

# FREEDOM

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# OUR POWER

**WE ARE NOT HELPLESS  
WE DON'T NEED POLITICIANS  
WE HAVE BATTLES TO WIN**

# EDITORIAL

The other day I cleared the leaves away from my small patch of garden. It's a project where I reclaim a public lawn and turn it into a wildflower meadow. After a long winter the faint fingers of small growing things were starting to peek out of the dusty soil.

Two years ago this was nothing but a desolate space, a biological desert, but now the wild flowers were starting to return. And I felt powerful. Without me, without the small actions I took to reclaim this soil from the monoculture known as 'lawns' these flowers would not exist.

That does not mean I am now the master of these flowers: I'm using my life's energy, my power, to give them room to grow. Sometimes I also need to push back against the forces that want to destroy them; but I refuse to set up a fence. When liberating and using our power we need to make sure we do not become another kind of limitation that exercises power over others.

We all have gardens of one kind of another. Through our everyday tasks we all participate in this kind of exercise of "power", and pushing against power, although it may look very different. Often it doesn't get called power at all. For this edition of *Freedom* we asked contributors for times they felt "powerful", they made things happen.

One of the hardest places to fight against power is prison. It's an institution designed to take you and make you powerless.

But when we spoke to Toby Shone about his experience of being a political prisoner he spoke about how it was possible to push back against violent raids by the guards. "The next day the whole wing refused to go back into their cells after the early morning unlock hour. As a cacophonous and unruly mob we demanded the return of seized items".

"This led to the screws backing off".

Even in the most difficult situations we can build power together and push back. Another way in which social power can try to exercise control over us is through the separation and misery that disabled people face. We spoke to Figers Malone about organising against benefit cuts and building power together.



Publishing this newspaper is also a way we try to reach out and build togetherness, so we can all be more powerful. Anarchy means being against authority and against sources of power, but scholars often draw a distinction between power-with, where we all become more able to achieve our desires, and power-over, which exists to stifle others and exploit them.

To return to my rewilding project, if I tried to plant or to train the wild flowers that would mean there would no longer be any wild flowers any more. Anarchist organising dares us to become more powerful while at the same time letting go of any tendency to hold too tight and control.

We need to trust and respect each other's power if we are to build it together, side-by-side. We are all wild flowers. Likewise, if I use my power to control you or to make you act in a certain way I don't have a comrade any more, I don't have a fellow-human at my side, instead

we become stuck in a destructive spiral of one person trying to hold tight to their power-over, and the other one pushing back with their resistance.

So let us, side by side, wild and thriving, appreciate the ways in which we are powerful. Our dandelion roots break through concrete like weeds. Our caring hands foster life.

Even the most authoritarian societies in the world depend on the mutual aid and the caring hands of powerful mothers, of people who fall in love, so that life can continue. We are power generators, we are the working class that keeps the lights on. Without our immensely powerful love the world would end.

Anarchism is about recognising this, cultivating it by giving it space to flourish, but not enclosing it in fences. We hope the discussions in this edition can also be a place for wild flowers and powerful love to flourish.

We hope they will help you to enjoy and build your own power. So that our mutual aid and our cooperation can spread, become the normal way of doing things – even while we must be vigilant to protect it from the lawnmowers who want to cut us down and turn us into a deadened monoculture.

How are you powerful today?



# YOU'LL GET A KICK OUT OF THIS

*Anon* writes on the growing phenomenon of red gyms following a recent gathering:

I'm part of a London red gym that's been organising regular Muay Thai and self defence sessions for more than two years. Last month we travelled up North to take part in a red gym interclub organised by a Leeds club called Mutiny Athletic, which brought together anti-fascist, anti-racist and queer gyms from across the country.

## What's a red gym?

A red gym is a grassroots anti-fascist martial arts and fitness group which allows participants in a broad range of liberatory social movements to train together, build skills and fitness and strengthen ties. Some gyms in Europe have their own spaces and are run like regular clubs. In the UK we generally aren't as developed due to a number of factors including extremely high commercial rents and property prices.

## What sort of places were represented and what political mix do you get in the gym?

There were clubs from London, Bristol, Leeds and Bradford. There were boxing, BJJ, Muay Thai and kickboxing bouts. Mutiny put on a cracking event, there were around 150 spectators, the venue was packed out and there were over 20 bouts! In our gym we have a broad mix of political persuasions, but we are all on the left and are all anti-fascist. Some of us are involved in social movements, anti-imperialist struggles, Palestine solidarity and anti-fascism.

## How do 'red gyms' differ from regular ones in eg. how they interact with communities?

We have community values, we are non



profit and volunteer run. We see ourselves as part of anti-fascist and liberatory struggles, it's a political project ultimately.

## What takeaways have you had in terms of learning to organise and run them?

The main point for organisers is to turn up week after week and set up and run regular sessions. If there isn't a regular schedule then people will drop away over time. We shouldn't wait for other people to organise stuff for us, we need to do it ourselves. Most of us had no experience of teaching when we started, we just stuck to what we knew and got better over time. We also need to be open to members taking on work/stepping up. Organising is for everyone who wants to put in a shift and we shouldn't gatekeep that.

## What similarities and differences did you see among the gyms that came along, any lessons you took away?

Clubs brought fighters of different skill levels but everyone was up for it and the fights were solid. There was an atmosphere of support and solidarity between clubs and fighters. I think our main lesson was these kind of country wide events need to happen more often. Fascists are organising in the UK but they're unevenly spread. It's only by coming together that we can build solidarity and power in or near areas where fascists are strong.

## How do you reckon the concept – and implementation – of red gyms plays out?

I think we're building power in a few

different ways. One is developing physical skills and capacities, and with that confidence to act in the world. Defending our organising doesn't mean some macho one on one display of prowess, it means acting together as movements to further our wider liberatory goals. Connections built between members, and between clubs are just as, or even more important.

## Training spaces are known, perhaps unfairly, for having a strict master student model. How can (does) this break down in more horizontal ways?

There is some benefit to deferring to expertise in martial arts. Learning incorrect technique can mean someone ends up spinning their wheels or getting themselves injured. That being said, teaching, coaching and organising can be done by anyone and anyone in the club could step up and do things. In that way we break down some of those distinctions.

## Was the interclub a success? How do you feel about the potential and importance of such spaces?

The interclub was a massive success, big crowd, high energy, fighters and clubs coming from all over. Massive props to Mutiny for putting it on. It's been ages since one of these things happened in the North and it showed how there's loads of shit going on outside of the capital. Fascism is weak in London and stronger in the north, we need to build and support stuff there. We've heard Mutiny is putting on another one later in the year so it looks like things are picking up! We're definitely going to be at the next one.



# Doing being totally out of control

I was living in Olympia at the start of 2008. Not in Greece but Washington, the northwestern-most US state. The Green Scare repression against the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) was still fresh, though there was new energy against the Iraq War, with multiple blockades against tank shipments through nearby ports.

Most people across the planet had heard of the 1999 Seattle WTO Conference riots, but unrest didn't reach Washington until 2007, when Tacoma police opened up on peaceful anti-war protesters with tear gas and rubber bullets, triggering an epic riot which was the first of its kind against the Iraq War. Soon there were similar riots in the state capital Olympia, just south of Tacoma.

While the major port is in Tacoma, the military thought shipping tanks through sleepy Olympia might be easier, which turned out to be quite inaccurate. Unlike Tacoma's port, which was a vast industrial wasteland far from the city, the docks of Olympia were blocks from the downtown business district, and as the riots escalated, banks and police cruisers were attacked, just as army tanks were pelted with rocks.

Keep in mind, between Olympia and Tacoma is the Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the largest US military base north of California. On top of that, Rachel Corrie was from Olympia, and after Israel killed her with a bulldozer all that local rage swelled until people were actually throwing rocks at tanks like Palestinians, a truly beautiful sight.

So when 2008 began, I knew the year would be doing being totally out of control, as one cop attempted to describe it.

First there was a riot in Olympia at a Dead Prez concert where a prisoner was liberated from a police cruiser, just as another was flipped over. Someone also stole the laptop

from a police cruiser and likely took all the data. The dean of the local college tried to compare the riot to a lynch mob, the local media tried to demonise everyone who was arrested, but in a united front, everyone stood together and ultimately no-one suffered any serious jail time or injuries, making it all a pretty solid win for anarchists in Olympia.

In the meantime, banks and army recruitment centers were getting smashed up and painted at night, as well as the businesses of local politicians. The banks were largely targeted for their connections to private immigration prisons, but it was

to crush what was happening in Olympia as it spread to Tacoma and Seattle. The Pentagon spy was just the start of intense federal repression against the anarchists of the Pacific Northwest, but in 2008 that wasn't fully clear. It was an exciting time to be alive, and when the December 2008 insurrection broke out in Greece, I felt a sense of tremendous power, not just within myself, but the international anarchist movement.

Back in 1999 anarchist news site Seattle Indymedia had helped coordinate events, and it was still the main regional anarchist forum in 2008 (it died off in 2010). We were all familiar with the Indymedia network when the Greek insurrection broke out, and I was joyous when I learned that Athens Indymedia had become the #1 Greek news source about it.

