

The "Friends of Freedom Press"

from a very limited amount of advertising, it relies entirely on friends to do this essential work. It must be the task of the members to organize this work in their respective localities, so that wherever there are groups or individuals, there are Freedom Press agents to visit bookshops and newsagents and keep them supplied.

Finally, it must clearly be an aim of the "Friends of Freedom Press" to see that the means to continue, and **enlarge its scope** are assured to the Press. For our part the Freedom Press will continue to be a voluntary organization; no one connected with its work will receive any remuneration for his or her services. The price of publications will therefore be kept at a minimum, the aim being the largest circulation at the lowest price. Any surplus which may accrue will naturally be used for further publications and for advertising.

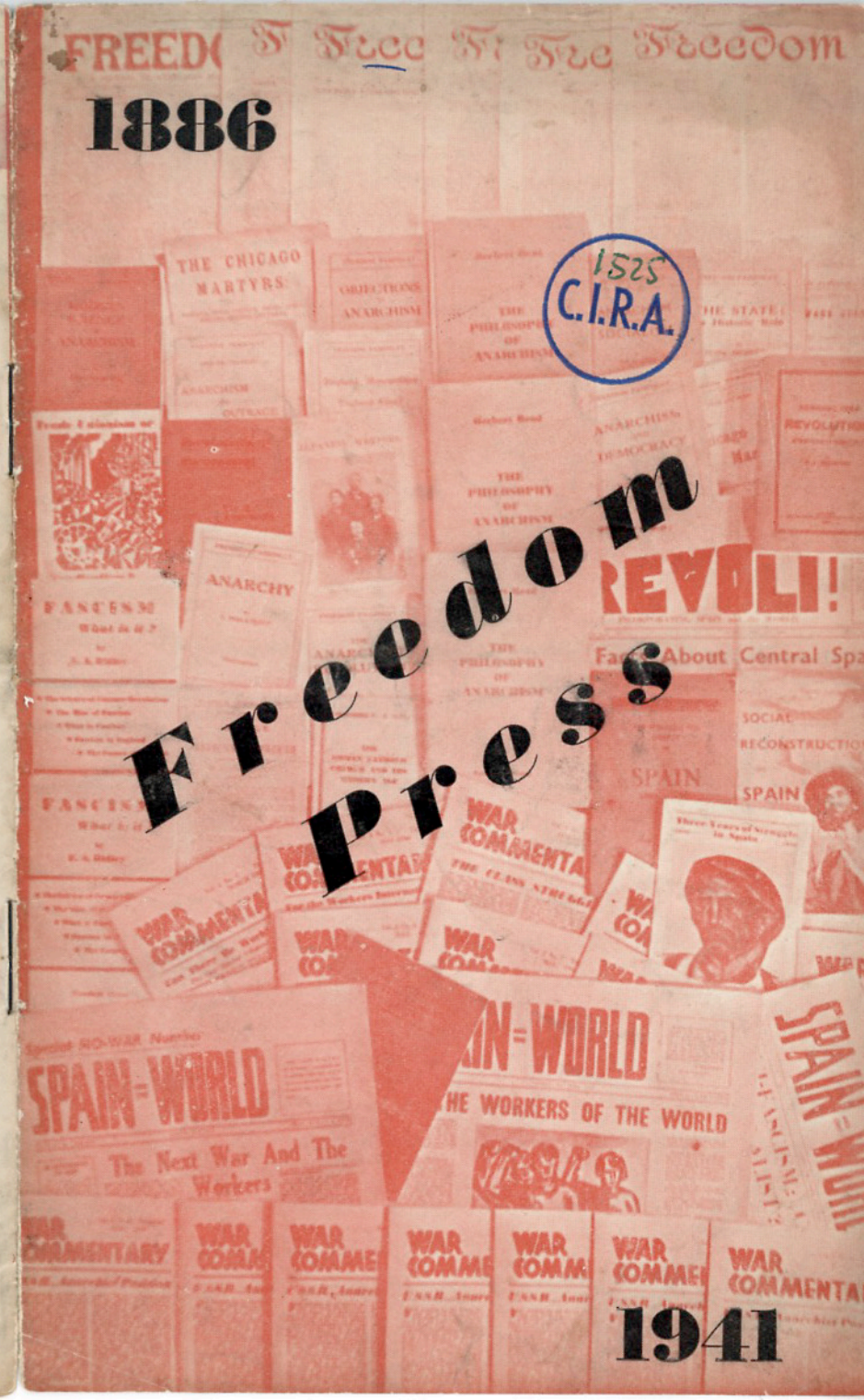


If after reading this leaflet you feel that you, too, would like to express your solidarity and willingness to assist in this urgent work of revolutionary education, then fill in the enclosed membership form now and post it to us without further delay.

