

**The Agitator** - a directory of non-hierarchical groups. For activist groups in your area check:  
home.clara.net/hsg/hhome.html or send £1.40 to Haringey Solidarity Group, PO Box 2474, London N8 OHW. (Pamphlet on the anti-poll tax movement also available)

### **Aufheben**

**No.9 Zapatistas, Nature of the USSR.**

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- £3 each (incl. p&p., payable to *Aufheben*) from Brighton Unemployed Centre, 4 Crestway Parade, Hollingdean, Brighton BN1 7BL.

Back issues also available via:

www.geocities.com/~johngray/index.htm

**Class War** - PO Box 467, London E8.

**DO OR DIE** - No.8: June 18<sup>th</sup>, pirates, patriarchy, GMOs, biodiversity, Kosovo, reviews etc. (348 pages!). £4 from 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

**Direct Action** - magazine of the Solidarity Federation. PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4RY.

**Earth First! Action Update** - monthly direct action news, £5 from PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA.

**Organise!** - magazine of the Anarchist Federation, 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1.



**SchNews** - weekly direct action news and events. Check www.schnews.org.uk/ or send ten 1<sup>st</sup> class stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2.

## **REMEMBER:**

On demos, take precautions!  
If arrested, give a name and address and answer 'no comment' to all other questions.

## **Reclaim the Streets**

- meetings are held in central London every Tuesday at 7pm. Phone 020 7281 4621 for venue (ansaphone message).

All welcome - except journalists.

## **MAY DAY 2001**

Check [www.freespeech.org/mayday2k](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k) for information about events in 2001 (or write to PO Box 2474, London N8 OHW)

This website also has links to articles on everything from the situationists to further reflections on May Day and June 18<sup>th</sup>.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual

## **Anarchist Bookfair**

Saturday 20 October 2001  
10am-6pm

Camden Centre, Bidborough St., London WC1, (Kings X tube).

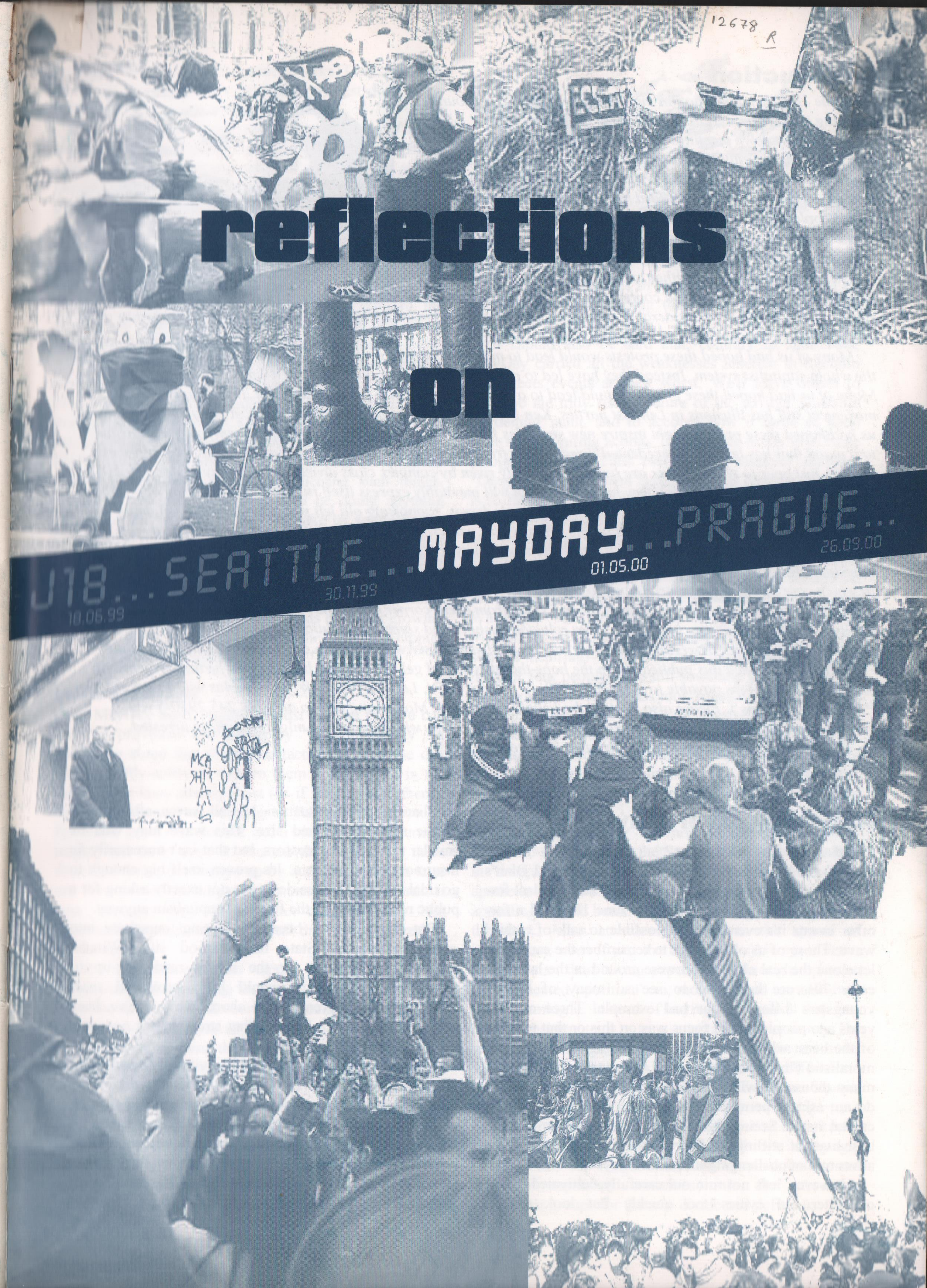
*Books. meetings. creche. food etc.*

[freespace.virgin.net/anarchist.bookfair](http://freespace.virgin.net/anarchist.bookfair)

## **Reflections on Prague and the new anti-capitalism**

Send articles on the way forward for our movement (and replies to pieces in this pamphlet) to:

prague\_autumn@hotmail.com  
by December 1st.





## Introduction

The June 18th demonstration in the City of London was a ground-breaking achievement. It inspired a wave of protests that effectively shut down meetings of the World Trade Organisation and IMF in both Seattle and Prague. Meanwhile back in London, it gave an impetus to those anarchists and communists who wanted a follow-up to the Bradford May Day '98 conference. With People's Global Action (an international coalition initiated by the Zapatistas) also calling for action, **May Day 2000, a festival of anti-capitalist ideas and action** was born.

Diverse groups came together to organise events in Bristol, Sheffield, Cardiff, Manchester and elsewhere. In London the main events were a conference followed by a Reclaim the Streets action on 1 May. Both events were very successful. However the considerable number of arrests and the media onslaught after May Day encouraged us all to question where this wave of 'anti-capitalist' protests is going.

Many of us had hoped these protests would lead to more discussions on how to oppose not just 'globalisation' but the whole capitalist system. Instead they have led to more agonising over the issue of 'violence' on demonstrations. Many of us had hoped these protests would lead to a complete break with the old statist left. Instead much of our movement still has illusions in Leninist parties, Ken Livingstone or Castro's dictatorship. Most importantly, many of us had hoped these protest might inspire new struggles from the working class. Instead they seem to have contributed to a mood that has led to unprecedented direct action from small business-people over, of all things, petrol prices!

This just goes to show that we are living in a society riven by complex class divisions - a society where people's frustration with lives over which they have no control will inevitably express itself in forms with a variety of positive and negative aspects - whether it's window-breaking on demos, supporting old left politics or joining fuel depot blockades. We are still some way from a time when people will express their frustration by making a world-wide revolution that replaces capitalism with a truly human society. But, if nothing else, the petrol protests show how quickly things can change. (You may well have different views on this or any of the other opinions in this publication. In which case please send contributions to the compilers of a Prague 'Reflections' advertised at the back.)

**Reflections on May Day** consists of diverse views from every corner of our movement. We lacked the resources to publish everything that was submitted, so we reluctantly shortened some contributions if, for instance, they repeated points in other articles. Everything will hopefully be published at [www.freespeech.org/mayday2k](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k) at some point.

Individuals funded this publication in the hope that they would get their money back to fund further projects. So please send donations payable to 'Mayday 2000' to PO Box 2474, London N8 0HW (any surplus will go towards the Prague 'Reflections'). Please also contact the Legal Defence and Monitoring Group on 0208 245 2930 if you witnessed events, such as police violence, at J18, N30 or May Day whose reporting might help those arrested.

Thanks for all the articles. Let the debate continue:

## A mayday over MayDay

### Third wave vs. third way

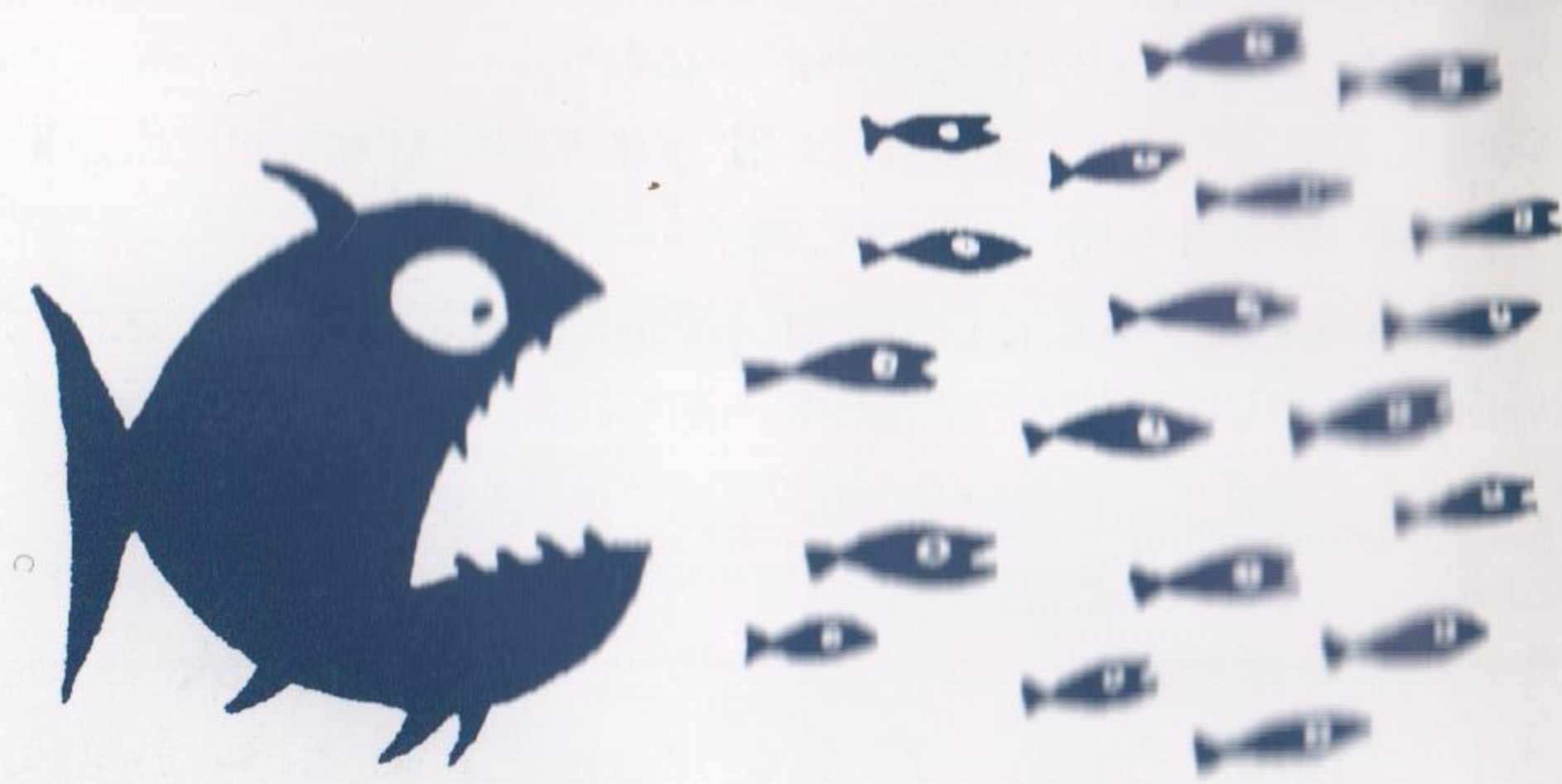
Despite the Terrorism Bill, despite the boom and Blair's continuing poll-surfing, many of us have seen the last few years as something of an up. Since June 18th and a few other events it's even become possible to talk of a third wave. Those of us old enough to remember the early 80s, let alone the real oldies who were around in the late 60s/early 70s, are heartened to see so many of today's youngsters following our bad example. Three or four years ago people's main focus was on this or that tentacle of the beast while the terrain they fought on was largely moralistic ("roads are bad", "CJA is wrong" etc.). Now many thousands will regularly turn up for events which do not ask for permission or reforms but simply contest capital itself. Seeing that the system can offer them at best lives of stifling mediocrity, they turn instead to the adventure of challenging it in its entirety.

However, let's not ruin our carefully cultivated image of bitter old cynics too quickly but look to the

peculiarities of our situation. Not all waves, after all, are of the same shape and size. This wave may well be smaller than its predecessors, but that isn't necessarily an insurmountable problem. It's proven itself big enough to go tidal before, and besides we're not exactly asking for a public referendum on the future of capitalism anyway.

But while we've been reinventing ourselves into smaller sizes the State hasn't stood still. Witness increased surveillance or the steady ratcheting-up of repressive laws which would have provoked mass outrage in the Seventies. In short, while we've been getting littler they've been getting stronger. It's got plain harder to do that thing we do.

Compounded to this, there's virtually no wider movements for us to link up to. Militant workers are virtually extinct, and urban rioters an endangered species, to the point they can make sentimental TV documentaries about them. What's the point of a wave with no-one to wave to? What price a catalyst without the general chemical reaction? Our new-found fixation with 'globalisation' (international conferences, days of action



etc.) must be seen in this context. Like Tony Hancock we've got friends all over the world, we just don't know anyone down our own streets.

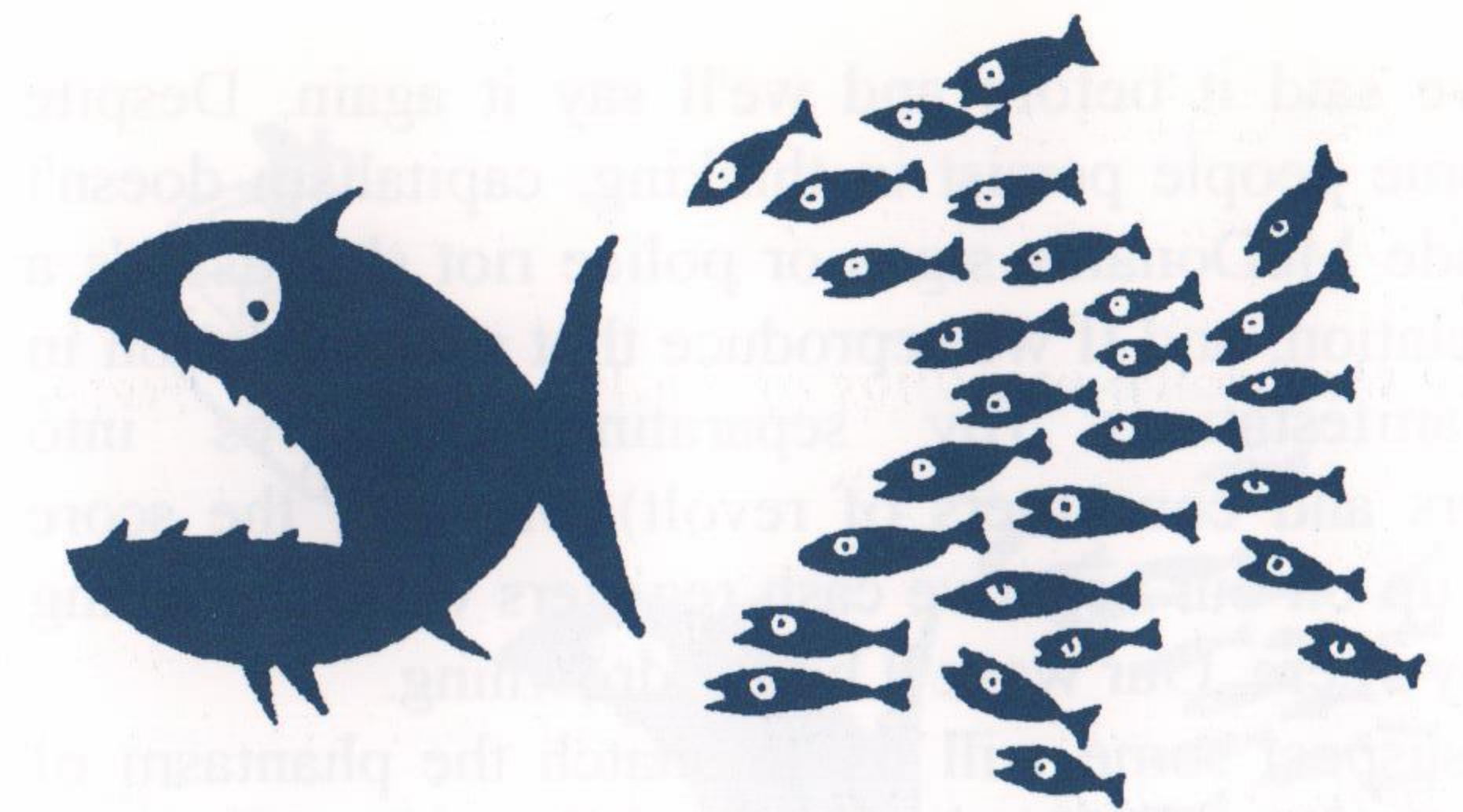
However, there's been parallel developments in the wider sphere which could cut against our isolation. Since Labour's fully-fledged embracing of neoliberalism and its almost total silencing of the old Left, 'mainstream' politics has closed up. The Third Way has taken the First and Second Ways off the menu. The new brutality is made to seem inevitable, as natural as it getting colder in the winter. Yet this strategy carries a risk for them - the globalised market is but one basket for all their eggs. Look at the recent elections where they reduced the choices on offer, then worried themselves into knots when fewer and fewer could be bothered to vote!

Faced with increasing levels of exploitation in their jobs, most people have developed an instinctive distrust of globalisation in all its endless faceless acronyms. They may not necessarily know what GATT, WTO, IMF stand for individually, but they're aware that together they spell SHIT. Yet our movement is no longer the most radical end of some liberal spectrum criticising such things, we're now the only people seen to be doing anything about it at all! When our enemies take us seriously, it's not because they love old statues or see insurgency in a smashed McDonalds window. In fact it's not because of anything that we're actually doing, but because of a potential rendezvous with the 'apathetic' mass which currently remains latent. If there's seeds they fear growing from our good deeds, they're not the ones the hippies stuck in Parliament Square.

### Divide and defuse

Onto MayDay itself. Against Leftist notions that we can only be provoked into action by "police brutality", it should be noted that the police tactics early in the day was so softly-softly as to earn them a ticking-off in the media! The laws already exist (as if they needed them!) to have prevented us meeting in Parliament Square. A few vans, some riot clobber and a bit of stripy tickertape might well have done it. Instead they opted for mere shows of force, not backed up by action until much later on. How come? As they virtually admitted afterwards, it was because they feared the consequences. Not necessarily immediately - after all they outnumbered us on the day!

But anti-demonstration tactics in Britain always revolve around separating the passive mass of onlookers from the activists or hardcore troublemakers. Police will try to impose this physically at the time. Then, regardless of their actual success, this story must be kept up in the media. How many times have we heard the line "it was a peaceful enough event until the hardcore of troublemakers turned up"?, even most laughably after June 18th! Strong-arm tactics risk creating an antagonistic mob who, even if beaten at the time, may come back better-armed and more prepared. This is exactly what has happened in Germany and many other countries, and exactly what they want to avoid here. A few smashed



windows and other bits of steam-letting can be fixed by the next day. It's keeping the liberal consensus which counts.

It should also be said that, contrary to June 18th, MayDay carried all the weaknesses inherent in Reclaim the Streets events at their worst. We'll leave others to describe the truly risible nature of the terrible 'Guerrilla Gardening' stunt, and to account how it came so soon after such inspiring actions. (But suffice to say even State stooge and upper class twit George Monbiot admitted "Digging up Parliament Square to stop global capitalism is so futile, so utterly frustrating and disempowering that the more hot-headed protestors could almost be excused for wanting to do something more spectacular.", G2 10/5/00).

In the spirit of positivity we'll concentrate instead on the potential moment of escape as we all left it to go up Whitehall. The whole mass of people stopped as McDonalds windows went in, whooping and cheering. It seemed inspiring. Yet over twenty minutes later the same three or four people were still smashing up the same one shop, while the same mass took snapshots for the album or clapped like they were at the theatre! Some, through not wanting to be sitting targets or just bored at all the repetition, drifted on to Trafalgar Square. This allowed the cops to step in and split the crowd in two, drastically reducing our capacity for mischief. The rest of the day was downhill.

This is saddening, but not necessarily surprising. Since the start Reclaim the Streets have been successful in bringing masses back out of doors after a very apathetic period. While some have condemned them for appealing only to bombed-out party heads, this is wide of the mark. Most attendees respond to the appeal of lawlessness, even if just the buzz of it. (Always a better place to start than boring papers.) But, brought up in an unprecedented 'apolitical' era, most respond to radicalism by consuming it. Instead of buying McDonalds they buy into opposition to it - as a spectacle, as a show. The 'activists' do things while the rest of us cheer them on. The police do other things and we boo. Same difference.

Had we continued en masse to Trafalgar Square, would we have been in time to get beyond and go on a mystery tour through central London? We can't know. But we do know that in Whitehall we obligingly demonstrated our biggest weakness to our enemies, and helpfully separated ourselves into the necessary constituent groups for them to divide and defuse us.



We've said it before and we'll say it again. Despite what some people persist in thinking, capitalism doesn't live inside McDonalds signs or police riot shields. It's a social relation, and if we reproduce that social relation in our manifestations (by separating ourselves into producers and consumers of revolt) whatever the score we ring up on our negative cash registers we're not going to go anywhere. Our wave'll be for drowning.

We suspect some will try to snatch the phantasm of victory from real-life defeat by waxing lyrical how MayDay went beyond "the plan". In this way they fetishise anti-planning about as much as the Stalinists do planning, and betray their essential similarity. The point is not to fixatedly plan or refuse to plan, but in our relationship to that plan. Look at what the Cops do when their plans fail. They either a) lose it and go mental or b) stand around, awaiting fresh orders. They exist as a mechanism to bring about plans they are given. Our plans are made by us and for us. We can change them in a moment if need be, but need no phobias of making them in the first place. June 18th was successful largely because it was well planned. Yes, on MayDay the plan was particularly crap but failing to spontaneously generate anything better we floundered. If we've any sense left that should take us back to the drawing board.

### **Tearful Tony and the media deluge**

Next let's look at the media response. Not because we assume that the media reports are more important than the actual event. And we'll leave it to the Trots and other wanna-be bourgeoisie to imagine people uncritically swallow whatever they read. But neither do we think, as many seem to, that if good media isn't our aim then bad media should be and the worse the media the better the action. MayDay marks the limitations of such 'thinking'.

Truth is, the media can have an effect on people if it manages to insert itself into their already-formed perceptions. As we've already said, most people are sullenly dissatisfied by the state of things but currently see no possibility of alternatives. Mention MayDay and the like to real-life folk and you're not likely to hear the quizzical "but what's wrong with capitalism?" or the outraged "you should respect the rule of law!" so much as the cynical "but what do you expect it to achieve?"