At the time, while we had a strong media presence, the smartphone hadn't been adopted by most anarchists and surveillance was much more difficult for the State. Part of why 2008 was so potent was because it took place before there

were cameras everywhere, when most anarchists met face to face and had physical locations where they could easily meet without needing to digitally plan out their encounters, encrypted or not.

Part of our power came from the lack of digital mediation, but having the very digital Indymedia helped, and it still feels like the right amount of online. Thankfully, a lot of anarchists are heading back in that direction, for which I'm grateful. I also don't want it to seem like everything has been downhill since 2008, when I first felt the power of our international movement. But it was in 2008 that I first felt the power of our decentralised network, and we will all feel it again sooner than later.

Long Live Anarchy!

~ Nicolas Flamel



the year after the financial collapse, so most people who saw those smashed up banks likely felt happy, at least for a moment.

While nocturnal smashings were taking place, a spy who worked directly for the Pentagon was creeping around, trying to find the source of all this rebellion, which he never could. John Towery would later attempt to entrap several people into a terror plot, although they were smart enough not to fall for it.

The federal government was desperate



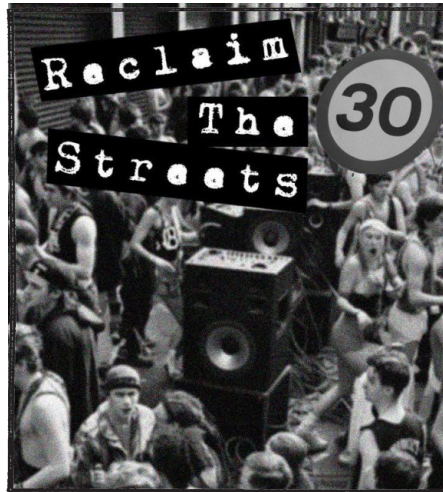
# RTS: A RETROSPECTIVE

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Reclaim The Streets' first high-profile action on Camden High Street, in May 1995. Although the organisation had existed in embryonic form for several years before this, the action marked an escalation in tactics, numbers, and publicity.

Several hundred people attended and the action caught the wave of the moment, with an appealing mix of anti-capitalism, anticar culture, new age travellers radicalised during the previous five years, and the rave / free party scene all wrapped into a direct action in an urban area. By the time their third event happened barely a year later, more than 5,000 shut down the M41 in west London with a massive party breaking through police lines, infamously damaging the road surface with jackhammer drills hidden underneath a carnival-style float.

The London organisation only existed for about six years before eventually disintegrating. In that time the messaging developed beyond being about a street party reclaiming the space from cars, and into a wider analysis of capitalism and power structures. This fairly rapid shift led to more confrontational actions such as the J18 event in 1999, where the expressed intent was to disrupt the business of the City. The group's high profile also led to more traditional leftist and workerist organisations reaching out to forge links, such as the Liverpool dockers and London Underground drivers. Bridges between union and more radical environmental groups were unheard of at the time and this alone would have elevated RTS's "threat level" amongst the authorities to severe.

There are many reasons behind the collapse of RTS London, and if you speak with ten different people about why, you will get ten different answers. The tensions between an "inner core" group with the knowledge of where and when an action would take place, and then holding open public meetings where suddenly there was a huge influx of new and enthusiastic participants who wanted to be a part of the decision making process and know what was going on but felt frozen out, were never resolved.



This is frequently cited as a reason for its dissolution, but there are others, including burnout, interpersonal dynamics and disagreements particularly with tactics, and a sense amongst many of a lack of direction. The post September 11th 2001 climate also had a chilling effect.

Years after RTS actions finished, including some remnant actions which took place in occupied spaces and on the southbank beach, the truth about one of their core activists Jim Boyling / Sutton was revealed. Boyling was a member of the SDS unit of the Met police, whose purpose was to infiltrate environmental, animal rights, and other left wing organisations. Boyling was a key coordinator for RTS from the very start, often steering the conversations

into more radical territory and directing the actions on the day. He also facilitated the delivery and driving of old cars, which RTS used as a publicity stunt to signal the beginning of a demo. Other activists at the time never suspected or uncovered the mole, despite hundreds of police officers being present and prepared at the exact M41 location when participants emerged from the train station. Boyling also had an intimate relationship with a female activist at the time while undercover, causing immense trauma when the details of his true identity emerged.

The main idea behind the movement never died – that cars occupy too much urban space and that it is the cars that are causing the disruption to life, not the revellers – and spread across the world like a franchise, with some cities having a longer-term permanent presence of RTS as a concept, notably Sydney.

Much has changed politically since RTS actions happened in the late 1990s. The recent 2023 revisions to the Public Order Act give police and judges considerable power to arrest any protestors who they deem to be in breach of the Section 7 "Interference with Key National Infrastructure" clause which includes roads. Other revisions include vague, discretionary descriptions such as "creating a risk of serious annoyance" under the Public Nuisance clauses; and "Wilful Obstruction of the Highway". These revisions have been used to convict peaceful activists from Just Stop Oil to extended prison sentences, and also acted as the driver for crackdowns on groups like Youth Demand. The debate about permitting peaceful yet disruptive protests is non-existent, despite a supposed left wing government in power, which seems in no hurry to strike down legislation created by the extreme right wing of the Tories during their 14 years in power.

Yet it is easy to forget that a similar climate existed in the 1990s when RTS began, with the introduction of the CJA by John Major's government, criminalisation of alternative lifestyles that had co-existed with mainstream society for decades. and similar repression and surveillance of left wing activists. So perhaps not much has changed after all.

~ Anon

# NO MORE 'GOOD DISABLED' GUFF

The government's proposed cuts to disability benefits will ruin lives if they are not fought.

Their focus is on making it harder to get Personal Independence Payments (PIP), halving the health element of Universal Credit for new claimants, and after 2029 connecting the Limited Capability for Work Related Activities to qualifying for PIP.

Personal Independence Payments are not related to whether or not you can work and are not means tested. They are an important benefit which enables people to pay for wheelchairs and other essential equipment, and to pay for care and other services which help people be independent. The planned changes would make it harder to get the daily living component of PIP.

The health element of Universal Credit is extra money which people receive if they are assessed as having Limited Capability for Work Related Activities after a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). These claimants do not have to look for work or have job coach interviews. They can work a limited number of hours if they are able to. This payment will be halved for new claimants and people under 22 will not be able to claim it at all.

After 2029 the government proposes to abolish the WCA and use the assessment for PIP – at the same time as making PIP more difficult to get. Claimants who do not get PIP will not only lose money but will be expected to look for work and may be sanctioned.

The government responds to criticism by saying it is not impoverishing vulnerable claimants, as it's going to help people get into work and the plan is to have more job coaches to focus on interviews. This is not a meaningful

or realistic response at all. Some disabled people just cannot work. Others could work with support – but the government is not going to stop employers from discriminating against people, or make public transport fully accessible, or force employers to make adjustments. The pressure is all on the claimant.

The Labour Party has a vision of a good disabled person, who has a positive attitude and therefore works full time in a nice professional job and doesn't need benefits. Everyone else has a negative attitude and is probably encouraged not to work by "perverse incentives" (being able to claim). The solution is to encourage a positive attitude through coaching, removing perverse incentives (the benefits) and then people will be transformed into good disabled people with well-paid jobs and be virtuous and happy. Except people are not out of work because of negative attitudes but because of material conditions, so taking away benefits will only impoverish people and make them more ill.

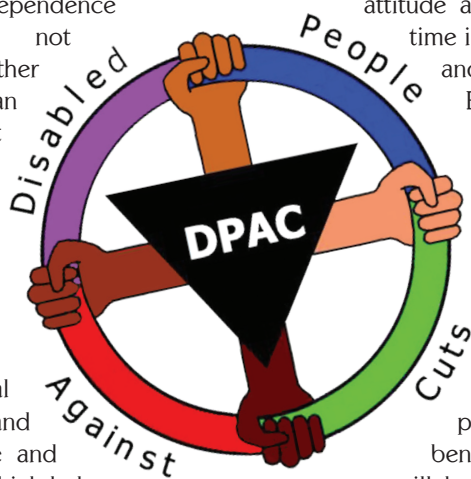


Somebody being able to do a job, with the right support, does not mean they are actually going to get the job when an employer can just not bother to provide support and pick somebody else. A lot of disabled people don't have great qualifications due to lack of support in the education system, so the idealised well-paid work from home job on your laptop is probably less achievable for disabled people on average than for non-disabled people.

Taking a lot of people off PIP would have a lot of harmful knock-on effects, as PIP can qualify a relative to get carer's allowance – a totally insufficient benefit for carers, but still a lifeline – and removing it will cause more immiseration. As PIP is not means tested, people living with working partners can still claim it and have their own money, and parents don't get it deducted from other benefits. Removing these benefits will put more children into poverty as well, and make people more dependent and vulnerable to abuse.

