

# FREEDOM

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**A DIFFERENT REASON TO MASK UP**



# EDITORIAL

With the end of lockdown and, to all intents and purposes, the end of the Labour Party left, we appear to find ourselves in something of a political grey zone in the Summer of 2022.

On the one hand, the Tories have never been less popular and rightfully so. The NHS crisis created by their deliberately chaotic privatisation policies has reached critical proportions. Vast sums have been wasted on cash bungs to their mates.

Their mishandling of Covid has killed vast swathes of people. Double standards on lockdown. Draconian laws enacted on everything from migration to protest and travellers' rights. Countless issues around senior figures' personal behaviour.

On the other, the public is offered little better than Tory-lite in the form of Starmer's Labour. A shadow cabinet made up of make-weights. A self-assumed role of doing what the Tories do, just more efficiently.

The brightest counters to this rolling pratfall of grey malfeasance have, inevitably, taken the form of direct action. Where Bojo and co. prattle about a new wave of nuclear power 20 years from now and net zero by 2050, activists have taken the initiative to force more them.

It is no coincidence that our media's most vitriolic condemnation has been reserved for the likes of Just Stop Oil and the HS2 protesters – economic disruption cannot be ignored, unlike A-B marches.

The resurrection of injunctions and airing of draconian new laws proves their worth. Primetime discussion about them and their cause bypasses the usual gatekeeping even as pundits sneer about “counterproductive tactics.”

The question should be asked, if these disruptive actions are so irrelevant, why are the penalties being handed down so incredibly harsh? Why spend so much time and energy intimidating people who aren't getting anywhere?

The reality is that for them, the actions of green fluffies blockading business as usual is the tip of a terrifying possibility.

Over the last decade the political class has, at every turn, acted against working class interests. They've made having a stable home a pipe dream while building luxury properties everywhere they can. They've denied us reliable incomes and taken away our pensions while enriching themselves. They've distracted us with culture wars while gobbling up all of the best of life.

And they've made it increasingly difficult to oppose them within the law. There is no political path to real change, no legal challenge they can't outspend us on.

It is this which makes them rant so loudly at any hint of direct confrontation. It's why they hand out decade-long sentences to young people in Bristol who defended themselves against police aggression in 2020. It's why they intend to start imposing prison terms for “obstructing the highway” – as though highways aren't obstructed by partygoers every friday night.

They do so because they need to cut the idea of direct action off before it spreads any further. They know exactly where it could lead. they know how much further the working class could go should it rediscover the will to act.

The greatest hope of the State as it stands is for the grey zone to last forever. Every so often a new Corbyn can come along to be handily crushed, as long as a stasis and sense of helplessness persists in the general public. They love us to shrug at their incompetencies and corruptions.

It is the vibrant light brought by those prepared to act directly against their interests and make change happen that they cannot abide.

## WHAT'S ALL THIS 'ANARCHISM' ABOUT?

There are many misconceptions about what anarchism is and what anarchists want in the media. Some of the myths are accidental, some spread deliberately – but the most famous is that we're all about chaos.

Little could be further from the truth, the famous circled A for example is historically a symbolic acronym. Anarchy is Order.

While we have our share of chaotic adherents and experiences, and sometimes comrades' methods are very direct, we have no desire to simply break the system. We also want to replace it with something better, known as the beautiful idea.

What that idea represents in its specifics differs from person to person, as with every broad creed (capitalism

included), but for the last 150 years, from individualism to mutualism, to anarcho-communism, anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian municipalism, the irony is that we are often obsessed with organisation.

Which will happen when you're trying to frame a whole other alternative society to the one we have now.

This paper is itself produced by an organised non-hierarchical collective and covers some of the broad range of topics where you will find anarchists fighting for a better future.

Every member has an equal say in how Freedom Press runs, and no-one is unaccountable for their actions.



The main typefaces are Langdon, Alfa Slab One and Centabel Book.

Dingbats are from 1910 issues of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth.

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# ON THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

There is panic in the air that the government is taking away the “right to protest” or making “all protest illegal.” It’s a good moment to ask, what is the right to protest, and why are activists so concerned with keeping their resistance lawful?

## What is the right to protest?

There is no such thing as “the right to protest” as such. This is partly because “protest” does not refer to any one kind of activity; it might include marches and static demonstrations, occupations and blockades, street theatre and leafleting, direct action and symbolic gestures. Sometimes we have the right to do some of these things, sometimes we don’t.

This means that our legal permission to protest is constituted through a collection of different rights. For example, Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects freedom of expression – the right to share your views publicly – and Article 11 protects freedom of assembly – the right to gather together.

But there are also plenty of activities which activists do which are not protected by these rights. Graffiti and other forms of vandalism are not typically protected by Article 10, and Article 11 does not give people carte blanche to indefinitely block roads to make a political point.

Activists and protesters do not always remain within their rights. People stand where they’re not supposed to, enter private land, stay out past the agreed end time, refuse to be dispersed by police. When we talk about protecting protest rights, we are talking only about protests which remain within the law.

## Rights and the State

A right is something the State guarantees your permission to do. (Note: it only guarantees your permission, not your ability – we all have the right to own a lamborghini, even though most of us don’t have the means; we all have the right to run a marathon even if we are not physically able).



Pic: Guy Smallman

There is a flipside to this permission: when the State grants a right, it correspondingly limits your freedom to act beyond that right. We often seek to protect rights in order to limit the power the State has over us, but the existence of rights also depends on State power. Rights can only exist if the State has ultimate control over what people are and are not permitted to do.

When the State guarantees the right to freedom of public assembly it does so on the understanding that it is the ultimate arbiter of when, where, and how people are permitted to assemble. When the State guarantees the right to freedom of speech it is declaring that it decides what speech is permissible and what isn’t. If the State did not maintain the ability to limit our freedoms it would be meaningless for it to grant us rights.

Those of us who wish to avoid repression by the State would do well to stop turning to the State to protect us from itself.

## The power to protest

This is not to say that rights are meaningless or that they are not worth defending. Far from it. But their importance is best understood by thinking about what they

allow us to do, not as ends in themselves. It’s helpful to shift our thinking away from protecting our right to protest and towards protecting our power to protest. Instead of prioritising the lawfulness of protest, prioritise its effectiveness.

Specific legal protections do indeed make protesting easier and help people avoid punitive responses; that’s why movements have learned to organise legal observers and bust cards and legal briefings. But rights alone are not what makes protest possible. Also necessary are solid organisation, practical knowledge, material resources, networks of solidarity and care, rigorous principles, critical thought, etc. With these things present, the state withdrawing our permission is not enough to stop us. Without these things, the right to protest is worth very little.

Some days people don’t stand where the police tell them to, don’t leave when instructed, don’t disperse in an orderly fashion. Some days crowds become uncontrollable.

On those days protesters are not acting in accordance with their rights, they’re acting in accordance with their power. It’s a sight to behold.

~ Mediocre Dave



# PLACES TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ANARCHISM & ACTIVISM

## ARCHIVES

### libcom.org

Recently upgraded, the huge libcom library contains essays, papers and books on everything from the 1926 general strike to its extensive set of Black Flag newspapers from 1968-2015. It also hosts news, blogs and discussion.

### Sparrows' Nest Library

Both a physical archive and sizeable web presence focused particularly on UK anarchist historical works

### Anarchist Library

Online repository of texts in multiple formats and with bookbuilder options

### Kate Sharpley Library

Anarchist history with a focus on Britain and Spain

### Lidiap

Collated anarchist papers and journals from all over Europe

### schnews.org and doordie.org.uk

Archived sites for the '90s and '00s activist direct action newssheets

## NEWSWIRES

freedomnews.org.uk and others listed at ima.press ..... Britain  
 enoughisenough14.org ..... Europe  
 squat.net ..... Squatting  
 Anarchist News ..... Aggregator  
 Paris-Luttes ..... France  
 Direkt Action, graswurtzel.net, indymedia.de ..... Germany  
 athens.indymedia.org and voidnetwork.gr ..... Greece  
 umanitanova.org ..... Italy  
 avtonom.org ..... Russia  
 Agencia de Noticias Anarquistas ..... Spanish language  
 operation-solidarity.org ..... Ukraine  
 It's Going Down, Unicorn Riot, Act For Freedom Now! and Crimethinc ..... USA

## RADIO/VIDEO

### channelzeronetwork.com

Collection of podcasts and anarchist-aligned radio shows from across the globe

### Submedia

Long-running video news show based in Canada

### Reel News

Regular protest reports from across Britain

### Breadtube

Subreddit collating youtube vlogs and documentaries

## SOCIAL MEDIA

(NB// Most groups listed have Facebook and Twitter presences)

### raddle.me

Alternative reddit

### Kolektiva

Anarchist server on Mastodon (which is itself part of the 'Fediverse' family of alternative social medias including Peertube, Pixelfed and diaspora)

### r/anarchism and r/anarchy101

Main subreddits for anarchist discussion and FAQs

### noblogs.org

Platform for anarchist blogging

### riseup.net

Secure email and list server

## LEGAL STUFF

### ABC

Prisoner support.. Brighton and Bristol branches are most active

### ACAB

The Activist Court Aid Brigade offers support for arrestees and people needing urgent advice. Contact 07946 541-511 or courtsupport@protonmail.com

### Anti-raids

Specialises in responding to migrant harrasment and detention. More at antiraid.net

## Advisory Service for Squatters

Advice for how to squat and how to deter eviction. Call 020 3216-0099 or email advice4squatters@gmail.com

### GBC

Protest guides and training: greenandblackcross.org

### Netpol

Monitoring site for changes in protest law and police activity, netpol.org

## FRIENDLY LOCATIONS

Aberdeen Social Ctr ..... Aberdeen  
 1in12 Club ..... Bradford  
 Cowley Club ..... Brighton  
 Hydra Books ..... Bristol  
 BASE ..... Bristol  
 Coventry Peace House ... Coventry  
 People's Bookshop ..... Durham  
 ACE ..... Edinburgh  
 Lighthouse Books ..... Edinburgh  
 Rubicund Books ..... Falmouth  
 Calton Books ..... Glasgow  
 GAS ..... Glasgow  
 Glasgow Zine Library ..... Glasgow  
 Pink Peacock ..... Glasgow  
 Wharf Chambers ..... Leeds  
 News From Nowhere .... Liverpool  
 56A ..... SE15 London  
 Housmans ..... N1 London  
 Feminist Library ..... SE15 London  
 Freedom Bookshop ..... E1 London  
 LARC ..... E1 London  
 Mayday Rooms ..... EC4 London  
 Star and Shadow ..... Newcastle  
 Blackcurrent ..... Northampton  
 Five Leaves ..... Nottingham  
 Sumac Centre ..... Nottingham  
 October Books ..... Southampton  
 Rockaway Park ..... Temple Cloud





# TREND OF THE WORLD

“Hiya, it’s been a while. How’s things?”

