

FREEDOM

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BY DONATION



**DON'T DESPAIR,
ORGANISE**

**BORIS JOHNSON'S FIRST FEW MONTHS SHOW
THERE'S NO SPACE TO WASTE ON IMPOTENT
SELF-PITY. IT'S TIME TO TAKE DIRECT ACTION.**

Painting by Juliusz
Lewandowski



**PLUS: FOUNDING A COMMUNITY KITCHEN ☠ BRITANNIA CHAINED
FORTRESS EUROPE ✂ THE STORY OF BRAINS KAN 💣 REVIEWS**

EDITORIAL

As this Spring issue of *Freedom* is being put together we are starting to see the outlines of what a full-throated Johnson government will be like.

As we know, behind the forced jollity of wobbly mumbly haw-haw rumple-hair lies a nasty piece of work, a man whose principles, such as they are, revolve around his own name. Following a pointed reshuffle the Cabinet standing beside him is comprised mostly of Yes Men answering as much to Dominic Cummings as to the PM.

Outlined in this issue are thoughts and analysis on what this means for the rest of us. The weakness being displayed, the brutal tactics being prepared to make up for it, the vicious nastiness that is likely to be enabled.

Before we even get to the end of Brexit trade negotiations, attacks on our rights, our homes, even our passports and ability to refuse work are in the pipeline. There is no longer a prospect of the Labour Party taking control away from them and even if there were, its priorities are over which hack gets to declare themselves monarch of the molehill.

There are no shortcuts to take. No saviours to invest in. There is only us, and

what we are prepared to do in resistance against the coming mess.

Our tactics must be myriad, they must balance between the construction of alternatives to disappearing public services and the rebuilding of a combative working class culture that does not simply walk around with placards in response to attacks against us.

Direct action must be re-learned, strategies tested to see what works. We have become timid and prone to seeing ourselves as powerless or defeated, and this cannot stand if we are to grow and thrive.

If our “betters” are to be believed, time is short. For all the toffs’ talk of better jobs in a competitive marketplace, automation and unfettered capitalism has created mostly precarious, low-paid work and pushed costs to the limit. All the means of life, from food and water to electricity and a roof have become more expensive as wages stagnate.

Johnson and his fellow elites don’t care about this. They will do nothing to change the direction of travel. It’s *their profit* which is at stake if they do. The only language they understand is leverage — do we have it, or don’t we?

ABOUT US

Freedom Press is the oldest anarchist publishing house in the English-speaking world. Founded in 1886, we have survived war, repression, fascist attacks and more crises than can easily be counted.

Based at the end of Angel Alley in Whitechapel since 1968, Freedom runs a bookshop, media group, and continues to publish works both old and new — some of our latest can be found at the back of this journal.

Freedom, and its attendant daily news site, is produced by an all-volunteer collective, carries no advertising and takes no profit from those who sell it. We do however have outgoings, so if you do want to support us feel free to buy a book at freedompress.org.uk, donate online at [paypal.me/buildingcollective](https://www.paypal.me/buildingcollective) or drop by our shop (see map, p20).

WHAT’S 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 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.



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



THE FRACTURED ELITE

With a bullish majority in Parliament we're now seeing glimpses of the Tories' plans for tougher sentencing and tighter controls of protests, but these are something of a smokescreen. The Establishment is actually weakened right now and there are fractures available which will open avenues for direct action and community fightback. An understanding of these weaknesses is useful.

The UK has gone through a period of political instability because of Brexit. The idea that the EU referendum result was only about Britain's membership is wide of the mark. The desire from many to give the Establishment a kicking in the ballots during that referendum is fairly obvious. It isn't clear whether leaving the EU will ultimately satisfy the 17 million people who voted for it. What will they think when they realise migration doesn't simply stop? What about other issues that contributed to the result?

There are a range of matters that really haven't been resolved by either the referendum or the two general elections since. Austerity continues to rip through our communities. The money saved from leaving the EU will continue to haunt government, whether we want to fund healthcare or provide local libraries or end the destruction of Universal Credit. The recovery from the financial crash of 2008 seems to have missed the UK. It won't be long before people are angry about why their communities and their lives are not recovering.

Meanwhile two scandals rocked politics in the last decade and little action was taken to make amends. The first was the expenses scandal which showed our elected representatives on the take. They still are, despite new rules which were brought in to prevent them from being so blatant. The other was the Panama tax scandal in which our politicians and business leaders were once again using the system to help themselves, this time to lower tax bills. Many will consider the last parliament to have been a daily scandal of blocking Brexit but over time that will be added to the other two. There is a sense that politics in the UK is broken.

The flip side of the current bullish mood of the Prime Minister is the plight



Pic: Guy Smallman

of the opposition party. The system works on having two antagonistic parties with the opposition effectively being a government in waiting. Labour is not, and even some Conservative commentators have lamented the length of time it is taking for Labour to replace Jeremy Corbyn. Some people foresee the party splintering while others acknowledge it will probably not win the next election. Meanwhile the useless idiot is still leader, hell bent on trying every trick in the book to ensure his faction controls the reins of the party. Ironically the state of Labour isn't good news for the Establishment. It is a vital part of the functioning of Parliament and without an effective opposition the actions of the executive will lack sufficient scrutiny. It is a weakness for the State.

These issues can also lead to a government thinking it can do practically what it likes. Recent attacks on the BBC and the suggestion that it could become a subscription service have been coupled with journalists being exiled from Downing Street. The Prime Minister and his head advisor Dominic Cummings are overreaching. They forgot they were supposed to end free speech before attacking the press.

Britain's economy is fragile, the pound all over the place and Brexit uncertainty remains. The people may have given Johnson a big majority but they won't give him a free ride. Overreaching further,

the Prime Minister has even criticised the Confederation of Business Interests for opposing Brexit. We have a government and business class that are not in harmony.

As Brexit progresses the position of Britain in the world is set to diminish. There are already plans to extend the number of permanent places on the UN Security Council, diluting the influence of Britain. The EU has already altered its position on Gibraltar, siding now with Spain's claims. The last few decades has seen a decline in Britain's influence around the world and anyone who thought leaving the EU would make the UK more powerful is misguided.

Britain is an idea in retreat from the world and the British Establishment is in a perilous position. No wonder there's talk of tougher sentences and tighter controls on protest.

These measures are related to the fears the Establishment is feeling. And the fightback against the Tory government has already begun. From blockades of Whitehall in solidarity with people being deported to the continuing and varied actions relating to climate change, people are stirring.

The weaknesses of the State are there to be exploited. Whatever it does to boost its power it will be done because of the fears of those in charge. The thing that they fear the most is us, the people.

~ Jon Bigger

FIGHTING THE RICH: ALL

D Hunter looks at the tough but necessary task of building working class strength in the aftermath of the general election.

I'm fairly sure everything has already been said about the elections. Everyone has been blamed, everyone has done some blaming. It was Corbyn, it was Brexit, it was media bias, it was Labour, it was the Lib Dems, it was canvassing, it was the white working class, it was immigration, it was racism, it was that there is no working class, it was rigged, it was London, it was the north, it was nationalism, it was globalism, it was the voting system, it was the hard left who supported Labour, it was the hard left who didn't support Labour, it was the liberal metropolitan elite, it was they/them pronouns, it was Blairites, it was neoliberalism.

But having agreed to disagree on why we're facing five more years of Conservative rule, we've now got to come up with ways to fight against it. Hopefully this will involve people finding a moral position which suits them, and then yelling it as loudly as they can via as many mediums as they can. I reckon it'll involve most of us being called liberal cunts, racist gammons, middle class activists, dogmatic Marxists, the out of touch elite or some other combination of all these.

By now I'm sure you'll have detected my slightly snide tone, so it's worth me offering a mea culpa: I have definitely done some of the above. The blame game is a safe refuge for those of us who feel defeated; when I lose to a team I'm supposed to beat in my latest Football Manager save, I will nearly always take it out on a few of the players I've already got a bit annoyed at. Equally when I've seen the class I'm a part of get their asses handed to them on a regular basis for several decades I'm inclined to point fingers.

So we look at others, others in our class, others struggling to survive, others fighting back, and we say "You motherfucker, you are fucking this up for all of us", and as we say this they start back at us, because they've just gone through the same thought process, "No, you motherfucker, you are fucking this up for all of us". And because we're in a public space, others

enter into the conversation: "No, you are both wrong, it's you motherfuckers, that are fucking this up for all of us". And then other people chime in, either agreeing with one of the previous points or offering up a fourth, fifth, sixth; "Motherfuckers, you're all wrong". And so it goes, the discourse of the left.