The most important feature of the media is the sheer scale of it. We're supposed to feel the width! Blair himself took time off shaking hands with mass murderers to do a photo-op condemning us. While the scale of destruction at June 18th had to be played down, it was the very lesser achievements of MayDay (i.e. a few shops done in and a bit of graffiti on some statues) which made it perfect for them to blow up. Hence there's been more furore over a tuft of grass on a dead bigot's head than the storming of the LIFFE building.

What do we want to get out of such days? We'd argue 'British' participation in anti-capitalist days need to have a positive domestic effect, not just join in a 'virtual community' of international activists like an anti-McDonalds trying to open the same branch all over the

world. MayDay didn't have to destroy capitalism to be a success (thankfully!), but it had to be big enough to float the idea that capitalism isn't as immutable as we're told. It wasn't and it didn't. The point isn't that they've made us look 'bad' or 'mindless' (like they'd ever do otherwise), so much as they've succeeded in making us look weak and irrelevant. Faced with a choice between such clear-cut winners and losers, most will remain apathetic or even actively embrace the winner for safety's sake.

This leaves us in a Catch 22 situation, unable to really achieve anything without wider participation but unable to get that participation without achieving anything. If our wave is beached from wider sympathy, it'll be harder to avoid our actions getting smaller as the passive mass stop turning up at all and the 'activists' get more insular, defensive and harder to join even if anybody wanted to. This seems like a cycle not to get into.

### **Out of siege mentality**

Finally, let's look at the very concept of anti-capitalist days themselves. A lot of physical and emotional investment has been put in these, in fact the very "up" people have been feeling is probably down to their tonic. After all, for a time they felt like part of a natural trajectory for us. For too long we'd been stuck in siege mentality. Whether occupying road protest camps or squatted social centres we were locked in a defensive war against the State - who are, in case you've never noticed, a superior force. They knew (pretty much) what we were up to, and had developed their rehearsed methods for dealing with it. Their main tactic was normally to wait until all the lightweights had pissed off and the rest of us had gone mad then just stroll in, and let's face it mostly it worked pretty well. (Especially the going mad part.)

The first Reclaim the Streets were a break from this. We weren't just escaping from the tunnels back into the daylight (which was welcome enough), we were reinventing the benefit of surprise for ourselves. We'd just get up and take over some shitty intersection somewhere. We would decide where. We would decide when. Short of guarding every crossroads and traffic light in the country, they were forced to wait on us! And of course we had the buzz of seeing a virus spawned in London spread across much of the world, as copycat parties happened from Finland to LA.

At first, international anti-capitalist days seemed like a step up from this. Not only did they put our politics on our sleeves, more importantly they were pushing the envelope of surprise once more. Just when the Cops were learning this new rule book of our actions we'd gleefully torn it up all over again. Trouble is we may have been too successful for our own good - or at least for our 'movements' shaky structure to cope with. After June 18th, and particularly after Seattle, capitalism has been seen to be contested again. They're not likely to be too happy about that.

So what happens if we continue with this tactic? First, we should note we've partly stepped backwards - back into a timing no longer of our choosing. Between the

IMF, WTO and European integration there's a bewildering array of conferences scheduled, dates all taunting to be put in our diaries. These dates are their dates, they don't correspond to the ebbs and flows or strengths and weakness of our movement. Neither do they bear any immediate relation to wider popular discontent. (And if you start arguing about May Day being "workers day" you haven't been getting out much lately.) Finally, if we disregard all this and show up anyway they're likely to be waiting for us with side-handled batons and a few old grudges. We may find the ground under our feet no longer our terrain.

(Of course many go further and argue that anti-capitalist days are themselves spectacular events, stunts that keep lazy journos in headlines and only reinforce how the other 364 days of the year are business as usual. There's no little truth to this. Nevertheless we must see it in context. There was a period where such methods did make for a progression for us, if not as the threat of a good example then as the temporary abeyance of a bad example.)

Ironically one successful action doesn't necessarily lead to another. It can even make things harder for next time, by combining a yardstick to live up to with a method that's already been used. It seems clear to us, in London at least, anti-capitalist days are numbered and new means of mobilising now required - ones which require us to again re-invent surprise and imagination. Let's set our own social agenda once more! We Kids don't have stacks of blueprints about how to do this piled up in our secret headquarters, in fact here and now we don't really have much of a clue! But that's what we need to stay one step ahead. We're not saying it'll be easy, but we've managed to reinvent ourselves before. The world will hear from us again!

*Bash Street Kids*

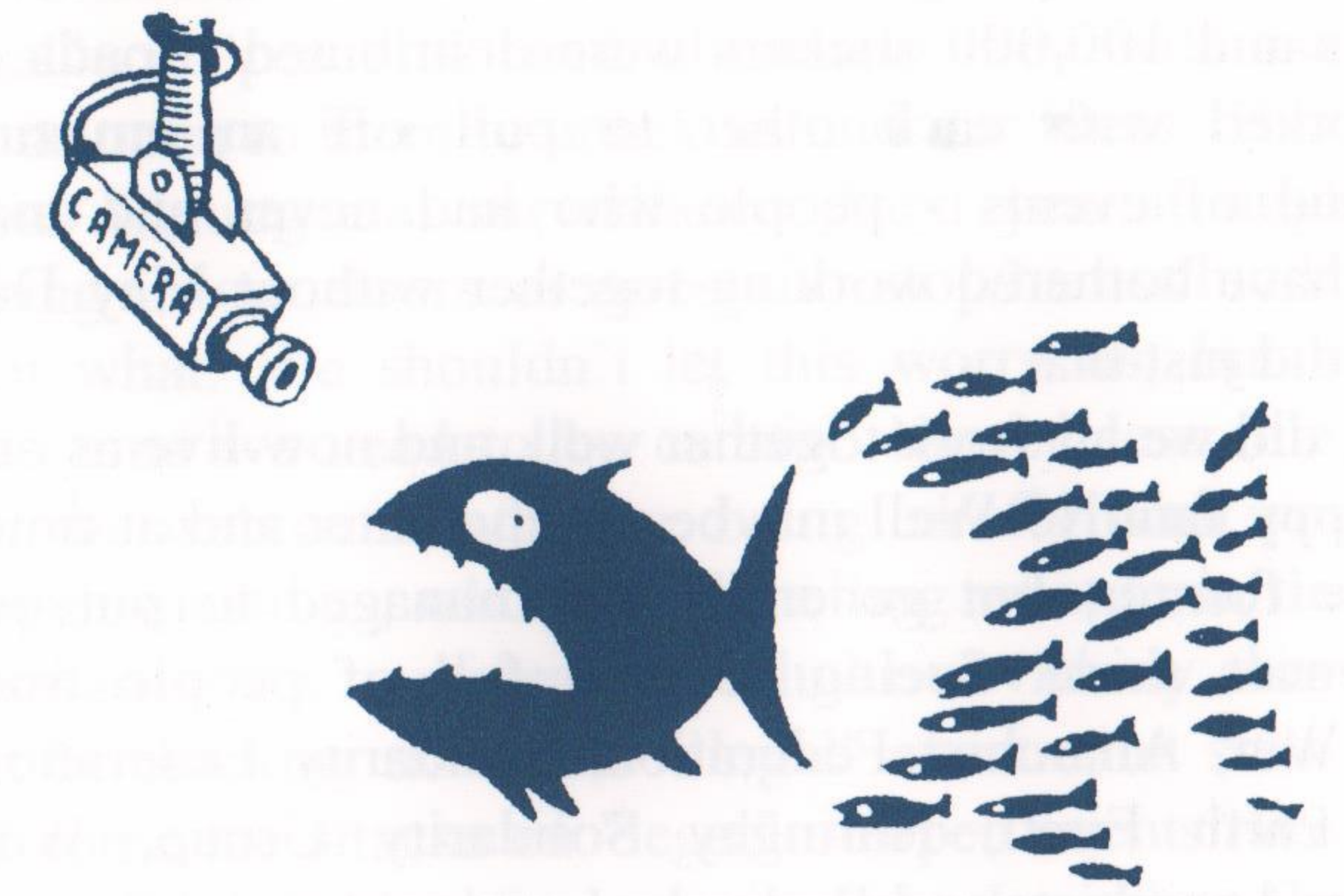
## **Dope springs eternal from May Day riot**

Green-fingered protesters, who dug up Parliament Square on May Day, have had the last laugh after a crop of marijuana plants was discovered in the shadow of Winston Churchill's statue.

MPs rushed across to the square last night to inspect the fledgling plants - each no more than four inches high - which sprouted up thanks to the efforts of the "Avante Gardeners" who invaded the square during the May Day riots. ... The Home Office minister, Paul Boateng, remained firmly on message when asked about the crop. "Have you told the police?" he barked.

... The May Day gardeners will be delighted with their handiwork, which shows that the authorities have failed to clear up the square. The plants were last night clearly visible behind the metal barriers, which are meant to bar access to the square to give fresh grass a chance to grow back.

*'The Guardian', Thursday July 6, 2000*



## **Was it worth it?**

### **Where did M2K come from?**

May Day 2000 came from an idea a few of us had around June/July 1999. We knew there were people from different strands of, what I suppose can loosely be defined as, the libertarian left\* who were putting on diverse types of events. These ranged from the Anarchist Bookfair, to the Earth First! gatherings, to the RTS street parties, to Lefty football competitions, the Bradford 1998 conference, J18 and lots more.

In London at least, our "movement" was/is not very united. We often don't know of each other, or have no idea what each other is doing - let alone talking to each other and working together. Again there were/are exceptions like London Underground meetings, *The Agitator* and the Bradford 1998 conference. We thought we should try to get us working together and talking to each other. And we wanted an event that was not the either/or conference or demo type thing. So, after a couple of meetings where as many people and groups we knew of were invited, we put the idea forward at the 1999 Anarchist Bookfair. The idea was different groups and individuals, working together, put on as many different events as possible over four days of the May Day weekend under a loose title of "A Festival of Anarchist Ideas and Actions" - later renamed "A Festival of Anti-Capitalist Ideas and Actions".

So, *did it work?* Did we all come together in some lovely harmonious group or did we nearly kill each other? Did the four days of events achieve anything? Did it all fall apart? Did we bring down the state or did we collapse under the work load? What follows is just my view. Others may see things differently. Also, this is not all inclusive.

Firstly, May Day 2000 a four day Festival of Anti-Capitalist Ideas and Actions DID happen and worked bloody well. Events happened on all four days: Critical Mass and the East End political walk on the Friday, the conference and football tournament on the Saturday, the conference on the Sunday and the Guerrilla Gardening on the Monday, as well as other events and loads of gigs. Some things did not materialise - the play and the four



days of films spring to mind for me. Over 200,000 leaflets and 100,000 stickers were distributed. Loads of us worked with each other to pull off an amazing weekend of events - people who had never and may never have bothered working together without May Day 2000, did just that.

So, did we all work together well, and now live as one big happy family? Well maybe not the latter and at times not the former, but generally we managed to put our differences aside. Seeing a room full of people from Class War, Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Federation, RTS, Earth First!, Haringey Solidarity Group, West London Anarchists and Radicals, London Animal Action, and all the others could have been the recipe for a blood bath, but we discussed, argued and always came to agreement about the way forward.

### **But there were problems!**

From where I was, there were problems. One of these was broadly between the organisers of the Monday action and the rest of us. Most events over May Day 2000 were organised by sub-groups of May Day 2000, and reported back to the monthly organising meetings. It seemed to me the Monday action was mainly planned and controlled by the weekly RTS meetings. There seemed very little co-ordination between the organisers of the Guerrilla Gardening and the other events. This led to confrontations which could have been avoided. Also, with the Monday action being seen as organised by RTS, other groups/individuals did not really organise other events on this day (a couple did I know). The whole of Monday's activities were never really discussed outside of the weekly RTS events as far as I know. It seemed a number of groups and individuals were working together to organise all the events leading up to May Day 2000 and the event over the Friday to Sunday, whereas the Monday seemed to be organised solely by one group and it's supporters. Perhaps this was all our faults; perhaps this is inevitable with illegal mass actions; perhaps I am wrong. However, this needs to be taken into account if we organise such events in the future, otherwise we could split "our movement" rather than bring it closer together.

In my view the openness problem can also be extended to the "Maybe" newspaper that was produced. Although a great idea, again this did not seem to be produced in a very open and accessible way. If it was to be the newspaper of and about the May Day 2000 weekend, there should have been access for anybody involved in May Day 2000 to participate and contribute. If it was just the contribution of one group working alone, this seems a shame and against what we were trying to do under the title of "May Day 2000". Then again maybe I am wrong - lets open up the discussion!

Secondly, May Day 2000 was, for those initial 20 or so of us, always intended to be an event promoting class struggle politics and be organised along non-hierarchical lines by people who believed in non-hierarchical organisation. This was agreed at a number of the initial meetings. Perhaps we were not clear enough about this.

Perhaps others had other ideas. However, this (to me anyway) got watered down. How did this happen? With any event, where meetings and organising are open to anybody who wants to participate, ideas will change. For May Day 2000 many new people got involved (which was excellent) and some of the original people dropped out (which happens). However, I don't think we focussed/chatted enough about what we meant by "class struggle politics\*\*", as more people got involved. Further, I felt the e-mail discussion list was partly to blame. A good number of the e-mails on this list were from people who could best be described as not believing in a non hierarchical form of organisation. Others could only be described as not supporting "class struggle" politics. As many of the organisers were snowed under putting the events on, we did not get the time, or have the inclination to answer loads of e-mails from people as diverse as members of the SWP, RCG, the Green Party, Labour Party and others. I also felt the whole discussion of violence/non-violence was skewed by the e-mail discussion list but I will mention that later.

### **Police intimidation**

One other aspect of May Day 2000 which struck me was the amount of low level, but very open, police intimidation. Groups like the ALF, AFA and more recently RTS and EF! have had this for years - but in a slightly different way. Also, because our aim is to bring down capitalism then we should expect interest from those who benefit from capitalism (the cops, the media, big business, etc). This is one way the state works.

The different with May Day, I feel, and this follows on from J18 and to a lesser extent similar actions before, was how open the police were in their surveillance and intimidation. There were at least two benefit gigs which the police made the owners of the venues cancel. These gigs were to raise funds for the weekend conference, which was a "legal" event for people to come together and discuss ideas. Likewise the gigs were "legal", but this did not stop the police intimidating the venue owners into stopping them.

Police turned up at most of the fund raising events that were organised. Their intimidation ranged from a few cops hanging about outside the venue, to plain clothes cops in unmarked cars videoing everybody entering the venue, to cops entering the venues to make sure everything was OK, although what they describe as OK is anybody's guess. In their eyes, anybody going to ANY event mentioning May Day 2000 made them a threat and therefore it was acceptable to take any action they saw relevant.

But it did not stop there. Obviously the e-mail discussion group was being monitored by the police, as were any websites. There is probably a good chance that some of the organisers had their phones/e-mails tapped - we would expect nothing less, after all it's a good job creation scheme for the "thin blue line". However, when five people went out leafleting for the conference a few days before the event, they were slightly amused to find

they had an escort of a police van, an unmarked police car, four cops (at least) and one copper videoing them for a good half an hour delivering leaflets through peoples doors. As this event was organised over the telephone, we have no idea how the police found out!!! However, this was surpassed by the football competition and picnic organised on the Saturday. Obviously the police thought the idea was to start an armed revolution in the park, although the football boots, food, kids etc should have given them the idea we ACTUALLY were going to play footie and socialise. They turned up with up to 10 cops vans and proceeded to film EVERYBODY at the picnic and then video EVERY match that was played. Perhaps we can get the video of the matches and show it at next years May Day. But the award for the most over the top policing must go to the "Radical tour of the East End" on Friday night. Some 100 participants had a police escort of up to 10 police vans, plus police bikes and the obligatory video cops filming everybody. Cops stopped traffic as people ambled round the East End looking at radical landmarks from our history.

The conference had loads of police around it for the whole two days, and they were filming everybody they could get their cameras on, including some who weren't even at the conference. The police were not too happy though when they were told they could NOT come into the conference to have a look around - fucking cheeky bastards! Then to cap it all we had the small unobtrusive state presence on Monday - which is common knowledge by now.

It seemed that if ANY aspect of May Day 2000 appealed to you, you were fair game for the cops' videos. They seemed to think they had a God given right to gather surveillance on anybody at any event. It is happening more and more, because we are letting it happen every time. We need to work out tactics to change this. Balaclava anybody?

Obviously state harassment may get heavier as our ideas become more and more common. Anybody who thinks different, is to my mind anyway, living in cloud cuckoo land. What I found different with the police harassment over May Day was how open they were about it. This is partly because they know they can get away with it. The main stream media had already softened the public up (we all read with amusement the stories) so that we were seen as a bunch of violent and naive no-hopers. Now the cops assume they could do whatever they wanted and sod our civil liberties (what are they then??). And they knew they would be able to get away with it. After all "violent anarchists hell bent on bringing down society don't have any rights do they, after all they just want anarchy. We can't have that. Give the cops more resources and bigger guns". You could nearly write the newspaper editorials or the police press statements now.

But, being serious, we need to think about this. Alright we can take the piss out of the cops as they video us handing out leaflets or on a demo. But we need to remember that they easily found out where we were leafleting. We need to remember that they will take an

active interest in ANYTHING we do, no matter how "legal" or "peaceful" and ultimately they will use any means open to them to attack us and our ideas. This year it was filming and surveillance. Next year it might be kicking in our doors or arrests to stop/harass/hinder us. Then what. We shouldn't let this worry us, but at the same time we need to be careful. Maybe less idle chat over the web/e-mails/phone; being careful what you say in open meetings; who are you telling what to in the pub afterwards. As our ideas take hold obviously they will start by cracking down on "illegal" events, but soon after will come the attacks on "legal" or open events. We only need to look back a few years to see the police (backed up by the army) breaking up strikes and meetings. But it's a sign our ideas are getting through (if only slightly). It should make us more active not less. We need to keep up activities, but be careful. We need to stay open and accessible, but at the same time stay wary. Basically we need a huge mass movement - but until then we should watch our (and our friends') backs.

### **Violence**

This leads me onto the last thing I wanted to spout on about. Violence and Non Violence. I can hear the groans already, so I will keep it as brief as possible. Two things.

Firstly, the e-mail discussion group. Early on, a huge amount of e-mails were about violence and non violence. Most were in favour of non violence, and one e-mail then concluded that obviously we all disagreed with any use of violence and realised non violence was the ONLY way. This is a WRONG assumption. Seeing that all the e-mails were being monitored by the police and how easy they are to trace, I am not surprised a number of participants did not want to give their views on this subject. Also a number of us might be fed up banging our heads against a brick wall time after time.

Secondly, I heard a number of people leading up to May Day 2000 and especially after the "violence" on the Monday coming out with comments like "if only it had been peaceful on Monday it would have been a great success" or "if there hadn't been violence on Monday the press would have given us great coverage" or "if you hug a copper they will love us all and the brainwashing of the state will fall from their eyes" (alright I didn't exactly hear the last one!). Let's get things straight. The media are there to sell papers, not to support us. They will print what they want and when they want it. They report on violent confrontations (and remember some see blocking a street as a violent confrontation) because it sells newspapers. Likewise they don't report on the thousands of peaceful protests held daily, or the information we put out by the ton, because they think it won't sell newspapers. Or more likely because our ideas repulse them and scare them. They put up with us, at times, because they can make a profit out of us - no more! Likewise the state and the police tolerate us at the moment. However, if we become a real threat (as I believe our ideas will), whether we are using non violent means or at times supporting it by more physical means,



they will attack us with all the means they have. They will use covert and overt tactics and they will use non violent and violent means. Look back at any state that saw their power threatened. They keep all their options open - so should we.

Before and over May Day 2000 the media and the cops built up the stories of violence, not us. They were the ones who needed trouble - for their headline stories and their police budgets. Some protesters may have been prepared to "alter" certain buildings, or defend themselves physically, or even to initiate physical confrontation with the agents of the state (cops). Good. As I said before, we should keep all options open to us and use whatever ones we feel are best at the time. Let's not see only one way forward. Nor should we see forms of violence/physical confrontation as the ONLY option.

Further, violence is a very "catch all" phrase. Some of us differentiate between violence handed out by an armour wearing, baton wielding cop, to the use of force to defend ourselves, to so called violence against property of the rich and powerful. Lastly, just because somebody feels that, at some point during a revolution the state will not give up power peacefully and we might have to use force to relieve them of it or to defend ourselves, does not mean they want to kill every symbol of authority at every opportunity - although some might. As the song goes - "Which side are you on boys?"

We also need to question why some elements of any demonstration feel they need to side with the forces of the state against fellow protesters. Yes we may disagree on tactics, but in the end of the day we need to see what side we're on. Let's not try and sort this out when the cops are attacking us. If at the end of the day you feel you need to side with the state, that's your decision - but be open about it. Large numbers of us are not prepared to accept minor reforms handed down from "above". We want real change and yes that might involve ..... well who knows!

### OK, I'll finish

May Day 2000 (and a number of other events, actions, and ideas) was one way to try and move a step closer to a more ideal society. It may have helped. It may not have. Different people will have different views on it. All I would say is we need to keep trying and looking for ways to change society for the better. May Day 2000 had its critics and problems. However, overall I feel it brought together a huge diverse group of people who managed to work together to make it a success. All the events over the whole weekend also brought together thousands of people from the UK and much further afield, to meet up and discuss and share ideas. Like this issue of "Reflections" we should remember past events and use them to help us in future ones.

\* I use the term very loosely and to call us all something. Sorry if it offends some people, and insults some who would like tighter definitions.

\*\* By this I don't mean only working class oiks can be involved - far from it.

## Comments on MayDay 2000

### Internationalism

An internationalist dimension to left-wing anti-capitalist opposition has been seen in recent protests against such transnational organisations or groupings as the World Bank, IMF, WTO, Davos conference, G7 summit etc. This opposition has taken the form of direct action. Such direct action has been conducted in a number of different areas of the globe; from London to Seattle, from Buenos Aires to Nigeria. We maintain that left-wing anti-capitalists must recognise that the struggle to liberate humanity from a 'late capitalist' world in which transnational corporations and the large imperial states (US, Japan, EU) rule the globe, *can only be conducted on an international basis or it will fail...*

With respect to MayDay, the internationalist make up of the protest illustrated the potential for the concrete linking of struggles; leftist revolutionary groups from around the world - especially from some of the 'semi-peripheral' countries i.e. Turkey, Iran, Iraq - mixed with revolutionaries from the 'metropolitan centres' of the world capitalist system to participate in the events. This brief link, forged through direct action ... must be further encouraged and strengthened. Historically there have been chinks of light in this regard; practical links were forged, for example, during the 1970s between left-wing revolutionary Palestinians and revolutionaries engaged in the struggle against capitalism and imperialism in the industrially advanced capitalist countries. Such concrete links are the basis of a genuinely internationalist opposition.

### Direct action

The key factor which seems to link left-wing revolutionaries - irrespective of the specific type of Marxist or anarchist theory they subscribe to - is direct action. The emerging left-wing anti-capitalist movement exists as a force to the extent to which it bases itself around direct action ... During the MayDay protest - and this also took place during the J18 protest - few slogans were shouted; rather, people gathered, marched off, danced and confronted capitalist property and the state.

At this point the question arises: just what kind of force is the nascent left-wing anti-capitalist movement? We believe that this emerging movement constitutes at the present time a *propagandistic* force .... We must emphasise that we are not setting up a simple dualism between constructive and destructive acts, but instead, seek to explore the necessary interaction of these elements for this *propagandistic* force to be effective.

The *direct action* which took place on MayDay involved, in part, the destruction of the property of transnational corporations; that is the McDonalds 'restaurant' in Whitehall. McDonalds has become a worldwide symbol of the evils of global capitalism: it exploits its workers, its customers and the environment. Consequently, the destruction of the property of this

symbol of global capitalism showed a wider audience that there is an emerging movement fighting for the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production ...