“Good thanks, you?”

“Yeah, mustn’t grumble ... apart from the whole ‘there’s practically no way to stop a 1.5°C rise in global temperatures by the 2030s, and it is highly likely that we go beyond 2°C if we do not halt a further rise in greenhouse gas emissions within the next three years’ thing.”

“Oh, really? What does that mean?”

“Well, dramatic rises in sea levels leading to coastal and inland flooding and a deepening of the displacement of people which has already started. Greater and more deadly flooding in many high latitude and mountainous areas. Ironically, water availability and droughts will also become major problems, triggering wars in the same way oil does now. More deadly heat waves and firestorms. The problems we already have with climactically sensitive crops such as coffee and cocoa will deepen, and staple crops will also become harder to grow in many places. Rising ocean temperatures, rising acidity and lower oxygen levels will see more ocean dead zones and a reduction in vital global life forms such as phytoplankton who create 70% of the planet’s oxygen. There will be a further deepening of the ongoing mass-extinction event, to which human beings themselves are highly likely to succumb.”

“Oh, bummer. No chocolate? Did you see the game last night?”

This isn’t a typical conversation, but it is typical of the global media’s attitude towards the threat of climate change. Those of us who have spent decades on the frontline of ecological resistance have witnessed some bizarre attitudes from the press over the years. At first

there was blatant support for climate change deniers. Then they played with the idea that “global warming” might have possible positive outcomes (I kid you not, there was even a feature on one TV channel in the 1990s where they put some deckchairs and a pile of sand in Doncaster marketplace and talked about how, in the future, it would be nice to visit ‘Donny by the Sea’). In fact, they continued to treat climate change as a novelty or, worse still, as a “debate,” until the laser-focused tones of Greta Thunberg’s voice cut through the prevailing static.



Despite an obvious rise in climate awareness, the media still constantly misrepresent the situation when they bother to mention it at all. This year they pretty much ignored the publication of the first two Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) working group reports of 2022. The first of these reports focused on the physical science, and the second dealt with impacts, adaptations and vulnerability. Then, on April 4th the third working group findings were published and the media took a brief interest again – they could hardly ignore the fact that we now have three years to halt rising greenhouse emissions, when it was the shocking revelation that we “may” only have 12 years which stirred Greta Thunberg into action back in 2018.

What is really interesting is that the media consistently choose to focus on what we, as individuals, can do to mitigate climate change. Our own actions are important, but beyond flying less, eating less meat, and reducing food and plastic waste, individual actions have very limited impact on the big picture. The real problem is the 100 companies responsible for 71% of global greenhouse emissions, as outlined in the 2017 *Carbon Majors*

*Report*, which, as the authors themselves say, “pinpoints how a relatively small set of fossil fuel producers may hold the key to systemic change on carbon emissions.” The focus should not be on what we need to do to stop climate chaos, but on the stupid shit which they need to stop doing. Or perhaps it is we who need to focus our attention on stopping them. It is here I would like to insert my favourite Utah Phillips’ quote: “The Earth isn’t dying it’s being killed and those who are killing it have names and addresses.”

The truth, of course, is that climate change and the sixth mass extinction event is systemic to the capitalist economic system. The bottom line of constant economic growth at any cost is blatantly illogical on a finite planet. Or, as Edward Abbey described it, “growth for growth’s sake is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

It is an anally-retentive death cult which sees the economy as more important than life itself. Born of the horrors of colonialism and imperialism, our dominant socio-economic system is as inherently ecocidal as it is genocidal, racist, sexist and classist. And any organisation playing by the rules of a certain economic system will not only fail to question that system, they will invariably inherit the biases of that system. Which is why the mainstream media largely ignored climate-induced suffering when it wasn’t immediately affecting rich nations, and also why they cut Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate out of a news agency photograph and then went on to misidentify her as Zambian campaigner Natasha Mwansa when they tried to apologise.

The dominant economic model cannot solve the problem of climate change, because it is itself the problem. And the mainstream press cannot be trusted to fully inform you about the problem at hand (when it bothers to inform you at all), because it would never choose to bite the hand that feeds it.

~ Warren Draper



# A LOCKED-DOWN WALK

During the break from lockdown in Summer 2020 a friend and I went to Southend to take a break from the city. It was interesting for lots of reasons, from the strange non-strangeness of throngs parading along the beach/riverside, to exploring the town's semi-faded attractions.

What stood out to me though was a walk we took to its north, out of Great Wakering. It was an interesting trek, in good company, and I'm glad I did it, but its lessons are primarily dystopian.

road leading past what, on the map, looked like some kind of private fishing firm and onwards to a bridge, to take us across the river and onto the island.

Except it didn't. We got to the crossroads alright. Unlisted on the map, however, was a bloody big gate. And on that gate it warned sternly: "KEEP OUT. MoD." Unbeknownst to Google Maps (or possibly "forgotten" by diktat) the entire island, about the size of Basildon, was signposted as being off limits.

yourself in the lands of the rich where you have few paths to tread, and your presence is tangibly neither needed nor wanted.

In his Pheasant chapter, Hayes writes about the many confrontations that took place in the 18th century over our right to share the Earth's common bounty. Back then it was poaching, villagers "stealing" the landowner's game. Today it's simply looking, because the ruling class has physically pushed the riffraff so far from its boundaries that the possibility of anything else barely even occurs. Picturesque villages are mostly filled with the comfortable middle classes, agricultural workers long since having been forced out, and what need have they to "steal" wood for a fire or a rabbit for the pot? The poor could, in theory, get out to such a spot, but to what end? The effort would cost more than the reward.

The other day a headline passed my desk which really struck me. It went 'Bread costs are soaring out of reach of families.' The return of a news item which, back in the 18th century, would herald talk of guillotines. Except today, unlike in pre-revolutionary France, the poor are almost all in cities and market towns, looking for work that mostly no longer exists in the fiefdoms of the countryside. They live within a 24/7 CCTV panopticon, poaching is from Primark, while starving and decaying is mostly done on paving slabs far from any field. The game, the woodlands, the resources of the manor are too remote, too alien to spend a moment's thought on.

The rich and powerful are thus free to scar and pillage the land, sharing nothing, and for the most part we will never be let near enough to see it.

After our walk I looked up Potton Island to find out a bit more about it. The most notable thing was that John Major's government, in the '90s, considered using it to dump high-level nuclear waste. They didn't bother to tell the local council.

This is the sort of thing our self-described betters like to stylise as "stewardship of the land."

~ George Wilson



Pic: David Kemp

We decided to head up towards Potton Island which looked happily short on people. This should, in retrospect, have been a tip-off. Nowhere this close to the machine would be empty by accident. Nevertheless, we trooped out on a fearsome sunny day to have a look round.

Just outside the village lies a series of fields which are vast, half a kilometre on a side. Paths lead around their edges, but no hedges or trees mark them or prevent hot winds from pounding through, blowing good earth into your face as it flees from the farmer's "care" towards river and sea. Not a soul was to be seen, and why would there be? There's little of interest, just flat ground and the intimidating scale of modern monoculture.

I was sweating by the time we'd walked maybe a kilometre through this patch of unshaded nothing, reaching the end of the track onto a sharp left turn, tarmacked

So, already hot from an unexpectedly scorching day, we admitted defeat and tried a different path. We stumbled onto the edge of another field, and courted sunstroke to trespass around its edge towards Great Wakering's sibling, Little. Parched and rapidly tiring, we walked alongside neat fencing between the village and What The Farmer Owns. And glory of glories, in Little Wakering we found an ice cream shop which marked, mostly, the end of our day's travails.

I've been reading the *Book of Trespass* recently, and this walk came to mind while I took in Nick Hayes' ponderings on the enclosures. Not just because it's an example of exactly how hostile our territorial laws and industrialised, militaristic attitudes are towards anyone wishing to wander around the world we share. But because even in south Essex, as connected a plain as any in England, it's not a long walk before you find

# COVID: LIVING WITH IT

On February 21st 2022, Boris Johnson announced the end of most Covid restrictions in England. A few days later, on the 24th, whatever domestic legal restrictions were still technically in force disappeared (most had long since vanished in practice) and our rainy island became the West's first Great Experiment in just y'know, letting things happen. See how they pan out, sort of thing.