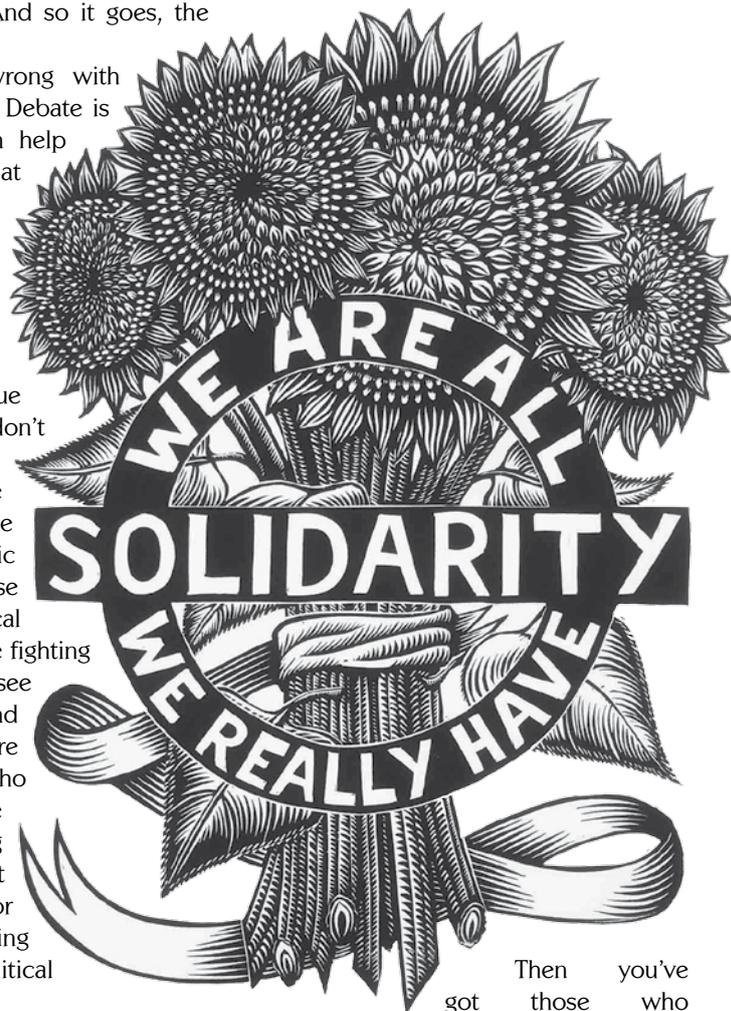
There's nothing wrong with disagreement per se. Debate is often healthy: it can help develop ideas and, at times, propel us into action. But within the class-struggle left, it's got to a point where it's hurting us more than it's helping us.

Part of this is due to the fact that we don't know who "us" is. Are we those fighting the Tories? Are we those fighting the economic system? Are we those fighting the political system? Are we those fighting the social system? I see these fights as one and the same, but there are many many people who tirelessly dedicate their lives to fighting for their class, that focus in on one or two of them, claiming realism, priorities, political ideals.

Some think that we can reform the economic system, that we just need the right government at the head of the political system, and that from there we can improve the lot for all people of our class. I disagree with this, but I'm not inclined to write these people off, nor do I think repeatedly telling them they're wrong is particularly helpful.

There are those that believe we should just all unite and fight to end the current economic system, whether it be through parliamentary or extra-parliamentary methods, or some combination of the two. All other differences should be put to one side, these people say, either because they can be dealt with later or

because they're the narcissistic hand wringing of middle class Goldsmiths students. Again, I disagree with them, but I'm not going to write these people off or refuse to engage with them.



Then you've got those who believe that focusing on the ways in which we're socially organised should take precedence, that every act, every organising moment must be ideologically pure, and that every time this purity is betrayed someone needs to be punished. Much like the first two groups, I disagree with them, but I'm not going to ignore them. There are other groups of people who think different variations on these, some who define themselves within an internationalist paradigm and others for whom local issues must be at the forefront. For some it's the environmental crisis that must be the sole focus, and everything else is a distraction.

I've said it before, as have many

WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER

others: our class is stratified but so is our resistance. Working class resistance and the resistance of the left are not mirror images of one another, but they are broken down into different spheres, different contests, different nuances and different features.

And it's in this context we're fighting against the rise of fascism, a force which seeks to unify and quash all the competing elements of the right. From the State protecting corporate power via continued austerity, to the recruitment in our communities of footsoldiers willing to swear allegiance to violence and oppressive power (as seen in the members of Britain First joining the Tory Party over the last couple of weeks) – what we're facing is grim. That our response is to exacerbate the ways in which we've been stratified is fucking depressing.

Are we going to be able to address the ways in which our working class and the left have been stratified? Probably not. Do we need to, in order to resist the coming fascist onslaught? I don't think so. What we need to do is cut out the mudslinging, finger-pointing, self-aggrandising bullshit. What we need to do is understand and accept some of the differences, and find where we can act in solidarity with one another.

This does not mean we need be uncritical of the tactics, attitudes, strategies and philosophies of one another, but recognise that we don't need to die on every hill. Not every disagreement is a battle to the death, and to act like it is is spitting in the face of those who are quite literally dying.

On the night of the election I was in Birmingham co-hosting with a comrade a launch event for *Lumpen: A Journal of Poor and Working Class Writing*. There was a bit of election chat, a bit of chat about working class trauma, the usual type of thing, and this carried on well after the event. I had to dash off just before 10, when some Labour canvassers arrived to watch the election results come in. I said hello to a couple that I knew and went to catch my train, in my head muttering (yes, I mutter in my head) something unhelpful about canvassers, working class communities and parachutes. I caught my train to Nottingham and by the time I got

to my friend's house it was pretty clear the Tories were in. I got into bed, watched half a TV show, and went to social media and wrote this:

“They've been killing our friends for my entire life. They've been killing our families for centuries. They're going to keep on killing us where we stand. Our organising has been needing to improve for a while now. Our caregiving has to get better. We have to protect, and if we can, rebuild and fortify our communities. If we don't we will continue to be killed. Tonight a chance to breathe a tiny bit easier was taken away, but we're not dead yet. Build relationships with your neighbours, with those you look down on, with those you think don't get it, those whose experiences are different. Build bonds with them, share ideas, make plans. 'Cause the State wants our blood and capital wants our bodies, and we have nothing but each other.”

I stand by it. Whether you're the dankest anarchist in the whole damned world, or were baptised in your Labour rosette, or ya Marxist-Leninist credentials go back to that time where you lent Mao some sugar for his tea, or if you voted UKIP ten years ago because they said they understood the pain of queuing in food banks and your kids school being shit and overcrowded and now you realise they were liars and knob heads, or if you're 20 years old, broke living in the city and sick of older generations telling you what politics looks like. I'm sorry but all we've got is each other, and as long as we don't deny each other's humanity, we can build solidarity. It might have to be small, it might have to be rare, but it can be built.

There will be lines in the sand for each of us, but I'd argue that these lines need to be carefully drawn. Not based on abstract notions of political ethics, but on whether the crossing of these lines legitimises suffering, be it our own or of others we live and survive alongside.

If, for example, your organisation, your community, your gang want to deny the legitimacy of trans folks to live, work, organise and thrive; if you

think sex workers don't have the right to safe working conditions or shouldn't be collectively organised; if you think migrants are stealing white jobs; if you believe that racism isn't something that we have to challenge in ourselves and our communities in order to end its reproduction; or, if you think there are deserving and undeserving poor, then you are diminishing the possibilities of solidarity within your class, you are punching out at marginalised groups.

Sometimes that line cannot be crossed and we'll have to fight. But some of the time, some of us will have to push a little harder, work a little harder, listen a little harder. People like me — who is no longer a sex worker, is not directly affected by transphobia or the policies of the hostile environment, who is not amongst the most marginalised members of our class — may have to organise in grey areas.

We might have to try and build forms of solidarity with those whose political positions and beliefs we find problematic. Uncomfortable conversations need to be part of our future if we are to build practical solidarity in our communities and our workplaces. When we decide that someone is a lost cause or a permanent class traitor, we have to be sure. We can't just leap to that conclusion because the work is too difficult, too challenging to our political schemas.

We may have nothing but each other but that doesn't mean that we need to aim for total unity, either of the working class or the left. There is power in a variety of ethics, tactics and forms of resistance. What we need is to find ways to express practical solidarity with one another beyond our differences.

~ D. Hunter

Lumpen: A Journal of Poor and Working Class Writing and D. Hunter's book *Chav Solidarity* can be purchased online or at *Freedom Bookshop*.



COOK UP A COMMUNITY

This text was first published by South Norwood Community Kitchen.

Community kitchens are truly spaces that can make the world a better place and our neighbourhood feel more connected. One myth is that they are only for those in dire need — they are for everyone regardless of whether you can afford a meal. Bringing people together from different backgrounds can heal divisions and dismantle preconceptions.

Here are some key ingredients that we have found to be fundamental:

Venue

Probably the most important thing is having a space to work in. Some options might be community centres, village halls, places of worship, street corners, parks in summer, restaurants and cafés out of hours.

You need as decent a kitchen as you can find, unless you are cooking in your own homes and serving on the street. If serving the public, you will need to make sure it has been inspected by the council's food hygiene team and if it is inside then make sure you have enough space for at least 40 guests. A clean and safe environment is a must.

Food

Fareshare redistributes surplus food. We have had donations from them ranging from whole lambs, cheese, birthday cakes and an abundance of fruit and veg. City Harvest is also a reliable supplier of veg and chilled food, if you can handle it appropriately. You can ask local supermarkets but being frank, the quality can vary. They can also need reminding as staff shifts can change.

The food should obviously be tasty but also nourishing. Not every kitchen can provide a three-course menu but decent food made with love can give a bit of dignity and just because something is free doesn't mean it has to be rubbish. We serve people at their table, clear up and treat them as diners in our restaurant for the same reason.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of community kitchens. A sign-up rota (we use sign-up.com) is fundamental so you can see how many you have for the week and can fill upcoming gaps. We have patterns in volunteer numbers



as the seasons flow. Summer can be quiet with Christmas and the new year good. Take advantage of these moments and be mindful to find ways to boost your numbers as that warm weather beckons.

