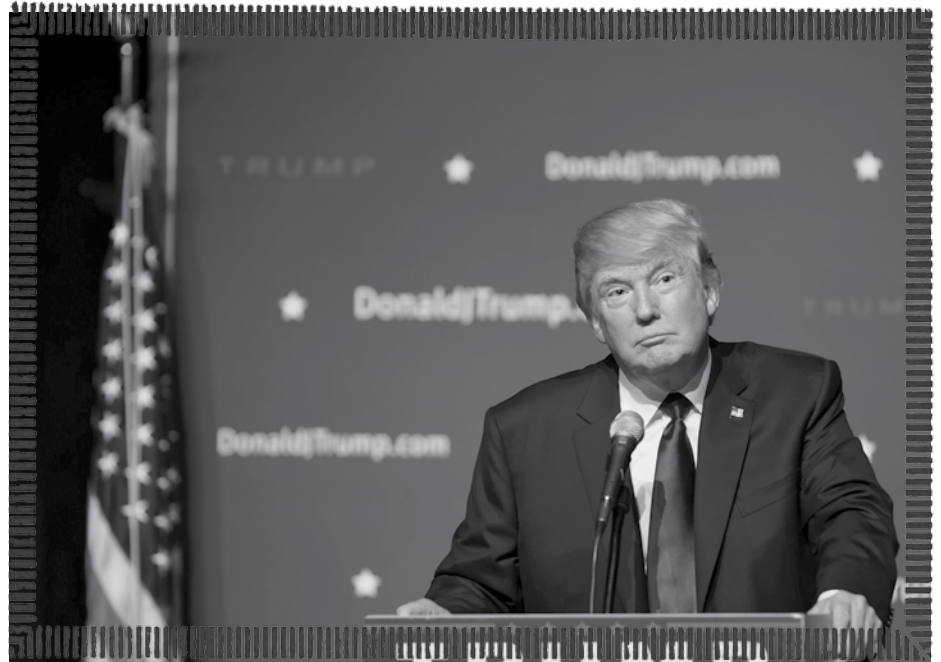
It is easy to conclude that there is no point anymore in our struggles and that we have lost for, at least, the foreseeable future. If not forever.

However, please allow for some optimism. Whilst the fact that we, as the left, are losing ground, sadly might be true, we strongly believe not all hope is lost and it is up to us where we go from here. Now it is time to up our activist, or just decent human being, game.

After all, most lasting changes in this world originate in the time of crisis such as the one we are experiencing today. Obviously, our struggles and organising were never an easy task, and likely it will soon become even more difficult. But, for the first time in decades, what we say and what we do might actually matter: provided we know what we are doing and are open for new ways to organise and relate to society.

Despite the gloom and difficulties of today’s world, It is our duty to take advantage of the current state of affairs in our organising and political and social struggles.

Most good organising doesn’t come from great ideas only. It comes from the urgent necessity of change recognised by wide parts of our society. This necessity has become apparent to almost everyone who isn’t high enough on the social ladder to just ignore the general situation of the world and get on with their trouble-free lives.



One of our problems is that our opponents seem to be very good in taking advantage of this situation in order to promote their ideas. They are the ideas directly opposing ours: they want isolationism, they want strong national states, they don’t want migrants, women, black and ethnic minority people and other groups as their equals. They are very good in convincing large parts of the population that their only hope is to follow them while they are trying to get their old mythical world back. They are even better in getting some parts of the population to mistake losing their privilege for losing their rights.

While it may look like a hopeless task, we ought to at least try, as hard as we can, to direct the current of change the way we want it to go. It is now when we ought to promote our ideas and actions. It is now when we ought to speak with those around us to find out how, and where, we are going now. Clearly, this work will not be easy and certainly not pleasant or speedy.

While we often find ourselves in a defensive mode, there are many groups and individuals doing great work in an attempt to create a better, just world based on anti-authoritarian left principles. Many of them don’t say it like that, but this doesn’t matter: they are still more than worthy of our attention and support.

While the big traditional trade unions may be losing their influence and find themselves a little too irrelevant for the modern world, there are other older and newer organisations gradually taking charge and gaining influence and attention.

In the UK, there is a not too well reported, but ever growing struggle for decent wages and decent employment: fighting against the so-called gig economy. Women all over the world are pissed off and fighting for their rights, often reaching out to their counter parties across national borders. Anti-gentrification struggles are gaining more and more attention. So are numerous environmental groups.

This issue of *Freedom* is partly dedicated to such groups and individuals. From the amazing United Voices of the World union going from strength to strength with their successful and unorthodox strike actions, through the Solidarity Federation doing their bit with their workplace organiser training days, IWW Couriers Network organising all over the country, kids campaigning for prisoners’ rights, and many others showing us that there is indeed a space and need for grassroots organising.

And that, however difficult it may be, it needs to be dealt with right here, right now. After all, it is not called struggle for nothing.