In between him saying so and it being so, 321 people died and were subsequently added to official tallies. We don't need to know their names of course, it's a lot more than any average person could remember in any case. When numbers get into three or four figures it's all about comparisons, "equivalent to the population of the Draper Estate main tower" or somesuch. One death is a tragedy, a million a statistic, as Stalin didn't say once.

Those were, fortunately, way down from the dizzying heights of Delta in the winter of 2021 when 1,700 were dying in a day, a whole Hatfield Heath keeling over at a time. By the summer of that year deaths were at a legitimately paltry four or five a day, so low they could be named in the local papers. A relatively tame winter in the low hundreds followed.

And then.

Everyone really wants things to be back to "normal," or at least not to have disease continue looming in our peripheral vision alongside the other three members of the horsemen of the Apocalypse. That's the honest truth. Some of us are more or less wary about it, but no-one wants that coughing git to continue taking up precious headspace.

So journalists and social media mavens, already bored, moved on to opinioneer and research about other topics. Boris and the semi-related partying gaffe. What "hypersonic missile" actually means. Chuck in a climate story if it's been a while. Lists of Covid deaths dropped down, or off, the agenda. Eventually, as March moved on, even conspiracy theorists had nothing left in the tank and quietly stopped grousing (for those who didn't immediately sign up to Great Reset tin foil hattery to scratch that itch, do please try and remember this pipeline for next time).



But this doesn't mean deaths have stopped happening. Far from it. In 2020, where the first wave somehow missed hitting in the winter, there was a rough (official) cumulative death count of 77,300 (approximately the town of Bury). The following year, particularly over the winter months, saw a further 72,600 (almost all of South Shields) with 22,500 of those (Felixstowe) taking place from April, after the Delta wave had subsided.

Through the first five months of 2022 we had two mini surges, with an average death rate of 200 people per day through to May 1st. It seems we may have reached the promised land that the Tories had been eyeing for so long. The rate which, in the words of our esteemed Prime Minister, "we're going to have to learn to live with."

If we extrapolate that as an annual average of sorts, evening out winter surges with (hopefully) summer recesses and with fingers crossed that the NHS's slow collapse is gentle, that would come to 73,000-odd deaths a year. An annual Devastation of Walsall, give or take.

And by "we" will have to live with it, I of course mean people with vulnerabilities and/or who need to rely on the ruins of public healthcare under multiple neoliberal governments.

So now we know what is and isn't the number of direct deaths which will galvanise the British government to fart around pretending it has a plan in ways that might actually require some sort of sacrifice to business as usual.

Where 75,000 is the low end of potentially double or triple that number, they'll clap for carers, tell us to wash our hands and make a sort of haphazard effort to enforce mask wearing. They'll chuck a lot of shady money at businesses (no point in wasting a good crisis), a bit of money at getting people temporarily off the streets, and make a showing of getting people jabbed when the option becomes available. That's Action Numbers.

Losing a Walsall made up primarily of the economically marginal though? No probs. Job done. They can live with that in any given year.

The bigger question is whether we can. Because it won't be the ruling classes' well-protected lungs, drawing in clear fresh air at the tops of skyscrapers and in green rural idylls, that fill with fluid and shut down.

It won't, in the main, be them waving goodbye to loved ones whose existing health complications were pushed over the edge by a dose of omicron or whatever Greek letter we're on by that point. It won't be them, working from home because they're too senior to bully back to the office, crushed into buses and on trains and Tubes sucking down polluted, infected air.

That joy is all for us. And what has become true for those who traipse the streets in defiance of State callousness is there's now more than one reason to mask up.

~ PS





# ON INTERVENTIONISM

The war in Ukraine has raised a sometimes heated discussion on one of socialism's most potent slogans: No War But The Class War. The general *political* idea (deserters and mutineers having always existed), is that the working class should not fight and die for the schemes of the rich and the frothing delusions of nationalism. It appears in World War I, II, in the Falklands, in Iraq. It is shouted at rallies and printed on placards. It's graffiti'd, leafletted and posted online.

NWBTCW, as it's enticingly acronymed, had perhaps its finest moment in the early 20th century. Employed as a rebuttal to the ludicrousness of imperial conflict early iterations of the idea, albeit somewhat crude, can be found through *Freedom* essays on the Boer War. These castigated British workers for leaping onto the bandwagon of patriotism, for failing to down tools to protect fellow average Joes and Janes against naked ruling class aggression as British troops reached in and scorched the ground, established concentration camps and annexed gold-rich lands.

So unpopular was this opinion at the time that anarchists were attacked in the streets by self-styled patriotic citizens, but it was correct in identifying the British elite as a rapacious oppressor, and workers as fools for not focusing on their true enemy at home.

It is raised again at the outset of the First World War, albeit with an unfortunate dissenting voice in Peter Kropotkin's insistence that his beloved France must be protected from the Germans. The vast majority of anarchists however recognised two things. First, that once again, the ruling classes were starting a war that working people would die in. And second, that after decades of propaganda, amid dramatic social change, the working classes were capable of saying no.

Campaigns against the war were raised in every nation. Cynically, the ruling classes sent rabble rousers to the front to die – but in both Russia and Germany this was to no avail.

In the former, mass revolt led to the overthrow of the monsters of the Winter Palace. In the latter, the January strike and



*The Boer War of 1899-1902 saw Dutch colonists in South Africa defending against a brutal British invasion which aimed to expand the Empire. The Boers, whose stand against Lord Roberts Freedom described as a "heroic struggle" were no saints, and Freedom's analysis of the situation was in many ways poor (racism abounds). There are striking similarities to today in aspects of the debate however, with Freedom arguing that ultimately it was the working class of the aggressor nation that would have to unilaterally put down their arms to end the killing.*

Spring mutinies led to the collapse of the German Army, and the end of the conflict as Wilhelm II's ambitions dissolved into nothingness.

In Britain such campaigns came to a less spectacular end, but the *Freedom* Group again threw itself into a struggle against capitalists' wars. It argued loudly against British workers being sent to France and the spirit of jingoism that had overwritten the promise of the Great Unrest – an escalating series of working class refusals which despite the war's intervention, never truly disappeared and would find their zenith in the 1926 general strike. Anarchists were prominent alongside the Quakers in taking a pacifist tack, refusing conscription despite the consequences.

The Second World War era was an altogether muddier affair. Following on

from the destruction of much of Western Europe's organised anarchist and socialist movements by facism in the 1920s, the anarchists were initially faced by Spain's civil war, in which foreign interventions were pushing General Franco to victory.

Many anarchists went to fight for that uncomfortable political compromise represented by the Republic in what was seen as an existential conflict, and prominent figures such as Camillo Berneri actively called for interventions by the populations of other Great Powers to aid the Republic's struggle. An example of such writing by Berneri, reproduced here, has parallels to articles on Ukraine today.

During World War II itself however the British anarchists were far less sanguine about such an approach, and again reverted to the one which had served



so well in decades past. This is broadly summarised by a Manifesto printed in the December 1943 issue of *War Commentary*, where the Anarchist Federation writes of the movement that in:

“... adhering unswervingly to the path of working class struggle, it has supported none of the belligerent imperialisms. German and Italian fascism have had their apologists; British and French imperialism have had their apologists; Russian totalitarianism has its apologists. All these are manifestations of class rule. Their policies are the policies of their ruling class, fighting as always for the maintenance of their privilege and power over the workers. The anarchists have refused to take the side of any of them.”

The problem, of course, was that as we know now, and was at least partially known then, the attitudes at play were not equal. The racist instrumentalism which led Winston Churchill to create the Bengal famine for the sake of war was brutal, but it was not an ideologically-driven Holocaust. As the Anarchist Federation's words were loaded onto the press, Jews were being exterminated with horrific focus and determination. The eventual heroes of World War II were thus not those who called for class war in a situation where little class power existed, but those who acted to liberate Paris from the Nazis, the Spanish anarchist fighters known as La Nueve.

In our modern conflicts, as Berneri often noted in his writings on everything from electoral abstentionism to our engagement with those of religious inclinations, there is a debate to be had on principle, and the practical struggle to save life. It is not an easy conversation, but somewhere, between the twin poles of rebuilding lost class power and survival, a path must be found.

■ *The State or Revolution: Selected Writings of Camillo Berneri* will be published later this year by Freedom Press.

~ Rr



## MADRID: THE SUBLIME

From *Guerra di Classe*, 2 December 1936:

Pilate is just as infamous as Judas. Who is Pilate today? He is not even the assembly of Geneva foxes, he is not even the ostriches of social-democrat Ministerialism. Pilate is you, the European proletariat!

Can you, oh tender proletarian mother tuck your little child into its bed without seeing mangled children lying abandoned on the roads like carrion. Can you play lovingly with your child, oh proletarian, without thinking of the children lying in pain in hospitals, suffering the tortures of their wounded flesh and the anguishes of fear.

And yet you read left-wing papers and you know that there exists a great city running with blood, torn apart and reduced to ashes by explosions of shells; they tell that the children have been surprised by death when they were shouting to the heavens the songs of their unconcern, that their mothers roam about searching for the fruit of their wombs and carry their blood-stained bodies in search of unlikely or belated help. The stench of death rises from dispatches and correspondence from Madrid. The sky over Madrid is red with fires which should set the world aflame. And yet, everything collapses, everything burns, a whole population is dying – without the masses being affected.

In the agony of Madrid there is all the horror of a rape in the marketplace on market day.