Of course, volunteers when they start need to be supported to learn the ropes and understand any health and safety issues, but they should also have the freedom to just get stuck in and make suggestions.

Volunteers can come through social media posts and community Facebook groups, guests, from asking neighbours and friends, and also through your local volunteer centre or support organisation.

Spreading the word

Give it a good name and an identity but without the corporate malarkey. People need to know who and where you are. Get your project on council lists for free meals, social prescribing databases and local noticeboards. Put posters around the area, post on Facebook groups and use the most effective method of all, word of mouth.

Getting your community onboard is the best support you can receive, they will be your guests that attend, source of donations and an all-round cheerleader. Collaborating is also key, always look for opportunities to partner with other local charities, organisations and businesses. We have worked with groups from local youth organisations volunteering to our local community cinema doing a lunch and film screening. Partnerships can yield people power, donations and support for guests.

Solidarity not charity

The Victorian charity model of feeding the poor and homeless does little to help people move beyond feeling like victims. Guests should be made to feel valued and listened to. Providing opportunities to volunteer or take ownership over some part of the project can go a long way.

Community kitchens are great hubs of mutual support. Of course, getting official advice providers in can be useful particularly around finances, housing etc. but creating a space where everyone can share experiences or offer help offers immediate solutions.

Make it fun

This is a vital ingredient. A quiet environment punctuated by slurps of soup is not always conducive to encouraging people to chat and relax. Stick on a bit of music, encourage a bit of dancing or put on some kind of activity like Bingo. We like to have fun in the kitchen too and volunteers will play with the menu and laugh through what is mainly chopping vegetables and washing up!

Community kitchens can be hard work and take a while to establish themselves, but they are worth every minute. When you see new friendships made, satisfied faces, raucous laughter, hugs and kisses — as one guy once said to us “this place is like coming home” — it makes it all worthwhile.



'NO PEDLARS PLEASE'

One of the big problems with how institutional charity has replaced human solidarity towards homeless people is that it frequently excludes those actually needing help from the conversation – a phenomenon brought home recently to Freedom Press author Andrew Fraser.

Andrew, who has moved intermittently from rough sleeping to hostels to shared accommodation depending on his fortunes, published *Invisible: Diary of a Rough Sleeper* with Freedom at the end of 2018.

As a small volunteer-run publisher with limited reach we tend to do short runs and don't make huge sums at the best of times (we just about broke even on *Invisible*), so while Andrew did get an advance it wasn't a big sum, and his main means of making money from it is to sell books himself.

He's gotten pretty good, and when funds run low he's often out and about at fundraising events or awareness raisers, talking about his time on the streets and offering direct feedback to the well-meaning about how rough sleepers are actually affected by the various ways in which they experience charity, solidarity and repression.

Recently however a slightly different aspect of how charity can act to exclude those it's supposedly helping was brought home when he was turned away from an event in Whitechapel, the Celtic Sleepout.

Active in Glasgow and London for the last five years, the event aims to raise cash for the Celtic FC Foundation. Despite using the sleepout name, however, its approach to actual rough sleepers was less than welcoming, Andrew explained:

I contacted Celtic FC regarding a corporate charity fundraiser 'sleepout' they're doing in Whitechapel tomorrow. You know the ones where they're in an enclosed space with loos and security guards.

Thought I might be allowed to attend to sell a few copies of my book to raise funds for my homeless mates who I helped get and keep off the streets.

The woman I spoke to told me I'd have to pay over £100 to attend.

I explained that might somewhat defeat the purpose of me being there.

She replied that "you're not even homeless." I said, "I am, just not sleeping rough for now. But perhaps I could give

some tips to your guests as they bravely spend a whole night in a railed children's playground."

No doubt bolstered by whiskey, security guards and hot water bottles. They're a brave lot. But seeing as I did it without security guards, toilets and hot water bottles, I really hoped I might be able to help elucidate the experience of homelessness.

Well that's the last time I attempt to make money by contacting a rich people's event. She asked me "do you have a license for peddling"?

Pedlars?!?! I didn't even think that word existed anymore. Apparently it does in Glasgow. Well Pedlar Pride! I'll just go out and sell them on the streets of London tomorrow.

This incident perfectly encapsulates a problem in the way that much of British society has become so caught up in a model of "helping" by palming off money to distant professionals that, when confronted with actual poor people, the response is often panic, anger, and rejection.

You can see it in the fury and disgust frothing in comment sections under news articles, or in social media groups. There are constant accusations that people sitting soaking wet in the rain holding a coffee cup are actually housed and making huge sums of money, that it's all scams, that it all just goes on drugs and booze (some might, who cares). Not a second of this would stand up to a proper conversation with most rough sleepers, whose difficulties are vividly displayed across every facet of how they hold themselves.

A lot of this stems from the way in which we've offset care to an industry worth £77.4 billion, the grey-named Third Sector. The wealthy in particular are utterly alienated from and cosseted against need, and when they see it the situation seems incomprehensible, threatening, foreign. Is it any wonder that councils introduce laws against begging under pressure from comfortably-off middle class whingers? That signs go up on public transport saying "don't give to the poor, give to the white collar middle man?"

And is it a surprise when a "sleepout" charitable event with a £30 ticket price and additional £130 donor requirement turns away someone living right on the edge, who's just trying to keep his head up, with a sneering line like "we don't accept pedlars"?

It isn't. But it should be.

This is what the dereliction of human contact in favour of process and institution breeds; a fear of what is made unknown through distance. We end up with a situation where comfortable people "sleepout" in sanctums heavily guarded against the very people they are professing to care for, showcasing not solidarity but fear, with a veneer of virtue.

~ RR

Invisible is available online at freedompress.org.uk/product/invisible-diary-of-a-rough-sleeper-2



BRITANNIA CHAINED

Johnson's Tories have begun a crackdown on legal rights that risk getting in the way of their plans to transform the UK into "Singapore-on-Thames". In speeches and announcements, State ministers – and the police – have laid out a comprehensive vision of the damage, writes **Carl Spender**.

Sentencing

"Toughen up sentences" has been Tory policy more or less since the party was founded, but in the wake of knife attacks in Streatham and London Bridge there has been a renewed drive to lock up more people for longer. Lord Chancellor Robert Buckland has outlined emergency legislation to ensure those convicted of 'serious terrorist offences' serve two-thirds of their sentence rather than half, and only be eligible for release if the Parole Board deems them safe. Such a move would potentially conflict with Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) but legal experts are far from unified in this view.

The ECHR – which is separate from the EU – has long been a target of Tory ire, with the party's 2019 manifesto promising an "update" of the Human Rights Act, which enshrines the ECHR in domestic law. The government will not rule out a temporary derogation from the convention to put the new laws in place. Whether this will affect only those convicted of terrorism offences or, in line with Johnson's election pledge, a wide range of serious criminal acts remains to be seen., but Buckland's speech undoubtedly heralds the beginning of the long-brewing Tory war on civil rights.

Police bail

It's not only those convicted of crimes facing a tougher regime of regulation. Priti Patel has announced a Home Office consultation on proposals to strengthen pre-charge or police bail, which allows cops to impose pre-charge conditions on individuals who are being investigated over an offence. Patel's proposals include:

- Removing the presumption against pre-charge bail;
- Placing a duty on officers to use pre-charge bail where necessary and proportionate, including for cases where there are risks to victims,



Pic: DulcieLee on Flickr used under CC BY 2.0

witnesses and the public; where it could prevent reoffending and where the offence has significant real or intended impacts;

- Allowing officers of a lower rank to authorise and extend pre-charge bail;
- Extending the initial period where pre-charge bail can be applied from 28 to either 60 or 90 days, as well as delaying the point at which magistrates' approval for the extension of bail is required;
- Introducing "review points" for investigations where pre-charge bail is not used, including where individuals are interviewed voluntarily or released under investigation.

These proposals would reverse changes brought in by the Policing and Crime Act 2017, following outcry at the length of time spent on bail by (later exonerated) suspects in Operation Yewtree. In effect, the proposed changes would allow officers to impose stringent conditions on the lives of people they suspect of committing an offence, lasting for months at a time, without any scrutiny by a court. As many activists know, the conditions imposed by the police are often deeply restrictive and wildly disproportionate, with instances of cops banning protestors from entering entire counties.



While Patel's proposals are likely to be welcomed by charities such as Women's Aid, the real winners are the Police Federation who have stolidly opposed the 28-day limit. Police Federation chair Jon Apter claims 28 days is simply not enough time for diligent cops to investigate criminal allegations. That Apter is seeking to capitalise on the public's anxieties post-Streatham is outrageous, if utterly predictable. However, for him to characterise Patel's proposals — which, on any analysis, involve swingeing infringements of individual liberty — as little more than a 'snipping' of red tape is utterly terrifying.

Protest Policing

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick (aka "Hollow Point") has also redoubled calls for greater legal powers to deal with protest groups like Extinction Rebellion, specifically:

- Public nuisance to be made a statutory offence, rather than common law.
- A lowering of the threshold before which conditions can be imposed on protests or assemblies under s12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986.

The aim of these changes was, Dick claimed, to help them "deal with protests where people are not primarily violent or seriously disorderly but, as in this instance, had an avowed intent to bring policing to its knees and the city to a halt."

She couldn't be much clearer: the police are out to stop anything but the most sedate, non-disruptive expressions of dissent.

A SPYCOP INQUIRY FAQ

The public inquiry into Britain's political secret police – the Undercover Policing Inquiry, or UCPI – is finally beginning this summer. Here's a bit about what we know and what to expect.