The destructive features of the *direct action* were *propagandistic* in that they ensured that the anti-capitalist protest was reported in the bourgeois press. The reason for this? The news values of the bourgeois mass media are such that violence and destruction are central to their reporting agenda. Firstly they believe it sells newspapers or increases the numbers watching television thus increasing the profits for the news corporations. Secondly, they specifically focus on reporting the violence of an action/demo in an attempt to portray the anti-capitalist struggle in a negative light. Dialectically speaking the bourgeois mass media plays with fire when it attempts to discredit the left-wing anti-capitalist struggle through labelling *propagandistic* action as 'mindless thuggery'. To those disaffected proletarians - who are not presently part of this emerging movement - it shows that there are others who are disaffected with the capitalist system and are prepared to actively oppose it.

A part of the *direct action* of MayDay involved a guerrilla gardening action which attempted to show that the creation of an alternative to capitalism is possible. In Parliament Square turf was dug up and the old lawn destroyed to pave the way for the construction of something new ... In addition to this, a spontaneous 'guerrilla art' action occurred; a piece of turf was placed on the head of Churchill's statue to give him a green mohican! This turned a symbol of the old world upside down... It constituted, as the Situationists would say, an act of detournement (see Ken Knabb (ed.), *Situationist International Anthology*, Bureau of Public Secrets, p8-14). With these actions a section of the urban environment, was temporarily turned into a liberated autonomous zone where people could briefly come to life and where the possibility of creating a revolutionary alternative to capitalism could be glimpsed.

As discussed above, the creation of a liberated space in Parliament Square involved destructive elements. The essential point is that this constructive direct action - which pointed to the possibility of building an alternative to capitalism - involved destructive elements and without these destructive elements this autonomous space could not have been created...

It was only following the attack on Macdonalds that there was confrontation with the police as they tried to prevent the destruction of this capitalist corporation's property. This showed explicitly that the police are mere instruments of capital; whilst capital is the puppet master, the police are the marionettes. In this regard, we maintain that the direct action on future demonstrations should, if possible, initially concentrate its attacks on easily identifiable symbols of global capitalism rather than just seek out confrontations with the state..

From a revolutionary left-wing anti-capitalist perspective the goal of the emerging movement should be the creation of a libertarian communist world (i.e. a world with direct democracy / generalised self-

management / democratic economic planning). To attain this goal we must stress that an element of destruction is necessary. But when we talk of destruction we are specifically referring to the overthrow of capitalism. In other words, anti-capitalist protestors must recognise that a truly libertarian society can only be constructed upon the gains of the old and not after the destruction of urban civilisation as some ecologists advocate! That is capitalism (in its advanced form anyway) has provided the material affluence from which we can construct a truly libertarian communist world.

### Voluntarism

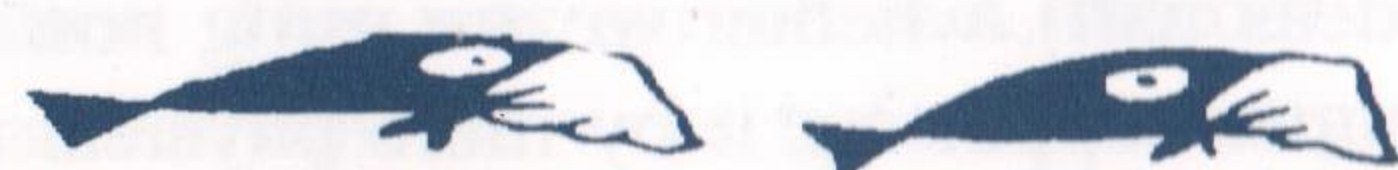
The fact that the emerging left-wing anti-capitalist movement is based around *direct action* reveals - given present conditions - that the movement is *voluntaristic*. The non-voluntaristic mind-set of the authoritarian leftists which stems from an over-emphasis on objective - usually economic factors (i.e. waiting for the next 1930s style economic crash or inter-imperialist war) - should (as it appears to be already) be rejected by the movement... To adhere to a non-voluntaristic stance would mean that the movement would condemn itself to putting off action until the supposed correct historical moment; in effect this would mean the movement would stagnate as it would shift from the politics of revolution to the politics of reformism (witness the SWP and other authoritarian 'left-wing' sects). ... It is in this sense that we declare that the *voluntaristic* stance of the movement must be retained or the recent upsurge of interest in revolutionary left-wing anti-capitalism will wane.

### The revolutionary subject

This nascent movement, at present, consists of a loose association of revolutionary activists; it is not an association of activists based specifically in the sphere of production and distribution or in the universities. In the past student militants or militant proletarians engaged in anti-capitalist *propagandistic* action in an attempt to draw larger sections of the working class into the struggle against capitalism. Today, for various reasons, students are quiescent and workers rarely go on strike ... In other words, the militancy of leftist anti-capitalists is to be found outside of the workplace or the university.

At present the majority of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist countries is provisionally integrated into the capitalist system; this provisional integration has been brought about through a system of mass consumption. (... Having said this we recognise that increasing job insecurity and the existence of an increasing number of people receiving low pay means that we now have - given the return of economic crises in the early '70s - a smaller majority of the proletariat who are provisionally integrated into capitalism ...)

Provisionally integrated proletarians are mesmerised by consumerism due to the ... promotion of false needs via advertising. Such false needs generate dissatisfaction which leads proletarians to purchase more and more consumer goods. Eventually however such dissatisfaction





can lead to boredom with the consumerist system as the proletariat's real needs cannot be realised through consumerism. It is amongst those who are bored with their role as consumers that we shall find proletarians who are potentially willing to participate in the revolutionary struggle against capitalism.

Revolutionary activists should, we believe, engage in *propagandistic direct action* in an attempt to draw sections of the provisionally integrated proletariat into the revolutionary struggle against capitalism... Other groupings of people who could also engage in (*propagandistic*) anti-capitalist *direct action* ... may be found amongst those sections of the proletariat which are not provisionally integrated into the system; for example the unemployed and refugees. We must stress that we are not simply suggesting that revolutionary activists and marginalised groups can, on their own, bring about the downfall of capitalism. Rather, such groups *may* be able to act as catalysts to bring about revolutionary change.

In sum, we think that this nascent left-wing anti-capitalist movement should ... attempt to draw increasing sections of the provisionally integrated majority of the proletariat into the revolutionary struggle against capitalism; in this respect the movement must try to act as a catalyst. Secondly, this emerging movement must try to construct concrete links with leftist revolutionary struggles taking place in other parts of the globe... The fact that these 'third world' revolutionary groups participated in the direct action in Parliament Square, Whitehall, etc, rather than attend the politically irrelevant MayDay gatherings called by the trade unions bureaucrats we see as not only encouraging but of *political significance for the future development of this movement*. We must build upon this brief link - forged through *direct action* - and go forward to construct concrete links with 'third world' left-wing revolutionary groups who maintain a presence in Britain. In other words, *internationalism needs to become more than just an empty slogan, as it too often is on the revolutionary left, in order that our resistance can truly become as transnational as capital*.

*Some MayDay Marxists*

## May Day 2000 conference

We came away from May Day 2000 inspired and revitalised - and these are some thoughts from the discussions we've had in Leeds since then.

As participants in the May Day 2000 conference we don't constitute a whole movement. It's important to remember that we are just part of a movement. Obviously there's also those people who knew of the event but didn't attend because they had to go to work, couldn't get a babysitter, or couldn't afford the train fare; and then there's those people who'd have gone if they'd heard about it but didn't, and those people involved in campaigns and struggles in other countries. But crucially the vast bulk of this 'movement' is made up of people

who don't consider themselves 'activists' or 'political' but who nevertheless have to struggle against oppression and exploitation in their everyday lives - people who, just like us, are struggling for new ways of living.

Obviously this begs a number of questions. What is a 'movement'? Is it 'the movement'? Is it more useful to think of 'movement' as a verb (doing word) rather than as a noun (thing word)? In other words, should we think of 'movement' as the way our struggles change (move) society and social relations? And then what does 'struggling for new ways of living' mean? This idea of 'people who struggle against oppression and exploitation in their everyday lives' seems to include a huge amount of people, but the times when those struggles goes beyond the defensive and towards the more creative type activities (self-valorisation) are a lot less common. Perhaps those struggling for new ways of living are people who live in communes miles from anywhere or perhaps it's LETS schemes or it's DIY music. Well, it probably does include those but more importantly we think it's about how people change themselves in struggle. Again this is a crucial point about movements - they are a time when things move. Political positions that have apparently been static for years suddenly shift. The paralysis we find ourselves in during times of defeat disappears overnight.

So we need to begin with the struggle, not 'the movement'. Our movement will only come together, form itself, through struggle. Discussion, debate and argument among 'ourselves' are as much a part of our struggle against capital(ism) as anything else. Sometimes, though, we got the feeling that many May Day 2000 participants thought that 'the movement' comes together at events like the conference, where the aim should be to discuss, agree and unite, prior to going out into the world and spreading the good word. This idea of the conference somehow being the movement is what really fuelled the debate about whether the conference should be described as 'anarchist' or 'anti-capitalist'. (On the other hand, as people who argued for the conference to define itself as 'anti-capitalist', we think there was also a real issue at stake about how useful the conference could be. In that respect, 'anti-capitalist' is not a label the same as 'anarchist' - it's actually a step forward in the battle not to be so hamstrung by definitions).

Instead of getting so hung up about terminology we should always keep sight of the fundamentals of our politics: asking the questions 'what are we against?' and 'what sort of world do we want to live in?' The answer to the first question is obvious: we're against capital. But what does this mean? Sometimes it sounded to us like the 'alternatives' being offered at the conference are just different forms of the same thing: different forms of capital. For example, in the session What is a Movement? (Sunday, 4-6) we were asked whether we were against 'child labour'. Yes, of course we are. But does this mean that we're happy to live in a world where we become wage slaves at sixteen, eighteen or twenty-one years of age? Are we happy for children to succumb to stress-

related illnesses as they face an ever-expanding battery of tests, starting from an ever-younger age, in an education system designed to produce them as labour power? Are we against 'big government' and 'multinational corporations'? Yes! But does that mean we're in favour of 'small government' and 'small business'? And is Romania really 'not capitalist' as one person insisted!!?

Similarly in the session on GM food (Saturday, 10-12) we were asked if we were against genetic modification. Yes, perhaps we are. But this is more because GM is part of capital's strategy for increasing control over our means of subsistence (and hence our ability to struggle against it - paralleling the 'Green Revolution' of the 1960s) than because of possible health risks, although the latter are also important. And does this mean we should therefore take the side of less-developed capitalist States against the seven 'more advanced' capitalist States in their debates over this issue? When the former are successful is that a victory for us?

Sometimes it seemed like some conference participants understand the world in terms of 'us and them' - and them'.

The first 'them' is the capitalists and their organisations, very clever and perhaps all-powerful. The other 'them' is 'the working class' or 'ordinary people', complicit, ignorant and/or too lethargic to 'do anything'. This view of the world isn't very helpful! It parallels the ways the traditional Left used to talk: because working class people are not 'politicised' (or 'active'), they need to be educated and prepared for their historic role. The same thing in a different guise: if you're not part of the solution you're part of the problem.

Of course there is another tendency: to criticise activists mercilessly but see an idealised working class 'out there' who spontaneously make all the right moves. We're criticising ourselves here as we're often guilty of this last approach. Obviously what's needed is to rid our heads of this divide altogether.

These ways of thinking don't do anyone any favours, 'activists' or 'politicos' alike. Our struggles are connected, and can only be finally won by destroying capital, a social relation between people, whether we all recognise that or not. This means more than convincing people that some things are good, and other things are bad - it's about collectively changing the ways we live our lives.

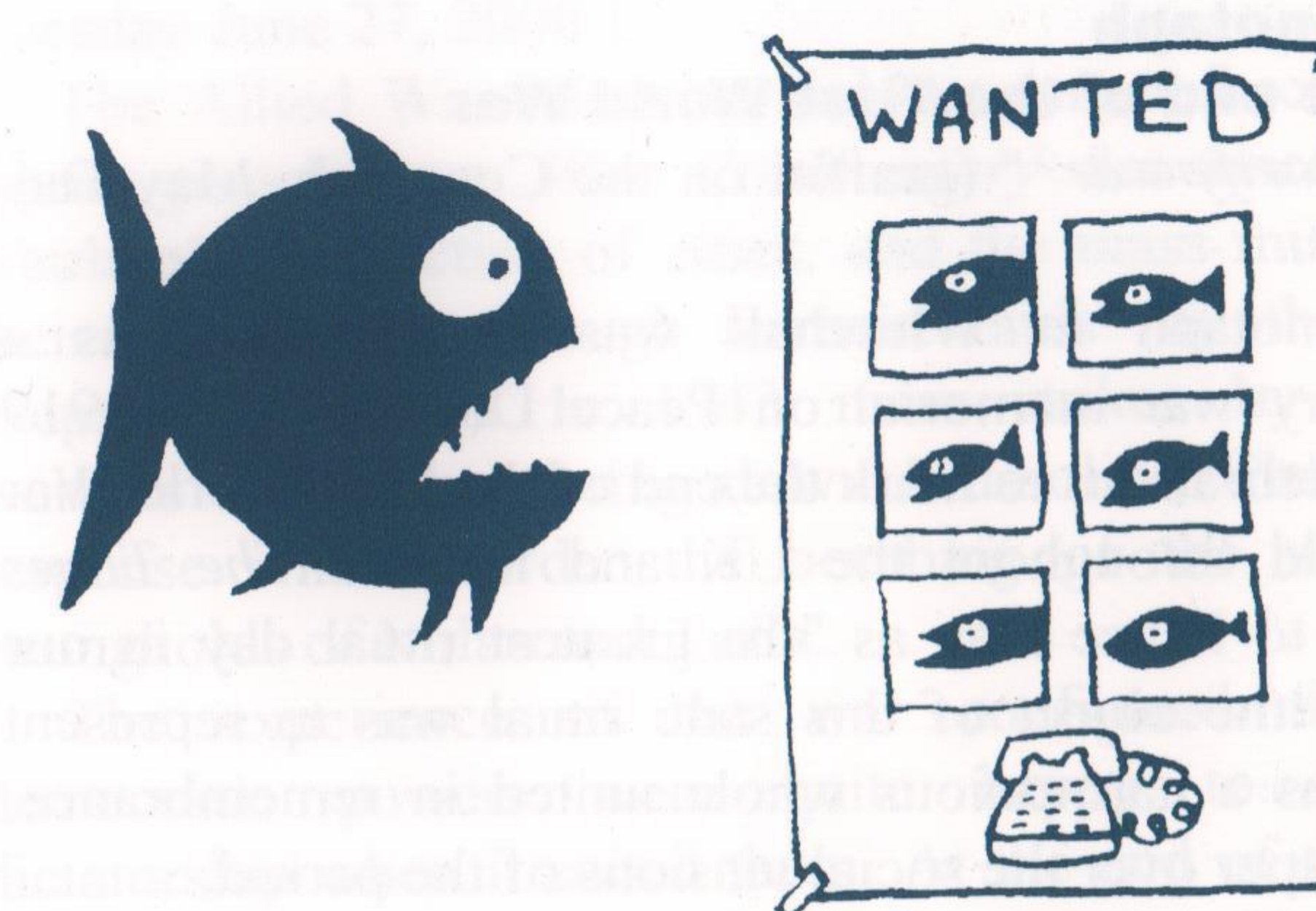
This is also why it's important to remember that we are struggling in our own personal lives, here and now, not in some abstract theoretical way. If we think of the film 'The Godfather' one of the themes running through it is 'this isn't personal, it's just business' - an idea which is used to justify the often fatal violence its characters do to one another. On the other hand, Al Pacino's character, Michael Corleone, understands why his father became and stayed successful as a 'Don': he knew that all business was personal: 'It's all personal, every bit of business. Every piece of shit every man has to eat every day of his life is personal. They call it business. OK. But it's personal as hell.' We're not mafiosi of course - but

our politics are about us all trying to work out in practice how we can live together as human beings without fucking ourselves and each other up. Of course it's personal!

As loads of people have pointed out, there's a 'common bond' between the struggles of all sorts of different groups - over housing, food, wages, child care, sexuality - which is becoming clearer and clearer as 'the movement' moves. We think this is a more useful way of conceiving of our activities: as activities. We're not interested in 'who's who', in what kinds of people are or aren't involved in 'the movement', for its own sake. We're interested in what different people are doing, some 'political', some 'not', some 'activists', some 'ordinary folk', in relation to how they hinder capital's movement. Massimo De Angelis (Sunday, 12-2) said that capital moves like a shark: if it stops still, it dies. All kinds of activities put obstacles in its path. What we're interested in is making these activities, this movement, stronger and more effective.

If anyone wants to take us up on any of these ideas, we're always up for debate. You can contact us:

*c/o Anti/Theses, Cardigan Centre, 145-149 Cardigan Road, Leeds LS6 1LJ; or at anti\_theses@hotmail.com*



## Churchill, the Cenotaph and May Day 2000

This response to the graffitied official monuments in London on May Day 2000 looks at the origins of war memorials in the social conflicts at the end of World War One and at the myth of the Second World War as an anti-fascist crusade.

*"The destruction of representational images is the destruction of a hierarchy that is no longer recognised... The solidity of the images was the expression of their permanence. They seem to have existed for ever, upright and immovable; never before had it been possible to approach them with hostile intent. Now they are hauled down and broken to pieces" (Elias Canetti, "Crowds and Power", 1960)*

As Canetti observed, the statues of the old order are



often prime targets in turbulent times. Compared with the numerous Stalinist monuments demolished in Eastern Europe since 1990, or Nelson's pillar in Dublin (blown up by the IRA in 1966), Winston Churchill and the Cenotaph got off lightly with a few daubs of paint on May Day 2000 in London.

Yet it was precisely the superficial damage to these monuments that generated the most political/media outrage in the aftermath. Far more than the Reclaim the Streets 'guerrilla gardening action' or the trashing of MacDonalds in Whitehall. Far more too than the racist attack in the Midlands on the same day when a black man, not a man of stone, was set alight.

Walking around London we can see many statues of generals, politicians, monarchs and imperialists. Taken together these physically embody the British nationalist mythology with its colonies and conquests. Their largely unnoticed integration into the everyday life of the city in itself stakes a claim for the 'naturalness' of the ideology they represent. It is only when we tamper with the symbolic power of these inanimate objects that their role becomes apparent. The minor redecoration of monuments on May Day touched on one of the cornerstones of the ideology of the British state - the nature of the First and Second World Wars.

### **The Cenotaph and the end of the First World War**

"Why glorify war?" (graffiti on the Cenotaph, May Day 2000)

The Cenotaph in Whitehall was first opened as a temporary war memorial on Peace Day, 19 July 1919 when celebrations to mark the end of the First World War were held throughout the UK and Ireland. *The Times* referred to Peace Day as "the greatest ritual day in our history"; the object of this state ritual was to represent society as a harmonious whole united in remembrance, and to paper over the social tensions of the period.

Internationally, as *The Times* also observed, it was a time when 'a spirit of unrest broods over the earth' with the shock waves of the Russian and German revolutions still reverberating around Europe and beyond. On Peace day the *Workers Dreadnought* called on workers to join their French and Italian counterparts in a strike to "protest against the shameful war on the Workers Republics" of Hungary and Russia (*WD*, 19 July 1919). A two day general strike did take place in Italy, and there were also strikes in Norway, Austria and Berlin, although in Britain only some London dockers seemed to have heeded the call (*WD*, 26 July 1919).

In the British armed forces there was widespread discontent. In January and February 1919 what Andrew Rothstein has described as "an extraordinary protest movement of strikes and demonstrations" demanding demobilisation shook the military. Whitehall itself was a focus for this, with thousands of soldiers commandeering lorries (painted with slogans) to put their demands to the War Office and the Government.

On the home front there were strikes, including on

Peace Day itself on North Eastern Railways, and in the mines of Yorkshire and Wales. In Luton, resentment at the treatment of ex-servicemen fuelled a riot on Peace Day in which the Town Hall was burnt down. In the next few days crowds attacked police stations in Wolverhampton and Swindon, and there was rioting in Coventry. Peace Day celebrations were also marked by violence in Dublin (where a policeman was shot in clashes with crowds) and Cork, a symptom of the pressure the British empire was coming under in Ireland, India, Egypt and elsewhere.

Clearly the social conflicts of the post-war period were not hidden even on this day of apparent national unity. Even the moderate leftist Labour Leader declared: "The industrial situation, the increasing cost of living, the 23 wars which, according to Bonar Law, are still going on, the dissatisfaction of the ex-service men and their treatment, all combine to make the public feel the celebration of peace when there is no peace, is a ghastly mockery. In the circumstances the "peace" celebrations assume the form of the burial ceremony of the hopes of all who supported the war to make an end to war' (17 July 1919).

The following year the Cenotaph was rebuilt as a permanent structure against a background of further protests and riots by unemployed ex-servicemen. Ever since it has functioned as a national shrine where politicians have gathered on Remembrance Day to shed their crocodile tears for the British war dead while actively preparing for further military adventures.

The Critical Arts Ensemble have argued that 'Monuments... function as reflective spaces where individuals can commune with the wonder and mystery of the state. In these areas, the contestational voice is silenced. In these spaces, the whole nation lives as a single community in total agreement, all social problems dissipate... where the rift between citizen and state is healed in a sick moment of a spectacular reconfiguration of memory'. The Cenotaph would seem to be fit this picture exactly. The message of the death cult centred around it with its poppies and its silences is not to question why people died but to accept that it was worth it, and will be worth it again. Whatever genuine feelings ex-servicemen and women may harbour for their dead colleagues, the function of the Cenotaph is to glorify the British war machine and ensure the death of many more.

### **Churchill and World War Two**

"We have opposed the war because it is not a war for freedom, because it has always been a war of conquest, a war for imperialist gain' (*War Commentary*, London, December 1943).

"The Capitalist system - production for Profit instead of for use - is the cause of War! In the struggle for markets, in which to realise their profits, the Capitalists of the world clash, and then expect their 'hands' to become 'cannon fodder'" (*Solidarity*, Glasgow, May Day 1939).

The case against Churchill was clearly articulated by

James Matthews, the former soldier jailed for painting on his statue on May Day: "Churchill was an exponent of capitalism and of imperialism and anti-semitism. A Tory reactionary vehemently opposed to the emancipation of women and to independence in India. The media machine made this paunchy little man much larger than life - a colossal, towering figure of great stature and bearing with trademark cigar, bowler hat and V-sign. The reality was an often irrational, sometimes vainglorious leader whose impetuosity, egotism and bigotry on occasion cost many lives unnecessarily and caused much suffering that was needless and unjustified".

Schnews too praised the 'pleasing improvement' to 'the statue of that racist old bigot Winston Churchill. He once described communists as "swarms of typhus-bearing vermin" and held similar views about everyone else who wasn't rich, reactionary and British like himself. Justifying the slaughter of indigenous peoples, he wrote "I do not admit that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America or the black people of Australia by the fact that a stronger race has come in and taken their place".

Still this skirted around what Churchill's statue represents in a broader sense - the myth of the Second World War as a glorious anti-fascist crusade, marked by social unity and Britain's position as a major global power with right as well as might on its side. All parts of this story are to say the least questionable - the absence of class conflict has always been exaggerated, with strikes by miners and others during the war; Britain was already in decline as a global power, with the US and the Soviet Union playing a more significant role in the defeat of the Axis powers than is usually acknowledged in British history. And despite the support of the left (including the Communist Party) for the war effort, a significant minority of anarchists and communists denied that the war was about fighting fascism at all. Many of them spent time in prison for refusing to be conscripted into the armed forces, while the editors of the anarchist *War Commentary* were jailed for inciting disaffection from the military.