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*Friends of "Freedom Press," 27, Belsize Road  
London, N.W.6.*

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## History of the Freedom Press

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WHEN Kropotkin came to England after his release from prison following the Lyons trial, he was invited to join the "English Anarchist Circle." This was a group which had gathered round Henry Seymour, a follower of Benjamin Tucker, who had already founded an active journal, "The Anarchist," in March, 1885, to express their libertarian ideals and ideas. It was agreed at a conference at the house of that noble figure Kravchinsky (better known as "Stepniak") that the paper would henceforward be issued under the joint direction of Kropotkin, Tchaikovsky, Dr. Merlino, Dr. Gibson, Mrs. C. M. Wilson, and Seymour.

After a short time, however, fundamental differences of principle caused a majority portion, which had the support of more closely allied foreign groups in London, to break away and found a new journal. The first number of this appeared in October 1886 and bore the title "Freedom: a Journal of Anarchist-Socialism, founded by Mrs. C. M. Wilson and Peter Kropotkin." In 1893 the sub-title was changed to "Anarchism-Communism."

Police prosecutions in 1894 caused suspension of publication until May 1895, but the general editorship remained the same until the late nineties. The editorship was then taken over by Alfred Marsh, the son of a brush manufacturer, while the compositing and technical side was done by Tom Cantwell, another member of the group. In this work he was to an increasing extent assisted by Tom Keell, a professional compositor on a well established weekly. The spreading distrust and impatience with parliamentarism and political socialism (the policy of the S.D.F., the Fabians etc.) attracted many to the anarchist-communist teaching of Kropotkin, and in 1895 elements of the old Socialist

League, of the Commonweal group and Independents had joined hands in the preparation of the London International Conference of the following year. Following on the revelations of the tortures undergone by the Spanish Anarchists in the castle of Montjuich in Barcelona in 1896-97, libertarian enthusiasm increased still further, and "Freedom" became the organ round which such activities centred.

There were hard times during the South African war, and Cantwell was struck down with apoplexy one Christmas day in the Ossulston Street office. On Marsh's invitation Tom Keell gave up an excellent permanent job to become compositor, manager, and eventually the effective editor (and contributor) of a precarious anarchist monthly. He and Marsh worked excellently together until the latter's death in October 1914. Under Tom Keell the paper was very well printed and edited, and he, too, was responsible for the pamphlet and book publishing activity. The "Freedom Pamphlets" were excellently turned out reprints and original matter in a period of much poorly produced and cheap printed "socialist" matter, and the translation of Proudhon's "General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century" (done by J. B. Robinson) which he arranged to be printed in post war Germany, remains one of the very few works of Proudhon available in English.

"Freedom" expressed its sympathy with the Syndicalist movement of 1907, and Keell printed and edited a new paper, "The Voice of Labour." It actively supported the suffrage movement (whose press was raided by the police).

The war of 1914, however, produced a schism in the group, the echoes of which are still with us, and whose lessons are still urgent. Kropotkin (for a time), Turner, Wess, Tcherkesoff and others favoured the Allied cause, but Keell remained consistently anti-war, refused to be considered a paid servant of the pro-war section, and with a growing inclination towards Malatesta's ideas, printed the latter's articles on war throughout 1914-16. For the publication and circulation of anti-war and anti-conscription material, both Keell and his companion Lilian Wolfe took terms of imprisonment.