The inquiry is a judge-led inquiry into policing in England and Wales, focusing on the activity of two undercover units which deployed long-term undercover officers into a variety of political groups: the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) (1968-2008) and the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) (1999-2011).

Officers from these units lived as activists for years at a time. More than 1,000 groups were spied on, though the inquiry has only named 83. Activist researchers have produced a more complete list of those targeted.

Beyond collecting information personal details about people's lives, officers often:

- Stole the identities of dead children
- Took key roles in the organisations they infiltrated
- Encouraged and participated in illegal activity
- Formed emotional relationships with children of people they spied on
- Supplied personal information for illegal blacklists of politically active workers
- Orchestrated wrongful convictions of activists
- Deceived women they spied on into long-term intimate relationships

Set up in 2014, it was originally supposed to publish its final report in 2018 but is now likely to be 2026 at the earliest after multiple delays, including delaying tactics by the Met and even the death of the original presiding judge Lord Pitchford. The case is now being presided over by Judge Mitting.

The setup

The investigation will be broken into three modules:

Module 1: Examination of the deployment of undercover officers in the past, their conduct, and the impact of their activities on themselves and others.

Module 2: Examination of the management and oversight of undercover

officers, including their selection, training, supervision, care after deployments, and the legal and regulatory framework within which undercover policing was carried out.

Module 2a will involve managers and administrators from within undercover policing units.

Module 2b will involve senior managers as well as police personnel who handled intelligence provided by undercover police officers.

Module 2c will involve other government bodies with a connection to undercover policing, including the Home Office.

Module 3: Examination of current undercover policing practices and how these should be conducted in future.

To manage such a broad remit, the Inquiry has divided its work for Modules One and Two into six 'tranches':

1. SDS officers and managers and those affected by deployments (1968-1982)
2. SDS officers and managers and those affected by deployments (1983-1992)
3. SDS officers and managers and those affected by deployments (1993-2007)
4. NPOIU officers and managers and those affected by deployments
5. Other undercover policing officers and managers and those affected by deployments
6. Management and oversight (including of intelligence dissemination) by mid and senior rank officers, other agencies and government departments

When and where?

The first hearings in Tranche 1 will take place between June 1st and 19th this year.

Managers, and any evidence relevant to Tranche 1 not heard by then, will be heard between September 1st and 18th.

Hearings will take place for up to four days a week, no other tranches are set yet.

This year's evidential hearings are to be held at 18 Pocock St, London, SE1 0BW.



Who will be giving evidence?

We'll be hearing from SDS officers, their managers and some of the people they spied on, from the squad's inception in 1968 until 1982. We won't get to see the files that are going to be cited and discussed. The Inquiry will publish a draft list at least four weeks before the hearing.

How much will the Inquiry cost?

Up to the end of 2019, the Inquiry had already cost £23,767,400. This will increase substantially as time goes on.

Can anyone come?

Yes – but only if there's room. The main room holds 60 people, with an overflow room for 40 more that will have a live link to the main room.

This means there is space for fewer than half the people granted 'core participant' status at the Inquiry, let alone any additional interested members of the public.

If you want to attend a hearing, the Inquiry wants you to register your intention via the Inquiry website. This will deter victims of spycops, and others who have issues with privacy. Even then, registering does not guarantee a place – if it's full when you arrive then you'll be turned away. This undermines the point of having a booking system at all, and is a deterrent to those who have to travel from outside London and/or make arrangements in order to take a day off.

These details aren't well publicised. The booking system and limited capacity are mentioned in one PDF on the Inquiry site, the dates are buried in another. These are further examples of the exclusionary attitude of what we've come to regard as the secret public inquiry.

For updates during the Inquiry process:

campaignopposingpolicesurveillance.com
policespiesoutoflives.org.uk
undercoverresearch.net

What can I do to help?

We will call a demonstration for the first day of the hearings. As things stand, this is likely to be Monday June 1st, but we'll confirm that nearer the time.

~ Edited from a piece by The Campaign Opposing Police Surveillance.

ARBITRARY DETENTION IS

CW: police brutality, child and sexual abuse, torture

The failure of authority in Europe extends across nationalism and borders, it is explicit in our internationally shared crimes against human liberty. There appears to be no other group in society, except for foreign nationals, where there is a popular notion to deny the same human rights afforded to other citizens, than with the prison population. Those who are both can be the most vulnerable to this power.

The psychological effects of incarceration are the true intention of prison. It is not punishment so much as institutionalisation that is the motive of this misery: in essence, to make the human obey. Recently this psychological violence has been exposed in the arbitrary detention of children on Europe's borders.

This investigation focuses on the power of the Greek police to arrest without reason or evidence – and how this psychologically effects younger prisoners.

Fortress Europe

It is an autumn day in Athens and I am walking through Exarcheia, towards a refugee collective. In the streets around me are anarchist squats and refugee associations, expropriations of property that allow the community to survive in a city of empty buildings and economic despair. I have come here to meet Ismini who is part of a self-run refugee collective, an association that helps people with asylum claims.

The length of the process of asylum and it's reliance on technology such as Skype means that the Greek Forum of Refugees (GFR) uses its offices to help those making claims who do not have access to computers. They also assist with information, especially in the language of the refugee, a particular problem as translation is very rarely provided by the State.

Ismini tells me there is a lack of communication and resources in the refugee camps across Greece, as well as access to both food and clean water. Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable, with a lack of medical resources dedicated to both refugees and Greek citizens. C-Sections are given to women

even in cases where it is not medically necessary and those interviewed by the GFR complain that they were not aware that this procedure would take place, with one woman describing how her uterus was removed without prior consent.

The work of refugee collectives in Athens show how groups of "stateless" people can organise themselves rather than be seen as hopeless people in need of constant support. This perception that refugees are unable to be part of society comes from the restrictions on movement, employment, and identification that are enforced by the states of Europe – masterfully creating their own crisis.

The solution European nations offered was the movement of refugees across Europe through a crude state distribution to various countries (not including the UK) – an offer that was quickly reversed with the EU-Turkey border deal. Thousands of refugees have been sent to countries where they are not safe in a direct violation of the Geneva Conventions.

Fortress Europe started to build walls and fences inside its own nations and the popular notion that refugees were criminals started to infiltrate all aspects of society until they were dehumanised.

Police Cell

If you walk past the Polytechnic University in Exarcheia, you will find yourself outside Omonia Police Station, with its dark history of brutality, torture and abuse. At this station on an autumn day in Athens, seven Syrians were arrested and split up into two groups. They were separated into groups of adults and children, the younger group taken to a room for what was supposed be a routine identity check.

The children were between the ages of 12 and 16 and as soon as they were separated from the adults, they were physically and psychologically tortured by the Greek police. They were told to undress in front of a police officer who filmed them from his mobile phone. Screamed at and beaten, the object of their torture was sexual abuse and humiliation.

When two of the five children refused to get undressed they were verbally and physically abused, with the police

screaming words like malakas (wanker). One child broke down crying and demanded to see his mother, as another who refused to take off his underwear was thrown against a wall.

The police who committed this crime had become desensitised in a process typical to the role of the torturer. The agony of the prisoner is made invisible, the moral consequences irrelevant by the urgency and significance of "The Question." Interrogation does not exist outside of physical pain, it is the language of power and the motive for the infliction of pain. In this case, the Syrian refugees were arrested for suspicion of being part of an armed terror group.

Terrorism became the just motive for torture, all based on a police suspicion that children carrying toy guns could present a legitimate threat to human life. The children were on the way to an association where they would be performing a theatre production based on their lives in Syria and the violence they escaped.

The urgency surrounding terrorism gave the police power to do whatever was "necessary" to neutralise the threat — they chose sexual abuse. The reason for this is simply the psychological damage that humiliation and shame can have on the psychopathy of an individual. It destroys your sense of community and is known to being a major component in depressive experiences and emotional distress.

Added to a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment, this increases psychotic experiences such as paranoia and other mental health problems, trapping victims in abuse and trauma that can last a lifetime. The violence of authority on the individual also leads to much higher levels of distrust and fear and are associated with an overwhelming increase in overall reported poor health.

Let me be clear, this is not a story about five children. In the Hellenic Republic, arbitrary detention of minors is automatic and has been known to be imposed for up to 18 months, although there is no official maximum pre-trial limit. The prosecution does not even have to prove guilt, as police testimony is often enough.

Investigating police brutality can be tough on the nerves, as much as it can be tough to read about it. The abuse of power



PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE



Pic: Joe Reynolds

and tyranny of the prison system is just one side of a never ending battle between the individual and the State. The solidarity of European nations had fallen apart in a historic failure on the rights of the refugee.

In the void of responsibility, there has come a different solidarity. The solidarity of European citizens working against the illegitimate mechanisms of the law.

They Work Here

At the end of 2019 there were 257 children held in protective custody, up from 80 one year prior. The term protective is obviously elastic, as these children are typically held in police cells, sometimes with adults and in conditions that are unsanitary and unsuitable for any human being. In the words of a 15-year-old Algerian child held in a detention centre in Athens; "I swear to god, I sleep next to rats."

Those who find themselves at the hands of the Greek police, typically foreign nationals, discover that they have not been arrested for an individual reason and so are arrested arbitrarily. If they are not lucky enough to understand Greek they will know nothing of the reason for their arrest, how long they are

to be held or their rights concerning legal aid. All of this is in violation of Greek and international law.