The anarchists and communists who refused to fight in the war were in no sense soft on fascism. Many of them had direct experience of fighting fascists in all corners of Europe from the East End of London to Spain. Marie Louise Berneri, prosecuted for her role in editing the anarchist paper *War Commentary*, was herself a refugee from fascist Italy. Her mother had been arrested by the Gestapo when the Germans reached Paris.

But with their experience of the First World War, the Depression and the Counter-Revolution in Spain, this generation of revolutionaries were only too aware that capitalism in all its guises - democratic, fascist, Stalinist - produced war, terror and poverty. Berneri's father, Camillo had been murdered by Stalinists in Barcelona during the May Days of 1937, a graphic illustration of the fact that fascism could only be defeated by uprooting all forms of capitalism.

They were also aware that the German and Japanese

war machines had been built with the help of imports from the US, Russia and the British Empire, and that the ruling class 'did not object to Hitlerism when the German workers were beaten in the streets and sent into concentration camps. But when they see the rise of a militaristic power threatening their colonial interests, their loot, then the youth of the workers have to be trained and thrown into bloody struggle in order to protect those interests' (John McGovern, speech at a No Conscription League meeting in Glasgow, October 1939).

Refugees from fascist terror in Europe, Jews included, faced internment as 'enemy aliens' alongside nazi sympathisers. By mid-1940 8000 internees had been gathered into camps in Britain, to be deported to the dominions. In July 1940 800 internees being forcibly transported to Canada died when the SS *Arandora Star* was sunk by a German U Boat.

Although retrospectively the Holocaust has been used to legitimise the Allied war effort saving Europe's Jews was not a priority at the time for British and American governments (see David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust*). For instance, recently declassified documents show British and US intelligence knew in advance about the Nazis' 1943 plan to deport Italian Jews to Auschwitz but failed to act on it (Britain 'could have saved Italian Jews', *Guardian*, Tuesday June 27, 2000).

The Allied War Machine did not target fascists but whole populations. *War Commentary* denounced 'the wholesale destruction of cities, and the mass murder of their populations through terrorist raids' by the RAF (September 1943). In 1943 mass strikes by Italian workers had helped bring down Mussolini; Churchill's response was to order the bombing of the workers' strongholds of Milan and Turin.

The experience of the war confirmed that the democratic powers were quite happy to support dictatorship when it suited them. At the end of the war, British forces helped crush opposition to Churchill's plans for a right wing monarchist puppet government in Greece. By December 1945, 18,000 had been jailed and hundreds had been killed, paving the way for 20 years of military dictatorship. The hopes of Spanish exiles that Allied victory would sweep away Franco's fascist regime were likewise disappointed.

### **The British Empire**

"Was the ruling class which shot down the workers at Tonypany in Wales concerned about Freedom? Or those who intervened on the side of the coal-owners against the miners in 1926? They have burned down cottages in Ireland, in India, in Egypt and in South Africa. Boys and girls of nine years have worked in the mines in India, where for demanding the right to freedom 375 men, women and children were shot at Amritsar" (John McGovern, speech at a No Conscription League meeting in Glasgow, October 1939).

The British Empire itself was an exercise in racist dictatorship across large areas of the world before, during



and after the Second World War. As the Glasgow-based Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation noted in their May Day 1939 manifesto 'Resist War!', 'The British Ruling Class... dictate by fascist methods to the colonial workers and peasants' (Solidarity, May 1939).

Between the wars the RAF had frequently been used to bomb rebels in India, Iraq and elsewhere. In Iraq, 9000 rebels were killed or wounded by British forces in an unsuccessful revolt against colonial rule in 1920. Whole villages were destroyed by British artillery, and suspected rebels shot without trial. The RAF were used to machine gun villagers and to launch gas attacks, notoriously supported by Churchill who stated in 1919 that he was "strongly in favour of using poisonous gas against uncivilised tribes".

Soldiers from the British colonies played a significant role in the Allied victory, as did native resistance forces in western colonies occupied by the Japanese. Their reward was further repression at the hands of both Churchill and the post-war Labour Government.

In the Dutch colony of Indonesia, Japanese forces surrendered to the local resistance movement in August 1945. The resistance proclaimed a republic independent of Dutch colonial rule, to which Britain responded with a massive armed assault on the city of Surabaya. The city was shelled from British battleships and bombed by the RAF before being invaded with the help of rearmed Japanese soldiers under British officers. In this way Dutch colonial rule was re-established.

70,000 servicemen from the Gold Coast in Africa served with British forces in the war, out of a population of just 3,000,000. In 1948 police fired on a demonstration of demobilised ex-servicemen protesting at rising costs of living, killing two and sparking a major uprising. A general strike against British rule in 1950 was met with a state of siege and arrests.

In 1948, the British Labour Government presided over mass repression in Malaya, the occupation of which gave Britain control of 45% of world rubber production and 30% of the world output of tin. Striking workers were shot by police and workers organisations banned. In the 12 year armed conflict that followed, the British set up concentration camps and used assassination squads against suspected supporters of the Malayan Communist Party and other opponents of its rule.

We don't have to look too far to find plenty of other horror stories from the other allied powers - witness the labour camps of the Soviet Union or the racist terror in the USA. (29 black workers were killed by police and other racists in the Detroit riots of June 1943).

To say that the allied powers committed atrocities before, during and after the war is not to downplay the Holocaust, or to claim that it was a mere detail (as the French fascist Le Pen put it). Of course there have been other genocides before and since, but there was something unique about deliberate mass industrialized extermination informed by a scientific ideology. Equally there is something obscene about creating a hierarchy of massacres, or arguing that one massacre justifies or

nullifies another.

### Why does it matter?

Is this all just a question of historical argument? Unfortunately not. The ideology of democratic, humanitarian, anti-fascist warfare is continually resurrected to legitimate the militarism of the British State and its NATO allies, as seen in the former Yugoslavia and Iraq.

More broadly anybody serious about confronting capitalism has to work through the legacy of British imperialism, racism and warfare which continues to shape political economy today. How else can we understand what's currently going on with asylum seekers, or the continuing importance of the City of London in the world economy.

The far right and many liberal leftists claim to oppose capitalism but want to hold on to the nation state and its armed forces. Capitalism isn't just global financial institutions like the WTO or the IMF. Nor is just an abstract system of production and exchange. Confronting capitalism means challenging all that holds it in place - the military, camps for asylum seekers, nationalism and monumental myths about the past.

See [www.geocities.com/pract\\_history](http://www.geocities.com/pract_history) for references.

### Reflekshuns from K.

Like a lot of folk I've spoke to since MayDay, and most likely, like many of the people contributing to this, I've read with increasing disinterest about the "public outrage" that followed London's MayDay demonstrations. I'm yet to meet any of these 'outraged' people, but then again I don't know the leader writers from either *The Daily Mail* or *The Mirror*.

I haven't read about, however, the way the police and the press intimidated people in the lead up to the demonstrations. How weeks of extreme surveillance, threats of mass arrests, "30,000 prepared officers" and the "army on standby" created a veritable air of paranoia on the day. I haven't read why the police advised the parks department to board up statues in Parliament square, yet failed to warn the local McDonalds of the expected anarchist rampage - or indeed why the only shirtsleeved policemen on the streets that day were in front of this same McDonalds - or more precisely in front of several hundred pressmen, in front of McDonalds. I haven't read about why 5,000 people took to London's streets or what their concerns about growing global capitalism are. I never read about the week of MayDay actions in Bristol, or the demonstrations in Sheffield, Cardiff or Manchester. I never read about the 1,000 MayDay protesters who were prevented marching in Copenhagen. I never read about the blockades of Austria's Chamber of Commerce or Ottawa's pro-corporate Council of National Issues. I wasn't informed by any of the mainstream media about the 200 people attacked by mounted police in Sydney as they protested

the Westpac bank over their involvement in Australia's Jabiluka Uranium mine, or the 10,000 demonstrators in Zurich who were met with a hail of rubber bullets and tear gas on May 1st. I never read about the tens of thousands of Turks who took over Istanbul and Ankara in opposition to a \$4bn IMF loan given to the country's leadership in return for privatising the state's industries. I never read about the MayDay demonstrators in the Philippines who were held back from storming Joseph Estrada's presidential palace by water canon, or the pitched battles between South Koreans and police who struggled to keep students and workers MayDay parades apart.

I never read about the 1.7 million workers who demonstrated in over 1000 locations in Japan or the 30,000 who marched in Luanda for increased wages. From Paris to Mozambique, Sri Lanka to Brasilia tens of thousands of people united under the MayDay 2000 banner in opposition to the stranglehold capitalism is exercising on the planet.

In fear of its people, the Pakistani government cancelled the 2000 MayDay holiday, raided meetings and arrested protest organisers. In contrast, the new East Timorese administration declared a new MayDay national holiday in response to a mass workers gathering.

None of this appeared in either *The Sun* or *The Guardian*. Surprisingly I never even read about the 200 policemen hospitalised by anti-fascist MayDay protesters in Berlin.

On the other hand I did hear calls by British politicians, on all sides of their, long discarded, fence, for increased controls over domestic dissent. The new prevention of terrorism bill is sliding through the House of Lords as I write. When it becomes law, which will be soon, they will cite what happened on MayDay in London to legitimise it.

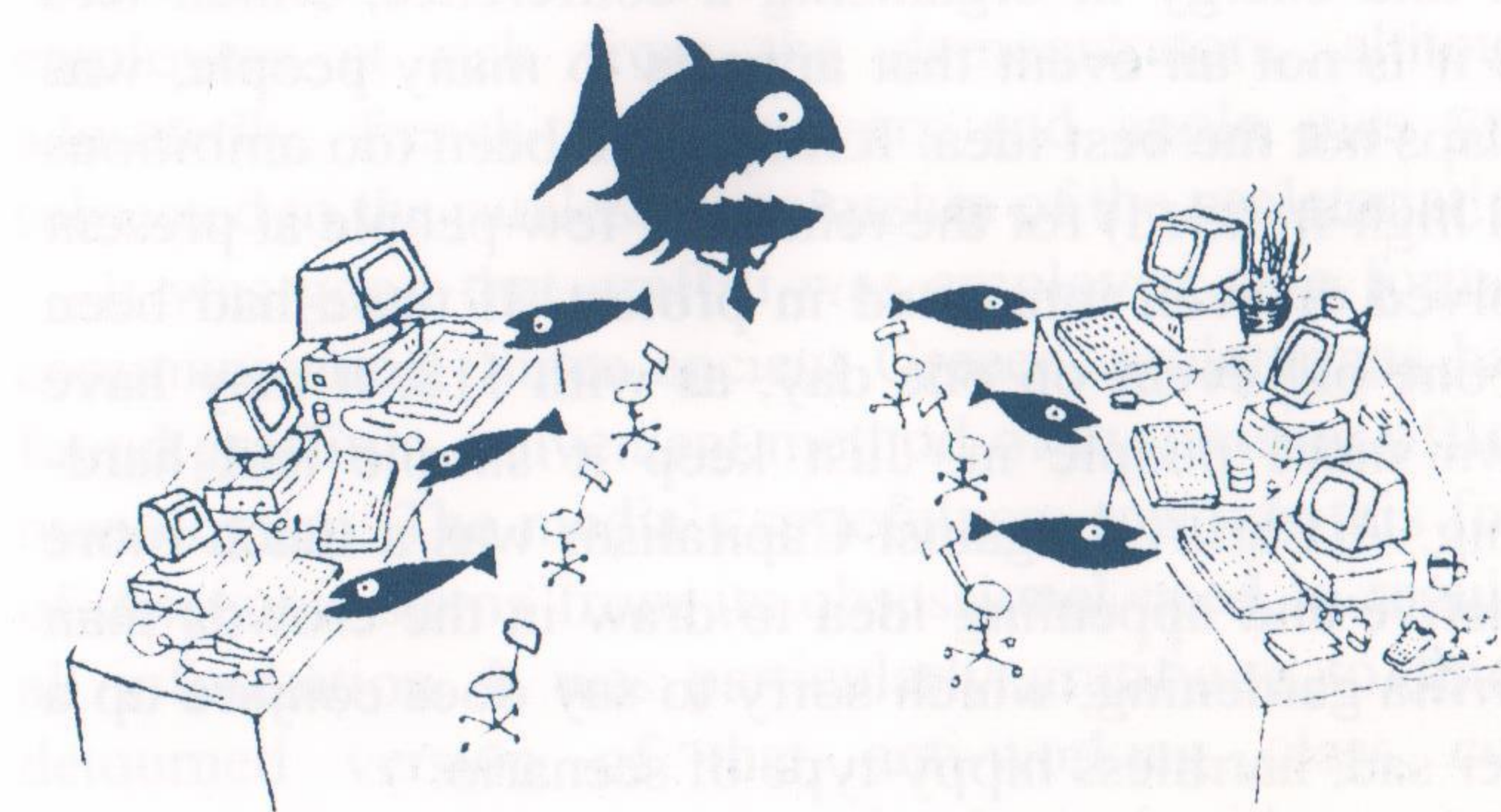
Blair's plan to ice Livingstone out of the London mayoral race, with a high profile riot in the city, may have failed. But the seed of: 'Anti-capitalist equals cenotaph defacing thug,' was one thing that Blair and his border guards of capitalism, were desperately hoping would take root after the Parliament Square action.

Equally insidious and out of touch with the reality of the situation is the crap that's been spouted in the liberal 'thinking' press. The well educated suits who know how to 'resist' without breaching proper etiquette. The George Monbiots and Zac Goldsmiths of this world who sit in their thatched Hampshire cottages and accuse anyone who dares to stall a truncheon blow to the skull, of setting the environmental movement back x amount of years. They seem to be blissfully unaware that job insecurity, redundancy, bad housing, homelessness, hunger, poverty, in Hackney, Hull or Hartcliffe destroys communities and lives in the same way it does in Manilla or Ladakh. People in the so-called developing world are being fucked over - yes. But at the same time, people here in Britain have been so far removed from the decision making processes that affect their lives, when they get the chance - and with every fucking entitlement - they take

some power back. Perhaps we should take heart that those who pull the power strings are so keen to marginalise our voices. WTO strategists - as exposed by Bruce Silverglade - who attended the meeting - have met to discuss ways of "de-legitimising" the groups who opposed them in Seattle. At the same time the corporations and global institutions are going flat out to prove how socially concerned and environmentally friendly they are. The World Bank has created an entire environmental wing, Shell have pulled out of the Chad/Cameroon oil pipeline - though Exxon are still very much involved and are waiting anxiously for Clare Short and her World Bank cronies to sign away central Africa's oil legacy, eco-system and any hope of social reform they may have harboured.

Following on from J18, N30, A16 and MayDay, tens of thousands of us will head to Prague for September 26 to jump on the IMF and World Bank Group's first and hopefully last annual meeting to be held in central Europe. The Prague authorities have drafted in 11,000 cops and the FBI are in Czech co-ordinating the 'ring of steel' that will protect the death dealers. However the dragon of social revolution that awoke on January 1st 1994, when the Zapatista Liberation Army marched out of the Lancondon jungle to reclaim their land and their freedom. The leaderless, justice-hungry, beast that reared up on the streets of Seattle in November 1999, is more than a match for the entire alphabet soup of corporate controlled law enforcement agencies.

Prague, I'm told, is a beautiful place in September - and if enough of us go we can stop this fucking machine in its tracks. After Seattle, the global capitalist leadership cannot afford another significant defeat on this scale. These are crazy days for global resistance and make or break times for the planet and its inhabitants. By building on the links we've made and the successes we've had, we can and will change the course of history. The alternative doesn't really bear thinking about, does it?



### 'Comradely but critical'

Here are a few of my reflections on the May Day action - I hope they are "comradely but critical". First, the turnout - to be honest it was a bit of a disappointment to me. Less than 10,000, probably around 5 to 6,000. I had hoped for more than J18, but instead only half that



number turned up. Why? Some people were maybe put off by the police announcement of their biggest mobilisation for 30 years, either because they don't like violence/confrontation or they don't want to be filmed or picked up for previous actions, but that doesn't fully explain to me why there weren't double the numbers of J18, which was what many people expected. I can only think that the following may explain it, based on many people I've spoken to: J18 had just one event, one assembly point, one time on one day, May Day, in contrast was less well-defined. There was this conference business spread over three days, guerrilla gardening and something at the same time as that at Bond Street, which I assume fizzled out or failed to take place. To be honest, almost all the people I spoke to about it were just not interested in a conference (and could not afford the cost of travelling and/or staying in London for that length of time), they wanted to get stuck into a big street action.

Then there was confusion as to what was actually going to happen, we all know the importance of keeping the Authorities guessing and sowing confusion amongst them as to what's going to happen, but my impression was that the confusion was equally sown amongst potential supporters. First we thought it was going to be a giant game of Monopoly, then a protest against the Terrorism Bill, then a conference, and finally guerrilla gardening. This led some people predicting that numbers on the streets would be spread too thin, leading to greater risk of police attack, so they felt they wouldn't bother coming because it could be a flop. Then when the guerrilla gardening idea finally emerged quite late in the day with the strange slogan "this is not a protest". The obvious response to this slogan is "well, if it's not a protest then I'm not coming". That slogan might have meant something to those in the know, was it a quote from someone or something? But to the uninitiated it just seemed daft or at least a bit counter-productive, I'm not suggesting it was a major reason for poor turn-out, but it might be one small factor. The decision to spend a lot of time and energy in organising a conference, which let's face it is not an event that appeals to many people, was perhaps not the best idea. It may have been too ambitious (and high-minded) for the relatively few people at present involved or even interested in protest. If there had been just one big event on one day, as with J18, it may have drawn more people in. Just keep it simple and hard-hitting. A Carnival against Capitalism was a much more attractive and appealing idea to draw in the crowds than guerrilla gardening, which sorry to say does conjure up a rather sad, harmless hippy-type of scenario.

*Anonymous 1*

## One day spectaculars

The first points I'd like to make refer to my discomfort with the movement which seems more and more to be built on a strategy of one day spectaculars. Some good observations were made on this in *Reflections on J18*, mine are more elementary.

There is a pressure that each Big Day must in some quantitative way (fun had, cops injured, £££ damage) be 'better' than the last. This will never happen. Movements will always be knocked back, but if they are built on firm foundations of ongoing resistance they will be able to take this.

It was highly unlikely after J18 that MD2000 would be better and so as a result the wind has been taken out of the sails for a bit (in Britain at least). Having said this the 2-day conference was a big and bold step forward.

So much time and energy is used to plan just one day. No sooner is one over then the next is being planned - a consistent cycle of planning for one off spectaculars (as this is how they will appear to most people as the contact between 'activists' and working class people is minimal, if at all existent). We're so busy organising each other we can't take the time to explain to people on the 'outside' why we are doing it.

The second effect of the domineering nature of these protests is that a lot of very important political events have passed by with no effective resistance from anarchists. People were too busy before J18 to oppose in an effective manner the mass bombing of people living in Serbia and May Day 2000 saw the chance of any anarchist view point of the mayoral election farce getting across to significant portion of London's population. And what an opportunity that was with so few people voting.

Likewise, recently the media and government have had a free rein attacking immigrants from Eastern Europe. We are paying a heavy price in pursuing this 'one day spectacular' strategy.

Moving on, the lack of a firm set of political ideas may have worked in the past, but now has meant that Marxists have been accepted into the fold. This principle of inclusivity, which the environmental movement has had, works for so long as everybody involved considers everybody else their equal. But where a group or individual sees themselves or self - or some other - as superior such an attitude is no longer enough. A hard line of total exclusion should be taken with people who have only a mouth and no ears!

Whilst we are on the subject of people with no desire to listen, does anyone still believe that it is worth having anything to do with the media? Capitalists aren't going to allow us to use their weapons to beat them with. Not that it matters as more and more the ways of talking about and referring to the real world used by the establishment - journalists, police, politicians - are going to be not only irrelevant but meaningless to most people. The bridges between their world and ours - left wing parties and unions - have collapsed. Let us not replace them.

The various single issue campaigning groups and individuals who over the last few years have come together to form the anti-capitalist movement have progressed incredibly in terms of political ideas and brought a freshness and energy to protesting which is superb. But it must be realised that any kind of movement which hopes to destroy capitalism will not survive, let alone grow to eventually carry out its task, if

it does not have widespread working class support.

To begin reaching out and putting down some roots it must start focusing on things that matter directly to working class people while at the same time not regressing to single issues and reformism. We must attempt to get a revolutionary message out to the people.

A good development in this direction is CAGE where opposition to prison and police station building is both spirited and highly political.

## Mindful thuggery and the spectacularisation of drama

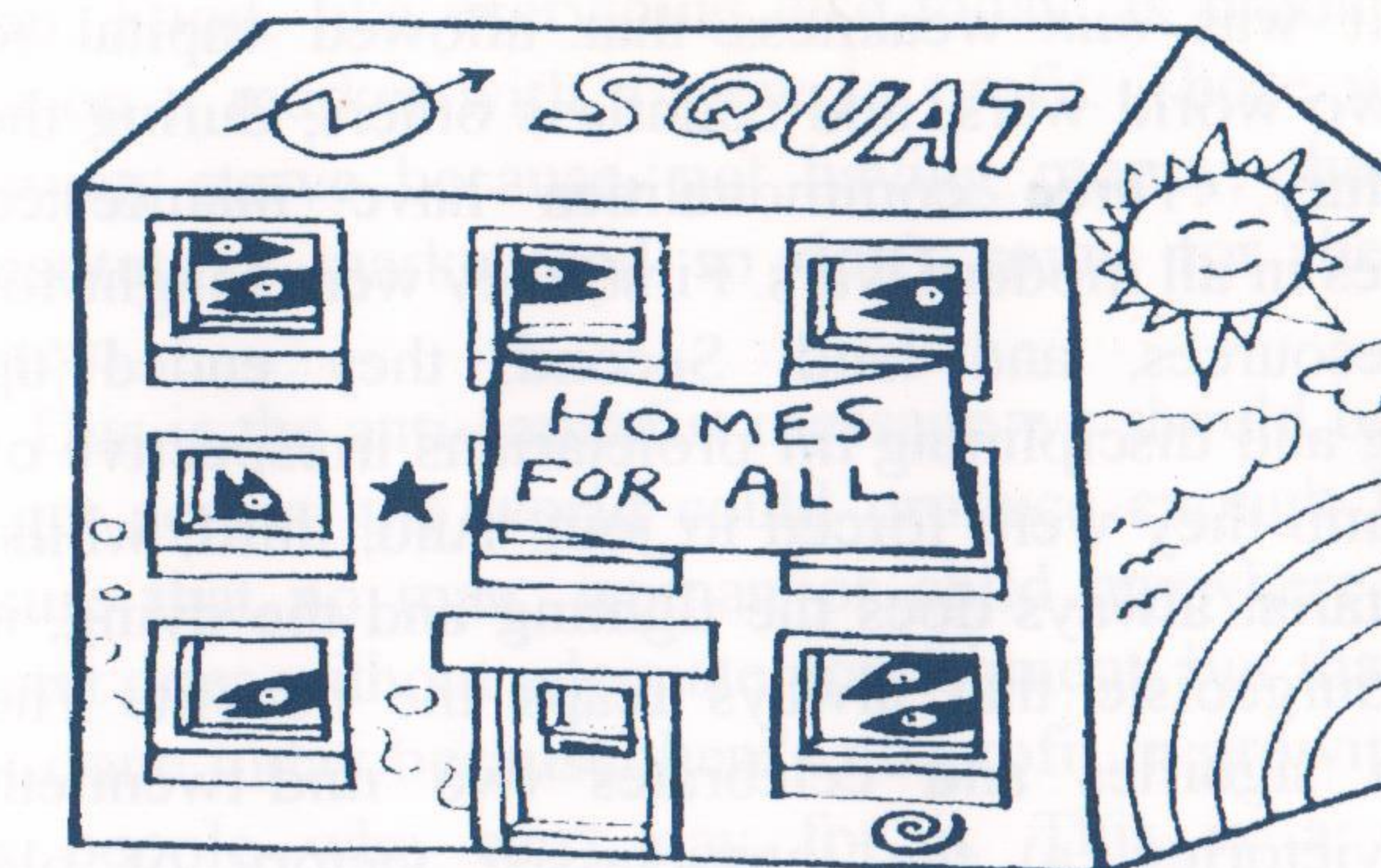
(This text comes from a leaflet distributed after 1 May)  
*Points worthy of consideration:*

- *This year's May Day demonstration had many novel features.*
- *The class struggle is entering a new, more intensified phase*
- *Different sections of the proletarian international are more readily learning from each other.*
- *The right wing of capital is encouraging the (limited) formation of a new left wing of capital to contain the proletariat more effectively. The revamping of 'civil society' is a moment in this strategem.*

*It was a good day to be alive!* May Day 2000 was, in Vygotskian terminology, a 'Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD). The ZPD is the distance between what a person can do or understand independently and what they can potentially do and understand with the guidance of other capable peers. In short, it is a dialectical learning zone. Different sections of the proletariat brought their experience, competence and sense of humour to a glorious festival and learned to share them with other working class people. There are certain truths that are best decoded collectively. In the event, the hardened 'molotov-cocktail brand of revolutionaries' learned the value of psychogeographic urban landscaping from street reclaimers, the 'veggie brigade' understood that a gulf of blood separates us from the police, media and all sections of the state, the 'theory freaks' came to know the joys of critiquing the law of value through unmediated action and the 'fetishizers of spontaneity' came to recognise the value of *mindful thuggery*. Oh, yes, brothers, sisters and fellow hermaphrodites, *May Day 2000 was a good day to be alive!*

*To be imprisoned in the viewless winds, and blown with restless violence round about the pendant world!*

It was good that the proletariat ignored the Houses of Parliament, and attacked Ten Downing Street instead. After all, during the *real* phase of capital domination, it is the executive and not the legislative (or the judiciary) that reigns supreme. A scottish prole began kicking the crowd control barriers outside Leviathan's residence. Soon, he was joined by a middle eastern giant of a man who was carrying his kid on his shoulders. They had an



entertaining father and son routine. The son would throw bottles at the cops from above, whilst the father helped his scottish comrade demolish Leviathan's lines of defence, from below.