There have been demonstrations in various cities already against the cuts, and online organising meetings. A good group to follow both for information and to know about protests is Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC). Scope have information on their website [scope.org.uk](http://scope.org.uk) about the planned cuts and MIND have a welfare benefits line on 0300 222 5782. Support from other people is vital as otherwise small numbers of people, who have health challenges, are doing all the work. People demonstrating in Exeter earlier this year faced intimidation with a chair thrown at the protesters, some of whom were attending their first protest. These cuts are unpopular and can be challenged, protest has worked before, please support campaigns.

~ Fingers Malone



The DPAC and Crips Against Cuts logos



# Today's seeds are tomorrow's future



What kind of power do we want? Power over people, or empowered people everywhere controlling their own lives? Is the top-down way our society is currently organised and run the natural “way things are”, and the only way? Do we have to put up with a system based on money, profits and greed, and on hierarchies, politicians and power structures? No! Why should we accept what inevitably comes with such a society – institutional injustice, exploitation, unfairness and discrimination, not to mention poverty, wars and environmental destruction?

Things could be, should be, and must be better than that. But in what way? And how do we get from here to there?

Firstly, whilst those with wealth and power, such as transnational corporations and governments, are relentlessly and ruthlessly working hard to maintain their domination of our world for their own profits and power, billions of people are acting in a different way in our everyday lives.

## Real normal behaviour

Families share resources and encourage the real human values of cooperation: mutual aid and respect. In every workplace workers try to do the same. In every neighbourhood and community, there are countless examples of such daily common sense, communication and solidarity. This is, in fact, the real “natural way” things should be done and how our whole society should be run.

On top of such daily sensible, human connections everywhere, people are continuously making collective efforts at the grassroots to organise themselves, to share and spread skills, to articulate their views, to promote their common interests, to defend their rights, and to challenge things that are wrong.

## Organising Ourselves

This is done through a plethora of groups, initiatives, projects and associations of all kinds (it is estimated there are a million voluntary associations in the UK alone) – from bee-keeping societies, to robot-wars conventions, sports clubs to choirs, from

childcare sharing arrangements to evening classes, and from park user groups and residents' associations to trade union branches.

Many of these are strengthened through their efforts to build supportive networks and federations. Many, possibly most, of these groups will employ democratic principles (for example everyone being equal), be based around volunteering and sharing, and encourage collective initiative.

In my own area alone, Haringey in North London, there's a network of more than 100 residents' associations, a Friends of Parks Forum with 65 independent local groups, an organised network of 35 community-run community centres, a forum for all the allotment site committees, and a range of other self-organised, horizontal grassroots networks.

What this proves beyond doubt is that “ordinary” people are in fact extraordinary, and we are very capable of organising and empowering ourselves. This human way of doing things could be a real alternative to capitalism and governments if people realised that politics is not about voting

for politicians but about what we can do ourselves, for each other and the common good.

It's our world – let's take it back! We need to up our game, organise ourselves and take action together to build community counter-power in every street and workplace. At the same time activists need to build strong local solidarity groups in every town across the UK and beyond, to support our communities, local campaigns, and to spread anti-authoritarian ideas.

## People Power

There is an amazing history of grassroots people power movements, strike waves and social revolutions throughout the world which should inspire us. Such movements should not only be against what's wrong but also be for what is right – where people aspire to seize control of their own lives, communities and workplaces and run them directly and collectively together for the benefit of all.

~ Dave

member of Haringey Solidarity Group  
haringey.org.uk



Community resilience: A spontaneous solidarity demo against deportation of the Stansted 15 in December 2018, and crowds in Walthamstow see off a mooted far-right rally in 2024



# 🔥 If the regime doesn't suppress the sparks, the wildfires will begin.

An interview with **Toby Shone**

*Elizabeth Vasileva* talks to the former political prisoner about his anarchism, the 365 project and resisting the physical and mental jails that surround us all.

**You recently spoke about the importance of solidarity and connections. Can you give us any examples in the pushback against prison repression?**

Shortly before I was released in 2024, violent cell searches by a tactical unit of prison guards known as the National Search Team took place on C-wing of HMP Garth in Leyland, where I was being held. The NST took over the wing with dogs and riot gear. Cell by cell the raid took place with a lot of pointlessly brutal drama.

In ones and twos we were handcuffed and placed in a locked wet room. Some prisoners were beaten, abused and a lot of our things were trashed. Some of the guys fought back, flooded their cells, banged their doors or played music really loud as a protest. The next day the whole wing refused to go back into their cells after the early morning unlock hour. As a cacophonous and unruly mob we demanded the immediate return of seized items, the replacement of damaged items and denounced the violence. This led to the screws backing off. There was nothing at that moment that the screws could do because we all acted together, and without any leader. Similar things happened in my experience when one of the prisoners was killed by depression or hopelessness. Demonstrations outside the prisons where I was held also were a strong experience that had an impact upon the guards and us. Especially when the fireworks exploded across the night sky and the comrades outside were militant. I found other prisoners to be generally supportive of each

other in the roughly anti-system and criminal environment. Whenever I was transferred or moved to a different cell, the local guys usually would come to check if I was okay and if I needed anything. I helped other guys with their legal cases or prison admin, and tried to find common points of interest and subversion. We'd try to back each other, and if I had some problem, the guys would be voicing their demands too. I lost track of the number of prison labour refusals and walkouts I heard about when I was inside, they are very common.

When I heard that comrades outside were carrying out revolutionary solidarity, that is when I felt our power inside the prison. From hearing about the direct actions with the Adream case in Chile, France, Italy, Indonesia and around the world, to the phone-call interventions that I was able to make to meetings of comrades on the outside, I could feel the warmth from the comrades. Also knowing about the censored letters and books, the solidarity funds and benefit events, it was great.

**What can you tell us about the 325 project?**

325 is an anarchist network of counter-information and direct action. In November 2020, Dutch counter-terrorist police took down the nstate.net server which held the 325 website, upon request from their German and English colleagues.

The website was a long-running information clearinghouse of general news, reports, communiques, publications, event listings, etc. Mostly it covered Europe, Latin America and South East Asia. 325 is also a hard-copy magazine which comes out on

an intermittent basis, and dozens of publications have been published by the collective, including the newsletter *Dark Nights*, which has its own website. Over the years, 325 has participated in an evolving participatory international network based on direct action and the support of prisoners, as well as providing space for various tendencies of anarchist, anti-capitalist and anti-civilisation groups. In recent issues of the magazine the analysis has shifted slightly to the profound new industrial changes in production and technology, such as artificial intelligence, life sciences and automation. The archive of the 325 site is an important document of social and armed revolutionary struggle.

**How come the British state is so obsessed with crumbs of resistance from below in the middle of a global fascist takeover?**

Well, we can never underestimate the smallest expression of dissent and rebellion, they all have power. If the regime doesn't suppress the sparks, the wildfires will begin.

Even if I disagree with the positions of the bureaucratic part of groups like Just Stop Oil, it gives me pleasure to see their successes and I want to see it escalate into a revolutionary movement. Any protests that are effective will meet repression. From prison I saw on TV the escalation of property destruction against arms companies dealing to Israel during the ongoing Gaza genocide, the shutdowns of the motorways and destruction of Barclays Banks (pictured). The radical left, ecologists and anarchists are basically the only opposition in the UK. Since it was wrong-footed by June 18th Global Day of Action in 1999, when the London Met were surprised by multi-million pound

damage anti-capitalist riots, the State has made it its goal to manipulate and dead-end the social movement. The question of tactics and energy, of small group actions and of mass protests that could have the capacity to pose a real danger to national security through creating situations that are out of the control of anyone – that requires our willingness to organise and link our struggles.

**The British left seems so divided, how do you think we can build solidarity effectively?**

I don't consider myself part of the British left. Leftism is part of the electioneering circus, and has capitulated to the mass media and corporations, to militarism, high technologies, statism.

That being said, I don't think you're speaking about this. Our group withdrew from the social movement in 2011 and took a nihilistic position, we are only active in our groups. That's another conversation, but from what we have been through, essentially; stop pointlessly fighting over toxic issues and excluding each other. Understand how the system constantly recuperates and infiltrates our anarchism. Learn to communicate. Learn from your interactions. Learn to value your time and that of others. Share skills, time, energy and money, if you can, with real projects that need support. Learn to give criticism and to receive it. If you cannot work well with others, work alone. Put your ideas into practice. This will strengthen our space. If you are part of a group or not, you can write to prisoners, support their campaigns and maintain an interest in the anti-prison topic. Meet face-to-face and do things in the streets if you are able. Make links in the local area and if you are active on other issues, remember those who end up behind bars, it could be you. If you have the capabilities, help do admin or organise demos, cooking, putting people up, flyposting, graffiti, leaflets, zines, stickers, night time excursions. Don't think that other people are going to do it for you. Let's take part in and build a real culture of resistance and mutual aid.

**What is the most effective way to support people in prison or who have recently left?**

The revolutionary action, this is the most important way to support people



inside. This is the first principle. Directly freeing the prisoners and carrying out the anti-State and anti-capitalist struggle.