There are some, however, who enforce justice. Who defy intimidation and the fear of incarceration. The Syrian Seven were represented by lawyer and human rights activist Electra Koutra, who is no stranger to police abuse and intimidation. In 2013, after a widespread round up and arrest of transgender activists before the Thessaloniki Pride festival, Electra was called to a police station to meet with her client, to make a complaint against the police.

First, she was not let in to the police station. Then she was arrested. For 20 minutes she was held in a cell at Democratias Square in Thessaloniki and then released. She had to go to another police station to file a complaint for torture, abuse of authority, unlawful detention, use of violence, abduction, threats and unprovoked insult with actions. The public prosecutor was immediately informed but claimed he could not arrest the police officers because they were acting in the line of duty of a police officer.

Two years later, the charges were dismissed as groundless, despite accusations of witness intimidation by the Greek police. A year after that, the police officer who arrested Electra filed a counter complaint of "insult to personality" for €80,000.

In that same year, Electra was told of the abduction of Syrian children and subsequent arrest at Omonia police station. After the five children and two adults were released without charge, Electra again tried to file a complaint. She was denied and made her way to another police station. It was here the children were taken by police without legal council or guardian and interrogated on their treatment by the last group of police officers. Their lawyer had to wait outside, again, a legal violation.

Electra has since faced police intimidation including an instance where undercover officers broke into her home. She was then named as a suspect in the police brutality case and later as a witness, an attempt to stop her from representing the children in a legal capacity.

Electra waited for the children to finish their second interrogation into the early hours of the morning. When two officers walked through the front doors of the police station and into the interrogation room, Electra asked who they were. She was given the offhand reply "they work here." They were the same police officers who had originally tortured the children.

Arbitrary detention is a crime – a violent, psychological torture that seeks to deprive freedoms through the humiliation of power. "They just arrested me, brought me here, and that's it," an incarcerated 17-year-old tells Human Rights Watch.

"We were just joking around in the cell. The police pulled me out, put me in a chair and handcuffed my hands behind my back ... he has all the power. He could do anything to me."

"All of us, we're each alone here, we don't have anyone."

~ Joe Reynolds

freeassociation.org.uk



IT'S CLASS WAR, NOT BORE

In this article, which first appeared at paris-luttes.info, a participant in France's Gilet Jaunes (Yellow Vest) clashes and pensions protests warns that a hijacking of effective conflict into A—B marching by left Establishment figures is neutering the movement. Rather than simply having more scraps though, strategy is key ...

Comparing France's Yellow Vest movement of 2018-19 to the demonstrations against pension reform in recent months, the parallel is striking and the transformation of the leading procession is significant.

From what had been a heterogeneous assembly of determined and united demonstrators, we are now arriving at the reproduction of a classic trade union procession. At the front are affinity and corporatist groups more interested in their image and which, because that it is necessary to make pretty photos for social media, break the dynamics of the procession and thus endanger spikier elements. It's individualism and the cult of personality applied to social movements.

This reached a laughable nadir recently when cops took advantage of the fact that a group had entirely stopped because it had been five minutes since they'd posted on Twitter.

Even more depressing is the apathy of these demonstrators. How many missed opportunities have there been to get out of the official route by a street that was not watched, looking at us with round eyes, shouting "it's not that way"? We know it's not. We know that at the end of the official course there will be nothing other than tear gas and pigs. We know that if we leave "that way" we don't necessarily know where we're going, but at least we will be free to choose. This unwavering desire of the majority of demonstrators to complete the end of the route, to be able to return home quietly is disconcerting and demotivating.

The news shows us the opposite lesson in strategy. While media pundits do not care about the demonstrations now they are quiet walks, when firefighters attacked the police head-on, their demands were reported on and discussed, and the government gave in.

Of course we must not lock ourselves into a morbid fascination for confrontations with the cops. There is no point in having the sole purpose of fighting against them, because unless we are equipped like the firefighters they will always win, and we will always have more injuries. It should be admitted that it is rather necessary to attack those they protect, and yet these sterile confrontations have a power of attraction (spectacular or manly?) which destroys initiatives for other more effective actions.

Two examples: December 28th 2019, when a procession was blocked on Renard Street, Paris, by clashes, the path was completely free to nearby Halles



(a major mall and transit hub). Despite many calls only about 20 went there, but if we'd managed to close the area, which would have been possible if the number of people acting matched the number of people recording on their phones, it could have made a significant impact.

Similarly, on January 4th 2020, after the Gare du Nord was taken over, cops disembarked to evacuate the premises. The opportunity was too good: to reform and occupy another place before reinforcements arrived. Despite all our efforts, only a dozen people were of a mind not to get stuck on a confrontation that would quickly turn to our disadvantage — the voltigeurs (rapid-reaction cops on motorbikes) and the other cop regiments

are very close, the main demonstration of the day having ended at the Gare de l'Est. And this is indeed what happened: everyone ended up dispersing. Another missed opportunity.

What can we do?

Do we admit that the demonstrations are no longer spaces of struggle but have only a performative goal, to make beautiful images? If so, should we then drop the big union rallies, that once again have become simply a means for the Establishment to flatter themselves? This question is especially relevant in light of what has been "won" lately — despite large turnouts, absolutely nothing. Because they have rejected conflict they will never get anything again. As we have found, only the sectors with substantial leverage, or equipped for conflict, see their struggles succeed.

Many of us have made this observation. But we ourselves are atomised into groups, sometimes not exceeding one or two people, and finding ourselves physically together through an event published on Demosphere or PLI.

Despite everything, we must learn from our recent collective failures and our individual traumas to imagine more effective modes of action. We cannot pretend to wait until the big night to be among hundreds of thousands of others and put to work. On the contrary, we must take advantage of our scattering, of our decentralisation, in order to feed more targeted actions with a real political goal, and, as strange as it may seem, this will put us less in danger. If we arise when they do not expect us, and disappear without waiting for them, they will not catch us.

Above all, let's be kind to each other. We all want different modes of action, but instead of fighting to find out who is right, let's support ourselves and coordinate! Our unity in purpose and our differences in actions can only strengthen us.

Let's stop playing by their rules, or we'll always lose.



INTERVIEW: JULIUSZ LEWANOWSKI

WE FIGHT IN HELL

As across the world, Poland is struggling with a surge of populism and conservatism. Having undergone a lightning transition from Soviet domination to capitalist “liberation,” it now faces an uncertain future for women and LGBT+ people under the looming influence of Catholicism and authoritarianism.

Amid this furore, **George F.** met with queer painter and ex-worker Juliusz Lewandowski to discuss how the themes of eroticism and anxiety, solidarity and sexuality are expressed through his innately political artwork.

GF: What’s your situation right now?

JL: I’m a self taught painter, and I make my living like that from 2012. Previously I was a worker. I live in Warsaw in my studio, so my situation isn’t bad for the moment. Much better than in the past.

GF: If you don’t mind sharing, how do you identify in terms of gender and sexuality?

JL: Honestly, in terms of my identity, gender and sexuality is important to me but not as much as being a communist. My interests in art, philosophy, and politics seem to me to be more important. After all of this I can say, that I’m a man, or a woman, bisexual, gay, or transsexual. Its, after all, not so important for me, but gender equality is. I don’t believe that any economical change would be possible without a change of social customs – like patriarchy, for example. It’s falling down already. LGBT people should stand with women, especially here in Poland, where the church wants to rule all.

GF: Many of your works deal with eroticism, sexuality and queerness. Why have you chosen these subjects?

JL: First – to show that gay erotica is the same as any other erotic art, and, as Klimt said, art in general, is erotic. Second – I think that eroticism is very important, that sometimes people tend to neglect it. It’s sad nowadays that many doesn’t know where the line is between erotic art and porn. Second

– I was always for gender equality. Even more than that, similarly to other painters from the past I wanted to create a canon of beauty that is not particularly connected to the male or female body. In fact, many heterosexual people love my gay paintings and they are collecting them. I think that’s great, and some mission is accomplished.

GF: Tell us why you chose to explore the Marquis de Sade?

JL: Many feminists will not agree with me, but for me de Sade was a pioneer in sexual liberation. First, because he openly unbound sexual pleasure from sexual reproduction, and explored human sexuality in a time when psychology did not exist as a discipline. Not many people know that in his works he is glorifying female sexuality as far more “advanced” than male. Today, I will say that although de Sade was bisexual, his ideal partner would be a modern, emancipated woman. He is also a patron for surrealists, another most revolutionary movement I’m interested in.

GF: Many of your paintings reference worker’s movements, resistance to capitalism, as well as a critique of high society. Can you tell us why?

JL: Capitalism gave me chronic illness – both my hands are affected by repetitive strain injury and inflammation of the elbow nerves due to working over 65 hours a week for a few years. I participated in a few strikes and we won one in the UK in 2010. Soon after, capitalism made me unable to work with my hands anymore. I spent 3 years as a homeless guy in the squats of London. The fact that I could manage to get out from these bad conditions in life was only a question of luck. Many people in my situation wouldn’t have had any chance to change it. That’s



why I cannot identify myself as middle class, regardless of my current, quite good situation. I think that it is my duty as an artist to criticise society. Just because almost all of the artists in the 20th century were in fact communists and anarchists. I continue this tradition. But people rarely know it. And art history books often will not mention the political sympathies of many famous painters. Art is also political – it should be, especially in these troubled times.

GF: Can you tell us about the situation in Poland right now.