It was good that the trafficking of commodities was brought to a temporary halt, by people deciding to picnic on the grassy concrete. The process foreground contours of power masquerading as innocent circulation. It was also good that the crowds dispersed in order to let a distressed pregnant woman drive through.

It was good that photographers were dealt with more forthrightly than usual. One cameraman was chased and beaten up by a small group, another thrown off the roof of a bus shelter. The simple precaution of acquainting the evil celluloid inside these infernal damnations with the purifying rays of Sol Invictus should now be added to our defensive repertoire, as a matter of course. It was also good that revolutionaries targeted *professional* image looters who work hand in glove with the state, and not every 'militant-tourist' armed with a cheap *camera obscura*.

It was good that a money exchange was set on fire. What better critique of 'yellowing, glittering, precious gold', than to torch the den in which all currencies gather to decide our fate? Likewise, it was a joy to see an establishment as anti-working class and unhealthy as McDonald's subjected to a spot of imaginative DIY redecorating. Contrary to media lies, at no time were the employers at risk from the demonstrators, although admittedly, french fries, burgers and apple pies were subjected to the ruthless dictatorship of the proletariat!

It was good that graffiti was employed as a form of communication. Since ancient Greece, proletarians have found graffiti a convenient method of by-passing official monologism. The media's spitefulness towards this form of discourse stems from its obsessional need to regulate all information. It was particularly gratifying to find a detoured version of that anti-working class cunt, Winston Churchill, providing the festival with a suitable focus of contempt. Churchill was hated before WWII, tolerated as a necessary evil during the war, and kicked out of office at the earliest opportunity, after the war, by the British proletariat. May he rest in hell!! The defacing of the Cenotaph brought into sharp focus the contested nature of signs. For whereas, the bourgeoisie claims it as a sign of respect for the war dead, the proletariat sees in it a constant reminder of our defeats at the hands of the



bosses. It was *our* weakness that allowed capital to initiate two world wars, and countless others, during the last century. Three commonalities have manifested themselves in all modern wars. First, they were fought for profit, resources, and land. Second, they ended up punishing and disciplining *all* proletarians irrespective of which camp they were forced to join. And, third, whilst the proletariat always does the fighting and the dying, it is the bourgeoisie that always reaps the benefit. The Cenotaph signifies and celebrates two mid-twentieth century victories: a) the intra-classist victory of old capitalists (Britain, USA, USSR) over upcoming capitalists (Germany, Italy, Japan); and, b) the inter-classist victory of capital over the *whole* proletariat.

*As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport.*

Oh, but the generosity of the bourgeoisie knows no bounds! Having butchered millions of us in battlefields, they graciously provide us with reified monuments as a constant reminder of the *dictatorship of capital*. Adam Smith once advocated the teaching of a personal 'song of death' from childhood, to help acclimatise the proletarian rogue to his/her inevitable fate, as with native American 'savages'. The Cenotaph is the stone of Kaaba which the congregation must circumambulate ritualistically, to renew faith in bourgeois *hegemony*, whilst chanting their 'song of death'. On May Day 2000, we sang a different tune, one that strikes at all nationalists and war-mongers. We despise the scum who start wars for capital accumulation, cajole us into uniforms and force us to open fire on our proletarian brothers and sisters. We recognise no 'imagined communities'. *We recognise no war, but the class war*. The choice between fascism, liberalism, social democracy and Leninism is a false one. As false a choice as that between supporting a liberal prime minister, with social democratic tendencies (Blair), or a social democratic Mayor, with liberal tendencies (Livingstone). Large sections of the proletariat are superceding such deceptions, hence, the bosses' fear.

*Monster, I do smell all horse-piss, at which my nose is in great indignation.*

The state stratagem for containing the new generation of radicals, seems to be two-fold: 1) to escalate the usual modes of surveillance, classification, and punishment with a view to breaking our will to fight; and, 2) to allow a partially revamped left wing of capital (i.e., labourism in its social democratic manifestation plus a few Leninist organisations), to police and marginalize revolutionaries at future events. British patriots associated with the industrial faction of capital have been emotionally manipulated to perceive May Day 2000 as a personal affront. In this context, the artificial conflation of cenotaph and synagogue, and the broadcasting of May Day nazi demonstrations in Berlin is calculated to confuse and mystify the politically naive. *Violence* is posited as a de-contextualised metaphysical entity, so that the media can equate the subversive *violence* directed against private property and the state, with the reactionary attacks of racists on blacks and asylum seekers. *The*

*dictatorship of the proletariat* can be 'violent' or 'peaceful', it can be 'silent' or 'deafening', it can be expressed 'individually' or 'collectively', with a 'frown' or a 'smile'. But it must always be out in the open, for all to see, debate and critique. And it must oppose *thanotocracy* (regime based on death) with *life*.

Whenever the bourgeoisie preaches *morality* from its pulpit so vociferously, two conclusions can be drawn: firstly, that the private-public spheres of behaviour are dangerously out of synch, and must, therefore, be brought into harmony with *common sense*; and secondly, this intensity of moral panic and indignation is usually a prelude for a new offensive against the working class.

As May Day 2000 came to a close, it became clear that what began as *dramatic theatre* (characterised by genuine antagonism, unpredictability, free-flowing and playful subversion), had metamorphosed into a *spectacle* (characterised by ritualistic confrontation with oh, so, predictable rules and outcomes). We will do well to look at the evolution of the medieval festival, which over centuries was gradually institutionalised in three directions: toward the *fair* (which commercialised the gift-exchange dimension of the festival); the *circus* (which used clowns and performers to sanitise the festival); and, the *carnival* (which after a period of retaining the spirit of rebelliousness, has been, more or less, 'cleaned up'). Unless we are careful, this is the fate the bourgeoisie has in store for *our* May Day.

*'Well and good, gentlemen, do you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the dictatorship of the proletariat.'*

*'Proletariat is a rope, fastened between animal and overman - a rope over an abyss. A dangerous going across, a dangerous way-faring, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and staying still.'*

*'Laughter is the social consciousness of all the people, and signifies the defeat of power, of earthly kings, of the earthly upper classes, of all that oppresses and restricts.'*

Melancholic Troglodytes

## Make the Earth a common treasury for all

In my view the violence that took place at the London event was completely counter-productive and those who set out to engage in it should be told they're idiots.

Presumably the purpose of the event was to make a point, among other ways via the media. As one of those distributing leaflets both before, during and after the event advocating, as the front page article of *Maybe* put it, "a stateless, moneyless society where goods were produced not to make profits but simply because people needed them", I was pleased with the free publicity given by the media beforehand to the idea of "anti-capitalism". OK, it didn't have much content but the mere use of the

word by them itself did the work of spreading the idea. In other words, before the event the media were, no doubt unwittingly, doing our work for us.

After the event, it was a different story. Then, they were able, this time quite wittingly, to discredit the idea of anti-capitalism by associating it with what they called "mindless violence". For, as Murray Bookchin points out in his latest book *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left*, "to ordinary people, however dissatisfied they may be, no protest is more frivolous than the sight of a spindly kid throwing a stone at a cop - the image, par excellence, of irresponsible, juvenile bravado". Male bravado, I would add. All the previous good publicity was undone.

Of course, the violence wasn't "mindless", it was "minded" - and that makes it worse. Presumably, the idea of those who planned it was to discredit the police in the eyes of other participants who, in their arrogant view, were less informed about the repressive role of the State and its agents. I don't know if they're satisfied but the effect was to change the whole tone of the event. Suspecting - in fact, no doubt knowing through undercover agents - that there was going to be violence the police adopted the tactic of trying to contain the participants and so confine it to an area of their choosing. This involved hemming in all the participants, whether violent or not, into the selected area and not allowing people out except on a one-by-one basis.

In the meantime people had to wait as the advocates of violence provoked the police in order to teach them (the other participants, not the police) a lesson. Hardly a carnival atmosphere - and hardly an encouragement for people to participate in future events. In fact, one person I met said he won't be going to any more. I am sure there'll be others who'll have made the same decision.

So, the lesson here would be to make it quite clear to the advocates of violence that they're not welcome and should stay away.

As to the content of the event - guerrilla gardening - there's nothing wrong with allotments, but they're not the solution to the problem of world hunger, are they? The Liberals may have won elections in the 1880s with the slogan "Two Acres and A Cow", but I don't think that "A Quarter Acre and No Cow" is going to find much echo these days. Small may be beautiful but that doesn't mean that big is necessarily bad.

In the case of feeding the world's malnourished millions, big is essential, at least to start with. Large-scale farming backed up by the farm equipment supplied by modern industry will have to be a key element in feeding the world's present population. OK, the farming methods can - and should, as far as possible - be organic and the technology and science ecologically-acceptable, but it's still going to be relatively large-scale.

UN agencies like the FAO have recorded that much more food could be produced than is at present. So people are not starving today because we don't have the resources, equipment and knowledge to produce the food. It's because it is not profitable to produce it for

them. Food, like everything else today, is produced for sale on a market with a view to profit. Those who are starving starve because, not having money, they don't constitute a market and so don't count for the profit system.

This is the anti-capitalist message we should be trying to get across: the world could produce enough food to ensure that no man, woman or child anywhere on the planet goes without adequate nourishment, but that this is not done today because there's no profit in growing food for people who can't pay for it. This is a striking demonstration of the way in which the so-called profit motive is in fact a barrier, not an incentive, to producing enough.

At the same time we should put forward the alternative to capitalism. Which is precisely the same frontierless, stateless, moneyless world where "goods are produced not to make profits but simply because people need them", where all the Earth's resources have ceased to be the private property of corporations or States but have become, in the words of Gerrard Winstanley, "a common treasury for all". How about "Make the Earth a Common Treasury for All" as the theme of the next anti-capitalist event?

AB

## It pays to be critical

It pays to be critical - only through fierce, thorough and open debate can any benefit be gained. Let us, then, be clear, for our very lives depend upon the truth.

There are two main interrelated criticisms to be made of the May Day 2000 event: the method of its organisation and the perceptible lack of purpose.

Personally, I was left standing round like a lemon, unclear as to exactly what was going on, once I reached Parliament Square. RTS had clearly been mendacious in the leaflet they had handed out, discussing us 'moving off' to a different location to engage in the guerrilla gardening and open mike events. Obviously, the intent was to put the police off the scent, but the effect was to leave myself confused, and feeling extremely passive and at the mercy of the invisible pilots of the event.

Likewise, I was left wondering - what is the actual objective of this event? Clearly, it wasn't to establish any autonomous zone, or to obtain any tangible gain by direct action - it was all planned to last one day. Rather, it was more in the line of a plebeian revolt, simply creating a spectacle of dissent. A carnival to put two fingers up to the city authorities. Beyond that, there was simply a pervading sense of dissent, rather than any specific active content or futurity.

The mixture of these two factors meant that for most of the protestors, rather than engaging in an empowering self-creative event of which they were in control, that they were largely passive spectators, consuming their dissent. In seeking to avoid leadership, RTS et al neglected the very openness and democracy that could well have proved an efficient shield against the lies of the



media.

Whether the negative aspects of the event were caused by agents provocateurs or political hacks, its clear that the diffuse aspect of the event meant that individual actions would break out over which the rest of the protestors had no control - I met several people in Trafalgar Square seriously hacked off with whoever brought the violence down upon us.

That the media so determinedly set out to rubbish the event, and afterwards resurrect the anarchist bogey-man gives a clear indication of the political situation, but unless such lies can be challenged openly on the political front, such lies will prove to be an effective tool to contain the anti-capitalist threat; and any further events will become mere justifications for erosion of already pitiful civil liberties. The fate of the Wobblies at the turn of the last century shows us how this can and will happen.

The fact, though, that anti-capitalism is firmly on the agenda is a highly positive step - the more so, for the googlie it has thrown the Leninists: the SWP relegated their coverage of the May Day 2000 event to the penultimate page of their rag. Their whole programme has been thrown into question by naked anti-capitalism outside the official Labour movement.

*Bill (S.P.G.B.)*

## Account of May Day

I arrived in Parliament Square at about 11:00, equipped with a bag full of goodies such as compost, a trowel, bottles of water in case of tear gas attacks, flyers and a large quantity of assorted Queen Mum stickers. I was a little disappointed with the turnout, which was about the same as J18. Considering how much our movement has grown since then I had expected more.

I also noticed an unhealthy number of leftists wielding offensive literature like Socialist Worker and The Socialist. Between them, state socialists must have numbered about 500 at most, but it seemed like every damn one had a bundle of newspapers under their arm. I have no objection to state socialists turning up to actions, but it is quite obvious that most of them just turned up to sell their newspapers and had no intention of participating in the guerrilla gardening.

Once the guerrilla gardening actually started, it went like a dream. The police had no way of stopping us as we unearthed turf from Parliament Square, which rolled up like astroturf! It was a joy to see activists scaling lampposts before hanging banners all around Parliament Square. We reclaimed all the surrounding streets, placing huge sections of turf on the pavement.

At around 13:45 we all moved off, following the drummers. Most of us stopped outside Downing Street and shouted at the riot police for about 5 minutes. Then we reluctantly moved off down the street, following the drummers who had deserted us. It was only a matter of time before we reached McDonalds...

Most anti-capitalists are very politically literate, and

informed of the tyranny of multinational corporations. We know that McDonalds are responsible for the destruction of acres of the rainforest, ethnic cleansing in displacing indigenous tribes, the slaughter of millions of animals each year, exploiting their employees, selling unhealthy food, lobbying against minimum wage and union recognition legislation and forcing their propaganda down our throats. So it was only natural that on passing I shouted Fuck McDonalds! and prepared to throw a bag of compost at them.

I had tied up my bag of compost very tightly with string the night before, and it took me a few seconds to rip apart the bag. By this time, several people were already kicking in the windows and doors. I threw my bag of compost at an already shattered window, which was fun but was not the symbolic act I had hoped.

I have to admit I did find the events very amusing and like the majority of onlookers, cheered on the vandals. However, this gave the pigs justification for the brutality which was to follow. I have no objection to vandals, and acknowledge that they are an important part of our movement, but in future I would advise against vandalism so early on, especially with so many cops around the corner.

By the time we reached Trafalgar Square (14:15), the riot pigs were already closing in on us in ridiculous numbers. It seemed that the state had finally found a way to stop mass anti-capitalist actions: by calling in just about every cop in the country! The police were very uncompromising, even for them, and several people were injured. There was no hope of fighting back as there were way too many pigs.

After a few hours the carnival atmosphere had been lost and I was tired, hungry and bored. The drummers deserve a big thankyou for doing their best to keep everyone's spirits up, but more would have been nice. A mobile sound system would also have changed things dramatically. After a while it became apparent that the police were intent on keeping us for as long as possible, probably to get extra overtime pay.

Some people somehow managed to keep singing anti-police songs after about 5 hours standing around. However, applauding Winston Silcott for being a cop killer is distasteful. Winston Silcott was cleared of the murder of PC Blakelock (I still think it was suicide - that's what the police always say when young black working class males are found dead in police cells). The observation that PC Blakelock has no head is entirely accurate, and I will sing along to that any day.

I was very annoyed when I got home to hear that the Cenotaph had been graffitied. People who die in wars are overwhelmingly working class and are victims of capitalism. If this was done by genuine activists I understand if you did it without thinking, and advise you to make an anonymous apology, which I will accept. Churchill was a different matter, and whoever graffitied the statue of that war criminal has my respect.

Overall, J18 was much more of a success, but the actual guerrilla gardening was as fun and effective as

anything that happened last year. Too bad the mainstream media focused on the Cenotaph and McDonalds.

Thought for the day: If we spent half as much time building up our own media as we do worrying about the mainstream lies, it wouldn't matter what they say about us because we would be able to counter them with our own propaganda.

*Message mailed with the anonymizing software at  
<http://anon.xg.nu>*

## What's all the fuss about?

*A Letter to Bystanders of the Emerging Real Democracy Movement.*

What was all the fuss about at Seattle, then Washington, now Prague and last May Day? What are people getting so wound up over? Aren't things getting better - after all we haven't had a world war for over 50 years, economies are booming with the Internet, and most countries seem to be moving toward electoral democracy, aren't they?

It's true that at the start of this new century we have much about which we can be grateful for, and proud of. World war does now seem unlikely, especially as most of Europe is working together. The human race has conquered once devastating illnesses such as smallpox and polio, increased life expectancy in less-industrialised countries by over a third and witnessed their infant mortality rates fall by more than half in thirty years (UNDP, 1993). Meanwhile new technologies are allowing people to communicate across great distances instantaneously, minimising national and cultural barriers, keeping people in touch, and creating new opportunities for people with vision, energy - and luck.

Yet, while this new digital economy drives forward on a pneumatic Nasdaq, and venture capitalists make millions within a month, approximately 1 billion of the world's people struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. Their traditional means of providing for themselves through fishing or farming are continually undermined as time and time again their resources are expropriated by others to feed the global market. Even in the worlds' industrialised countries, high levels of unemployment, falling real wages and the increasing use of short-term contracts are creating a climate of stress and insecurity for the majority. The more extreme symptoms of this malaise can be found in growing violent crime rates around the world and increased levels of armed conflict within states (UNDP, 1994).

Meanwhile increasing numbers of people face environmental catastrophe. In the last few years freak weather episodes have become more common and devastating, such as the 1998 hurricane 'Mitch' in Central America, which killed approximately 20000 people, and the 1999 floods in Venezuela which killed still greater, if unknown, numbers. For the people left to rebuild their lives, climate change is not a theory. Nevertheless, our societies continue to increase the rates of deforestation, air and water pollution and extinctions of flora and fauna. Biologists estimate that half of all life on earth is at threat

from extinction, because of the actions of humankind. Disrupting the web of life may have untold effects on our own security. Already, environmental pollution is affecting our health and it is probable that you are currently reading this book with 500 more chemicals circulating in your body than someone living in the 1920s, increasing your risk of allergy, infection, infertility and cancer (Colborn, Dumanoski and Peterson Myers, 1997).

I don't list these events, concerns and injustices out of morbid fascination or pessimism. I list them because they are symptoms of a sick social and economic system. The environmental degradation and social dislocation we are facing is a direct result of the policy paradigm that now dominates political discourse in most of the world's nations. There are two pillars upholding this policy paradigm. The first pillar is the idea that increasing the production, consumption and amount of money changing hands in an economy is intrinsically good for society. The second pillar is the notion that international trade helps in this expansion and is consequently an important goal for society to pursue. Study after study proves these pillars are made of sand and that we need to reassess what really benefits people - yet business, the media and politicians 'carry on regardless'. I'll quote David Korten:

*The continued quest for economic growth as the organising principle of public policy is accelerating the breakdown of the ecosystem's regenerative capacities and the social fabric that sustains human community; at the same time, it is intensifying the competition for resources between rich and poor - a competition that the poor invariably lose.* (Korten, 1995 p. 11)

That quest for growth has been accelerated by the globalisation of the world economy and the unveiling of a form of hypercapitalism where trillions of dollars are switched around the world in a day, where companies that have never turned a profit are worth billions, and where the future of corporations is decided by a handful of investment managers who are primarily interested in short-term share price. The collective opinion of these investment managers is the compass from which the courses of corporations are set, and in turn the course of governments seeking the favour of investors. Hypercapitalism is spiralling out of control, becoming disconnected from the people living in its midst. This disconnection is heightening the negative social and environmental consequences of the growth paradigm. A former banker and US political adviser, Jeff Gates, is worth quoting on this:

*Lacking a reliable human-based signalling system for identifying investments that have damaging, even transgeneric effects, today's capitalism - indifferent, remote and numbers driven - continues to direct resources into projects that endanger our planetary resources.* (Gates, 1998 p. xxv)

The growing frustration with unaccountable institutions and corporations has now spilled onto the streets: the May 1998 meeting of the G8 in Birmingham, the January 2000 meeting of the World Economic Forum



(WEF) in Davos, and the November 1999 meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle where 50,000 demonstrators took to the streets, and recently in Prague ([www.s26.org](http://www.s26.org)). NGOs and individual activists working on a wide variety of issues from turtle conservation to child labour have been uniting in opposition to the unfettered and unaccountable hypercapitalism that globalisation is producing (Lynch, 1998). The meetings and direct actions of May Day 2000 are part of this growing rebellion of people against an increasingly undemocratic system of global capitalism. The events on May Day have been described by many as 'anticapitalist'. The reasons for being against capitalism, especially its current global form, have been made clear. But what are we actually for? What is our alternative?

Margaret Thatcher once said of free trade and economic growth that "There Is No Alternative". In recent years and months people around the world have been sharing ideas and visions with the aim of proving her wrong. Some are coming to this debate from Marxist perspectives, others from Anarchist analyses, still others from the spectrum of light green and deep green ideologies. Some are more concerned with making immediate changes to people's lives today, while others see this as a waste of energy if we are to cure a sick system and not merely bathe its wounds. While the reformist vs radical debate rages about the means to cure the system, it's obvious to many of us that we share the same end goal: communities of environmental and social well-being shaped by real, meaningful democracy. Many of us have been turned off by 'democracy' as the term has been kidnapped by governments who use money from big business to con the electorate, seeking votes from people who are reliant on the corporate media for their information. But real democracy isn't about sham elections and meaningless choices between puppet politicians. It's about people having control of their own lives, and not being affected by groups that aren't accountable to them. In the world today the majority of the largest economies are corporations not states. These corporations affect our lives but are not accountable to us. As people who seek communities of environmental and social well-being, we expect to see every aspect of our society - businesses, governments, international agencies, charities, pressure groups, and religious organisations - contribute to this goal. If they don't they must be confronted and made accountable to us - the people who's lives they affect. This is real democracy.