Second are the material conditions. It costs money to fight legal cases, pay for food and provisions, visits, travel to the prison, arrange the situation of the life left behind etc. This can't be done by the prisoner. It needs a collective effort. When prisoners are released they continue to need support with housing, money, travel, food and so on. On release I was helped a great deal by my comrades. Third is the solidarity campaign and raising awareness. This campaigning must include also making sure that the imprisoned know about what is happening on the outside and putting pressure on the prison administration, or any private companies involved. When I was locked up I was not able to receive much news, but whenever I heard about a demo or

a solidarity action it always provided me with a lot of strength, and to be able to speak about it with the other guys enabled me to show practically that the anarchists exist.

We have to prepare for larger numbers of us going to prison, there are dozens of prisoners from the social movement – climate change and Palestinian solidarity. They are facing the same or similar conditions I was imposed with, through the terrorism schedules and Counter Terror Police investigations. In my case I was not even sentenced for terror charges but I was still held under an anti-terrorist regime. This situation is not going to get better unless we are active and create a stronger tendency of struggle. Currently the movement is not able to provide adequate support, there needs to be a real effort to connect the struggles of all of us who are targeted by the prison and criminal justice system.

**Do you think abolishing prisons is one of the main areas anarchists should be focusing on?**

I think that the anti-prison topic is an important intermediate struggle that has the capacity to not only create significant damage to bourgeois society, national security and the police-state, but experience in confronting very difficult issues and finding allies in working class communities.

Prison has a clear racial and class basis and at the moment the system is breaking. A start could be the fight against prison labour and the construction of new prisons. As anarchists, we don't want to simply abolish prisons, but destroy the State itself. So, I'm in favour of any actions and campaigns from the radical left and the anarchists that strike it.

The important social battles I see coming all pertain to poverty and exploitation, and are the results of the new asymmetric state of war, technocratic capital, rising artificial intelligence and the ecological collapse. I think that nothing should be taken for granted. The resurgence of internationalist struggle and the next generation of social war is what I am placing a bet on.



# PROTEST AT ITS BEST IS A PRO

As someone who grew up in Britain during the long victory march of Thatcherism, I was in some ways born into a generation of the powerless. Ours was a world where popular power was not merely lacking, but declared entirely surplus to requirements. We were told the slow, measured advance of capital would gradually sand the sharper edges from life, and everything would improve, gradually but inevitably. Who truly needs power in such a society? Simply go to work, consume, and hand over your vote every few years; go back to sleep, all is well.

Like many others of my generation, I began to realise something was wrong with this picture around 9/11, the War on Terror and all the various horrors that followed. I began attending protests, but found them failing to quell my internal disquiet with society. Many of the protests I attended seemed just as much a part of the stultifying social rhythm as was not protesting. Protests were there to help you let off steam, but they weren't expected to actually achieve anything; the object of a protest was the protest itself.

During the global financial crisis of 2008, I found my political path leading to anarcho-syndicalism and I made contact with the Solidarity Federation in London. At the time they were heavily involved with supporting parents occupying Lewisham Bridge School, attempting to stop the school's proposed demolition. It was a struggle they would go on to win.

For someone as new to political action as myself it was a revelation. Witnessing this small, local struggle, I understood what I had found lacking in my previous political endeavors; that the purpose of a protest is not protest, but to win an objective. In short, the object of a protest is not protest, but power.

When the Tory-Lib Dem austerity coalition came to power in the spring of 2010 I had moved to Oxford and helped found a SolFed local in Thames Valley. We were soon involved in the local anti-cuts movement. It took a form very familiar to me: marches, speeches; but it didn't really seem to take off until Millbank happened.

On November 10th 2010, what was

intended as a typical A-to-B march organised by the National Union of Students took an unexpected turn when a group of protesters broke away from the main event and ended up attacking Millbank Tower, the location of the Conservative Party campaign headquarters. Soon, more and more students made their way along the river and the building ended up first under siege and then occupied.

I wasn't there myself, having finished my studies and living away from London, but I remember surreptitiously refreshing news feeds at my desk all day, following the unfolding action minute by minute. It felt like a dam breaking, a reaction not merely to the actions of the coalition but to all of the lies sold to our generation. There had been other major protest actions prior to Millbank, such as the 2009 G20 summit protests, but it felt like something was very different in the air post-Millbank.

Despite round condemnation from the media, politicians and not least the NUS leadership, the effects of Millbank spread far and wide. Even the previously sleepy anti-cuts marches in Oxford were filled with a new energy. Our first local anti-cuts march after Millbank was joined by a large group of school students. They were wonderfully uncontrolled, not merely angry but joyous in their anger.

When we reached the center of town, the students made an abrupt turn. Having no intention of attending the scheduled rally, they instead made a beeline for the nearest bank. It is telling that, despite being widely characterised as mere ignorant yobs, these young people had instinctively identified the true enemy as not only the government, but capital.

Mounted police who had been lying in wait appeared instantly from the side streets. Along with officers on foot they formed a cordon around the bank. Acting spontaneously and with no particular plan, the students simply bounced down



the road to the next bank, the police in tow. This cat and mouse dance continued until the protest eventually dissipated. It was an unusually strong reaction by the Thames Valley Police to a protest, and if it had been intended as a show of strength, it had to me the opposite effect. I can still see the expression of one of the mounted officers; his face fearful, despite his clear position of strength. The foundation of orthodoxy that held him up had shifted.

This energy continued into other major student protests around the country but also into the wider anti-cuts movement. More protests were called, eventually building to the TUC-led March for the Alternative in London on March 26th 2011. Everyone knew it was going to be huge. Protesters from all over the country travelled down to London, including our own SolFed local. The march was to be so large that it would begin as multiple feeder marches across the city. Various anarchist groups had agreed to form a red and black bloc, with our own independent feeder march starting at Kennington Park

# PROMISE, FOLLOWED BY ACTION



just outside the Oval cricket grounds. As we set off, the first thing I noticed was the almost complete lack of police. Stretched as they were by the numbers city-wide, we were free to march down the street as we pleased. It seems such a small thing, but it's also a microcosm of the entire thing; to be able to march down a street in your own city at your own choosing. It is a small taste of what the world should be.

When we eventually merged with one of the official feeder marches the scale of the protest became apparent. Attendance estimates range from 250,000 to 500,000, but on the ground such distinctions fade away, and you are only aware of being part of a great mass of people.

The planned TUC route headed to Hyde Park for the usual round of speeches, but we had no intention of going that way. As we reached Trafalgar Square, we broke off from the main march and turned into Pall Mall East. We rounded the corner and saw that the road was lined by police on either side. We bunched up as the front of march hesitated, with the collective

memory of a thousand police kettles. Though just as quickly a shared thought seemed to flash between the police and ourselves: "They can't stop us". We were too many, they were too few, the street was too small. Our bloc set off again with newfound confidence.

As we emerged from the other end of Pall Mall East, we caught sight of the main march across some open ground. When they saw the anarchists were off to cause trouble, they gave a huge cheer. In that moment, I understood that we weren't two movements, the mainstream and the radical, but one movement. Many in the main march would never dream of doing what we were doing, and many in our march would have felt stifled and constrained in theirs. Yet neither could exist without the other. Without the mass of their numbers we would not be free to take action. Without us, indeed without prior actions such as Millbank, the effect of their numbers would have been wasted.

Our bloc went on to take action that day against a number of companies on Oxford

Street, many of which were a part of the government's Workfare scheme, extorting unpaid labour from unemployed people. Other groups unaffiliated with our bloc also took part in actions, the most well-known being the occupation of the Fortnum and Mason store in St.James.

At the end of the day, a large number of us gathered in a pub in Holborn, and I still remember the energy of that evening, a collective buzz of confidence. It felt as though every anarchist in the UK was in there, and that may not have been far off the mark. I still remember occasionally glancing out of the window and seeing cops sidling awkwardly along the other side of the street, observing us nervously but unable to take action. For that small moment in time, the city felt like it was ours, not theirs.

It could be argued that the actions taken that day weren't ultimately effective. The government continued its regime of cuts and the economic orthodoxy it engendered led directly to the present political moment. Yet I think that underplays the day. From the momentum it generated SolFed alone went on to have further victories against the Workfare scheme, against wage theft, against cheating landlords. A few years later I myself helped a co-worker successfully defend himself against an attempted unfair dismissal. This friend was not an anarchist, nor even particularly political. Yet he had heard my stories about our movement and our victories. He understood that on some level I was connected to a wider power that could help him in his time of need, and what's more, he was right.

The March for the Alternative gave me a glimpse of the power we can wield, and gave me faith that our cause, despite its difficulties, has the capability of doing great things, and making a real difference in the world; that the powers that currently control us are not invincible, but simply sit at the other end of a scale, and that scale can be shifted. That day taught me that sometimes a show of strength is simply a show of strength, but still no lesser for that.