JL: When I came back to Poland in 2012 I knew what is coming here – so now it is even worse, because here there is no leftist party. You can choose between few right wing ones as is happening globally. People are disappointed. After 30 years of capitalism here, this country is a ruin, what I can say... In 2019, many museums organisations and galleries want to engage in an anti-fascism expo in Poland. The project is huge and I hope that me and my friends will prepare our own in my studio in Warsaw.



A BANGING HISTORY

BRAINS KAN'S RISE AND FALL: 1998-2007

"Dem think it's over but we nah done yet"

It was a sunny Sunday morning on March 28th 2004 when everything changed for the Norfolk-based anarchist free party crew Brains Kan.

DJ Manarchy, a former member of the crew, was dancing in front of a speaker stack with hundreds of other ravers in a warehouse on the Norwich Airport Industrial Estate when a friend came over and told him to take a look outside.

In the yard of the warehouse he saw that the group of police that had been trying to shut down the party had been joined by a large riot squad carrying shields and wearing helmets with visors.

"It was the first time we had ever dealt with a riot squad," says Manarchy. "We didn't know what to do so we just reinforced the barricades and carried on with the rave."

This party had been difficult from the beginning, according to Fudalwokit, another former member of the crew.

"Police were aware of the party almost immediately," he says.

Some cars and the rig had made it to the venue at around midnight, but the police had quickly locked the area down stopping any more vehicles entering.

"People were parking wherever they could and finding alternative ways to get there, climbing fences, scaling walls," says Fudalwokit.

"At the very beginning the police tried to enter the warehouse but the roller door was quickly shut.

"As it was shutting, the police sprayed CS spray under the door at random into the crowd causing a lot of people to suffer from streaming eyes and coughing.

"Dog units were also there and one girl had to be taken to hospital with a head wound from a baton."

Despite the chaotic start to the night, and the continuing stand-off with the police, the party went on as normal with the system blasting sets of techno, trance, hard house and jungle as the hours rolled by.

As the event progressed more police congregated outside.



At this point Brains Kan had been putting on free parties in Norfolk for six years without any problems from the police.

"We'd always been amicable and chatted the police at the gate when they arrived," says Fudalwokit. "We always let them know that the party would be finished at some point in the afternoon and everything would be left as it was before the party."

When Brains Kan started in 1998 it was the only rig putting on politically charged large-scale free parties in Norfolk – and it was easy for the police to turn a blind eye.

As ravers entered a Brains Kan event they would be handed a photocopied A4 newsletter with details about current political issues and protests that the crew were participating in, as well as logistical advice like how to stay safe in the rave

and how to talk to the police without getting into trouble.

"One of the things that made so good it was how we ran it," says Manarchy. "On the door there would be ten or 20 people wearing masks and balaclavas and we would be buzzing people up.

"People were greeted by a really excited crew on the door saying – 'this party is for you' – everyone is welcome. And it was genuine excitement. It was everything we were living for."

Ravers were asked for a one-pound donation and all the money went back into putting on parties.

The crew were non-hierarchical and promoted a DIY ethos – with crew members building their own sound equipment as well as producing their own tunes.

OF NORFOLK RAVE

"It was an amazing time," says Manarchy. "At the parties there would be hundreds of people all bouncing together. You could feel the energy.

"It wasn't about ego. It was about sound system music bringing people together.

"A party for the people by the people. We were trying to create a self-sustaining commune and a movement that went way beyond music."

At the time Brains Kan were also involved in campaigns including the Stop The War march in London in 2003, sabotaging fox hunts, and the campaign to shut down Huntington Life Sciences, Europe's largest contract animal-testing laboratory.

Brains Kan inspired other groups to create their own sound systems, and by 2004 it wasn't unusual for there to be as many as four unlicensed events in one night, just in the Norfolk area.

Additionally, 2004 was the year that Brains Kan had started regularly putting on parties in the Norfolk's urban areas, rather than in the countryside.

"We knew that the authorities didn't like it," says Fudalwokit. "But we also knew that many people didn't have cars and couldn't get to parties in the countryside.

"We wanted to create a free space for expression and unity. We felt like it was our duty to bring it to the city to help create more positive change."

While Brains Kan saw the growing political free party scene in Norfolk as a sign of its success – it also brought more police attention to the parties.

The violence as the police shut down the party at the Airport Industrial Estate on March 28th marked a dramatic change in policy for the police and a watershed moment for Norfolk's free party scene.

After the riot police had been outside for a couple of hours, and as midday was approaching, the crew decided to turn off the sound system, packed the equipment down and put everything in a circle in the centre of the warehouse.

As they opened the warehouse shutters a flood of ravers poured out past the riot officers and into the sunshine while around 80 members of the crew and some ravers remained sitting on the equipment in a circle with their hands linked.

"The police didn't know what to do when they were faced with this sitdown protest," says Manarchy. "They just came in with the dogs and were talking amongst themselves."

"From the look on their faces you could tell they thought they were going to be met with violence. But we were just sitting there peacefully."

Once the officers had entered the building they told the remaining crew that they would give them three warnings to move before they used force to seize the sound system.

After the third warning no one moved. The police officers moved in and removed the remaining crew members by force.

"It was horrible," says Manarchy. "They were beating people with batons. They were beating girls up and about six people got arrested."

A spokesperson from Norfolk Constabulary said: "Norfolk Police have always taken a zero-tolerance approach to unlicensed music events and raves, which are potentially dangerous and cause unnecessary damage and disruption."

After the police had seized the sound system everyone from the crew gathered at a squatted period mansion in Cringleford, on the outskirts of Norwich, which had become Brains Kan's base.

"The emotion was raw, people were in a sort of state of shock. Six years no trouble, now a violent ending to a party, people in the nick and no sound system," says Fudalwokit.

"Then the news stories began to run, the main East Anglia news ran it as the top story on their 6pm show but they had put the angle on it that we were the aggressors, which couldn't be further from the truth. The corporate propaganda machine was in full swing."

Reds, an MC and part of the Brains Kan crew, was writing lyrics to try and process the whole experience.

"He had done either 16 or 32 bars, I can't remember exactly now," says Fudalwokit. "He passed the lyrics to me and I just lifted the phrases that I thought would work in a techno track and would tell the story in a concise way."

Fudalwokit visited ITV to request the television news footage on tape so that he could sample it for the tune he was planning.

Back in his bedroom studio, using Cubase and an Access Virus C synthesiser, he started writing the iconic hard trance tune Propaganda.

"The idea was to try and bottle up the emotion of what had happened, portray the story," he says. "We felt there was an injustice in how the rave had been reported."

The first time Brains Kan played Propaganda at a one of its parties was later that year in Thetford Quarry.

"It felt amazing hearing it out for the first time, but I thought I'd play it a few times then that might be it," says Fudalwokit.

"I had just knocked it up as a 'fuck you' to the authorities. It was more therapy for me at the time more than anything else.

"But the reaction was strong from day one. People understood it, it seemed to communicate in music what a lot of people felt in their hearts and minds.

"It crystallised the rebel spirit into a dance track much in a similar way that 'Forward the Revolution' by Spiral Tribe did."

Once Brains Kan got the rig back the crew kept on putting on regular raves for the next three years before eventually disbanding after a focused campaign by the police to disrupt their parties.

"In the end there was no final meeting or anything like that," says Manarchy. "After that last party everyone dispersed and the squat ended.

"It was such a strange feeling. One minute I was part of a movement that I thought was going to be there my entire life – and suddenly there was nothing."

In the years that have passed since the original Brains Kan party crew went their separate ways in 2007 crews that have been inspired by Brains Kan have continued to flourish and *Propaganda*, the tune about the police raid on 28 March 2004, has become a global free party anthem.

~ Wil Crisp



SQUATTING AIN'T DEAD,

The Autonomous City
by Alexander Vasudevan
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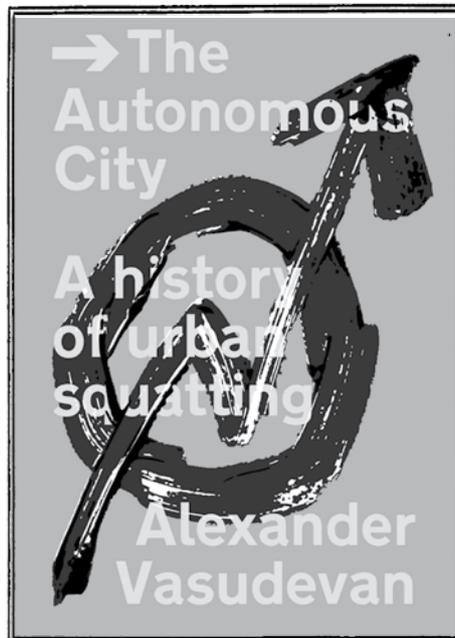
I write this from within the dying hulk of the Pula Vida squat in the Bon Pastor district of Barcelona — the bailiffs are coming tomorrow.

It will be the third attempt to evict this vast industrial complex and return it to a state of tomb-like emptiness after more than two years of housing a lively and active community of punks, artists and workers. There will be breakfast, and this time I will exercise more caution in the morning than I did at the first resistance in May, when I accidentally mistook a line of ketamine for speed and spent the morning wobbling up and down the street trying to stop everything from melting.

Vasudevan's radical history of squatting looks at self-help housing in a half-dozen European and North American locations across the post-war globe, yet can really only manage to sketch out the historical differences and geographical peculiarities between them.