Death can continue to strike, sudden as hail in summer and unavoidable as lightning. The Horsemen of the Apocalypse had for themselves, with the safety of high altitudes, the moral void of the era. Let them shake it, let them rend it apart, let them burn it slowly, this martyred city; millions of proletarians don't care at all about it. Is Madrid resisting? Many wonder how long it can hold out. It is a European bullfight. It is a disgrace of peoples and not merely of governments and classes. It is the blockade of anti-fascist indifference that adds itself to the criminal fascist siege. Meetings will not stop the aircraft from flying through the sky over Madrid and scattering death and ruin. The cold sweat that weighs on the

brows of mothers, the eyes of children enlarged by fear, the bodies pounded and shaken by the convulsions, are no more than a future vision of what you will suffer, you who are entrenched in non-intervention! Today, the war is in the sky over Madrid, tomorrow it will be in the sky over Barcelona, the day after tomorrow in the sky over Paris. The European war has started again. It exists, even if it has not been declared. These are the aircraft and pilots of Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany which are massacring and ruining Madrid.

The horror of it no longer touches people's consciences? Well then, the bombs will waken them. And that will be historic justice.

Madrid, the joyous Vienna of the Iberian Peninsula is reviving the deeds of Saguntum. It has passed from the waltz to the "Eroica" [Symphony]. Epic witness of the acts of heroism of the masses and the militias, beside which those of the Commune of Paris pale in comparison; it disappoints the bestial hopes of the generals, thwarts their meticulous calculations, refutes their boasting. It is resisting and will resist. If the compassion of the masses is deaf, if Europe is incapable of anger, well then, the whole world will be branded by the energy of this city. Madrid will not be taken. It can be completely destroyed, but it will not be taken alive. Death, exodus and flames will make it a Pompeii.

If it is not the wings of victory, it will be those of Nemesis that are unfolded above it. The reputation of the fascist generals is assured, but it will be the reputation of Genghis Khan. It will be another Commune. but it will not be a final glimmer; it will be the blazing up of a fire that will bring all the "spectators" out of their lairs, at least as long as it does not burn them there in their Blumist beds.

Madrid, where here thousands of men are fighting with an ardour nourished and sustained by that of thousands of women and children, is in the process of nailing its torturers to the pillory and the blind and deaf masses are lighting for everyone a light that still allows you to hope in man.

Madrid, the martyr city, already merits the title of sublime.

~ Camillo Berneri

# AN EASTERN EUROPE

“Apparently, for the Western left, it is totally fine to publicly self-fellate over Kurdish, Palestinian or Irish self-determination, but just try bringing an Eastern European one to the table ...”

~ Eastern European Leftist Proverb,  
medium: Telegram

One of the more frustrating aspects of watching the most recent Russian special military operation imperialist war unfolding is the number of self-appointed experts from the Western left thinking they have some particularly insightful view.

While some make it rather difficult to give them the benefit of the doubt that they aren't simply bad actors who mistakenly thought, until now, they are anti-imperialists, anti-racists and democrats (yes, we are looking at you, Varoufakis); others, we think, just lack appropriate knowledge on the situation and fill this gap with traditional leftist takes.

In reality, most would have struggled to point to Mariupol on a map two months ago. But still, they assume the voices of those directly affected and the general reality of the situation must bend to their leftist theory. The reasons for this attitude of parts of Western left are many and would fill more than one text, but we would like to focus here on clearing out some of the more prevalent leftist myths about the Ukrainian war, and Eastern Europe in general.

We plan to continue this column online and invite comrades from beyond the West or Central and Eastern Europe to get in touch, should they want to produce similar texts: we know you have been long-suffering too.

## Myth 1: NATO “expansionism”

The myth of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe and its role triggering the Ukraine war is one of the favourite arguments of the Western left. It is also flimsy.

The relationship between NATO and Russia is complicated. All leaders of Russia have, at some point, expressed concerns about eastward expansion of the powerful Western military alliance as a security threat. However, Russia's attitude toward such expansion varied, depending on the country's strategic goals at any given time.

Even Vladimir Putin himself, during a 2000 visit to London, when asked about the possibility of Russia joining NATO said: “Why not? (...) Russia is a part of European culture, and I do not consider my own country in isolation from Europe. (...) Therefore, it is with difficulty that I imagine NATO as an enemy.”

Yet the Western left insists that Russia was promised no expansion eastwards following the fall of the Iron Curtain. The problem is there was never such a promise, and both former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian president Boris Yeltsin have admitted this. It's easily google-able: just type in “unification of Germany” or “Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation 1997.” And for the adventurous who wish to educate themselves on what Russia (and the US) did promise to Ukraine (and Belarus, and Kazakhstan) in exchange for the post-Soviet nukes present on its territory: try “the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances 1994.”

From the left's perspective, the biggest problem with this claim, however, isn't that it is factually incorrect. It is the apparent image of Eastern Europe in the eyes of the Western left as naturally subordinate to Russia, incapable of independence. Instead the two great colonial powers, the West and Russia, should settle this dispute, because who would bother asking nearly 45 million Ukrainians what they think, or let them sit at the same table as equals. This kind of attitude is, pretty obviously, left over from the West's own colonial past and post-colonial present, and the requirement for its left to self-improve around this issue isn't unreasonable – it is anti-colonial.

## Myth 2: “Ukrainians are basically Russians”

This sort of myth can be heard from all sides. Some Russians say it to justify Russia's right to Ukraine – in their view, Ukrainians don't deserve (or are innately unable) to think or speak for themselves. Some Russian nationalists simply treat “Ukrainian” as a slur for people who are against Russia. Some use this vicious myth to deny or justify genocide against Ukrainians; “they never existed in the first place”.



Some more ardent conspiracists say the concept of Ukraine was fabricated by an outside enemy solely to disrupt the “unity” of the Russian Empire. What may sound like a productive use of words like “brotherly,” “shared,” and “united,” when spoken by Russian nationalists this is only done as part of their historic attempts to take over.

The Western left has an urgent responsibility to resist the use of this myth. But for some observing from the outside, nostalgic Soviet fantasies can blind you into thinking Ukraine should be united with Russia at the expense of self-determination. Some see a choice between allying with The West (EU) or Russia, and may be so uncomfortable with the first that they back the latter. But superficial, tangible similarities like language, food, or superstitions should be seen as remnants of imperialist history, not the “historical unity” or “brotherly” myth that Moscow wields against Ukraine.



# MYTHBUSTER



### Myth 3: Azov and “Ukraine’s Nazi problem”

So, here is the thing: yes, there are neo-nazis in Ukraine. Are they a problem? Hell yes. Are some armed and in militias? Shamefully, they are. Are they a problem warranting the left making excuses for an imperial military offensive and genocide? Are they powerful enough to describe the entire country as nazis? Hell no.

Ukraine has a population of nearly 45 million. In the 2019 parliamentary elections the far right got 2.15% and failed to enter parliament. This would put Ukrainians at the bottom of the list of the countries where people are inclined to vote far right, let alone nazi. Only recently, Marine Le Pen in France succeeded in getting to the second round of presidential elections with a little over 23% of the vote. In the same elections, another far-right politician, Éric Zemmour, got 7%. In the US a fascist politician, Donald Trump,

scored nearly 47% in 2020 and only narrowly failed to play the US electoral system well enough to win.

Does this mean Ukraine is a blessed land without nazis? Of course not, no country is. But claiming that it has a particularly serious nazi problem is a dishonest peddling of Russian propaganda and, frankly, racist. Eastern Europeans are often subjected to higher standards regarding racism than Westerners.

As someone who has direct experience, the founder of Operation Solidarity, put it in an interview published by *Freedom* earlier this year:

“I can only properly talk about the context just before Putin’s escalation – this new reality needs a much deeper analysis to say something objective. Their [nazi] influence on Ukrainian youth was at its height in 2014-16, but from about 2017 their movement was co-opted by the Ukraine Security Service maybe and the cops. The most rebellious (radical, anti-government) groups were destroyed. Their leaders and members were forced to co-operate, pushed out to other countries or civilian life, were sent to prison or even killed (sometimes by their own comrades).

“To sum up, yes here we had a lot of nazis and problem was big. But after 2017 they started to decay. Just before the war started they still had many youth in their structures, but those people were new and politically weak, their beliefs were vague and shaky, and their personalities absolutely ridiculous.

“For now, what I can see, it’s absolutely different from 2014. It’s a domination of popular and patriotic narratives, rather than their sort of nationalism. But every new day of war can grow their popularity.”

### Myth 4: De-escalation is the only position the left should take

We don’t want to name the think tanks, publications, or “analysts” who are the backbone of this argument, so here’s a summary of their general mythology. For them, the worst thing that could happen in Ukraine is intervention by The West,

because preventing Western imperialism is their sole priority. In light of this, some have literally called Ukraine’s defence “self-righteous posturing” while others clamour for Ukraine to stop fighting back.

The more pro-Russian factions claim to support Russian people protesting against Putin, but they do not extend the same support for Ukrainians fighting against the same thing. This is not the sort of solidarity we need.

This view also has roots in Myth 1, that NATO or The West are the primary aggressors. This proselytising language carefully avoids ever applying “imperialism” to Russia’s actions, like they find it hard to believe Russian expansionism is a thing. There can only be one imperialist expansionism! Behold, the believers in mono-expansionism.

The endgame to this myth is that if Ukraine doesn’t lie down and surrender, this war will spread further, we’ll all run out of gas and oil, fall into a recession, and somehow this will be Ukraine’s fault. It’s a complex kind of victim-blaming which you’d expect nobody would dare to say while Russia drops missiles on civilians. But these mythologisers blame the victims for fighting back, as if accepting a Russian invasion would ever bring peace. They want Ukraine to fall, to bring this to an end, for the sake of everybody else, apparently.