# A FUTURE FOR ANARCHY

## FILM-MAKER JOEL SUCHER REFLECTS

*Anarchism in America* is the title of a documentary produced way back in 1980; a time when the world was a far different place and the embers of the older strains of the movement – communist, individualist and syndicalist – were still alight. I was one of the producers of that documentary and was lucky enough to rub elbows with a variety of anarchists – Italians, Jews, Spaniards, Russians among others – who shared a common vision of a better world. They dreamed of a universal terrain without the shackles of authoritarian structures, governments and their corporate lackeys; churches, with their superstitions, and armed police to enforce the dictates of oligarchs and authoritarians.

The documentary was financed, ironically, by a liberal institution – National Endowment for the Humanities – established by Lyndon Johnson in 1965 when the idea of intellectual stimulation was still part and parcel of a democratic sensibility. Flawed, I'd reckon, because it was an ideal steeped in the belief system of US exceptionalism. Propping up this notion these days has plunged America further down the bowels of a new dark age, replete with heaping helpings of stupidity, racism, white supremacy and hyper-masculinity. It's a time for idiots to open mouths before engaging brains.

The original documentary was strung together with a questionable premise drawn from a 1978 book written by David DeLeon, titled *The American as Anarchist, Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism*. It postulated that there are those who explicitly tag themselves anarchists (like yours truly) but there are plenty more whose thinking embodies anti-authoritarian ideas without applying specific labels. Extended by DeLeon's implication, these folks have inherited an anti-authoritarian DNA that's become intertwined and defined in the American character.

The script was written by an old pal and comrade, Paul Berman, and was so good that for a few years the NEH staff waved it



around as an example of what they would fund; that is, until Ronald Reagan became president in 1981. In the backwash of the election – presaging what's happening today – the NEH staff bristling from the change in political sensibilities sheepishly asked us to take their names off the credits (we didn't).

Well, many decades on I'm gazing through the Looking Glass and see the American as anarchist in a different guise: that is as a MAGA supporter.

For instance, we interviewed an independent truck driver – “Lil John” – standing by his big rig and railing on about how government dos and don'ts had cut into his livelihood.

“We're not really independent because you talk about independent truck drivers and then you get into the political bureaucracy that run the United States government ... mainly the rules and regulations. I mean, I don't think a man in Washington, D C can dictate to me how to operate this truck, financially”.

Touching a key point, he concluded: “Just because you get elected to an office or you become a politician... don't necessarily make you the big brother that's

got to oversee everything that's under your domain ... the people out there feel that they got to be the big brother, that we're not smart enough down here to do our own thing”.

Perhaps another fly in the American as anarchist ointment is the idea, espoused in the documentary by the late working-class anarchist poet, Philip Levine, about how Americans are “smart enough” to hate rules and conformity especially in places that have a sense of orderliness in their culture.

“One of the things that struck me most when I went to Europe and lived there for a couple of years, was how fucking law abiding the people were, and how I broke all the laws. And I think I didn't break the laws so much because I was an anarchist, it was just because I was an American. I mean, if I came to a traffic light, nobody was there. I went through the goddamn thing. It was just an attitude, you know, what's the point of staying here? ... I found that my European neighbors went crazy. stay in line, you know, it was sort of the stay in line, be this way, queue up in England, you know. And I'd say, fuck you, you know, the first one to the bus gets on,

# IN THE USA?

you know ... We are a people who are very smart, you know, that we got a lot of street smarts ... I mean, we know what the law is all about. We know who made it and how it gets enforced. I mean, I think if you stop the average American say, what's the law all about? Did God make it? He'd say, bullshit. He didn't have anything to do with it. John D Rockefeller made it".

In retrospect, this "truth" has embedded itself in the viscera of MAGA as a justification for releasing all that pent-up rage against the edicts of what they call the Washington swamp. Unfortunately, their goal is to create a new swamp overseen by a charismatic leader who has sold them a bill of goods about how he'll make their lives better.

Obviously, as events in America unfold with deliberate shock and awe, it's clear the confusion provides cover for rolling out a "brave new fascist world". The blueprints are already out there (see my Covert Action piece on Curtis Yarvin). Anyone with even the slightest left-of-centre perspective will find themselves on hit lists with ambiguous outcomes. Handwriting is on the proverbial wall and the 2023 Cop City protests outside of Atlanta, where one activist was killed, provide more than enough evidence to highlight that the State has placed a target on the backs of the anti-authoritarian movement.

Will anarchists be the next group – after immigrants and pro-Palestinians – to be carted off? A definite possibility. You don't have to be Nostradamus to guess what may be coming next.

So, what is to be done?

Well, mutual aid; that foundational anarchist theory-into-practice concept remains as alive and relevant today as it did and has given us the incentive – the power – to act in concert with like-minded folk for the benefit of our local communities.

No need to wrap A's in circles around our foreheads. It's a demonstration of what is innate in the human character: an empathy that transcends greed and cruelty and one that infuses anarchist thought.

Encouraging self-management in the small and medium business realm maintains credibility even now when Wall Street and its predatory banking buddies seek to control everything and anything.

Back in the day many of us were infatuated by the anarchist hue and cry, "don't vote, it only encourages them".

Times have changed severely and I, for one, believe that voting, primarily in local elections, where a vote counts for something is an imperative that should be heeded. The old New England "town hall" ideal which we discussed in the documentary – gathering local citizens to discuss political affairs – remains a crucial exercise of power.



As the resistance starts to take root anarchists need to heed the pitfalls and traps set up in this new world of surveillance and AI. Welcome to "predictive policing"

where science fiction meets science fact and where algorithms drive lead-generated police investigations.

No longer are police gumshoes hiding in hotel rooms listening to bugs they have planted via crappy, old vacuum tube transmitters. The modern detective is fixed to a computer screen watching algorithms make – in essence – criminal predictions.

We have turned a page; one Philip K Dick wrote about in his dystopian 1956 novel, *Minority Report* (later a compelling film starring Tom Cruise).

The incompetent fools currently playing with the levers of US power take China as an example of how you can control an unruly population. It's a true 1984 world where surveillance is translated into social control, and points are literally deducted if

you're late to pay a bill or jaywalk; yes, it is a scheme to turn the population into good, obedient boys and girls.

An awareness that you're being watched needs to be just that and something that shouldn't damp down activism. Having been involved in producing films like the 1970 documentary, *Red Squad*, I'm cognisant about the dangers posed by the surveillance State but there are plenty of counter-measures. Keep your circle of friends small ("affinity groups", we used to call them); use secure platforms like Signal for communications and don't invite all those you think may want to be on the down-low. If that means tamping down social media posts proclaiming support for Palestine, well, for the time being that should be considered. The other side will be monitoring and the threat is real. Anything is possible. I was born in a Displaced Persons camp outside of Luebeck, Germany, after the War and came over to the States and naturalised as a citizen.

Could I, theoretically, be denaturalised? Sure.

Anarchism, like the proverbial Seventh Wave, seems to engulf successive generations of young people eager to act on anti-authoritarian impulses and that's a good thing, in my estimation, so long as they understand it's a long-term commitment. It's all too easy for the young kid waving around a black flag with an A in a circle to succumb to the seductive temptations of materialism, power-mongering and fame-whoring.

While I believe that *Anarchism in America* is a deeply flawed film, I'd maintain that there are lessons to be learned and that after the authoritarians and capitalists melt down – which I'm sure they will – then anarchists can get back to the task of proffering the vision of a better world.

~ Joel Sucher



*Physical Resistance*, by Dave Hann is the latest book from Freedom Press, telling the history of working class anti-fascism over the last 100 years. Expanded and updated by Louise Purbrick, it's from her writing on the 2010s that we draw this extract ...

# March for England became a stumble

## Brighton, 2012

When it was over, I wrote a piece for our website titled 'We won the day' but now I believe we did more. We won the city. What happened is not only part of anti-fascist memory but Brighton's history.

It took more than a day ... We produced posters, leaflets, fliers, stickers. We distributed them from stalls in shopping areas, at the train station, at the football stadium, at any meeting, theatre performance or film screening that was halfway relevant. We created "March for England not welcome here" door signs for cafes and pubs. Many venues took them and many had already made their own. The city began to be plastered with stickers. When they were ripped off or cleaned off we went back and put up new ones in the same place. We cut graffiti stencils of an outline figure throwing away the letters ED. We designed banners. Agreed the words. Painted the letters. Brighton's all too expensive housing is full of unapproved 1980s knock throughs, which if all the furniture is pushed back, clears a runway of flat floor space that can be used to dry a banner overnight. Some were used for banner drops from the Pier and seafront balustrades to intervene in the city space and create a media event in the weeks leading up to March for England rather than a distraction from a strong anti-fascist street presence when they actually arrived. Some banners were unfurled on the day. All our relentless activity was aimed at getting the people out on the day and our recurring discussion was what we would do when we did.

... Assembling along the route of the march was the key that set us free to protest. Cops cannot kettle the whole length of any long pavement, especially one that is the major tourist pedestrian route leading from the station to the shops then the sea. For residents and regular visitors, these pavements are everyday routes. We shared the right to be there.