I believe strongly that this can only be successful if we emphatically rule out violence as a means to achieving our common ends. This is because a non-violent society (in all senses) is our end goal. You don't spend to get out of debt, and you don't dig deeper in order to get out of a hole. Anyone who uses or advocates violence is working against the growing movement to see real economic, social, cultural and political democracy break out around the world.

As protestors on the streets we may be more visible to the world media, but we are not alone, as there are

millions of people working in the voluntary sector toward progressive social and environmental change. The conclusion of the forum of non-governmental organisations that met 8 years ago in Brazil at the first Earth Summit, illustrates this growing global movement:

*We the people of the world will mobilise the forces of transnational civil society behind a widely shared agenda that bonds our many social movements in pursuit of just, sustainable and participatory human societies. In so doing we are forging our own instruments and processes for redefining the nature and meaning of human progress and for transforming those institutions that no longer respond to our needs. We welcome to our cause all people who share our commitment to peaceful and democratic change in the interest of our living planet and the human societies it sustains.* (International NGO Forum, 1992)

Many people have responded to this call and are helping form a global movement for real democracy. Isn't it time you joined the fuss?

Jem Bendell

author of 'Terms for Endearment', [www.jembendell.com](http://www.jembendell.com)

## Reflections on May Day

Because the hour of liberation is far away it does not mean that this is the hour of surrender.

Despite the emergence of the 'new anti-capitalist movement', the revolutionary struggles to replace capitalism world-wide are in a very severe crisis, the worst since the First World War in fact. I don't want to be pessimistic, but it is a reality that most activists have failed to grasp. To understand this would be useful in constructing the new movement.

Humanity is paying a terrible price for capitalism's victories in the 80s over the socialist block and the anti-imperialist movements in the Third World. The era that opened in 1917 and stretched to the Cuban Revolution of 1959, through the historical defeat of the US in Vietnam in 1975 and on to the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 has closed. In the five years after victory in Vietnam, no fewer than 13 revolutionary movements came to power, in the 20 years since then imperialism has ensured that none have. The first major attempt at overcoming capitalism has been defeated. The once mighty USSR, with all its failures and flaws nevertheless provided the most serious challenge to imperialism, has been torn down together with Eastern European socialism. Together with the failures, all the advances the working classes had achieved have been swept away as capitalism has been restored. A spokesperson for Fiat said eagerly that Eastern Europe would be "like the Third World, but on [western] Europe's doorstep." Already in Russia life expectancy has dropped from close to that of Britain to nearer that of Cambodia.

Meanwhile, the anti-imperialist movements that struggled in the Third World have lost the economic, military and political support once provided by the socialist block. There has been no let up in the arms sales

and donations and training in how to use them given by imperialist countries to reactionary regimes fighting against anti-imperialist movements. Arms continue to pour into Turkey to suppress the Kurdish revolution and into Israel to suppress the Palestinian revolution. Here too these movements have suffered retreat and annihilation. Once Central America, Southern Africa and Palestine were the focuses of anti-capitalist struggle in the world. Today, the Central American revolution has been reduced to parliamentary politics and the Intifada that mobilised hundreds of thousands of Palestinians has been traded for a bantustan dependent on whatever crumbs of aid imperialism offers and in which Israeli security is verified by the CIA.

In nations in which anti-imperialist movements actually managed to seize power the developments have been similar. Whatever restraint the socialist block once forced on imperialism is gone. Imperialism can launch attacks against any Third World country that threatens the interests of capitalism with no fear of retaliation at all. All across the world from Nicaragua to Angola to Cambodia anti-imperialist governments have been forced into retreat and accepting capitalism back. Some like Sandinista Nicaragua have been completely wiped out.

The remaining socialist countries are isolated and this is forcing the reintroduction of capitalism to varying extents. China is becoming more and more capitalist while Cuba has done its best to maintain the achievements of socialism. However it cannot hope to carry on indefinitely keeping socialism going on one small underdeveloped island in a hostile sea of capitalism.

The resulting "New World Order" was proclaimed as one of freedom, prosperity and democracy by the Cold War victors. Already the lie has been long exposed, buried under the devastation of war and economic crisis. All the things that made the struggle against capitalism come about are still with us, the facts that it cannot provide what the working class of the imperialist countries and certainly not the working classes and peasantries of the Third World with what they need. Therefore it is not surprising that the struggle continues, at a lower level and on a smaller scale at the moment, but it does exist.

### Green shoots in the ruins?

Amidst the ruins of defeat there are hopeful signs. A new and inspiring movement has even emerged in Mexico in the 90s the Zapatistas of Chiapas, and the Colombian people fight on undefeated against seemingly impossible odds in their uprising that has been going since the 60s. Where does the 'new anti-capitalist movement' come into this? It is difficult to tell for several reasons. Firstly it is a very diverse movement and secondly there has not been much time to see its true colours or where it is going. However I really do believe that the new movement is progressive. It is certainly a very refreshing experience in comparison with Britain's 'old left.'

The old left was a major obstacle to the anti-capitalist

movement and a very damaging one because of its appearances that looked socialist. It represented the more privileged minority of the working class. These privileges come from the profits obtained by the super-exploitation in the Third World, that is from imperialism. That was the reason they could never oppose imperialism, they could never kill the goose that laid their golden egg. Therefore they could not lead any serious challenge to the state because it was this state that maintained their privileges, so anti-capitalist struggle was a non-starter.

This explains things that would seem bizarre otherwise. For example how "Red" Ken could denounce May Day demonstrators and praise the police. How the Socialist Worker's Party can call for the destruction of the Cuban socialist revolution while asking for a vote for the oh so socialist Labour Party at every opportunity, and how the Worker's Revolutionary Party could find itself on the same side as Thatcher and the CIA in praising the anti-socialist Solidarity in Poland.

The new movement is free from these corrupt influences. It does not have the hypocrisy of the old left, it does not have the shameless support for imperialism, the contempt for the mass of the working class, the delusions in social democracy (Labour) and the racism that is inevitable in any supporter of the state in which black people form the most oppressed section of the working class.

But it is not just that the new movement does not have these bad points, it has progressive features as well. Although the word imperialism is not much used, there is an understanding and acceptance that exists in many sectors. Imperialism means that the capitalist class of Britain does not just exploit the working class of Britain, it also super-exploits the Third World. This super-exploitation is well known in the new movement, in the form of sweatshops in which workers are paid a few pence for producing an item that is sold for tens of pounds for example.

The new movement wants to get rid of capitalism, we know that but what does it want to replace it with, and how? That is less clear. It is almost as though we have set out knowing that we have to leave this place behind us but don't yet know where we want to go or by what route.

May Day in London was strongly supported by supporters of revolutionary anti-imperialist movements, especially from Turkey who painted their symbol of a hammer sickle and assault rifle on the base of a statue of Winston Churchill to the horror of the bourgeois media, with the *Evening Standard* writing the headline "Red Turks bring violence to our streets." We need to strengthen the recognition that this stage of capitalism is the imperialist state, the form that exploits the whole world. We need to recognise that capitalist imperialism is necessarily racist, and that the struggle against imperialism and racism are the same as the struggle against capitalism. That the Turkish revolutionaries are struggling against the same thing as our movement is, that the roots of what the revolutionaries there face in the fascist, massacring dirty war state are right here in



imperialist Britain. By doing that the new movement must develop and strengthen its anti-imperialist, anti-racist and working class character. In that way we will find where we want to go and how to get there.

But the 'new anti-capitalist movement' inevitably raises an issue that has been off the mainstream agenda since the defeat of the Soviet Union. That is the necessity of an alternative to capitalism, in which production is consciously directed to meet the needs of society rather than being motivated by individual profit, that is a struggle for a real socialist society.

Long Live Globalisation - of the People's Struggle!

*Eleno*

## Globalisation

### Origins - History - Resistance

*Excerpts (for the full article see [freespeech.org/mayday2k/readings](http://freespeech.org/mayday2k/readings)).*

Globalisation has become a *bête noire* for all sorts of people – activists and academics, reformists and revolutionaries. At a time when nationalism is resurgent, we see an internationalisation of struggle. And yet... confusion reigns – confusion over our objectives, our ideals, our methods and goals. A confusion that could be fatal – if we miss our chance when it is presented to us we might not get another one. We are living in critical times. Therefore in the following pages we examine the background to globalisation, the struggle against it and some of the confusions and misunderstandings that surround it.

The current trend for opposing 'globalisation' appears to have fallen for an inverted version of the same illusion that those in favour of it suffer from – that what is occurring (and has been for approximately the last 20 years) is something new and radically different to what has gone before. Capitalism is the most adaptable and voracious system in history; free trade, free movement of capital, the growth of international regulatory bodies and institutions, the expansion of multinationals, borderless images and cultural discourses are new in the sense that they are new forms of organisation and structure but in essence are a continuation of what has gone before.

Capital has always been global. From its beginning it has been driven by the need to constantly expand – or die; the changes that have occurred in recent years are an expression of this need. Globalisation is 'worse' in the sense that it represents an attempt at extending and intensifying capital's grip on humanity, but it is not worse in opposition to some mythical idealised past when capitalism was nice and local and the state intervened to protect us against the markets as some seem to imply. The logic is the same now as it always been – to exploit people and nature to the maximum extent possible at the time, the fact that in some previous eras this exploitation may have taken place in a way that appeared to be softer or more 'democratic' doesn't change its essential nature.

In order to understand the process that has become

known as 'globalisation', it is essential to understand the trajectory taken by post-war capitalism. Looked at in this context, globalisation can be seen not as a cause or separate phenomenon but rather as the effect of the crisis caused by the resurgence of European and American class struggle in the late 1960s and the 1970s.

#### 1945 - 1968:

##### Restructuring, integration and growth

In 1945 with the virtual sole exception of America the industrialised and 'developed' world was in a state of massive economic and physical disarray – a condition mirrored in its working class. It was in this period that the world began to be divided between the American and Soviet versions of capitalism. Stalin's Red Army proceeded to subjugate Eastern Europe to a variant of capitalism which involved most of the worst aspects and brought none of the fringe benefits which help to make life a bit more bearable in advanced capitalist society.

Meanwhile, America adopted Western Europe as its sphere of influence. This came to develop into the 'cold war', an era of frosty relations and supposed ideological struggle between the two superpowers. Each vied to collect as many 'satellite' nations and regions as possible which could become new market places and through which proxy wars could be fought. This was a *de facto* new form of colonisation which was preferable for powerful nations because it largely avoided the hassle of actually administering territory. Those countries whose populations proved resistant or had unsympathetic regimes were forcibly brought into the fold through engineered and assisted coups or simply invaded (e.g. Brazil, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, South Vietnam, Chile, Afghanistan etc., etc.). The decline of the old colonial powers opened up vast swathes of the world to this process of domination by new masters (both domestic and foreign) who were at least as brutal as the departing imperialists and just as keen to use their populations as cheap labour for capital.

##### Cold War economics

In the West, aside from actual physical rebuilding, the task of restructuring faced by states and capitalist enterprises was a twofold one. Firstly, economic expansion and growth rested upon the "diplomatic reconstruction of international trade and payments systems which would facilitate international exchange and secure the regular import of essential commodities and raw materials." And secondly, it would be necessary to contain the class struggle in order to avoid a repeat of the massive social conflict that occurred in the aftermath of the First World War.

The initial result of this need to restore industrial economies destroyed by the war was the Bretton Woods agreement which was shortly followed by the creation of a number of accompanying institutions and agreements which acted to assist and safeguard its terms; these included the now notorious IMF, the World Bank and the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT).

The IMF was originally set up to insulate the system from attacks by speculators or from short-term trade imbalances by providing governments with emergency loans to support their currencies on the foreign exchange markets. The World Bank's purpose was to provide governments with longer term loans necessary for the development and reconstruction of their economies so that they had no excuse for not competing in the world market.

##### Social Democracy and Keynesianism

However the re-establishment of global and national capital accumulation and the resultant twenty year period of economic boom could not have been accomplished without the imposition of more fundamental and concrete forms of social and political organisation which were necessary to restore (relative) domestic stability again. These were – in the west at least – social democracy and Keynesian economic management and planning. It is important to note that these existed within the context of the global economy and not just on a separate national basis. These 'social forms' were dominant within advanced capitalist societies until they began to founder in the late 1960s. Their importance in the context of this piece is that their retreat and increasing ineffectiveness as a means of management in the face of massive class struggle and related 'structural' faults, resulting in the major crises of the 1970s, is possibly the main reason for the state that capitalism is in today.

The disorganisation of the European working class post-1945 meant that it was forced to enter into the so-called 'class compromise'. This essentially meant foregoing unity and mass struggle, at least temporarily, in return for representation within individual nation states through the medium of social democracy. Social democracy can be defined as the representation of the working class as labour, within capital and the state – politically through social democratic parties and economically through trades unions. ...

The nation state gained a new significance in the post-war era because it assumed the role of policing, maintaining and organising the new class compromise. (Even though according to some it's now subject to 'corporate rule', the role of the nation state in policing, maintaining and organising labour power remains undiminished; all that has changed are the forms that this takes; for example breaking or 'restructuring' entrenched sectors of the working class instead of accommodating them, imposing and encouraging casualisation etc.) ...

Social democracy was an example of divide and rule in so far as concessions were made to national working classes as opposed to the working class as a whole.

However the relative disunity of the working class was not shared by the capitalists. Although different sectors of the capitalist system have a contradictory relationship at the best of times, their unity in terms of the common pursuit of profit always remains undiminished. In fact it could be argued that capitalism in this period was more global and united than it has been



since, due to the dominant position of the US and the virtual hegemony of the dollar as the world's currency.

The practical importance of social democracy for the working class was that it provided a framework through which concessions could be demanded and won from capital on a national basis. The price of this set-up was that it meant that instead of existing as an autonomous force against capitalism; "the aspirations and demands of the working class could be harnessed as the motor for capital accumulation." i.e. in exchange for improvements in health care, housing provision, education and social security the working class surrendered control over production and accepted the 'Fordist deal'. ...

Fordism was a system based upon mass production and mass consumption. It was premised on an implicit trade-off between increased alienation and boredom at work and increased consumption during 'leisure' or 'free' time – dissatisfaction turned into demand. ...

##### Decolonisation

The situation outside the advanced capitalist countries was very different. The post-war years were primarily characterised by brutal national liberation struggles against the old colonial powers – mainly Britain and France but also Belgium (Belgian Congo) and Portugal (Angola). ...

Unfortunately the main and lasting effect of decolonisation was to open up vast new markets and opportunities for increased and more efficient exploitation. Even though exploitation had clearly taken place on a vast scale under colonial rule, the attempt had not been made to integrate people into the capitalist mode of production – to make them into wage workers. ...

The process of turning 'Third World' peasants into proletarians is in some ways very similar to the development of the capitalism in Britain and elsewhere but in a highly accelerated form. The capitalisation of agriculture through enclosure of common lands, mechanisation and production of food surpluses to feed workers who were no longer able to produce their own means of subsistence was the necessary first step. Urbanisation and the creation of a "reserve army of labour" out of those who had been forced to leave the land were then necessary for capitalist development which could not have otherwise occurred. ...



### 1968-1979: the refusal of work

The new generation of post-war proletarians which was formed within the context of the post-war settlement and the Fordist production line brought with it new demands and aspirations. These were expressed in two principle ways; on one hand screwing everything they could get out of the bosses and the state in terms of wage concessions and increased public spending - demands that had to be met in order to try to maintain the status quo and stave off more radical demands. On the other hand the re-emerging class conflict didn't simply limit itself to questions of degrees of control within the workplace; the other (interconnected) side expressed at its most radical the refusal of work and capitalist social relationships. Dissatisfaction with factory and office life brought with it a more generalised contestation which was by no means limited to workers; other proletarians (such as the unemployed and housewives), malcontents and students all seized the opportunity to exploit the relatively weak position that capitalism was in at the time.

A global wave of strikes, riots and mass social upheaval, some of which openly confronted the state and the trade unions left the capitalist world reeling under the strain - it had taken a body blow but by no means a fatal one as events that followed in the 1970s were to prove.

The best known European example, with which most people are familiar to some degree, is the near revolution in France in May 1968 when millions of workers and students and other proletarians joined together in a brief but intense moment of mass struggle. However this represents only a small part of the picture; for example highly significant but lesser known struggles took place into and throughout the 1970s. The Italian 'Hot Autumn' of 1969 marked the beginning of 10 years of struggle. Many strikers and other rebels took part in activities which went beyond simply stopping work or occupying the workplace; in 1971 Polish strikers took over gas and transport services, whilst in Italy: "...squatting, 'social strikes' by bus drivers, hospital staff and supermarket cashiers providing (respectively) transport, healthcare and food free of charge, electricity workers cutting off supplies to bureaucrats or firms and a thousand other instances", showed the extent to which the dull compulsion and isolation of capitalist social relations were rejected. ...

### Capital takes flight

For the capitalists, the squeeze on profits from ever increasing wage demands, strikes and random stoppages meant that solutions other than Keynesianism and 'demand management' would have to be found. The answer lay in a three-pronged strategy of restructuring. In the old established industries management attempted to limit workers' influence over the production process through forms of re-organisation such as decentralisation and outsourcing and the introduction of automation. Secondly, new industries such as electronics, information technology and the 'service sector' were developed.

Thirdly capital 'took flight' to the 'Third World' where labour and natural resources were (and still are) plentiful and cheap. ...

Throughout the 1970s, capital flooded into certain areas of the 'Third World', such as Brazil, Mexico and South Korea, creating what have become known as the Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs). This process was greatly accelerated by the quadrupling of the price of crude oil in 1974 by the world's main producers, the OPEC countries, which "...served to liquidate and then divert huge sums of capital away from industry which was committed to various national economies within the Atlantic axis, into the hands of the banks and the international circuits of money capital that owed little or no allegiance to any state."

This liquidity is the ideal form for capital, but it cannot increase itself without being 'grounded' in a concrete form - without having wage labourers producing both material and immaterial things. It can never permanently escape from its own contradictions; wherever it moves to it creates workers who have a tendency to do problematic things like demand higher wages and go on strike.

It was in this period that the NICs and to a lesser degree the 'Third World' in general began to accumulate massive debts. The influx of capital was mainly either in the form of loans or production facilities (e.g. factories, mines etc.) owned by corporations based in the northern hemisphere. The loans were mainly used to finance prestige projects which had little material benefit for the majority of the population - or to line the pockets of the ruling classes. ...

### Origins of the debt crisis

By the end of the decade the West's ability to sustain general profitability and economic growth was undermined to the point where all the economies in the Western world were plunged into recession, which was inevitably accompanied by a corresponding slump in world trade.

The "anti-inflationary policies" aimed at wage control which had been pursued had had little obvious effect, with the result that by the end of the 1970s, capitalist planning agencies such as the IMF were calling for urgent globally co-ordinated measures to attack inflation. These would include 'tight money' and cuts in social expenditure as well as breaking 'structural rigidities' in the labour markets, e.g. trade unions. As is usually the case with economics the banality of the language used bears no relation to the reality that is actually being referred to.

These were the policies that became known as 'monetarism' (as well as being loosely described as 'Thatcherism' or 'Reaganomics') and when adopted by the world's largest economy, the US, resulted in the global recession and sharp interest rate rises that triggered the debt crisis.

A number of 'Third World' economies had borrowed heavily from major banks and other lenders including the

World Bank to finance rapid development and industrialisation, leaving them with massive debts and interest payments. Consequently when interest rates rose and the value and volume of the exports which they used to service the debts fell, they found themselves unable to pay. In 1981 the Mexican government threatened to default on its loan repayments and started the Third World debt crisis. ...

### The '80s - defeat, misery and monetarism

The results of this were twofold. Debtor nations in the Third World were forced by the IMF to adopt Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as means of 'saving' their economies and enabling them to attempt to keep up repayments on their loans. In the industrialised countries, governments began to change their economic policies away from Keynesianism towards monetarism in an attempt to attract international money-capital with increasing interest rates and disinflationary economic policies. In reality the pursuit of disinflationary economic policy meant mounting a concerted attack on the gains won by the working class in the preceding decades - the imposition of austerity. All governments whether conservative or socialist were forced to do this in order to keep wages down and slash public spending on the social wage (e.g. welfare, free healthcare, services etc.) ...

In both Britain and the US the unions had largely contained and defused working class militancy, but had therefore simultaneously undermined their own *raison d'être* as mediators of this militancy and been left weakened. ... The attack on the most entrenched sectors of the working class rapidly gathered pace; protracted, bitter, losing battles were fought first by steel workers, then miners and printers. The 1984 miners' strike was a turning point in the sense that the miners had traditionally been the strongest sector of the working class in the UK - (their '74 mass strike brought about the downfall of the Conservative government in power at the time). ...

### Structural adjustment: global Chile

Two major perspectives exist on the debt crisis, both of which share the assumption that it is a threat or obstacle to capitalist development. For the Right the crisis has been viewed as potentially threatening the international banking system and "stable growth" of the creditor economies through default by major debtor countries; hence the need for harsh IMF programmes to make them "pay up"; whilst for the Left the crisis (and the Right's 'solutions' to it) is seen as the main obstacle to the development of 'Third World' economies. A choice between hard or soft versions of capitalism would be no choice at all even it was possible to choose, the fact that existence in some parts of the world is less harsh than in others does not mean that it is possible to reorient capitalist development in a 'better' direction through more 'democracy' or well-intentioned liberal proposals or campaigns. The debt crisis is the result of what capitalism has been forced to do in response to proletarian resistance in order to sustain its constant need

for growth, expansion and accumulation; it has been used as a "key instrument" in "shifting the balance of class forces to its side on both poles of the debt relation".

Although workers in the West have suffered repression and hardship, the fate of the working class in the Third World has been considerably worse. The result of the debt crisis was the (still ongoing) imposition of SAPs, initially in those countries such as Mexico which had threatened to default on their loan repayments and gradually extending to cover almost every country in South and Central America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. ...

The concrete measures that SAPs consist of are essentially modelled on the monetarist economist Milton Friedman's formula for Pinochet's Chile. ...

Third World governments are not helpless to resist the demands of global financial capital, rather they depend on its help to be able to resist their own populations. Structural Adjustment (and to a lesser extent economic 'development' in general) requires internal repression. In Chile it cost the lives of 30,000 workers. ... Of course this situation has not just been accepted - resistance has been constant and ongoing. Massive uprisings, rioting and insurrections have become endemic but go largely unreported in the West. ...

The general effect of SAPs on proletarians however has been nothing short of devastating, whilst those in positions of power have in general continued to directly or indirectly benefit in a variety of ways. For this reason it is as implausible to talk of 'India' or 'Brazil' being exploited as countries as it is to consider 'Britain' for example as an exploiter, since it is quite clear that in any given nation state the population do not simply exist as equal citizens with common unifying interests. To talk of rich and poor nations obscures the reality that the rich and poor exist within nations. Such formulations implicitly assume that everyone in the industrialised countries is rich and everyone in the 'Third World' poor. The ruling classes in the 'Third World' obviously don't bear an equal amount of the burden of debt (if they bear any at all - Mobutu the ex-president of Zaire siphoned off an estimated \$8 billion, Suharto \$16 billion.) as peasants or workers and are as rich as the rich in the north; conversely proletarians in the north cannot be equated with the bosses and the state. ...

The need to increase exports and cut spending meant a corresponding decrease in living standards. In countries such as Mexico and Brazil wages have been cut in real terms by between a third and a half since the debt crisis began, whilst malnutrition has become endemic as food prices have soared. In Africa the situation is far worse with many areas on the verge of mass starvation. ... It has been estimated that between 1982 and 1990 an incredible \$1,345 billion has been transferred from the 'South' into the coffers of states, banks and financial institutions in the north.