### Myth 5: Russian speaking = pro-Russia

It doesn’t, and you can’t trust polling done by Russian-backed researchers.

This is quite simple. But it might also be worth remembering why huge swathes of non-Russians only learned Russian at school because this is a remnant of recent colonial histories, which gets used to justify contemporary versions of it.

~Darya Rustamova  
& Zosia Brom



# THE FAILURE OF PEOPLE.

When discussing matters of inequality and oppression, particularly through a radical framework, there always awaits a countering opinion, that deep-rooted systemic issues such as the prison industrial complex are somehow uniquely to do with the US; the implication being that Britain, a nation regarded for its pragmatism, has nowhere near as many issues and thus does not need to concern itself with radical thoughts or ideas.

Despite the comfort that this rose-tinted assertion may bring to some, it couldn't be further from the truth. Whilst the US remains by far the nation with the highest prison population, there are still more than 79,000 members of the British public currently behind bars. The Ministry of Justice projects that this number will reach over 96,000 by July 2025.

As recently as 2019, England and Wales were on record as having the highest prison population in Western Europe. Nearly 10% of the prison population was made up of former armed forces members, whilst 25% were of Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. Despite these statistics of excess, there are plans to create 4,000 new prison places at 16 different sites, all to deliver the government's promise to be "tough on crime".

This tough-stance promise has been utilised by every political party in Britain. Particularly on a local level, every campaigner from Labour to Lib Dem to the Conservatives all promise and guarantee an increase in police resources – and yet, despite the increasing presence of police, overall violent crime in England and Wales continues to rise. This cyclical conundrum renders the promise of further police and prisons a hollow, albeit potent tactic of performative politicians seeking votes from a terrified British public.

There's been a very intentional and carefully manufactured campaign to ensure that we see humanity as inherently brutal and horrid, all the while maintaining prisons and police as the only viable and indispensable solution. The fact of the matter is that policing and prisons are both relatively new concepts in the grand scheme of recorded human history.



Manchester City Police parade at Albert Street Police Station in the 1850s

## A brief history

The police system as we know it today stems from two separate institutions from both sides of the pond. In the so-called United States, the modern police system originated first out of slave patrols from the South. After the abolition of slavery in 1865, a portion of these slave patrolmen would go on to form the "vigilante" hate group known as the Ku Klux Klan. The US would then establish a more formal approach, inspired by Britain's policing model.

English citizens were understandably rather anti-police at the time they were introduced. Early rumblings of police-like units were starting in France, which inspired Scottish merchant Patrick Colquhoun to slowly institute the concept in London, primarily at the docks, to combat cargo theft. Three decades later, Colquhoun's work would inspire that of Robert Peel, the man who is regarded today as the father of modern-day policing.

Peel was appointed as Chief Secretary in Ireland around 1812. By 1814, he had

set up the Peace Preservation Force. With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, this paramilitary institution's primary function was to squash any form of Irish rebellion. By the end of the 1820s, in response to several further uprisings and riots in London, Peel had received royal approval for the Metropolitan Police Act, thereby formalising police into the centralised profession we see today. These "Peelers," as they were nicknamed, wore blue uniforms to separate their public image from that of the red-coated British military.

Of course, with the rise of Robert Peel's police came a predictable rise in prisons being built throughout the nation. By 1877, millions of pounds were used to build 90 different prisons, many still in use today.

Whilst the US and the UK run their prison systems differently – for profit vs largely nationalised – the issue goes far beyond a simple economic incentive for placing people in cages. There remains an obsession with punishment, control and an "us vs them" mentality. Dr. Angela



# PRISONS AND PROFIT



Davis famously wrote, “Prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings.” Policing and prisons were never designed to protect the general public; rather they’re designed to suppress us whilst protecting private property and state interests.

It can be all-too tempting for the average Briton to dismiss these critiques as only applicable to the US. However, one need not look too far to see the same strain of structural violence within British society.

Earlier this year, a Black schoolkid in Hackney was subjected to a dehumanising strip-search by police at her school. The police, who were fully aware that she was on her period, were unable to find any suspected cannabis, yet still did a search without parental consent, or even a parent present.

In 2019, Met PC Benjamin Kemp used riot spray and a baton to subdue and hit a teenage girl with learning disabilities, who was asking for help after being separated from her group, more than 30 times.

Sarah Everard was a 33-year-old marketing executive whose murder and rape at the hands of a police officer sparked nationwide outrage, particularly amongst women – a demographic whose safety is all too often used in disingenuous attempts to defend the necessity of the system.

As a result of further protests and direct action from social justice groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter, the Home Office sponsored the proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in Spring 2021. Its purpose is to further expand police powers, allowing them to perform suspicionless stop-and-searches, as well as the ability to criminalise any public protest they deem a “public nuisance.”

Yet despite their origins, prisons and police are still being pushed by elites as the main, if not only solution to our social problems. This campaign to ensure that we view prisons as indispensable understandably causes many to struggle imagining life without them.

## Alternative approaches

The abolitionist’s viewpoint is not to turn a blind eye to any harm that is committed, but rather to address the root of the societal issues which lead a person to harm in the first place. Concepts such as transformative justice take influences from early indigenous tribes of the West, whereby the victim and the offender sit face to face and address the harm that has been done, all alongside the support of their local community. This approach focuses autonomy on the victim and allows their voice to be heard, rather than lost through the bureaucratic and often traumatising court system.

When we claim that police and prisons are the only ways to stay protected from harm, we inadvertently export our care for our communities onto an institution that cannot fix our social problems – and that, in fact, worsens them.

In reality, rather than dealing with violent crime, much of the police’s time is spent on ticketing, responding to noise complaints and otherwise upholding bureaucratic regulations. If you’ve lived in Manchester or nearby, you might be familiar with the news of a student from India who was fined £150 for feeding a pigeon a piece of

his tortilla whilst having lunch in Piccadilly Gardens. Despite how menial and petty these tasks may seem, it’s not uncommon in the US or Britain to see police respond in a disproportionately aggressive way to such things, escalating further until the citizen is either brutalised or sent to prison.

You may be wondering, “Why not simply reform police and prisons, rather than abolish them?” The answer is that police and prisons themselves began as reforms. Whilst many point to the Nordic method of prison – apartment-style complexes with more focus on rehabilitation – this fails to grasp at the root as to what causes crime.

Why wait until a crime has been committed to start providing quality housing and respect the human rights of those who are oppressed and disenfranchised? The safest cities are not ones with the most police or prisons, but rather they are the cities with the most resources.

As the world keeps changing rapidly since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, many of us have shifted our eyes towards new horizons, new ways of thinking and new methods of problem solving.

Prison abolition combats far more than the big-business economics of a prison industrial complex. It’s a direct challenge to our outdated obsessions with punishment and domination – a realisation that we are all, as humans, capable of causing harm. Abolition is knowing that every prison sentence marks a profound failure of our current system, and mostly, it’s a commitment to the notion that the best deterrent to violence are close-knit communities built on care and compassion.

Abolition continues to grow as a topic in Britain as the justice system starts to emulate the United States more and more. As time goes by, this dogmatic insistence on punitive justice over transformative justice proves to be borderless.

So must our resistance.

~ AJB



# BRIAN MORRIS AND THE

Brian Morris's work as an academic over many decades has taken in everything from how cultures name things to how they interact with nature, religion and the concept of self. Since the 1960s he has also been active as an anarchist and has taken a particular interest in social ecology.

Brian has written for many publications including *Freedom* and has published several books on figures such as Peter Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin and Murray Bookchin, as well as taking on the topic of anarchism and ecology in a series of books such as *Anthropology, Ecology, and Anarchism* (PM Press) in 2014 and *Visions of Freedom: Critical Writings on Ecology and Anarchism* (Black Rose) in 2018.

## Tell us about your early life and influences

I am at heart a working-class lad from the Black Country, with a fascination for the natural world. I have had a somewhat odd academic background. I failed my eleven-plus and left school at the age of 15 to work in an iron foundry in West Bromwich, like all my male forebears. While working in the foundry I severely damaged my right hand in a machine. For that I was awarded £120 working men's compensation – a lot of money in those days.

This enabled me to leave home aged 20, after undertaking my two-year National Service as a seaman-navigator in the RASC. In October 1957 I sailed from Amsterdam to Cape Town, and after hitch-hiking around South-Central Africa for about five months I eventually obtained employment as a tea planter in Malawi (then Nyasaland). I worked as a tea planter for more than seven years, eventually sitting and passing five GCE "O" levels at the age of 29. I then returned to the UK. Failing to get into university to study biology (ecology) – my cherished ambition – I trained as a teacher at Brighton College of Education in the late 1960s. It was there that I first engaged in socialist politics.

The main intellectual influences on my life were not philosophers, nor even academics, but popular naturalists such as Charles Darwin, Ernest Thompson Seton Gordon and W. H. Hudson. As

a teenager I avidly read their nature writings. Apart from Darwin, all have been forgotten. My intellectual outlook on life has therefore always been one that is realist, historical and ecological – a form of evolutionary naturalism.

## How did you get into anarchist politics?

Although I have always been something of a rebel – even as a boy I flouted the law of trespass – I became an anarchist largely due to two events in my life. The first was that my wife, Jacqui, sensing, perhaps, my rebellious spirit, gave me as a birthday present in October 1965 George Woodcock's *Anarchism*. Although much derided these days – quite unfairly – this book opened my eyes to what to me then was a completely new political vision.