... When the word filtered through the Brighton crowd that they were setting off, the noise of opposition rose several decibels while small groups got ready either side of Queens Road. March for



England moved in a controlled square surrounded by a riot of the sounds of antifascism. Lines of police walked at the front, behind and alongside them, forming a box of nastiness that covered the ground at a slower pace than a funeral procession. Then, 50 yards further down, still nervous, still hopeful, a handful of anti-fascists ran into the road and unfurled a banner across its width. STOP MARCH FOR ENGLAND. No-one read it. There was no time. Some cops tried to pull people off the road while others pushed forward against the banner. But people from Brighton moved in behind it. We were blocking the road and halting the march of the English fascists.

... Now we were in front of both, preventing the march from moving at all at some points. The police used their weapons: gloved hands, truncheons, pepper spray, horses against those holding the banner. When one person got too battered or lost their balance another person stepped forward. We held on. The cops made several bids to grab the banner, looking like spoiling bullies in a childish tug of war, which they lost a few times before they finally got hold of flimsy cotton length. Too late. We had caused enough chaos in the road to control the rest of the route.

Our numbers stayed strong. Those who started out lining the pavements around the station continued to surround the

March for England. The police could have saved some of their overtime expenses and turned the march around on Queens Road and sent it back to the station but instead re-routed down a short-cut, Church Street, to its end point on Victoria Gardens. We ran. How dispersed groups of anti-fascists on the move collectively decided to block off the march once more remains a mystery to me but that's what happened. Numbers had gathered on Church Street before the march was even half-way down. Big commercial wheelie bins were pulled out to build barricades.

If anything, this second stand-off of the day was even more successful. March for England was at a standstill. The police must have done some of their own re-grouping; they pressed on towards us, yanking the bins away and forcing the fascists along one side towards the turn into their penned in rally point in Victoria Gardens. The silence of defeat descended upon MfE. No speeches. Each and every time a voice was raised in some incoherent defence of race hate, they were shouted down. Their police escort took them back to the train station with a jubilant crowd of antifascists following in their wake.



# UPCOMING ANARCHIST TITLES

## Born of Struggle, Living in Hope: The Anarcho-Punk Lives of the Centro Iberico

by Nick Soulsby  
PM Press (Oct)  
192 pages | £14.99

The Centiro Iberico in London Notting Hill was for many years at the heart of Spanish anarchism in exile. Lasting for 12 years, it became a legendary music venue and the base of operations for civil war veterans such as Miguel García García, benefitting from its links to political punk through to its loss to gentrification in the 1980s construction boom. Soulsby analyses the centre and its importance to solidarity groups in Britain and Spain.

## Love and revolution: A Politics for the Deep Commons

by Matt York  
Manchester University Press (Jun)  
216 pages | £25

York brings classical and contemporary anarchist thought into a dialogue with a global cross-section of ecological, anti-capitalist, feminist and anti-racist activists – discussing real-life examples of the loving-caring relations that underpin many contemporary struggles.

## Associational Anarchism: Towards a Left-Libertarian Conception of Freedom

by Chris Wyatt  
Manchester University Press (3 Jun. 2025)  
224 pages | £25

Wyatt's theory of political economy aims to unite the public sphere of citizenship with the private sphere of production in a system of communal ownership, through a scheme of self-governing horizontal networks held together by libertarian politics.

## Another War is Possible: Militant Anarchist Experiences in the Antiglobalization Era

by Tomas Rothaus & CrimethInc  
PM Press (Jun)  
448 pages | £26.99

Rothaus, who was active and present for many of the major events of the anti-globalisation movement around the turn of the Millennium, follows him through his early days as a militant across three continents.

## Red Flag Warning: Mutual Aid and Survival in California's Fire Country

Edited by Dani Burlison and Margaret Elysia Garcia  
AK Press

184 pages | £13  
Named after the term for a high fire risk, Red Flag Warning explores fires in rural and urban Northern California. It examines relationships to place and community and the importance of mutual aid, organising, community care, land stewardship, and resilience.

## A Continuous Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Martin Sostre

by Garrett Felber  
AK Press

424 pages | £27  
Sostre (1923-2015), from East Harlem, was an anarchist and key figure in black radicalism in the latter half of the 20th century as a campaigner, jailhouse lawyer, bookseller and political thinker. A lifelong organiser against all forms of oppression, his decades of activism are recounted by Felber in what is the first biography to have been written about him.

Active Distribution meanwhile has the following due out over the summer:

- **The Continuing Appeal of Nationalism**, by Fredy Perlman
- **Why Anarchists Abstain from Elections**, by Tommy Lawson
- **Against History Against Leviathan**, by Freddy Perlman
- **New Times**, by Peter Kropotkin
- **Society of the Spectacle and**

**Comments**, by Guy Debord

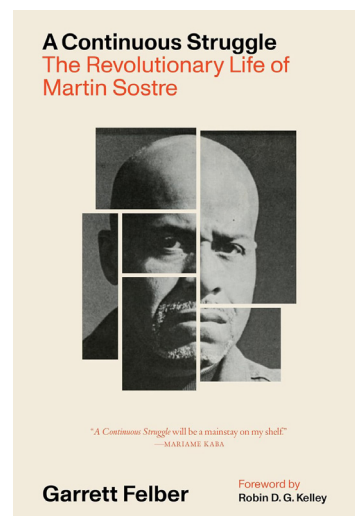
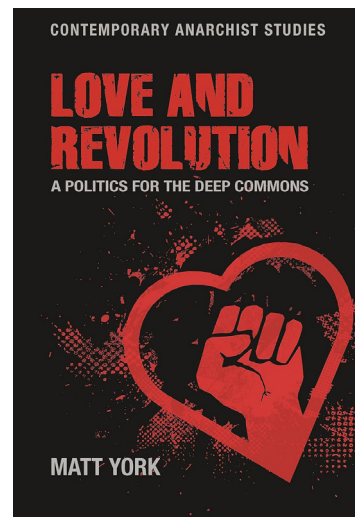
- **Storming Heaven**, by Roger Yates (Fiction)

- **All Hands on Deck** by Jan Goodey
- **The People's War in Rojava**. (new intro and update)
- **Anarchist Techno Attacks**, by Crimethinc
- **Kropotkin Escapes**

And Freedom Press has two books confirmed for this year:

## Housing: An Anarchist Approach

by Colin Ward  
Continuing our series refreshing some of Ward's key works. Ward produced some of the most influential anarchist writing to come out of Britain in the latter part of the 20th century, and housing was a specialist topic, taking in thoughts on squatting, tower life, self build and urban planning with a laser focus on the question of how we can, and should, be participants in the lifecycles of our own homes.



## Everything Continues: Anarchism and the Greek Financial Crisis

by Neil Middleton

Turmoil in Greece following the 2008 financial crisis was of a different order to that of anywhere else in Europe, lasting throughout the 2010s and destroying much of its economy. At the heart of popular revolt against the catastrophe was Europe's most militant anarchist milieu, a force potent enough to control parts of Athens and overwhelm police lines, an embedded reality in the life of the nation. Neil Middleton examines the circumstances that led to this riotous assembly and how the anarchists' story played out over a decade of tumult.

# GAMING AND THE SYSTEM

## Everything to Play For: How Videogames are Changing the World

by Marijam Did

Verso Books (Sept 2024)

288 pages

ISBN: 978-1804293249

£16.99

A distinction often made by progressives in gaming is in the use of the term “gamer”. Many of us avoid applying it to ourselves, because much of the most visible discourse in gaming is outright embarrassing. Nobody with any sense wants to be associated with stories where women characters with face fuzz, or normal body shapes, spark bizarre ultra-misogynist freakouts from popular influencers (and not infrequently developers).

Social progressives and the left make intermittent attempts to push more level-headed analysis, but it’s hard going. Anita Sarkeesian, offering a feminist position, became a byword for monsterings meted out to critical voices by hordes of furious chuds. Noted critic of games enshittification Jim Stephanie Sterling, after coming out as trans, lost a full quarter of their formerly million-strong YouTube channel’s viewership and has been lampooned incessantly. Mainstream sites have been targeted by the far-right on the grounds that their largely milquetoast business-friendly liberalism is an infiltration of The Woke Agenda.

That scene has good reason to aggressively police the boundaries of gaming. As Marijam Did, a longtime friend to both *Freedom* and the Advisory Service For Squatters, notes in her new book, gaming is by far the largest cultural zone worldwide, outstripping the movies and books which occupy much of our collective critical headspace. *Billions* of people play on any given day. Capturing the zeitgeist around its most popular products can provide a pipeline for recruitment and a powerful entryway into much broader social influence.

Did’s own aims are clear from early on when she writes: “My ambition here is nothing less than the recruitment of an army of game-changers for this vast and influential field ... Nothing was

inevitable about gaming becoming the current toxic, misogynist, imperial wasteland with few, albeit crucial, saving graces. In a few short decades, distinct actors made it that way”.

Well said. As Utah Phillips might have put it, gaming’s not dying, it’s being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses.