If anything, it manages to highlight the sheer scale of squatting and radical housing struggle by what it omits. Barcelona is one such omission. Despite remaining resolutely academic in tone and delivery, his obvious passion and belief in the transformative and radical potential of squatting still manages to shine through the series of documentary sketches.

"Squatting can be configured as violent and marginalising. It can also be a means to construct new practices of care and subversion. While, for some, it represented an artistic and creative retreat from the social struggles of the city, for others it pointed to different and more socially just ways of organising and sharing urban space. These contradictions may yield no easy answers, though they do point, however fleetingly, to how we might still come to know and live the city differently."



I wonder if Vasudevan had ever taken up the boltcroppers and crowbar and headed out into the urban sprawl to seek shelter during his research. It seems unlikely. I couldn't help a wry smile in the section on Amsterdam where he talks about the eviction of the De Strijd social centre in 2014 as I was there to witness scenes of chaos and violence as the anti-kraak squads smashed through the barricades and dragging out a half-dozen black-masked anarchists.

This chapter in particular captured the militancy, the urgency, the guerrilla struggles of squatters in Amsterdam and Copenhagen in the '80s, where pitched battles were fought in defence of housing, and in Holland a dominating and violent fringe emerged known as "the Political Wing of the Squatter's Movement." Vasudevan details how this militancy caused the movements to fragment and shatter over the diversity of tactics used and the escalating violence. It is a passion and style still present in the Barcelona scene, where the eviction of a social centre in 2016 resulted in several days of riots. In Copenhagen, the anarcho-punk squatters would barricade themselves into buildings and practice martial arts, waiting for the cops to break in, or would spirit away through tunnels built under roads.

Meanwhile in London, Vasudevan revisits the well-trodden ground of the Vigilantes – ex-servicemen and their families who squatted military bases across the UK in their tens of thousands, and covers the politics of the myriad of groups who occupied buildings as a tactic for self-determination, such as the Gay Liberation Front and the Republic of Freestonia in the '70s.

He skillfully outlines the ways in which the State has consistently operated to marginalise and neutralise the radical potential of occupied spaces, showing repeated patterns of legalisation into the modern co-operative movement, the designation of "good squatters" on projects that bestowed the desired cultural capital on a new generation of "creative cities", effectively weaponising squatters as a vanguard of gentrification, whilst violently purging "bad squatters" through evictions and criminalisation.

Vasudevan has many examples of the fortitude and bloody-minded stubbornness of these generations of pioneering autonomads, and how the praxis of squatting nails the holy trinity of social change – saying "no", creating alternatives and shifting consciousness. As he explains of the delightful grey area where those with loose concepts of property ownership slip, "squatter's rights don't exist on paper ... but in the concrete action of opening up empty buildings, working on them and creating homes." A call out for parity in words and deeds indeed.

Over ten years of squatting in London, through the criminalisation of residential squatting and the subsequent years of monthly evictions, we mastered the arts of barricades, roof-top occupations, and harsh language directed at the authorities, yet the culture of eviction resistance has more often than not tended towards defensive actions, rather than active aggression.

Phone trees like the No Evictions London Squatter Network used to summon dozens of bodies to resistances, and for a while there was a dedicated Eviction Resistance squad, who'd rock up with a huge banner saying "Your

IT JUST SMELLS FUNNY

Eviction Is My Eviction.” In the '70s in London they had the Squatter's Union, and to this day the Advisory Service For Squatters pens legal defenses and organises a monthly Practical Squatter's night for newbies to form. Notable exceptions to the fluffy rule are some of the resistances of anarchist group Squatter and Homeless Autonomy, whose wonderful “Gentrification Is Class War” banner earned them a visit from a TSG squad, who subsequently went ape-shit after being pelted with potato salad and smashed through the wall to get them out. Even then, one member climbed up in the rafters and refused to come down for eight hours.

Yet it's a far cry from the burning barricades of the Villa Road squats of Brixton in the '70s, where bailiffs were greeted by a giant swinging boulder as gutters full of petrol were ignited. It lacks the white-knuckle audacity of murder-planks like those used in the Can Masdeu resistance, north of Barcelona, where two people balance each other over a multi-story drop sitting on planks balanced in windows. The M11 road protests constructed epic towers of scaffold rising like antennae from the roofs of these squats.

The infamous and intricate interior barricades of the Orange Fence squat in Hackney were enough to summon the Special Evictions Unit from Scotland; the moat and portcullis of the Black Sheep in Deptford, or the massive steel door constructed in the Noah's Ark social centre, all came undone through accident rather than forcing the bailiffs to smash through, typically them jumping in through an open door when someone left to go to work.

When hundreds of bailiffs turned up to evict Tidemill Gardens, activists surrounded the police vans to de-arrest

a colleague. The fences at the Aylesbury Estate were symbolically torn down by activists as the occupation drew to an end after two months. Our longest ever squat (11 months two weeks) confounded two successive batches of bailiffs with a “barriclid” — two overlapping doors sealing off the stairwell, so poor bailiffs would spend two hours carving through the front door, only to rush in all sweaty and adrenaline pumped to find themselves sealed in a corridor with no exit.

Years of poverty porn propaganda in the form of ‘The Sheriffs Are Coming’ has softened the ancient public hatred of bailiffs as class traitors, but we should remember that it always remains just below the surface. In Cable Street in the '30s, when bailiffs turned up to evict a known fascist from his home, the local anarchists prevented it, informing them that “they would decide what happens in their neighbourhood”.

The seizure of properties and their repurposing as spaces of liberation ideology and collective organisation flies in the face of the logic of market capitalism, as does the defiance of the law and the authority of courts, judges, police and bailiffs.

It is the frontline of the class war, where the powers of hierarchy come face-to-face with the resilience and collectivity of King Mob. “You couldn't be an a-political squatter: the radical essence of squatting could no longer be denied by anyone, and slacking on the politics could be fatal to any given house.”

Fun fact: according to author Robert Neuwirth, there were over 1 billion (one in seven) squatters worldwide in 2004. If current trends continue, this will increase to two billion by 2030.

Squatting ain't dead – it just smells funny
As anarchist historian Colin Ward said,

squatting is the oldest form of land tenure, and certainly isn't going away. Vasudevan has added another piece to the history that Ward himself penned a great deal of, yet as with so many well-meaning academics he holds squatting almost at arms length, like a weird-smelling boot, peering down into the piratical histories of those who would live otherwise.

Despite the love and respect, I wonder how much he could really understand about squatting from his professorship in Oxford. It's possible that he squatted in his youth. It leaves a certain distaste to have the histories of the squatting community, inseparable from the histories of struggle against domination, of class war, to be documented to us by someone who has clearly esconced himself into the echelons of power as an academic and Grauniad journalist.

Would Vasudevan crowbar a window to get out of the rain? Had he ever watched an army of bailiffs descend upon his home from the rooftops of Brixton whilst the sun rose? Had he studied the rudimentary physics of barricading? Or been awake five nights in a row climbing the vistas of Shoreditch looking for a place to live? Or awoken to a bailiff at the foot of his bed? Has he ever shit in a pizza box because the toilets were concreted up?

Maybe. I don't really know him, and even if he did those may not have been the choices he would have made within his own squatted community. As the man said: “For squatters, the right to the city has always been a right to remake the city and transform it through hope, resistance and solidarity.”

~ George F.

George F's newest book Good Times In Dystopia, about the grimier side of Europe's squatting scene, is out now.



SKINT ESTATE: THE HARD

Skint Estate

by Cash Carraway

Ebury Press, 2019

ISBN: 978-1529103373

368pp

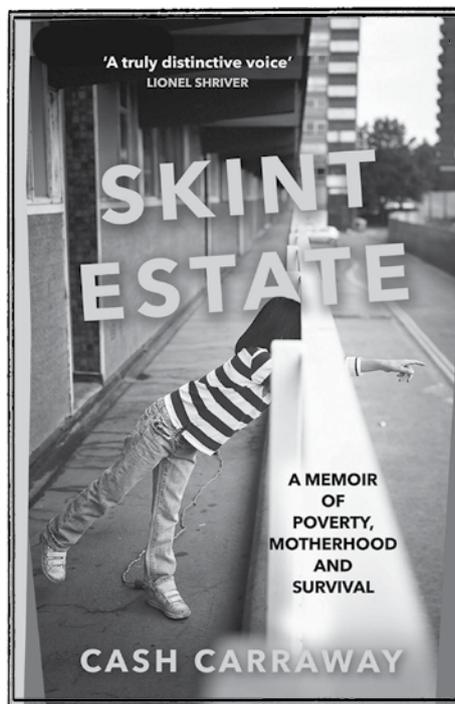
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This is not poverty porn.

I ummed and aahed about writing this book review for a while now. I have spoken about it with enthusiasm to everyone I know. I have bought it for people for birthday and Christmas presents. I have cried and laughed while reading it, sometimes to myself, sometimes aloud to other people who happen to be in the vicinity. But I hesitated about writing this review.

Cash Carraway's *Skint Estate* is the most important book on the impacts of Tory austerity, particularly on women, that I have ever read. I have read articles in *The Guardian*, I have read academic theses, I have read policy proposals and recommendations and yet none of these bring home the reality of the loss and the horror of austerity so much as Carraway's book.