The second event was a meeting on comprehensive education that I attended in February 1966, at Conway Hall in London. It was to hear a lecture on "Education or Indoctrination" by Madeline Simms. After the lecture a lively debate ensued during which a rather large Bakunin-like working class bloke spoke out forcibly about the rights of children. He appeared to be quite a misfit. I overheard one person remark, rather disparagingly: "Oh he's only an anarchist." Quite by chance I met up with him later in Red Lion Square. I asked outright "are you an anarchist?" "Yes" he replied, and we got talking about it. His name was Bill Gates, and he gave me the address of an anarchist bookshop called Freedom.

On that cold night in February 1966, we said our farewells. I never saw or heard of Bill Gates again, but that meeting had a profound influence on my life. I later visited Freedom Bookshop, then in a back alley near Chelsea football ground. There I acquired cheap books and pamphlets by Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and Guy Aldred (in those days there wasn't much else). I read them avidly and have ever since considered myself an anarchist.

During the 1980s I attended several meetings of the "History Workshop" on anarchism. There I came to meet the likes of Geoffrey Ostergaard, Peter Marshall, Caroline Cahm, David

Goodway, Nicolas Walter, Carl Levy, Stuart Christie and Laurens Otter. I gleaned much from them.

I have throughout my life been involved in protest movements, whether against inappropriate road schemes, the Vietnam war, the Apartheid regime in South Africa, nuclear weapons, the National Front, the Poll Tax, and neoliberal capitalism in its various guises.

## Can you say a bit about what you think was happening through the late 20th century when trends such as anarcho-primitivism grew while 'red' anarchism struggled?

The end of the 20th century involved the development and hegemony of global capitalism, and the emergence of neoliberalism as its political ideology. This was accompanied by several other tendencies: a rise of neo-Darwinian theory with its emphasis on human nature as fundamentally selfish; a revival of philosophical individualism as a radical cult (Nietzsche, Stirner); and the emergence of nihilistic postmodernism, a cultural movement and ethos that some have viewed as a radical ideology and an alternative to so-called "modernity," while others have dismissed it as the latest ideology of neoliberal capitalism.

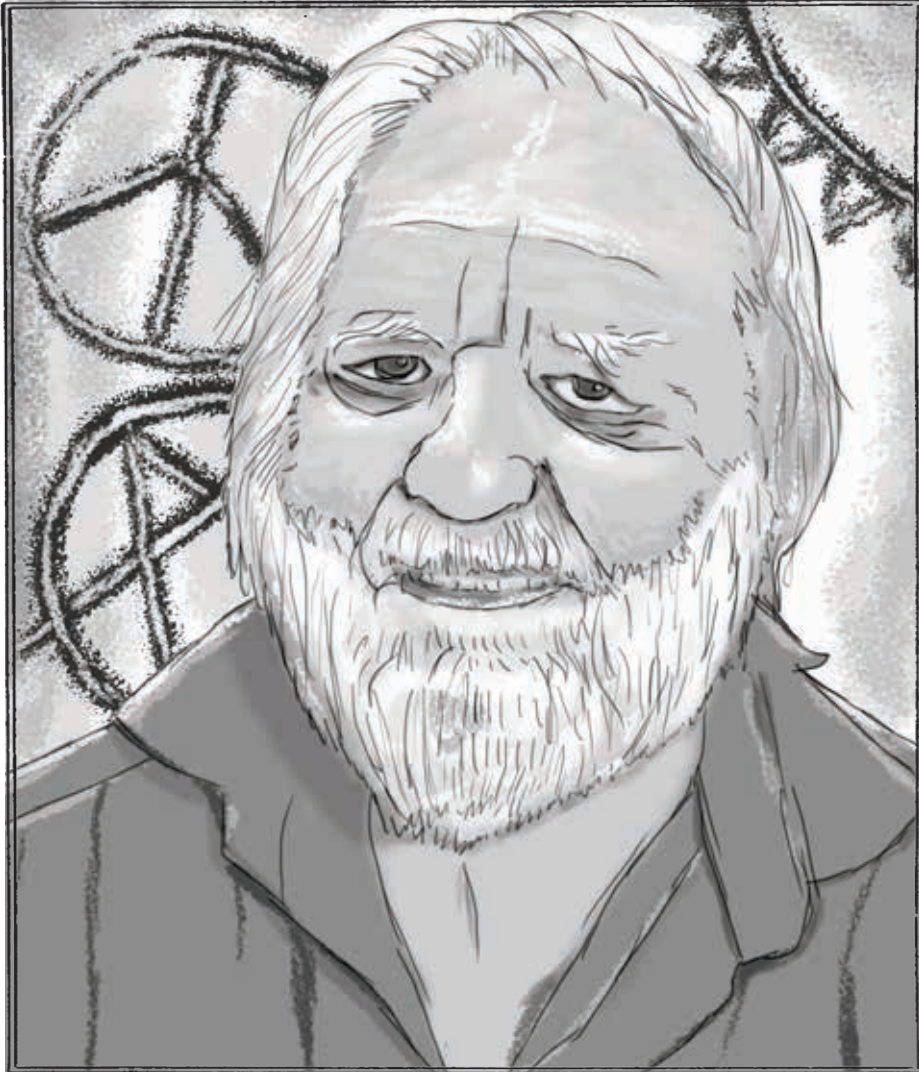
What troubled me was that many self-proclaimed anarchists embraced these tendencies with uncritical enthusiasm, in the process repudiating the philosophy and politics of early anarchist communities, specifically their metaphysics and their evolutionary socialism. The post-modernist tendency to simply dismiss anarchist communists as advocates of the ideology of capitalist modernity seemed to me quite misleading given that the intellectual trends within modernity – covering around 400 years – are both complex and multifaceted.

## The closest thing to a recent red mass movement is probably Corbynism. What do you think of it – and its collapse?

The Labour Party, given the nature of its origins, has always expressed an inherent tension between liberal democracy and statist politics and socialism derived from the trade unions.



# ANARCHIST IDEA



There have always been deep cleavages and conflicts between these two wings.

Under Corbyn the more socialist wing tended to flourish, given Tory austerity measures and general working class discontent. But Labour has never been a radical alternative to capitalism. Its socialism has always been muted, and when in power it has always advocated and upheld Britain as an imperial State.

The demise of Corbyrnism certainly opens up opportunities to re-affirm anarchist communism, especially as anti-capitalist sentiments are now widely expressed in the media. But one should never underestimate the powers of the modern State, and the degree to which the market has penetrated everyday social life. I have never had much

enthusiasm for Labour, or for the Greens' "New Deal" which continues to support capitalism, and actually endorses giving increasing powers to the modern State, even though we may be able to engage with them on specific issues.

Increasingly, and regrettably, the ecological crisis tends to be discussed in terms of either Leviathan or oblivion, as if there is no alternative.

## Where do you think anarchist communism can respond most effectively?

I do not have any pat answers – though I certainly hold that a better order of social life is both possible and necessary in the current crisis. Contemporary anarchists surely must engage and be active on three fronts.

Anarchists should endeavour to keep alive the "spirit" of anarchism, a vision of a world free of capitalist exploitation, State oppression, and all forms of what the anthropologist Christopher Boehm called "hierarchical dominance," propagating the notion that there is no viable alternative to capitalism and the State. Anarchists must be continually engaged in critiquing capitalist modernity.

Anarchism as a libertarian vision should be employed as an "ethical compass" in marshaling that critique. Anarchists should therefore participate in or support any event, grassroots organisation or community that attempts to defend the well-being and rights of working people against the intrusions of the State and capital. This does not imply, even with regard to the present ecological crisis – as anarchists like Chomsky and Vodovnik have argued – State power and an involvement with parliamentary politics. Insurrection and protests are, of course, intrinsic, and anarchists should freely engage with any enterprise that undermines capitalism and State power.

Finally anarchists should create forms of social life based on mutual aid and voluntary co-operation. Such groups and organisations may be focused on a diversity of different needs and interests, including to defend the environment or for worker's solidarity, and be based on "prefigurative politics." The organisations we create in the present must reflect the kind of libertarian socialist society we intend for the future.

It seems to me that anarchist communism is the only alternative, for all other forms of politics have all been tried, and found wanting.

■ Freedom Press will be publishing Brian's latest work, *A Defence of Anarchist Communism*, later this year.



## REVIEW

# AUTHENTIC DEMOCRACY

*Authentic Democracy: An Ethical Justification of Anarchism*

ISBN: 978-1916477889

Price: £9

Tippermuir Books

225pp

By Dan McKee

In this engaging and accessible book, Dan McKee makes the case for anarchism based on a long-overdue critique of liberal political theory, in particular the social contract tradition. The book develops two connected arguments:

a) No centralised State could satisfy the conditions envisioned in the liberal social contract tradition;

b) Anarchist programs for social organisation do a much better job at realising the basic intuitions about human survival, equality, freedom and flourishing, compared to capitalist societies that pretend to be legitimated by the liberal social contract.

Compared to the volumes of text produced by anarchists in the confrontation with authoritarian Marxism, liberal political theory has received much less critical attention. Proudhon, Rudolf Rocker, Robert Paul Wolff and L. Susan Brown are among the very few to anarchist writers to carefully scrutinise the liberal common sense of government by consent, and the way in which it obscures society's real power relations structured by class, gender, race, and other regimes

of domination. Similarly, while anarchism has successfully supplanted authoritarian Marxism as the ideological point of reference for transformative social struggles, it is liberal common sense that continues to underwrite everyday obedience in Western capitalist societies.