She is meticulous in her detective work, dividing the book into multiple “levels” that tackle increasingly advanced and lesser-addressed aspects of the industry. Level One’s overview of gaming’s early years leads swiftly into an analysis of its well-known demographic tendencies and the ways in which a stunted wannabe machismo built up everywhere, from the pseudoscience of William M Cannon to baleful sexism that ran rampant at Atari.

Many of these processes will be tiresomely recognisable to anyone who’s worked in “modern” industries, and in gaming particularly stories continue to abound, most notably in recent years at Blizzard-Activision.

Did’s analysis is not, however, simply about the darker side as she moves on to Level Two, covering the sometimes enormous communities which have built up around games like *Eve Online*, *World of Warhammer* and *Elite Dangerous*. While these are in no way spaces free of the same problems of exclusion and cant identified earlier in the book, she is careful to highlight the positive aspects of what online gaming offers to millions, including the forming of strong bonds and in-game mutual aid.

This acknowledgement that gaming is not simply a parody but a reflection of life is core to her main thesis that gamers and those who entertain them are nascent political actors, capable of transforming their material conditions. That an analysis encouraging solidarity and indeed class



consciousness is vital to untangling the knots the industry has tied itself in.

Both Levels Three and Four, talking about the culture and economics of gaming, build on this with a deep-rooted and thoughtful analysis of the conditions that make up the modern industry, with giant firms hyper-exploiting their numbered franchises, bearing down on and burying the offerings of an indie scene that provides sometimes

outstandingly thoughtful fare.

Did’s work has been a success for publishers Verso for very good reasons. It’s timely, inclusive and in many ways unique – while there are more left gaming commentators than there used to be, it’s still not even close to enjoying the interest levels of say, television or music.

And it’s important to note how far she’s been ahead of the curve for a long while before getting to this point. Her first foray into the subject was around 2017 with a tech column, *Left Left Up*, that presaged many of the topics she covers in *Everything To Play For*. That run-in has given her clarity and depth applying a radical insider’s analysis.

Her conclusions on the immense possibilities for change in gaming draw on a wide gamut of left campaign tools, from building union power to internationalist solidarity and co-operativism – and if you keep an eye out, she doesn’t skimp on the less hierarchical side of things with a particular shoutout to French anarcho-syndicalist workers’ co-op Motion Twin, makers of *Dead Cells*.

As many reviewers have said before, it’s a must-read for anyone who spends much time pushing pixels.

~ Rob Ray



# Sound providing a base for fury

## Anarcho-Punk: Music and Resistance in London 1977-1988

by David Insurrection.

Earth Island Books

224 pages

ISBN: 978-1916864443

£19.99

Having a place, a venue, a local or social centre, somewhere you and yours can feel at home and surrounded by kindred spirits is a powerful thing. Where you can work, inspire, create or kick back, chat or meditate, a place to host events and fundraisers ... a solid base, foundation or safe space can be vital to maintaining a community. It's not something easy to achieve in a period of history where many people either exist online or are spread out geographically away from hubs of social activity.

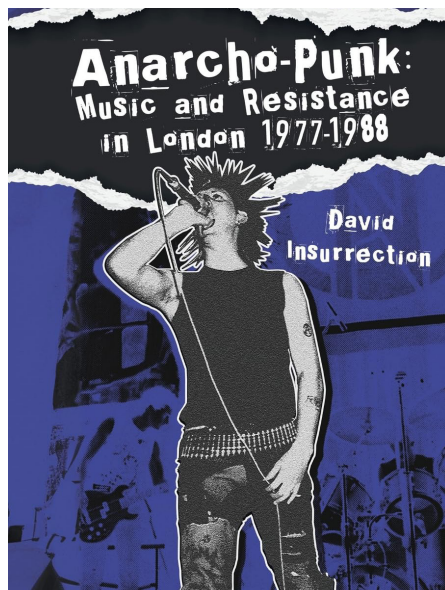
So it's incredibly useful to know what can be done and it's nice to know how people have achieved, tried and even failed to create communities in the past. In the 1970s and 1980s in Britain there was a new form of activism that branched off from musical culture, i.e. from punk, that looked for an authenticity beyond the punk posture.

Along with it came an interest in anarchism and new, social ways of living with each other and our environment. It's an important and often obscured part of our social history.

It's without doubt that if we don't record our own history we lose a lot. We lose our culture and we lose the ability to point out that it has been done, can be done and can continue to be done. Making such a record, from the experiences of people who have engaged in cultural creativity and resistance, is vital.

Having this knowledge can give us inspiration, energy, and resilience. It gives us the stability of experience and can allow us to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

And so we come to this magnificent work. In this 200+ page history, David sets his sights on and brings to life, with stories and photos, punk subculture.



Looking back at significant locations and key events during the late 1970s and '80s, this book records and documents, in his words: "the story of an oft overlooked scene" that "inspired a generation of activists, artists and musicians to take up the fight for a better world". It talks about the people, bands, iconic venues and buildings – voicing the experiences of those who used and maintained them.

After a foreword by Tony Dayton of fanzine *Ripped & Torn* (and also *Kill Your Puppy*) proclaiming that Crass were what was missing in the squat punk scene (and then explaining how punks through to Adam Ant were transformed after seeing Crass play) certainly helps set the scene for the rest of the book.

I enjoyed how it starts, immediately establishing a connection between punk and the anarchism of the time. Anti-fascist activism is also a constant theme throughout the book.

"Bands, zines, labels and self managed autonomous spaces became the frequency of this new scene" he explains, saying his "hope is to give people a flavour of the times and people", with his research serving both as historical document and guide.

There's a lot of history that I hadn't read before around such locations as the Wapping Autonomy Center and

Centro Iberico, plus stories of Black Flag and Spanish anarchists in London. All fascinating information you won't find very easily elsewhere.

There are a lot of interesting and anecdotal stories around different venues and different bands. There's discussion of the Monday Group and an interview with Martin Wright, which makes for a great read.

It's also a nice touch that the stories aren't nostalgic rose-tinted memories. It wasn't all perfect, not everyone got on, not everyone understood everyone else. That's besides having to deal with real fascist violence at concerts. And the Hackney Hell Crew of course.

There's stories of personal problems and one interesting anecdote about someone who had left a squat, only to return and find all the squat mates wearing their clothes.

I personally like a lot of the music of the period and the book paints an interesting picture of the lives and experiences of bands which made up the anarcho-punk scene. The first mention of a band is of course Crass, but we also get Poison Girls, Icons of Filth, Omega Tribe, Conflict, Chumbawamba and lots more. To their credit a number of the bands of that period can still be found playing the occasional gig today.

Many of the venues in the book no longer exist, many of the buildings are demolished.

The memories live on, however, and while places like the 121 in Brixton were taken forcibly by the state, others survive. There's a nice section talking about the history of Freedom for example, which is still going strong. We all share this history and should own it.

We have a tradition of social spaces, music, collectives, publications and a culture that we continue to build and learn upon, that we continue to maintain. And should learn to celebrate this, because it is the culture and history we ourselves create. And because we remember our people and our power, our culture is not empty.

~ Phil



# What is Freedom?

If you happen to have picked our august paper up for the first time today, welcome! You've probably gotten a reasonable idea where we're coming from in the course of reading the last 17 pages, but it's probably worth talking a little about our project as we so rarely do (shh regulars, pipe down).

As you may or may not have spotted on the front and back pages of the paper, we are a very old group, coming up to celebrate our 140th anniversary in October next year.

The story of our founding is a fascinating one, and the stuff of classic 19th century London. Exiles and agitators on the run rubbed shoulders with working class heroes, stary-eyed converts to the cause, dodging State infiltrators and repressive waves.

Our founder, Charlotte Wilson, and her crew were pugnacious to the point of self-sabotage, refusing to bend or silence their principles even for their allies, leading to clashes with Eleanor Marx (daughter of Karl) and exasperating even the legendarily tolerant socialist icon William Morris.

In World War I the "no war but class war" line of editors Wolfe and Keell saw them jailed, and in World War II articles urging the workers to keep hold of their guns after its end sparked the famous *War Commentary* free speech trial.

In the 1950s we were prominent in fighting the death penalty, while in the 1960s we could be found supporting the anti-Bomb movement, women's lib and the anarchist new wave.

Since 1968, when the Freedom building was finally bought outright, 84b Angel Alley has been a singular point in the city where you can walk in and find a whole different world of thought.

Our view of the working class is not that of the Marxists – we don't seek to become rulers or control a State that is not built to make us equals. It is not that of the mealy-mouthed liberals who have so royally screwed over the working class.

Where the left asks you to follow them in fruitless complaining, Labour tells you to vote "not Tory" (which has been working out great the last 40 years), Reform sells

you vague miserablism and hustle culture tells you to just "work harder bro" we have a different take.

We don't want you to struggle alone, we don't want you to give up your agency. We want you to be a working class hero. We have all been told that our world is a zero-sum game, and it's a lie. We've been told we need to give up our strength to people who know how to channel it, and that's a lie too.

Look at the mess this has made! Competing with each other for scraps while the rich buy up everything in sight. A constant feeling of failure and powerlessness while great events pass us by. None of this is inevitable. We are both survivor and maker in this world, powerful in our collectivity. We can remake things however we like, if we have the vision, fortitude and discipline to work as one.