### Capital and nation states

One of the most common themes running throughout



'anti-globalisation' is that the state and the market are two opposed forms of social organisation, with globalisation giving the market, multinationals and supra-national bodies 'power over' the state with a resulting loss of 'sovereignty' and 'national autonomy'. States and capital are not opposed to each other, if anything, the opposite is true; they exist in a contradictory unity; they are differentiated forms of domination within the relations that constitute the social order, states oppress their populations as much as managements exploit their workers. ...

The present global re-composition (as opposed to de-composition) of national states tends to enhance state power. Although their room for manoeuvre over monetary and financial policies has been limited, the policing and planning of labour power has become the central strategic pivot. Far from being outmoded or bypassed, in the global order nation states are as important as they ever have been. A central theme of state re-organisation is a generalised shift of responsibility onto international regimes and 'independent', 'politically neutral' (in the sense of left/right party politics) organisations, which amounts to an apparent de-politicisation of some areas of decision making. The first thing that Gordon Brown did after becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer was to hand over responsibility for monetary policy to the Bank of England. Similarly, membership of the WTO or the ERM (European Exchange Rate Mechanism) allows governments to plead helplessness in the face of 'external commitments', and divert the blame for unpopular policies. ...

Too much of the time anti-globalisation amounts to an appeal to the state to take account of the wishes of some of its 'citizens' and return to the good old days of social democracy and national 'autonomy' and sovereignty so that it can protect us against the worst excesses of the corporations. Aside from being a grotesque distortion of reality, these sort of calls and complaints are quite simply reactionary and should be challenged at all possible opportunities. We should understand that states and governments are complicit in this process and act accordingly.

### Corporate rule?

51 of the 100 largest economies in the world are transnational corporations. The combined sales of Ford and General Motors are bigger than the combined GDP of all Sub-Saharan Africa. Statistics such as these are said to 'prove' that corporations rule over us, as opposed to capital and the state. (although it should be pointed out that liberals probably would not see the state as being against us but rather corporations being against the state which is supposed to represent us as free and equal citizens) Corporations and capitalism do not amount to the same thing. Whilst its undoubtedly true that corporations are capitalist; capitalism is not necessarily corporate.

Corporations are the dominant form in which capitalism exists at present, but capitalism is not a thing

or a legal entity, it is a social relation between people, whereby the vast majority are forced to sell their labour-power in order to live. Small businesses are as capitalist as the largest transnational corporation. The fact that it would be strategically nonsensical to direct our efforts against small businesses which wield relatively little power and influence shouldn't mean that that we see them as better or an alternative to 'corporate power'. Capital always seeks to expand whatever form its in. All large enterprises started off as small ones, Sainsbury's for example started out as a single grocers' shop.

Capitalist social relations impose themselves across the whole of society; there is no escape to be found in any activity - local or global which reproduces wage labour and exchange value. The sad reality of local businesses is that they're not progressive 'alternatives' and in fact tend to be run by petty-minded shrivelled little tyrants, who think they're free because they're "their own boss", content with their island of illusory dictatorship, where power is reduced to short-changing. Regardless of their longings for some fantasised former simplicity and local autonomy, regardless of the fact that they might call themselves anarchists and certainly moan about central government and big business, they identify with their present means of survival and almost invariably call the cops when their niche within capitalist society is threatened, by looting for example.

In *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the Communist Movement* Dauve pointed out: the law of profit has nothing to with the action of a few big capitalists or multinationals and getting the world we want does not mean ridding ourselves of fat cigar smokers wearing top hats at horse races. What matters is not the individual profits made by capitalists, but the constraint, the orientation imposed upon production and society by this system which dictates how to work and what to consume. The whole about demagoguery rich and poor and 'big' and 'small' merely confuses the issue. *The abolition of capitalism does not mean taking money from the rich, nor revolutionaries distributing it to the poor, but the suppression of the totality of monetary relations.*

### The present situation

The supposed triumph of the 'global economy' seems to have turned out to be a very hollow 'victory'. It seems that struggle is once again resurgent after at least a decade of relative dormancy. Behind the talk of 'monetary instability', 'bad loans and trading practices' and warnings by financiers such as George Soros about the dangerous fragility of the financial system lies the reality that the ultimate source of the present crisis is not transgressions and mistakes by bankers and speculators but the reduction of profits by class struggle. The Zapatista uprising in 1994 that threw Mexico and NAFTA into crisis, the general strike in France in December 1995 which blocked planned social welfare cuts and 'austerity' measures and the South Korean workers' season of general strikes from December 1996 to March 1997 that sparked off the Asian crisis and

ended the myth of the 'tiger economies' and the boundless profits to be made in 'emerging markets' are just a few examples.

What does this all mean for the future? Has capitalism bitten off more than it can swallow in its attempt to fully subjugate the vast majority of the world's population to the rule of money?

The virtual collapse of the Russian economy and the financial meltdown in the Far East have shown how rapidly it can plunge into crisis. If the latest resurgence in struggle in various forms turns into a concerted global offensive, then the abandonment and subsequent lack of means to accommodate working class needs may prove to be an error on the part of the ruling class (of course in terms of 'normal life' as atomised individuals there are all sorts of palliatives and diversions to try and distract from the misery of daily existence). The contemporary weakness of old social-democratic forms of mediation such as the unions opens the possibility for struggle outside and against their malign influence. In this context it is possible to see both a certain awareness amongst capitalists of a possible future need to re-incorporate elements of 'social justice' into the system in order to contain class struggle - a point alluded to by Soros when he warned that "the uninhibited pursuit of self-interest [which is] not tempered by the recognition of common interest" will spell disaster for the system.

Set against the background of a rising tide of nationalism and racism (some of which is directed against 'globalisation') our struggles have to be international and internationalist, recognising both national states and capital in whatever form as our enemy. After the next stock market crash, it is entirely possible that opportunist politicians will start coming out against globalisation and de-regulated markets, with the effect of co-opting and neutralising movements who also situate themselves against it. What we are struggling for is not a return to some form of global social-democratic consensus, a redistribution of wealth or a "sustainable and participatory civil society without borders," it is questionable whether permanent reforms are any longer possible - let alone desirable. The only option now left available to us is the complete abolition of capitalist social relations.

*From 'Do Or Die' No.8*

### Poisoning in the guerrilla garden

In this land of hasty critics, it isn't difficult to inflame levels of self-criticism so destructive that the team - our team - is bound to lose, whatever. The mercenaries who populate British media know the formula well. It may be numbingly predictable but relentless criticism sells; the nastier the better. It sways our decision to pluck a newspaper from the stands and persuades us to loiter before the TV news.

It has often been repeated that British heroes are only promoted with applause in order to provide fodder for future lambaste and British journalists largely deserve

their scurrilous reputation for fuelling the process. One minute yer friend, the next yer enemy, regardless of circumstances; fickle in search of a novel angle and permanently purchasable for thirty pieces of silver.

The barrage of criticism heaped upon RTS from all sides subsequent to the guerrilla gardening action on MayDay provides an ample case in point; staggering both in its complicity with mainstream political strategy and for the inanity of its pointless self-destruction.

We're used to the likes of *The Daily Mail* and *The Sunday Times* proffering the 'Anarchist jobs takeover' and 'RTS stockpile weapons' style of coverage. But this time the usual suspects were joined by an onslaught of critical barrage from pseudo-friends of the movement like Oxbridge journo, George Monbiot. Content to have established a career based on his connections to the UK direct action scene, it is a bitter truth that Monbiot might accept thirty pieces of *Guardian* silver for an exaggerated kiss and tell onslaught against RTS.

For those who missed George Monbiot's bilious attack, a wade through the spluttered outrage can be spared with a summary of his main points. Liberally peppered with the language and metaphor of utter condemnation, he stated that RTS's ranks are swollen with violent and uncaring thugs, and that, having lost the plot completely, RTS are "a part of the problem not the solution". Furthermore, and perhaps most hypocritically, he stated that planting seeds outside the Houses of Parliament was a "futile" action against capitalism.

Four years ago, Monbiot was content to wallow in the acres of column inches which revolved around "The Oxford don and his rag-bag army" when as one of a hundred or so activists on The Land is Ours' first action at Wisley, he planted vegetables and trees on a small stretch of long disused WW2 airfield in Surrey. Monbiot launched his career in British journalism off the back of his association with that action, with the Daily Telegraph running a whole page on the "ideological leader" Monbiot and his French aristocratic ancestry. There were many of his co-activists on that direct action who felt the agenda being pilfered even at that stage.

Four years later there's an undeniable hypocrisy in Monbiot's preparedness to describe the Guerrilla Gardening action on MayDay as a futile gesture. And yet occurring as it did outside the Houses of Parliament it was evidently a far more full frontal and significant action than planting up a wooded Surrey copse miles from anywhere and already full of wildlife. If Monbiot was alone with his extravagant and well paid criticism, we wouldn't waste our column inches talking about his. But his criticisms sat complicity alongside a raft of hysterical exaggerations and dire warnings which appeared on BBC and ITV news that evening and in most national newspapers the next day.

Stoked further by the Labour Party's desire to associate Ken Livingstone with those who sprayed the cenotaph, coverage of the event became a laughable circus of hyperbole; an exaggerated monstrosity of self-inflated condemnation portraying all anti-capitalists as



mindless thugs who would spit on the grave of the war dead. In the latent belief that there is no smoke without fire, people believed it. The media steer babbled on relentlessly until people were found whistling its tune without thinking twice about the source of the subliminal melody. Even those with previous direct action associations began parroting the position that RTS had lost the plot.

And so SQUALL would like to present a few unreported facts to remind ourselves that staying on our toes is a permanent requirement.....

**Fact.** Reclaim the Streets publicised a guerrilla gardening action in Parliament Square. Their publicity stated that it was not a protest but a constructive action to highlight the necessity to reclaim public space. The horticultural nature of the event was consciously designed to attract those genuinely into 'greening the streets' rather than just getting pissed and exercising their lairyness.

**Fact.** The event in Parliament Square lasted for seven hours and there was no violence whatsoever, even when towards the conclusion of the day police tried to hold everyone in the Square against their will. The samba band played, seeds were planted, the road was turfed, banners were unfurled, a maypole was erected and activists filed reports and thoughts onto Indymedia UK's new roadside-laptop website. The day passed off as a success. Whether or not activists agreed with defacing statues - some did some didn't - the paint was cleaned off in a day and no lasting damage occurred. At the end of the day the crowd held together in one mass and marched through the police cordon united. The police did not wield their truncheons and there was no violence on either side at any point in the day. Some activists even hung around with bin bags and cleaned up the Square afterwards. How many people heard about this. Six weeks later Parliament Square was covered in plants as the MayDay sown seeds sprung into action.

**Fact:** A van full of compost, straw bails and seeds bound for Parliament Square was trailed from west London, intercepted by police and impounded for being unroadworthy. Two days later police allowed the driver to drive it away. It was evidently roadworthy. Five weeks later when the van was put in for a service, the garage mechanics found that every nut on the two back wheels was about to fall off. The garage informed the owner that he was fortunate to be alive.

**Fact.** For three weeks up to MayDay, British mainstream media incessantly publicised the event as a riot. "British army on standby" roared the *Evening Standard*. More people in the UK learned about the event through the mainstream media than they did through RTS leaflets. If certain people arrived in London looking for a riot, it wasn't an RTS flyer which attracted them.

**Fact.** The media and those they managed to attract got their riot. Not much of one as riots go but just enough of a ruckus to weave the story around. A plethora of groups ranging from the Socialist Worker Party to the Rover workers to Turkish communists to pissed punks to unaligned anti-capitalists and bemused tourists were all

corralled in Trafalgar Square and refused exit by truncheoned police lines.

**Fact.** For the first time in four years of anti-capitalist demonstrations, a McDonald's Burger bar right in the middle of the demonstration was left undefended by policemen. Nearby riot police waited for twenty minutes before going in to disperse demonstrators who had by this time smashed the place up. A pre-event action outside McDonald's on the Strand earlier that morning was swarming with police and intelligence officers. Why did they leave the Whitehall McDonald's undefended?

Let those who got caught up in the scraps with police, those who sprayed the cenotaph, those who threw tarmac lumps in Kennington Park later that evening; let them defend their own actions. Some property-damagers like the ex-British army soldier who daubed fake blood on Winston Churchill's statue had very good reasons for doing what they did and deserve applause for their courage of conviction. Both for their action and their willingness to be emphatic about the political reasons for their action when a "sorry m'lud" might have reduced the sentence. Some were just the pissed lunch outs you'll always find somewhere. A tiny minority amid the thousands.

The barrage of critics laying blame for the MayDay skirmishes and the subsequently overblown media backlash at the feet of Reclaim the Streets are well wide of the mark. In their critical haste they are ignoring the creative work that went into facilitating a remarkably successful event in Parliament Square. An event that was imaginative, politically symbolic, well executed, well attended, forceful yet non-violent. Very few people seem to realise that this event even took place. And yet this was the RTS event, as advertised by RTS, in Parliament Square. A malevolent media so keen for dramatic copy and so capitalistically complicit, continues to foster and ferment the outrage, relishing and inflaming the very riots they pretend to abhor.

The more insidious part of this agenda is the cold calculation. For the abhorrence that such hysterical coverage ferments in the minds and loyalties of a general public is capitalism's attempt to destroy the reputation of its detractors. If the capitalist world can persuade the general public that its opponents are not thoughtful people with a point, but violently crazed troublemakers, then they can keep their tightened grip round the throat of the world, unchallenged.

To split the spikies from the fluffies, the NGO's from the direct action groups, middle England from street folk, one section of society from another so that disunited, we affect nothing. The straggled survivors from a thousand massacred social causes are uniting to provide a significant challenge to the manicured PR of unfettered capitalism; a threat unparalleled in recent years. Beware the wedge now being driven strategically into the joins.

*"If you're not careful the media will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing"* Malcolm X

Squall

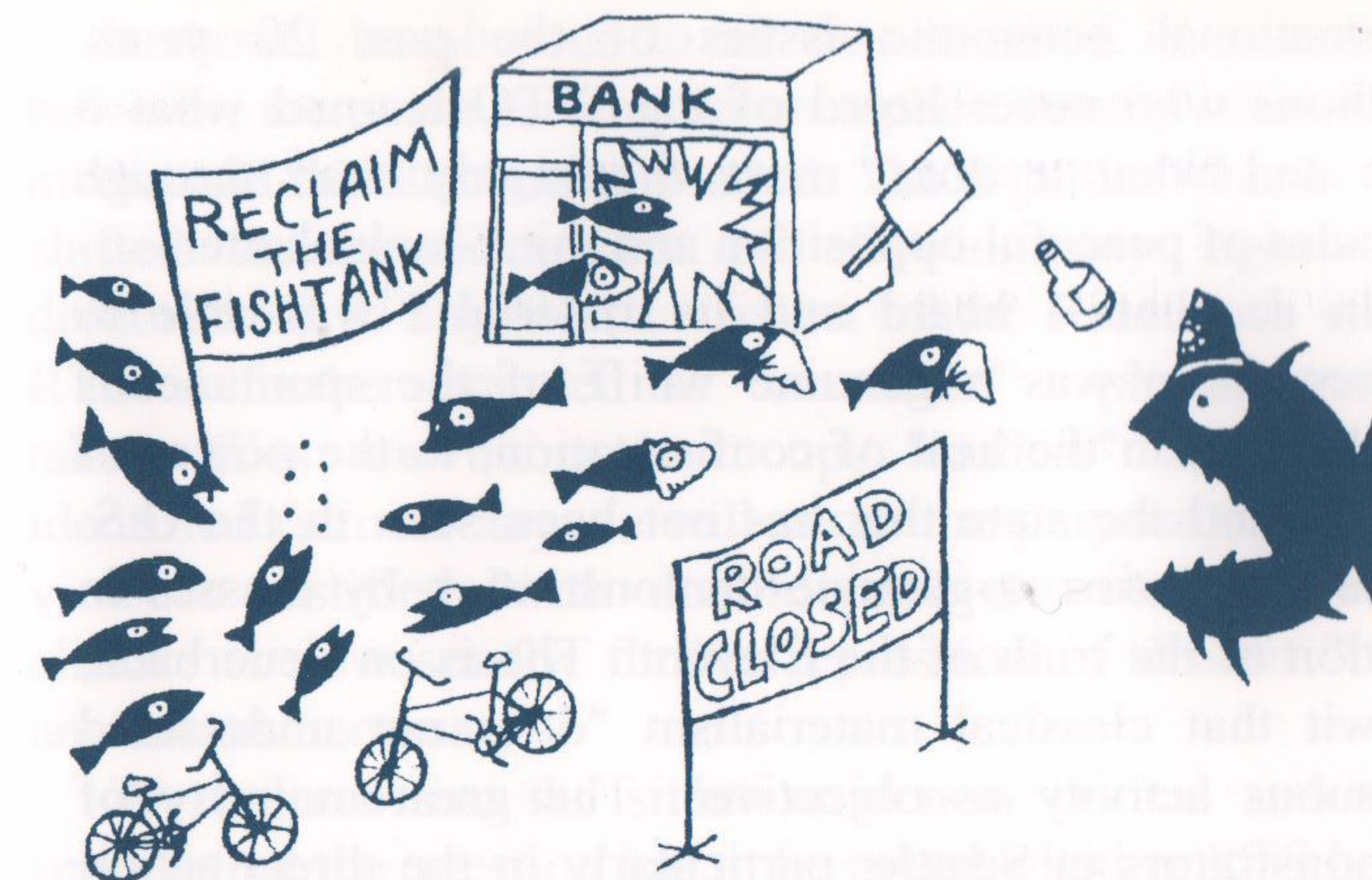
## Seattle: the first US riot against 'globalization'?

Mass politics in the streets disappeared in the U.S. between 1970 and 1973. In retrospect, it is clear that the years 1964 to 1970 were not a "pre-revolutionary situation", but anyone who lived through those years as an activist can be forgiven for thinking it was. Any number of people in the ruling circles shared the same error of judgement. The black urban insurrections of 1964-68, the working-class wildcat rebellion (often led by black workers) from 1966 to 1973, the breakdown of the U.S. military in Indochina, the "student" and "youth" rebellions, and the appearance of militant feminist, gay and ecology movements were all indicators of a major social earthquake. Thirty years after they ended, the "sixties", for the left and for the right, still hang over American society like smoke after a conflagration.

The "oil crisis" and world recession of 1973-75 closed that era, and the revolutionary movement in the U.S. and everywhere else has been retrenching and regrouping ever since. If the ebb has seemed deeper in the U.S. than in Europe, it is only because U.S. capital is the cutting edge of the dismantling of the old Keynesian "social contract", such as it was, a dismantling in which Europe is still at the halfway point. The ebb of open struggle in the U.S., punctuated briefly but hardly reversed by actions against the Gulf War in 1990-91 or by the Los Angeles riots of 1992, expresses a vast "recomposition" of class lines in a world restructuring of capital. Many formerly successful forms of struggle, most notably the wildcat strike, have all but disappeared. The movements of the sixties were internationalist in sentiment, but they rarely transcended the national framework in practice. However much one wants to quibble about the reality of "globalization", it has been clear for a long time, even to avowed reformists, that any meaningful strategy, even in the day-to-day sense, has to be international, or better, "transnational", from the outset to win anything worth talking about. "Think globally, act locally" may sound like a solution, but its practical result usually comes down to rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

Some American and Chinese workers may have had a more radical consciousness, and perhaps were even more internationalist rhetorically, in the 1920's than today, but today conditions exist in which they are compelled, practically, to make internationalism concrete in a way that was unthinkable in the 1920's. ...

There has been an important protectionist sentiment among American workers for a long time: "Buy American", "Save American Jobs". ... Many workers have been won over to sympathy for their employers, who are beleaguered by imports, and have swallowed big concessions on that basis. On the other hand, traditional unions such as the UAW (United Auto Workers) as well as respectable reformist opposition groups such as Labor Notes have made some serious attempts to hook up with workers (usually along industry-lines) in Mexico, Asia



and Europe ... But all these actions have been strictly under the control of some faction of union bureaucrats, in or out of power, and represent the extension of sectoral trade union reformism to a world scale. ...

If, as seems to be the case, the world economy has become a "negative sum game" for workers, a "race to the bottom", then a "different kind of internationalism" would mean creating a situation for a "positive sum game" in which workers can concretely fight for their own interests on a CLASS FOR ITSELF basis, in a way that implicitly or, better still, explicitly, recognizes the practical unity of interests of working people in the U.S. and China, Japan and Bangladesh, Italy and Albania. ...

From a revolutionary viewpoint, it is easy to be skeptical about the events in Seattle. ... The slogan "Fair Trade, Not Free Trade" could certainly be seen as a slightly-concealed variant of protectionism by those (and there were many) who wished to do so. ...

The failure of the Seattle meeting took the Democrats off the hook of having to push hard for China's entry into the WTO in an election year, when both the USW and the Teamsters have clearly gone for the protectionist option. Clinton's kind words for the rights of the demonstrators should be seen in that context, particularly after it became known that powerful forces at the top had pushed for heavy repression when the police lost control on the first day ... In the Boston area, where I live, much of the "post-Seattle" organizing has an even more overtly protectionist agenda, with repugnant slogans such as "Not One More American Job to Mexico", and I doubt that this is exceptional.

Nevertheless, despite all the elements of "uneven", parochial or simply reactionary consciousness it may have contained, one has to characterize Seattle as a breakthrough. There was, in the patent lack of official preparedness for what happened, an unrepeatably singularity (no international trade summit will ever again take place, anywhere, with so little readiness for heavy repression), an opening to exactly that element of the unknown and unexpected that characterizes a situation momentarily beyond all manipulative control, whether by the state or the unions or the "left", when power lies for a moment "in the streets".

In 24 hours, Seattle ripped away the "one note" unanimity of the tolerated "public discussion" of



international economic issues of the past 20 years. Millions who never heard of the WTO learned what it was and what it does, more thoroughly than through decades of peaceful opposition and think-tank chatter. ...

In accounts I heard and in material I was able to gather, there was a genuine whiff of the spontaneous awakening, in the heat of confrontation, to the power of capital and the state that has not been seen in the U.S. since the sixties, a genuine demonstration by masses in motion of the truth of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, to wit that classical materialism "does not understand sensuous activity as objective". The great majority of demonstrators in Seattle, particularly in the direct action contingents, had not been born or were children when the sixties ended, and had never experienced their own power in the streets in this way, anywhere. Trite as it may sound to the small numbers of sixties activists who still consider themselves revolutionaries, and who are jaded from having been through it all before, a first clubbing, a first tear-gassing, seeing the police go berserk against people detained in a holding cell, a first concrete experience of what bourgeois "rights" really mean when the state tears them up in a confrontational setting, is an irreversible crossing of a threshold, an irreplaceable experience of collective power and of the role of those whose job is to repress it. People who go through this, whatever the consciousness or intentions that brought them to Seattle, can never be the same.

The brief, ephemeral opening of the sense that "nothing will ever be the same" experienced by some in Seattle and in the wake of Seattle will close again quickly (just as the opening, such as it was, of the LA riots, or that of the December 1995 strike wave in France, closed quickly) without a strategy for a real internationalism, an internationalism in which criticisms of slave labor in China or child labor in India are joined to, e.g. a practical critique of the mushroom-like proliferation of sweatshops and prison labor in the U.S.. A perspective encompassing the most oppressed layers of the working class and its allies is always a safeguard against the parochialism, including militant parochialism, which sets the stage for a "reformist" reshuffling of the capitalist deck, as occurred in the 1930's and 1940's. ...

In their greatly heightened global mobility, the capitalists stole a march on the world working class that more than 25 years of losing and defensive struggles has not yet overcome. If Seattle is in fact to be a positive turning point, at which history did in fact finally turn, it can only be on the path to solidifying and greatly expanding this terrain.