Shortly after the war the death of W. C. Owen, a Land question enthusiast, deprived the Freedom Press of another staunch supporter, and libertarian ideas were also affected by the post-war depression and disillusionment. Publication was suspended in 1927, when Keell retired to Whiteway Colony. A few further issues (Freedom Bulletin, 1928-32) from Stroud, Gloucestershire, and a revival in London as "Freedom: New Series: Freedom Publishing Committee, 2, Malden Crescent, N.W.1," edited by A. G. Barker with the help of J. Turner (who died in 1934), J. J. Humphreys (who printed it), G. Cores and others were issued from the Press in the years up till 1936.

But the Spanish Revolution of July 19th, 1936, brought new life into the movement, and within a month or two of the July rising a pamphlet entitled "The Struggle for Liberty in Spain," was the signal for renewed activity of Freedom Press. In November, 1936, the first issue of "**Spain and the World**" was published, and for two and a half years this fortnightly paper continued to support the struggle of the revolutionary workers in Spain, and warn the workers in this country of the impending dangers of another world war (the May Day, 1938, issue of **Spain and the World** was a No-war number, and was widely circulated throughout the world).

Freedom Press, strengthened by a growing circle of young and enthusiastic supporters, again came forward in 1939 to defend the cause of the international workers with its publication **War Commentary** which, we feel, needs no introduction. For two years now it has taken up the anarchist position towards the struggle in which millions of men and women are being slaughtered at the bidding of their governments and politicians. In addition to **War Commentary**, Freedom Press has published a number of other works, books and pamphlets, which have been widely acclaimed for their subject matter and attractive presentation.

This work goes on unceasingly, in spite of various misfortunes (such as the fire during the raid of May 10th in London, which destroyed the greater part of our stocks of literature) and our precarious economic position.

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## The Aims of Freedom Press

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THE aims of Freedom Press can briefly be stated to consist in the political and social education of the people, the majority of whom have no political ideas beyond those received at school and through a so-called "National" Press, which is, in fact, the mouthpiece of the ruling class in society. Freedom Press has been chiefly concerned with the publication of Anarchist literature, and though in recent years pamphlets on other subjects have been published, it is nevertheless proposed to devote most of its energies to publishing and distributing Anarchist and Anarchist-inclined literature.

All existing political ideas find expression through political parties and in literature published by well-known publishers. Yet only three books dealing with Anarchism have been issued in recent years, and without Freedom Press and one or two Anarchist groups, the ideals of Anarchism would hardly be known in this country. As it is, a large majority of the people are ignorant of the true meaning of Anarchism, a philosophy of life which is distorted beyond recognition by its opponents who have ample means of making themselves heard.

To keep alive the ideas of Anarchism, a task started in this country by that distinguished group of Anarchists in 1886, is today as necessary as it was then, and we are confident that the great majority of our readers subscribe to this view and would be glad to associate themselves more closely with FREEDOM PRESS in this work. We refer these friends to the next section of the pamphlet, which suggests ways and means in which they can help.



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## The "Friends of Freedom Press"

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THE "Friends of Freedom Press" is a voluntary organization of people who consider that, by continuing its work of publishing literature on Anarchism and related subjects, Freedom Press is performing a useful function.

But sympathy unaccompanied by action will not further the cause of Freedom Press nor the ideals which inspire its work. Consequently, ways and means whereby the "Friends of Freedom Press" can actively assist it are here suggested.

First, it should be pointed out that the "Friends of Freedom Press" has been formed in response to numerous requests from readers of War Commentary and other publications of the Press, who, while not convinced anarchists, nevertheless found in Freedom Press publications the expression of ideals worthy of their sympathy and support. The "Friends of Freedom Press" is, as its title implies, an association of people in sympathy with this work, and eager as friends to lend a helping hand.

An important function of the association will be the **critical** discussion and analysis of the ideas expressed in War Commentary and Freedom pamphlets; this can best be done by the formation of discussion groups wherever there are members. As the ideas of the group develop, so can their activities expand—meetings can be organised in their local halls, new contacts made and new members enrolled for the discussion group and the other activities connected with the association.

An activity which the "Friends of Freedom Press" can undertake, and whose importance cannot be over-estimated, is the distribution of Freedom Press publications. Normally, publishers ensure the widest possible distribution for their books through the medium of advertising and through full-time travellers who tour all the book-shops of the country. Freedom Press has not the means—either financial or of personnel—to do this. Apart