So that's us. That's the grandiose pitch for a handful of stubborn bastards running a dysfunctional little bookshop and publishing house down a grimey alley. Never let it be said we lack ambition.

## What we get up to in Angel Alley

The Freedom building is actually home to a number of groups, which keeps it busy every day of the week. On the top floor is the ever-shorthanded Advisory Service For Squatters (go say hi if you want to volunteer), which helps people facing eviction and intermittently runs a popular how-to for people facing the need.

One flight of stairs further down is the office of *Dope Magazine*, a hugely successful project that hands out papers to anyone who needs them for street selling. Unlike the *Big Issue* it doesn't try to sanitise the vendors for public consumption – a solidarity without restriction.

Across the hall is Decenter, a room the building users leave available for meetings that hosts everything from language classes to union organising.

Getting to the lower half of the building we have Haven books for prisoners, a fantastic group that has, without judgment, helped countless people

learn, grow, or sometimes simply have a moment of escape.

And in the smallest office there is the National Bargee Traveller Association, which fights for the rights of houseboats, usually against the hostile gentrifying efforts of the Canal and River Trust.

Freedom itself, meanwhile, is primarily (but not exclusively) an outreach outfit. We run the largest dedicated anarchist bookshop in Britain stocking thousands of books, magazines, zine zines, badges, posters, T-shirts and loads of stuff we've probably forgotten about. If you're a radical writer we do love hosting a good talk on interesting topics, and if you're looking for a community place to volunteer in we do that too.

As a publisher we put out, usually, between two or three books a year

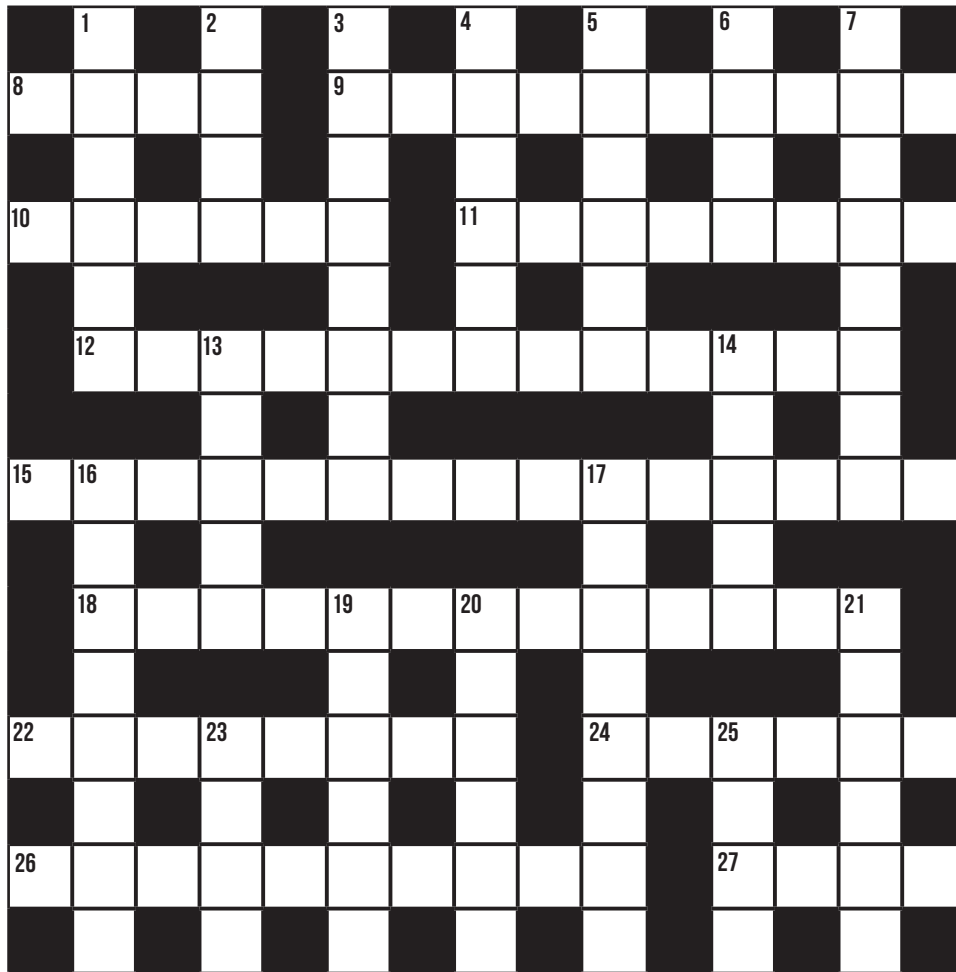
entirely on a volunteer basis. It's a satisfying sort of hobby (and is looking for a fresh organiser or two as an old hand is due to step back). Our upcoming titles are mentioned on page 15, plus we have plans for more ebooks, reprints and collaborations to come!

This journal you are reading right now is part of our media arm, and we put it out twice a year (we'd like to do more but funds and energy are always a factor), funding it through a combination of generous donations and money we've scraped together from the shop and publishing.

The other part is our newswire ([freedomnews.org.uk](http://freedomnews.org.uk)), which is pretty much the only organised daily anarchist news source around alongside hosting a weekly livestreamed news review. We're always looking for stories and reporting, especially on demos and direct action, and are happy to train up budding truth seekers, so please do get in touch if you want to be involved.



# CROSSWORD



## ACROSS

- 8 New mode of protest (4)
- 9 It sends a message when Ren returns, gets mixed up in bad porn (6,4)
- 10 Cold place in cold continent? (6)
- 11 Fighting emu ticks is an all-consuming activity (8)
- 12 Work stoppage caused by officer's ride (7,6)
- 15 Doctor said three steaks increased risk (6,3,6)
- 18 Expansive hearts needed for flash mob (6,7)
- 22 Clapton lied about "Spamalot" lyricist (4,4)
- 24 Bespoke result: brilliance (6)
- 26 Career squatting (10)
- 27 Publication pounded Inez (4)

## DOWN

- 1 Killjoy featured in Marlowe tragedy (3,3)
- 2 Drag cot around Ohio, old man! (4)
- 3 Made well after obstetricians briefly closed the curtain (8)
- 4 Plant found mostly in St Albans (6)
- 5 Transfer materialises, involves French mathematician (6)
- 6 Side first to be relegated mid-month (4)
- 7 Actual prisoner on Mediterranean island (8)
- 13 Polite refusal of synthetic rosin (2,3)
- 14 My main aptitude encapsulates "awkard" (5)
- 16 Summary plank targets pamphlet (8)
- 17 Sprout grows annoying, after changing direction (8)
- 19 After coda, a musician's gift might charm (6)
- 20 Find the point in part of the Sistine Chapel (6)
- 21 Make a mistake and have something to do (6)
- 23 Not much, mate? (4)
- 25 For example, small tag info (4)

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Across: 8 Demo, 9 Banner Drop, 10 Arctic, 11 Timesuck, 12 General Strike, 15 Raised The Stakes, 18 Street Theatre, 22 Eric Idle, 24 Lustre, 26 Occupation, 27 Zine.  
 Down: 1 Wet Rag, 2 Cool, 3 Obscured, 4 Instal, 5 Fernat, 6 Ides, 7 Concrete, 13 No Sir, 14 Inapt, 16 Abstract, 17 Seedling, 19 Endear, 20 Thesis, 21 Errand, 23 Chum, 25 Size.

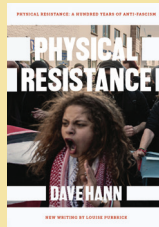
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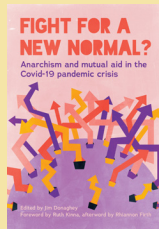


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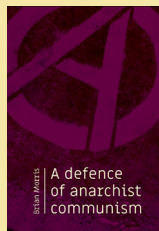


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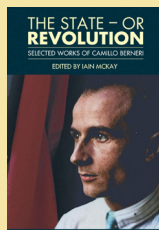


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# ABOUT ANARCHISM

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 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.

### Some resources:

[libcom.org](http://libcom.org): Huge repository of history and theory on every aspect of anarchism

[channelzeronetwork.com](http://channelzeronetwork.com): Collection of podcasts and anarchist-aligned radio shows from across the globe

[Activist Court Aid Brigade](http://Activist Court Aid Brigade): Legal support for when the action goes a bit wrong

[anarchiststudiesnetwork.org](http://anarchiststudiesnetwork.org) for academic writing on all aspects of anarchism

[freedomnews.org.uk](http://freedomnews.org.uk): Our very own newswire

## FINDING FREEDOM

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

We are socialists, disbelievers in property, advocates of the equal claims of all to work for the community as seems good — calling no-one master, and of the equal claim to each to satisfy as seems good to them, their natural needs from the stock of social wealth they have laboured to produce ... we are anarchists, disbelievers in the government of the many by the few in any shape and under any pretext.

*Freedom*, a Journal of Anarchist Socialism, Vol 1, No. 1, October 1886