In this context, *Authentic Democracy* is an important contribution. The book starts with a sharp critical review of the social contract tradition from Hobbes and Locke to Rawls and Nozick. The critique is astute, informed by historical context

and close attention to the texts. Even without it, the first part of *Authentic Democracy* could rival any university textbook for clarity of explanation alone.

The next section works out an account of essential human "species-facts" and their corresponding "species-interests" – the latter ranging from bare material needs to sociability, autonomy and self-expression. The satisfaction of these needs, McKee argues, is the implicit

ethical basis of all contract theories.

At this point anarchism is introduced, drawing on modern accounts by e.g. Colin Ward and Ruth Kinna. This is identified with "authentic democracy" in the direct, federated and horizontal sense of the word.

This is clearly distinguished from representative government, drawing on R. P. Wolff and Noam Chomsky. There follow a powerful indictment of the harsh realities of existing capitalist society, and a summary of the case for anarchism.



Non-hierarchical organising methods used during the Spanish Indignados movement of 2011 allowed for rapid mobilisation of massed crowds. Pic: Calafellvaio

In handling all of these complex issues McKee writes concisely and accessibly. In addition to its penetrating insights, *Authentic Democracy* is also a pleasure to read. This book will no doubt help many anarchist readers articulate their own critical intuitions about the liberal common sense. For those who still take this common sense for granted, it will be even more valuable as an eye-opener.

~ Uri Gordon





# UPCOMING BOOKS

Across the broader anarchist and left publishing industry there's a number of books coming out over the next few months on the subject of anarchism which may be worth keeping an eye out for. Some titles, particularly from AK and PM, will be released in ebook format but may not initially be available as paperbacks, depending on shipping and launch schedules. Approx paperback prices are included as a general guide.

## June

*Overcoming Capitalism* (ISBN 978-1849354707, 400pp, £16.78, AK) by Tom Wetzel attempts to rework the strategies of trade union movements for the 21st century. Rejecting the "peace" that has characterised decades of slow retreat, he instead looks to libertarian socialism and the empowerment of grassroots activists for inspiration.

*Islam and Anarchism: Relationships and Resonances* (ISBN 978-0745341927, 352 pages, £19.99, Pluto) by Mohamed Abdou makes an original attempt to draw on both Islamic and anarchist texts to argue for the possibilities of an anti-authoritarian and spiritual interpretation of its religion.

## July

*Disaster Anarchy: Mutual Aid and Radical Action* (ISBN: 978-0745340456, 256pp, £19.99, Pluto) by Rhiannon Firth looks at anarchist responses to major disasters such as Hurricane Sandy and Covid-19. Governments have repeatedly been left wanting in crisis situations over recent years, with mutual aid and solidaristic solutions plugging the gaps to great effect, often surprising the mainstream.

## August

*War and Peace* (ISBN 978-1849354684, 625pp, £21.61, AK) is one of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's best books but perhaps the least well known in the English-speaking world. This translation aims to open up both our understanding of Proudhon's mature works as well as a window on mid-nineteenth century international relations and the history of international thought.

*The Modern Crisis* (ISBN 978-1849354462, 196pp, £12.20, AK) by Murray Bookchin reissues four key essays by the influential and forward thinking

social ecologist dealing with an oncoming ecological and social disaster that has only gotten closer since his death.

*Anarchic Agreements: A Field Guide to Collective Organizing* (ISBN 978-1629639635, 128pp, £12.16, PM) is a collected work with Ruth Kinna, Alex Prichard, Thomas Swann, and Seeds for Change. Aiming to be "a quintessential field guide for the revolution" it focuses on everyday practical ideas around how leaderless groups operate, balance power and maintain themselves.

## September

*Images of Class: Operaismo, Autonomia and the Visual Arts, 1962-1988* (ISBN 978-1839765292, 448pp, £25, Verso) by Jacopo Galimberti examines the influence of Workerism and autonomia on visual artists such as the members of Archizoom, Gordon Matta-Clark and Gianfranco Baruchello. This book focuses on the aesthetic and cultural discourse developed by three generations of militants (including Mario Tronti, Antonio Negri, Bifo and Silvia Federici), and how it was appropriated by artists, architects, graphic designers and architectural historians such as Manfredo Tafuri.

## October

*Practical Anarchism: A Guide for Daily Life* (ISBN: 978-0745344928, 160pp, £14.99, Pluto) by Scott Branson looks at large and small ways in which anarchists act and frame their lives. Branson offers a host of handy tips and suggestions for all ages.

*No Pasaran! Antifascist Dispatches From a World in Crisis* (ISBN 978-1849354820, £18.99, AK) by Shane Burley is being published as a joint project with the Institute for Anarchist Studies, and is set to be a sizeable tome with 30 chapters by a wide selection of writers including Talia Lavin, David Renton, Kim Kelly, Geo Maher and many more.

## November

*Abolition Revolution* (ISBN: 978-0745346519, 192pp, £14.99, Pluto) by Aviah Sarah Day and Shanice Octavia McBean is a historical, theoretical and practical guide to revolutionary abolitionist politics in Britain. The authors trace the evolution of policing and criminalisation from their colonial roots to their contemporary expression, as found in Prevent and drug laws targeting Black communities. They also draw out a rich history of grassroots resistance.

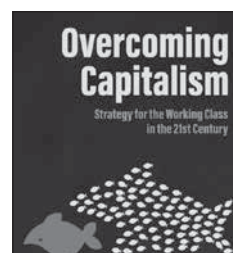
*The State Is the Enemy: Essays on Liberation and Racial Justice* (978-1629639680, 192pp, £16, PM) by James Kelman comprises 16 essays laying bare government brutality against all who are deemed of "a lower order." Drawing parallels between atrocities committed against Kurds by the Turkish State and racist police brutality, and government sanctioned murders in the UK, Kelman shatters the myth of Western exceptionalism.

Active Distro is also bringing out three new titles this year, with various details still tbc:

*A Libertarian Reader* by Iain McKay will be a set of four volumes aiming to show the real libertarian tradition by presenting texts from anti-state socialists, whether anarchist or not. The texts show the rich tradition associated with "libertarian" and why we should reclaim the word.

*Smash The System* is the first in an upcoming series on Anarchism and Punk.

And finally, *Feminism in The Phillipines* essentially does what it says on the tin!



# FREEDOM UPDATE

Every year Freedom publishes its update, which aims to keep our readers supporters informed about what we've been getting up to and encourage more people to get involved in our various projects. Freedom is a co-operative run collectively by its volunteers – get in touch to find out more!

## Publishing

It's been a hectic few months for Publishing, particularly around the publication of *A Normal Life*, by far the biggest job we've had of recent years, with a lot of moving parts. The entire project had difficulties built in from the start, such as author Vassilis Palaiokostas being unavailable throughout – mainly because he's still on the run.

Thanks to some wonderful support during our Crowdfunder, we were able to bring out both the book itself, charting Palaiokostas' life robbing the rich of Greece and giving to the poor, becoming the nation's most notorious bank robber and prison escape artist through the 1990s-2000s, and a second title, *Greece and the Black Flag*.

*A Normal Life* is, to a great extent, the tale of a man whose life parallels the classic tale of the social bandit – one of his nicknames is indeed the Greek Robin Hood. Among many other adventures, he narrates his part in the biggest bank heist in Greek history, the ransoming of a far-right industrialist, and no less than three major prison breaks including his famous helicopter escapes (plural) from Korydallos.

One of the difficulties we had in the making of the book, however, was the translation of not just the language but many cultural touchstones. In Britain for example the notion of the social bandit is largely historic, with few examples of individuals taking the decision to personally rebel against the ruling class and justice system with an overt political perspective.

As such, throughout the book we had to include explainers and copious notes on how Greek attitudes towards illegalism – the practice of confronting and undermining ruling elites through illegal acts – function very differently to those of Britain.

Some of this made its way into *Greece and The Black Flag*, a short title which gives an overview of the rise of Greek anarchism both in its 19th century incarnation and in the aftermath of the Athens Polytechnic Uprising of 1973.

The Greek experience, unlike the British one, has in close historical memory involved imperial oppression from the Ottomans, British and Axis powers as well as multiple attempted monarchies and dictatorships. As a result its rebels, including modern incarnations of Communist and anarchist groups, hold a particular and better-regarded role in its social fabric.

Moving on to a more theoretical work, this summer will see the release of Brian Morris', *A Defence of Anarchist Communism*. Brian is a prominent libertarian voice in the fields of ecology, history and anthropology, all of which he uses in this short title to analyse critiques of the political philosophy.

Sticking with a mix of history and philosophy, with a side dish of biography, classic Italian anarchist thinker Camillo Berneri – father of the better-known former *Freedom* editor Marie-Louise – will be getting his own book this Autumn.

A highly inventive and independently-minded figure, Camillo was an influential opponent of both Mussolini and Franco in the 1920s and 30s, eventually meeting his end in 1937 on the orders of Stalin – nothing defines a person like their enemies.

And finally, still in the works is, for the first time in a long time, a title from Colin Ward. Ward is one of Freedom Press's best known writers, with his thoughts on the practice of everyday anarchism, childhood, land and particularly housing remaining vital reading decades on from his death.

We're looking for more people to get involved with our publishing projects, if you're interested get in touch!

## News

With the "re-opening of the economy" one of the changes for the news group is our shift back to doing two issues of *Freedom* per year. Our position with print is, as with most of the rest of the media, increasingly a difficult one to weigh particularly in the pandemic era, which has hit a lot of

traditional paper sellers hard on top of years of decline. Sales are down across the board with many particularly regional news firms having lost 60 or 70% of their printed paper readerships over the last couple of decades.