As a memoir, she does not shy away from some of the brutish elements of growing up and living below the poverty line. She details with frank and often humorous honesty the lengths she has had to go to in order to create a life for her and her daughter. And yet, as she emphasises time and again "this is not poverty porn". For good reason, Carraway is sceptical of journalists and politicians always looking for a unique scoop, for an edgy, dirty story they can use to show how gritty and "real" their journalism is. One of the finest examples of this is when Carraway is trying to draw media attention to the fact that the ceiling in the women's shelter she is staying in has collapsed, nearly killing an occupant who was thankfully not in her bedroom, due to its degraded and unsafe infrastructure. She is trying to spread the word about fatal cuts to women's services in the same constituency as, and only a short time after, the Grenfell fire. She writes that the message they wanted to spread is "this is what happens to working class women under austerity".



And yet, when the journalists finally take notice, they ask instead for the women to describe the treatment they received by men to have ended up in the women's shelter, to ask "how many bruises did you have". Carraway acknowledges quite rightly that these journalists do not seek to spread the message of the fatal impact of Tory policies and how government cuts are harming the most vulnerable members of society. What they want is poverty porn.

And this is why I hesitated about writing this review. I think everyone should read this book. I really do. I think middle class people should read it to understand their complicity in the subjugation of working class people and to challenge their conscience if they vote Tory. But they shouldn't need to. Carraway's memoir is personal and affecting, but the impacts of austerity that she details from her subjective position are not new. This is not news. We should know by now about the number of people who have died since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC). We should know that 60% of women who approach a refuge are not able to be offered a place because of closures, that the government have cut funding to women's refuges by 24%. We should know

that poor people are being forced out of the cities and neighbourhoods where they have lived their whole lives, banished from the capital which is increasingly only for those with capital. And if you don't know by now or don't care and instead want to cry for a few minutes over such a "tragic story", then forget and go on with your life, you don't deserve to read it. So instead I urge working class people to read this book. To know they are not alone and that if they are angry they should be angry. To know, as Carraway says that "is OK to speak out about the injustices of society without coming up with a solution ... it's OK to feel unsure and stammer your way through an argument" because access to real change has been gatekept by the middle classes for too long and, as she reminds us again and again, to change things, to come up with solutions is a team effort, and she is just one voice hoping to create change. "How many unheard voices are out there just like mine?" she asks. "Imagine if we all spoke up together."

The 83rd Estate Agent

There are so many elements of Carraway's book I want to pick out, to highlight, to rant and rave about. Among them: the way in which she analyses the risk of acknowledging mental health problems for fear of austerity having your child taken away from you, the feeling of helplessness and failure when you are forced to use a food bank, when you are uprooted from where you spent your entire life and shifted to temporary accommodation in a tiny racist town far from anywhere, the fear of being nowhere near a hospital and unable to afford a taxi if anything were to go wrong, of being considered a "bad mother", the jobs you don't choose but you take, you are forced to take, in order for your daughter to be fed and well, the stigma attached to benefit recipients and the myths that are propagated about how they are lazy and entitled and do not deserve assistance, and how those myths can become internalised. But to see Carraway's exploration of those themes, as she delves into them with the openness and anger and humour that characterises

EDGE OF AUSTERITY

her unique writing style, I urge you to read the whole book. More than once.

However, one part I particularly want to focus on is the tale she tells of how she attempts to find a home in the private rented sector for herself and her daughter. She moves from estate agent to estate agent, to Gumtree, to Openrent, to an advertisement in a shop window offering a free room in exchange for an unorthodox arrangement. How landlords consistently refuse to rent to someone on benefits, and a single mother at that. How she is offered a horrible overpriced flat and pays her holding deposit only for the landlord to have a “change of heart” and the money not to be returned. How if she is offered somewhere they expect two months deposit and six months rent in advance as she is deemed unreliable and untrustworthy for being a benefit recipient. How it took her EIGHTY THIRD estate agent before she is offered somewhere.

The reason why I want to focus on this chapter is because at the end of the day it all comes down to housing. A home. Carraway makes the same point at the close of the chapter and I want to quote her in full because she says it better than I ever could:

“Yes, when times are tough you can swap Sainsbury for Lidl. Luxury for basic. The gym for a jog. Do a ‘no spend’ year. A ‘no spend’ life. Change your energy provider. You can cut back in almost every way. Yet the same can not be said for housing, not if you’re a single mum.”

As Carraway points out in her introduction, one in three single parent families live in poverty despite 68% of single mothers being in work. And a huge part of the reason for this is rent. The introduction of the benefit cap and Universal Credit changed housing benefit drastically, with one of the most damaging changes being the streamlining of the “housing element” of UC in line with the “local housing allowance” (LHA). LHA was in theory based on the cheapest 30% of privately rented properties in the area, however, it was frozen in 2016 as part of a surge in austerity policies, while, unsurprisingly, rents kept rising. However,

in practice most of the affordable rented properties are already occupied, so a huge amount of people are not having their rent covered adequately by the LHA, leading to increasing likelihood of rent arrears and evictions, contributing to the attitude of landlords to be disinclined to rent to people on benefits. Unlike gender, race, or religion, among others, class or poverty is not a protected characteristic in UK law, therefore there is no legal recourse to challenge landlords who refuse to rent to people on benefits.

The Bureau of Investigative Journalism released a report in October 2019 where they discovered that out of the 62,000 two bed properties they mapped across Britain as available to rent, using LHA rates only 5.6% were affordable to people on benefits. If you were lucky enough to be able to afford one of the limited number of properties, the Bureau discovered that out of 180 landlords they contacted, 50% said they would not let to anyone on benefits, and most of those who considered it included measures that they did not enforce against other prospective tenants such as asking for six months rent in advance – an impossible request even for a large number of non-benefit claimants.

What this means is that people are being forced into increasingly precarious forms of housing: temporary accommodation in their local area if they are lucky, in a different borough or even city if they are a little lucky, and forced into homelessness if they do not match the criteria of vulnerability which councils use to measure whether someone deserves to have a home or not. Those criteria used in homelessness applications state that you must be more vulnerable than the average person seeking assistance, which leads to a sick kind of race to the bottom for the most precariously placed people in society.

To bring this back to the book then, Carraway is perfectly aware of this charade of housing assistance, as she moved from precarious private rentals, to women’s shelters, to temporary accommodation both in and out of the city. It took the EIGHTY THIRD estate agent for her even to be given a chance.

Women like me

To finish this review, I want to come back to a point Carraway makes again and again throughout the book. Her story is not the only story. She is not the only voice that ought to be listened to.

She is part of a vast swathe of people, often women, ignored and trodden on by society. The refrain “women like me” reoccurs throughout her pages, as she sees the effects of Tory austerity impact not only her but other single mothers, other women juggling multiple jobs yet still below the poverty line, other women who escaped domestic abuse and found some solidarity and support in women’s shelters, other women forced to use food banks, other women who would do almost anything to try to protect, and create a better world for the children they love.

Sometimes it is used to illustrate the deliberate attempts by the government to remove “women like me” from the city, and at other times it is used to urge for other voices to be raised up as she understands that “change takes flight when we unite together, when we all share our stories without shame and we raise our individual voices collectively”. And as much as some are urged to raise their voices and tell their stories, others of us are encouraged to be quiet, for once, and to listen. But most of all, and why her book is so powerful and her message so clear is in her recognition of the strength and resilience of the “women like me”.

“What I’ve mainly written about is love, and the things that women like me do for the love of their child in a society designed to break them”.

Read this book. Get angry. And perhaps one day the collective voices of the previously ignored will be heard. And together, we will be able to change things.

~ Rowan Tallis Milligan



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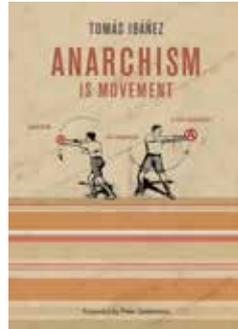
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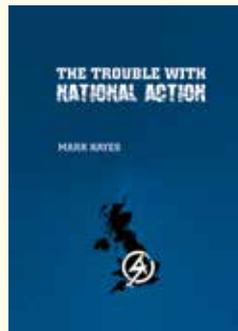


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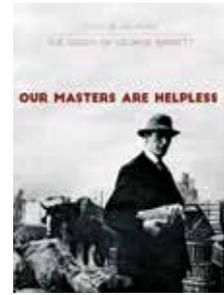


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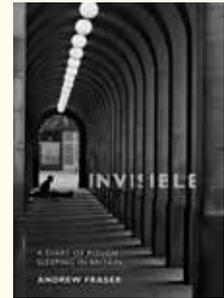


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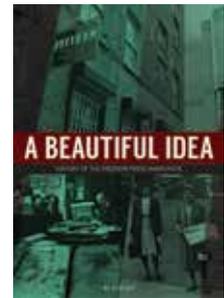


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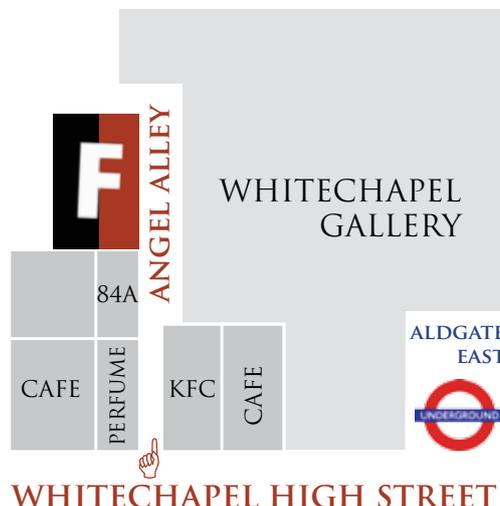
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