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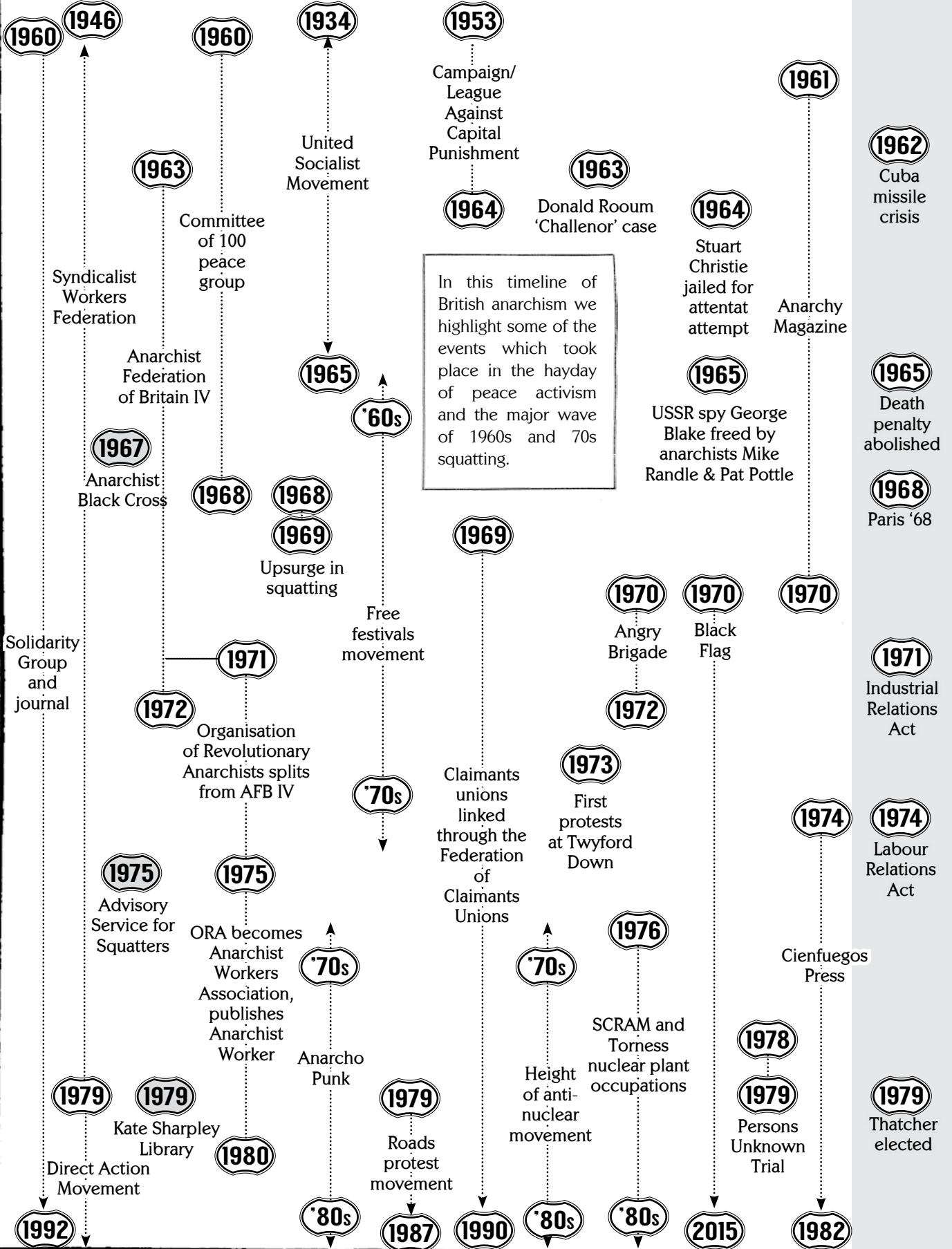
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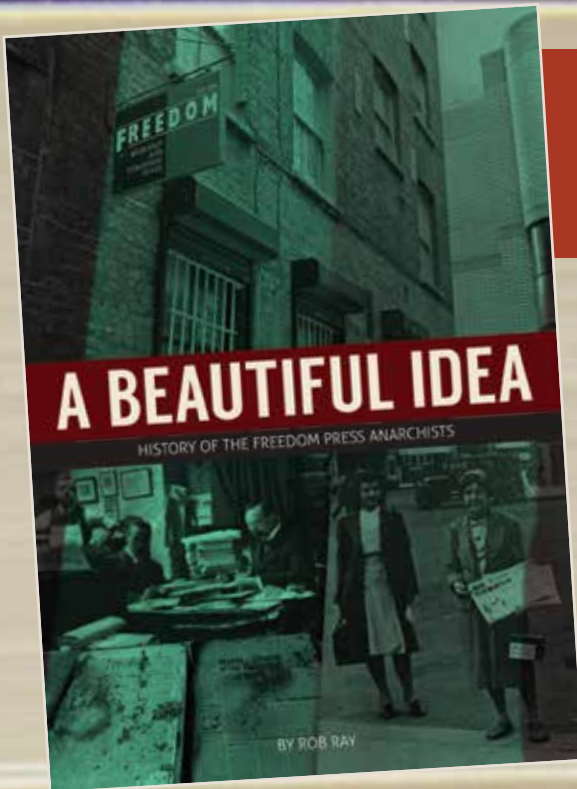
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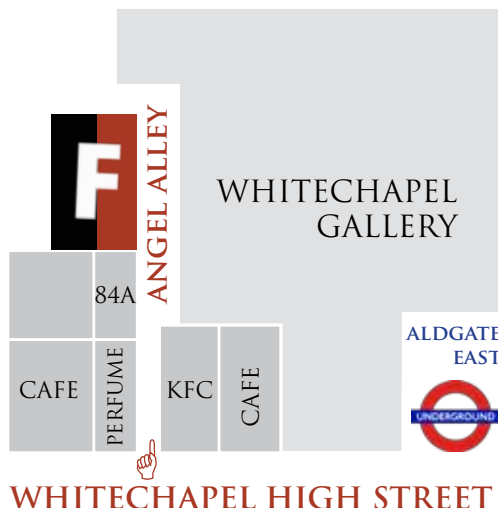
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