*Freedom*, fortunately, has long since switched to a model where the paper's main use is as physical outreach to highlight the Press and anarchist ideas, rather than being sold. The print industry as a whole being in trouble however does mean costs are going up, and while we would like to print more often, twice a year is most practical. The welcome resurgence of radical bookfairs, conferences and events has provided ample platforms to get *Freedom*s into the hands of both long term activists and newer folks. Our aim will be to have newspapers in all radical spaces and at large events – even if we can't be there in person.

The Freedom News website has held steady over the past year, with a notable uptick in traffic following Russia's recent war against Ukraine. A notable article that broke into the mainstream was 'Fuck Leftist Westsplaining' written by editor Zosia Brom. In addition *Freedom* has a correspondent on the ground in Ukraine, providing regular video updates on the struggle against Russian imperialism.

As ever, the news group is always on the lookout for anarchist or anti-authoritarian writers who can contribute to our website and print output. If you or your group would like to highlight your work or campaigns you are involved in then you are welcome to email us the usual address. Finally, *Freedom* is exploring options for funding our news efforts in order to further develop our reporting.

At present the news group is entirely volunteer run, which presents some obvious limitations. At the same time we have to acknowledge, as we note above, that the changing media landscape means an operation sustained on print sales is unviable. In light of this, we will soon be launching a crowdfunding account to help us grow our platform and further diversify our coverage. Don't worry, all our content will remain free to access, but if you feel like helping us out financially soon you will have an avenue to do so!



### At the shop

In a world increasingly characterised by dramatic and terrifying change, there is some comfort to be found in the stubborn persistence of small things. The pungent aroma of Angel Alley is one such phenomenon. Each time I approach 84b, the hum of ammonia reminds me that thankfully some things remain unchanged.

Freedom Bookshop is another small thing which persists against the odds. While the pandemic delivered the coup de grace to many beloved institutions, the shop is currently thriving and, according to all available figures, we're distributing more incendiary texts than ever before.

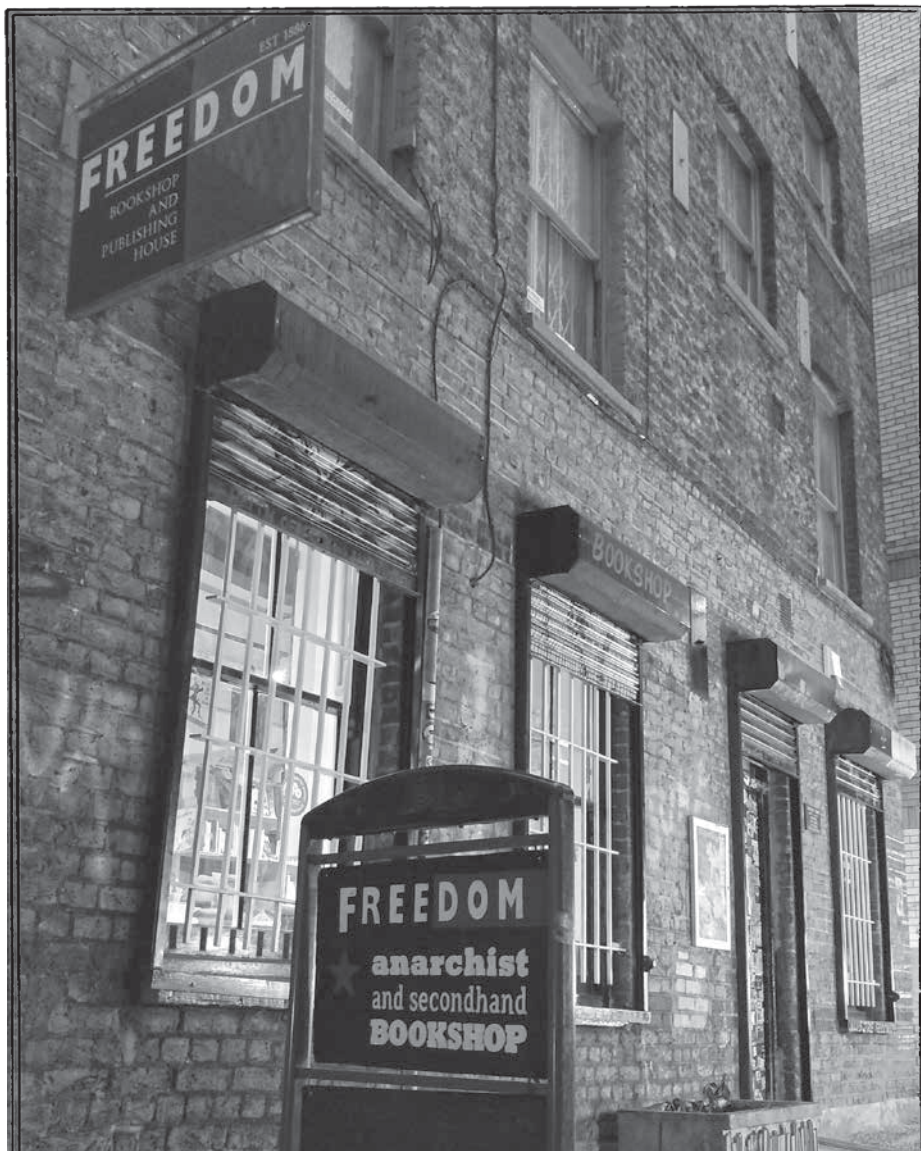
This is in no small part due to our fantastic volunteers, many of whom have joined us since the beginning of the pandemic. Thanks to them, we have once again begun opening our doors seven days a week. Nevertheless, we are always looking for people who can do regular shifts behind the till. If you're interested, please do drop us a line or come into the shop for a chat.

The most exciting development over the last few months has been the return of in-person events. Since the new year, we've hosted talks by Eric Laursen on the anarchist theories of the state; Lisa Fannen on psycho-emotional health and the politics of experience and Terry Edwards and Carl Parsons on the academisation of English schools.

As the weather improves, we hope to see many more of you in and around the shop.

### The Freedom Building

For the most part Freedom has had a blessedly calm time of it with the building and Angel Alley over the last few months, with some tidying of the Decenter social



space on the second floor and small office but no major works being undertaken. The alley continues to be a Sisyphean task to keep tidy as rubbish is often blown in or dropped, and a special mention should go to our wonderful volunteers who are often out with litter pickers keeping it clear.

It does however look like we, along with everyone else, will be having to absorb a number of larger bills especially

with electricity and business rates rises, and we're looking into what fundraising we may need to do over the course of the year. Any donations ahead of fundraising drives are welcome and can be paid using the details at the bottom of this page.



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## A NORMAL LIFE

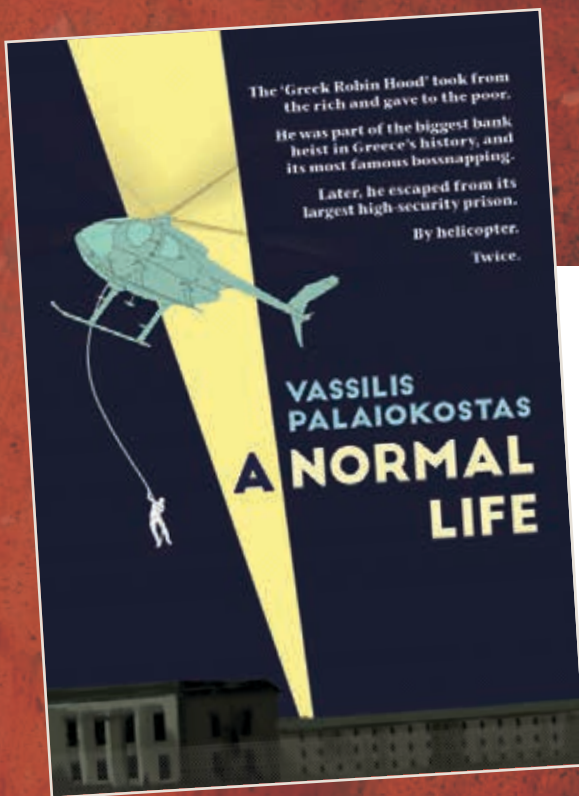
BY VASSILIS PALAIOKOSTAS

A bestseller in his native country, this is the official autobiography of famed “Greek Robin Hood” who has robbed millions from the rich and given it to the poor. Still on the run and with decades of activity under his belt, Palaiokestas is perhaps best known for his daring prison escapes – including not once, but twice by helicopter.

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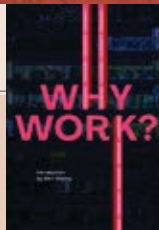
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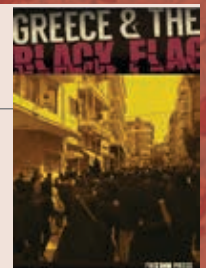
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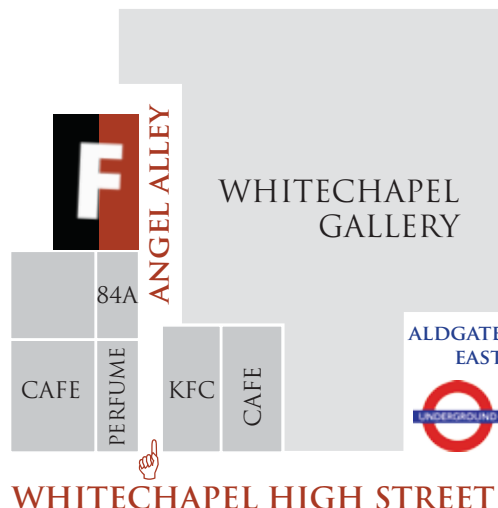
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