Loren Goldner

## Reflections on MayDay 2K

It was a 'riot' laugh! Rampaging through the city with my Eton-educated, pierced-up, masked-up anarcho-terrorist chums, I pissed on Churchill, spray-painted "anarky woz ere" on the Cenotaph, set fire to MacDonald's on Whitehall, and fought hand-to-hand with riot police

beneath Nelson's Column (see *The Sun*, *The Daily Mail*, *The London Evening Standard* etc, ad nauseum).

For me, the day started at Hyde Park corner, where demonstrators gathered in the sunshine, some dressed in spectacular costume, some masked and in black. The gardening motif was apparent, with some carrying pot-plants and compost on their bikes or wheelbarrows, and some swathed in leaves like the Green Man of old English pagan lore. Feeling guilty at not having made an effort, I was cheered when a demonstrator gave me a fine pink "Guerrilla Gardening" flag to wave and lead the crowd. Comedians Mark Thomas and Rob Newman turned up on their bikes. The police photographers were already taking pictures. This being the first protest I had taken a camera to, I resolved to photograph every police photographer I saw. One recognised me. "You're always at these, aren't you?" he asked.

The samba band started drumming, banners were unfurled, the carnival dancing girls shook their booty, and, whooping and cheering, the crowd moved out to take the street. The police kept their distance, diverting traffic to avoid the protest. Progress was painfully slow, with the samba band inexplicably halting and holding ground several times.

Eventually, we reached Parliament Square, where our crowd merged with the other half of the protest. This was massive! I searched in vain for my brother in the crowd of thousands. The gardeners moved into action, planting veg and flowers in the grass square. I climbed a tree and watched the scene unfold. Huge banners were stretched across the square, reading "LET LONDON SPROUT" and "RESISTANCE IS FERTILE". A cheer went up as the statue of Churchill was defaced, with a turf mohican and a trickle of "blood" from the corner of his mouth.

By now, a sizeable area of the pavement had been carefully carpeted with turf... Stencilled lettering on the pavement read "beneath the pavement, the garden". A maypole was erected, and a May Dance was enacted by skipping volunteers, weaving the coloured ribbons tight to the pole. On the other side of the square a fire-breather entertained. Realising that half of the crowd had moved up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square, I followed. The Cenotaph had been defaced with spraypaint. Downing Street was sealed off -- a line of very serious-looking riot police standing guard behind the railings.

MacDonald's was being smashed and looted, the police having temporarily retired to don their riot gear. In the empty window-frame, a hooded medieval monk held aloft a golden crucifix -- a prophet of doom bearing witness to the End of the Big Mac. Media photographers angled for a shot, while a face-painted rioter attacked anyone carrying a professional-looking camera, seeking to protect the masked raiders from identification. It was an ugly scene. Trafalgar Square was ours, but the riot police were massing. There was still a party atmosphere. I met up with friends, listened to music and waved my flag. Looking back towards Parliament Square, I saw that the protest had been cut in two on Whitehall, riot police having moved in to stop the shops being trashed. A

couple of crazy Chinese guys entertained the crowd by flinging paint at each other until they were covered from head-to-toe.

Hiding in the middle of the crowd, agitators flung cans and bottles at the police lines. Some missiles fell short of their mark and hit other protestors. In response, police lines advanced a few feet at a time. All around Nelson's Column, the square was daubed with anti-capitalist and anarchist graffiti. As the carnival mood turned dark and the police pressed in, I decided to leave. I was too late. The police had ringed the entire square, and were under orders to let no-one out. Around two thousand people were trapped on the square. Tensions were high. Some argued with the police, some joked with the police and some tried to force their way out, but to no avail. Over the next few hours, the police lines drew tighter and tighter until there was standing room only. Only then did the police let people go, a few at a time, to walk through an alley of police surveillance. Suspected troublemakers were singled out, searched and photographed.

Meanwhile, the police had used the same tactic to contain the protest on Parliament Square, but an enraged crowd broke through the lines and went on the rampage across Waterloo Bridge, smashing car windscreens as they went, until they were once more caught and corralled by the Met.

On reflection, I am angry that what was billed as a colourful, creative and positive peaceful action was overshadowed by violence and vandalism, and I read that Reclaim the Streets themselves share that view. From the moment MacDonald's was trashed, I knew that was all that would be reported in the papers and on TV. From what I saw, the police behaved well, and that's a lot more than can be said of some of the protestors. I will be attending future anti-capitalist demos, but I think that the movement needs to act to restrain its more violent and witless sympathisers.

Kirk

## Reclaim Reclaim the Streets!

*The retreat from the specific experience of empowerment to symbolic politics, sentimental solidarity and 'spontaneity' ... We're on the road to nowhere.*

"Not Trafalgar Square again, do we never learn?" A voice in the crowd. MayDay 2000.

We are writing this as a contribution to the inevitable post-mortem debate over the failure and counter-productive nature of the recent MayDay manifestation in Parliament Square. Though the disclaimer 'This is not a Protest' seems disingenuous in retrospect, the tactic of attempting to side step the role of "terrorist organisation", which Reclaim the Streets is being set up for by those in power, in the form of a demonstration of 'Guerrilla Gardening' was an inspired idea.

It should be obvious to all that it failed in practice however; the event serving up on a plate exactly what the media and the authorities wanted. The argument has now shifted to the discussion of allowing any right to demonstrate to anyone (the return of the Riot Act), etc. RTS is further branded as "extremist" - photos were taken; files are being built up; "leaders" are being identified (almost anyone will serve the purpose); police violence justified (with double pay) etc, etc, and the climate is now set for further repression of dissent "by any means necessary".

We believe that the situation is now critical and so serious that the question has to be asked whether RTS has been infiltrated (by either the not-so secret-services or by the left-wing sentimentality; or both) and to ask whether RTS isn't (involuntarily) serving as the avant-garde of repression!! (see Notes below)

The gains of Seattle (and Washington) which worked both on the level of specific experience and empowerment and symbolic politics (the sight of police marksmen and armoured vehicles protecting 'democracy'; police over-reaction, etc.) have been reversed in this country by the failure of MayDay 2000.

### So what's going on?

*Why MayDay?* Let's face it, the World Trade Organisation was not holding a meeting in Trafalgar Square on MayDay, was it?

The choice of this date is for us nothing more than dead left sentimentality, which we believed RTS had overcome.

We all know the history of MayDay - it's been allowed by the authorities for years already. It is seen by most people as a worn-out symbol of a worn-out struggle of the organised, institutional, industrial and defeated left - and they're right, it is!

Why has RTS become so predictable all of a sudden, why try to raise the dead instead of celebrating the living (struggle)? Why not choose any old day? Why not the anniversary of Seattle - and declare it 'Freedom Day' (something like that)?

### Parliament Square, Whitehall, Trafalgar Square and the Dome

... We noticed that the official Trades Union marchers (along with the SWP) were behaving themselves, marching correctly in formation, stopping when the police asked them to etc.

The street was lined with riot vans and we stood there wondering why the police were holding them in the Strand and not letting them into Trafalgar Square (we still don't know if they ever got in). Then we suddenly heard the drummers, the police officer next to us went from van to van with instructions that once everyone was in Trafalgar Square it was to be sealed off - "with no-one in or out." ...

Standing on the other side of the street, surrounded by the press, with our backs to the police video camera in the building above, we watched as "anarchists and yobs"



"spontaneously" smashed up MacDonalds right on cue, and the rest, as they say, is history.

*A number of Questions need to be asked:* Why has RTS decided to announce the venue for an event/action, rather than a designated meeting place (like Euston or Liverpool Street)? Not only is the creative confusion of leading the police in different directions, and surprise as to the actual venue lost - it allows the police to plan and control the event.

Why after a couple of hours of peaceful occupation of Parliament Square, of fun, putting up of banners, etc, did we not move on to the actual venue somewhere else.

Why did the police not seal off the entrance to Whitehall at Parliament Square to prevent the (depressingly) inevitable trek to Trafalgar Square? By now the answer should be obvious. It was all so predictable that they knew exactly what was going to happen and remained in control.

Why did the drummers lead a large proportion of the crowd out of Parliament Square up Whitehall when it was so obviously a set up? If we remember correctly, with the occupation of the motorway, at a certain point the sound system was closed down; and at Trafalgar Square the same, with the flags leading the way out of a predictable confrontation with the police. Almost all of those who stayed knew what would happen next.

Why on earth should anyone involved with RTS want to meet up with an organised Trades Union march, led by (redundant) car workers?

Why was the MacDonalds in Whitehall not boarded up by the time the crowd got there, like the one in the Strand already was? Once again, the answer is obvious.

Why smash up one MacDonalds on MayDay and not every MacDonalds everyday? Why does 'spontaneous' violence always hide behind the crowd? Neither 'anarchists' nor the police seem to care much if women with children, pacifists, tourists, anonymous passers by, get caught in the (always "necessary") violence.

As for the Dome - Even as a tactic for dispensing police strength... The dome has already been destroyed by the press and by public refusal and is on its way to becoming a symbol of the death of New Labour - so why should RTS reinvest it with significance; better to have ignored it altogether like most of the rest of the country.

*Metro and Evading Standards*, although brilliant and informative, are a waste of resources on the day (being distributed to those who are there and already know why). What about the rest of the year, distribute to those interested but less adventurous?

### Summary

Once the venue had been decided on as Parliament Square then RTS should have known that there would be outbreaks of 'spontaneous' violence and planned how to creatively transcend the situation making the predictable knee-jerk reaction more difficult. (Although we must admit Churchill never looked better). For instance, the War Memorial could have been transformed into a Peace Memorial, decorated with flowers with a banner: "They

died so that we are free to kill the Earth."

We know that Capitalism is violent and this includes the violence against it. For those for whom violence is a legitimate response, we would say that Mayday 2000 was not violent enough to transcend the situation and enter the realm of symbolic politics; as did the Poll Tax riot (where the violence of the day became, for many reasons, a counter-symbol of resistance and a premonition of the downfall of Thatcher's divided Britain').

Even so, no group can occupy Trafalgar square for more than a few hours (failing the mobilisation, spontaneous or otherwise, of a revolutionary mass) as it was militarily designed both as a focus for protest and its containment (as its history shows).

The change in RTS strategy of giving the police notice of the actual venue allows them to plan for control of both the event and its reception (just look at the tango between the SWP, police and the press at Euston Station!!)

Mayday 2000 was not 'violent enough, peaceful enough, creative enough, planned enough, anarchist enough, and worst of all, it was a waste of plants!!'

The truth is there was neither the critical mass nor the creativity, in response to such a 'loaded' site, to overcome such a symbolic and practical set-up. There lies the danger of becoming addicted to the (dead) symbols of a (live) enemy and the problems of transforming them into counter-symbols of a growing movement.

In short it seems to us that in retrospect the move from the local specifics of empowerment (reclaim the streets: a specific location/stretch of motorway) to the realm of (abstract) symbolic politics (Carnival against Capitalism) is proving counter-productive - and many sense it!

### The future: think global act local

We would say that all the issues (global warming, traffic pollution, ecological destruction, third world debt, etc) are already on the agenda and have been since the sixties! We have already won!!....(It's just that some people need convincing!!)

Given that the majority of the world's population are disillusioned with corporate capitalism for one reason or another, RTS is a (visibly vocal) part of the mainstream, not a revolutionary avant-garde!!

RTS is being used/and set up as a "terrorist organisation" and therefore the next manifestation of RTS (in London) will without doubt revolve around the issue of the right-to-demonstrate and Prevention of Terrorism Bill.

Does every manifestation of RTS (London) have to be explicitly 'anti-capitalism' from now on? Reclaiming a stretch of motorway, a disused community centre, plot of land, etc. are implicitly anti-capitalist.

Having taken this step into symbolic politics however it may prove impossible (thanks to the press and the police) for RTS to return to the local.

With all the above in mind we believe that RTS (London) should consider its own disappearance, and announce its dissolution (as a tactic of dissimulation - let

the enemy 'win) rather than be used as counterproductive avant-garde. The movement will continue to grow and take many forms.

Alternatively, in spite of what we have already said above, having gone so far as the announcement of the actual venue, it may be an interesting tactic to 'co-operate' with the police at this point (to undercut their strategy and reveal their 'inflexibility', etc... "negotiations broke down today between..." etc. etc.)

After all, the police are not the actual enemy, merely an obstacle in the road and the trick is to put them, along with the politicians and the rest, in a contradictory position (with relation to "law and order" on the one hand, and 'democracy' on the other.)

Capitalism may be the actual enemy but certain developments can be useful and can be taken advantage of to reveal contradictions (between corporate control of world resources and 'free'/fair trade, etc.) Take the Internet for instance, and the slightly hysterical over-investment in its potential (on all sides). The illusion of democracy can be used to reveal the reality of capitalist repression. Contradictions are there to be exploited by progressive social movements, not resolved by them!

RTS should consider declaring a 'Democracy Now! Coalition, in alliance with all civil rights and activist groups. (Just picture the outraged reaction - "We are the first and the best"; "this is not Eastern Europe" etc., etc.) At the same time as returning to the local, less symbolic smaller scale actions, Be more clever and more creative; take advantage of the illusion of Tony Blair Ken Livingstone's "more inclusive Britain" (to expose the reality of more centralisation and new police state).

The next event must be peaceful and win back the ground won at Seattle! (Always allowing for unprovoked police over-reaction).

*Notes* - For a discussion on the role of the (Stalinist) Red Brigades played in creating a climate (with the silent collusion of those in power) which allowed the governing elite to destroy the autonomous movement in Italy in the name of 'law and order' and the 'prevention of terrorism' see: *Italy: Autonomia, Post-Political Politics* pub. Semiotext(e) On Germany and the similar role played by the Baader-Meinhof and others see: *Terror or Love?* Bommi Baumann.

It makes no difference from a non-sentimental historical and strategic perspective what degree of sincerity and commitment the various participants had; the effect of state-collusion on the one hand (to the extent of allowing Moro to be murdered/sacrificed) and the police 'agent-provocateur' infiltration on the other (to the extent of supplying information, drugs and weapons) combined with increasingly inflexible left-wing (avant-gardist) ideas and tactics; the result was the same - increased repression and the suppression of autonomy; the real threat to order.

### Diverse views on May Day:

... Smashing up MacDonalds is one thing. Frightening staff who are on minimum wages is another.

... I've seen so much violence and police violence over the years - mainly at football - that it (kind of) astounds me when it continues. ...

All that was needed was a few people to steward the event, even only informally. To pick out places and actions that were going to rebound on us. To be there to explain that, 'look this bit of stone (the cenotaph) will cause us loads of problems if you spray it with "Gary is a

poof" (one bit of graffiti I saw). Go and spray the Downing Street or Whitehall sign'. To explain that smashing MacDonalds there and then (why not pick another one, do them around the country in sympathy, do them the night before - rather than the one that's just around the corner in the middle of everyone) will just be used as an excuse by the police to beat the fuck out of innocent crowd members.

... I have been a journalist for fifteen years and I find the blanket antipathy towards 'journalists' a mistake. Hardened news hacks like Nigel Rosser (he's less trustworthy than your average boa constrictor) don't give a fuck about reasonable reporting so avoid people like him but work on others who aren't...be prepared to debate ideas...know your facts...know your history. The arguments are our power, not our ability to 'bear arms' or stones or spray cans... Z

I thought the worst mindless thugs were in the Palace of Westminster.

My estimate is that increased poverty since 1980 has killed at least 100,000 British residents each year, that is two million people. Nobody appears to record how many die of poverty and since the 70s even the numbers recorded as suicides have not been published because they were increasing so rapidly. It would be interesting to note how the figures for life expectancy have varied. We do know that it is far worse for those in poverty.

Michael Moore

The government is a tool. It is sold to us as 'our tool' (democracy). Meanwhile 'money' also uses this tool. Gordon Brown has to please the IMF (et al) Tony Blair has to please the PR machine of the corporations (the media). ... The government is not our enemy, it's just that 'money' is much better at using it than us. The government is our defence against corporate megalomania, we need it on our side. The old bill; they are us, we need them on our side. The army; it's ours, we need them on our side.

... The people who run the corporations are very few. In the face of collective action they don't stand a chance of running this planet their way. Unless...there is no collective action.

The media attacks everyone. They call it 'critical' but it is just pure negativity. The only thing they are positive about is consumption.

... Blair cannot move. Having sold his soul to the media he is now at their beck and call and thus at the beck and call of corporations (for media read 'corporate missionaries').

He is their lapdog, but my guess is he would like not to be. If only he knew that the anarchists are fighting for what he probably wants too; community, belonging and love. All a politician really wants is to be loved. Deep down Tony Blair is an anarchist. We need him on our side. ...

theMole...defending the people..



.... The damage was minimal. The protestors were remarkable restrained given the lack of freedom to move around. The streets around Trafalgar Sq. were remarkably free of traffic, and for the first time ever, I could walk around the area without breathing in fumes, being run over and without the anxiety from the noise of bad drivers with short fuses. ...

We'll have to find a way to deal with agents provocateurs that give us bad publicity. I am resigned to wearing out the police, before they wear us out. I hope they get so fed up with us, that they'll have to calm down.

How about a 'Reclaim our Spirits' in a park. the theme would be spiritual, because capitalism and imperialism destroys our souls and prevents us from being real humans. We could have flower ceremonies, Buddhists chants, gospel music, tai chi, yoga, shamanic rituals and whatever else people do for their spirits.

I wonder how the police would deal with that.

NLP

.. Perhaps we might need to do more than just shrug when the usual suspects decide that venting their spleen by trashing another McDonalds and baiting the police in any way moves things forward.

You can't build an effective broadbased coalition against capitalism and consumerism without breaking into the mainstream and you can't break into the mainstream if people think opposing capitalism means trashing fastfood franchises.

Brendan

... Sir Winston Churchill was one of the greatest (and probably THE greatest) leader that this nation has ever had. Were it not for him, his patriotism, his resolve, and his dedication to the British people, none of you lot (or me for that matter) would be alive today. Why? Because our parents would all have been slaughtered following the German invasion and occupation of Britain. How dare you deface a statue erected in his honour?!!!!!! And the Cenotaph! Our national monument to all the hundreds of thousands of brave men who gave their lives defending our nation. You bunch of commie hippy dropouts deface that too? No wonder Britain is fading as a global power with people like you lot in our midst.

Graham

... But this global civil society is new in that it is strained between being reactionary, in the proper sense of the term turned toward the past, and avant-gardistic. In other words, it's position has not been defined otherwise than by being against the dramatic effects of globalisation. So we find turtle-lovers and human rightists and cheese-protectors all standing side by side. Opposing the poor of the world to turtles in terms of meaning is of course irresponsible, since the poor would probably not mind inheriting a creation as intact as it was when we were all still coming down from the trees in an equally painstaking manner. But does that give one priority over the other? Of course not. The resulting problem of the

diversity of actors is and was one of the greatest problems to the "left" in the past decade. But luckily, for many of those who went to Seattle, "left" and "right" is as outlandish as "turtle" and "yellow-headed squirrel monkey".

... What Seattle showed us, is that if social action continues -and that is a big if- then the globalisation based purely on motives of capital accumulation (to keep it simple), and operating exclusively by the mechanisms existing today will not succeed. As already globalised beings, we need not only to look at the social and political ramifications of globalisation, but subject all aspects of globalisation to the principle of plurality.

Sascha

## Hidden agendas

... One of the key issues on the agenda was JackBoot Straw's new "anti-terrorism" bill, due to become law over the summer having been swept through the commons by "Labour's" massive majority (not that the Tory scum would oppose it anyway) and which will, in effect, legally brand those who resist "terrorists".

Some people marched to Downing street to raise their concerns with the PM though, being unable to get past the Gestapo at the gate, had to send the freak a message in a bottle, or two... It later transpired that Mr bLIAR was at Chequers having tea with -yep, you got it- Gerry feckin Adams! The bill is aimed at direct action and any form of dissent on any level. ... Has it not occurred to them that, had the Suffragettes not resorted to direct action then women wouldn't even have a vote let alone seats in the House? (mind you, no vote, no Ann Widdecomes!). If we cannot protest then the illegal government will be able to carry out massacres -as it did in the Gulf and the Balkans-completely unchallenged.

The bill is not only about giving the elite and their little (working class !?!) helpers more powers, its also about protecting corporate scumfucks like McMurder's. These faceless menaces -who've been hit by direct action-tell the government (which they own) to pass laws that enable them to continue to kill people and animals and rape the planet (not to mention putting crack in their "cheese burgers"). ...

But, fear not. Their laws are to be broken. The forest that is beginning to rise-up from under the restless concrete of their system -not seen since '68- will continue to flourish in the face of the pesticide that is the elite and, eventually, devastate the foundations on which their monuments are stood. And y'know what? They're fuckin' shittin' it!

Anonymous 2

## MayDay hangover

*'Guerrilla Gardening is not a protest; by its very nature it is a creative peaceful celebration of the growing global anti-capitalist movement.'* -- Reclaim the Streets

*'You don't have to give any information to the police. Only if you are arrested are you legally obliged to give your name and address; answer 'no comment' to everything else.'* -- legal advice ...

*'I have always been in favour of direct action ... if it puts us outside the law, the laws are wrong and we have a right and duty to fight them.'* -- Ken Livingstone

We were not protesting. Under the shadow of an irrelevant parliament we were planting the seeds of a society where ordinary people are in control of their land, their resources, their food and their decision making. The garden symbolised an urge to be self-reliant rather than dependent on capitalism. It celebrated the possibility of a world that encourages cooperation and sharing rather than one which rewards greed, individualism and competition.

*'As you would expect the May Day message about why people were there got kind of lost. But what is a few smashed windows and some daubed paint compared to what global capitalism is doing to the planet?' -- protester.*

... Political commentators who are in symbiotic relationship with the state-corporate-nexus failed to understand why they were there and came out with meaningless gibberish posturing as explanation. For some reason they fail to comprehend why people fail to turn out to vote at elections, fail to connect the two. Think that gimmicks will increase voter turn-out. Fail to recognise that voters don't want to vote for crap candidates, don't want to cast their votes and legitimise a corrupt system...

... The violence used by the Anarchist thugs was to play into the hands of the state. May Day 2000 had been hyped days before by the police, the government and the media as a day of excessive violence. Until the Anarchist thugs stepped in there was no violence, there was a peaceful carnival atmosphere. If there had been no violence, the police, the government, the media would have been made to look fools, instead their hype was seen to be justified, if anything an underreaction to the terror on the street disguised as protest. ...

Draconian legislation is currently passing through Parliament on encryption and terrorism, we are likely to see this get worse, and at the very least be given an easier Parliamentary passage. There is likely to be a much heavier police presence on future actions, assuming such actions will be even permitted let alone tolerated, and the level of policing is already repressive and, as intended, prevents many people turning out on the street.

One of the first casualties have been the Greenpeace GM crop trashers. On the day following the May Day violence the Crown Prosecution Service announced that they were going for a retrial (the previous week the activists had been found not guilty of theft and the jury had been unable to reach a verdict on criminal damage). Following the May Day violence they are going to be tried in a much less favourable atmosphere than was possible a week ago, the violence would in turn have exerted political pressure to force a retrial rather than allow direct activists to go Scott free.

Violence begets violence. To use violence is to challenge the state-corporate-nexus, to play them at their own game, a game they know only too well. No matter what violence is used on the streets, the state-corporate-nexus can command overwhelming fire-power. It is better to move the ball park to an area they don't know and stand a chance of winning. When violence takes over the media reports the violence not the underlying issues.

In no way wishing to exonerate the mindless violence of the Anarchist thugs, which served no purpose other than to legitimise the activities of the state, it pales into insignificance compared with the violence of global corporations against the people of the world and the environment. But to counter violence with violence only serves to legitimise the use of violence.

*'The corporate media's obsession with confrontation and property damage conceals the violence of capital that occurs 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: The fact remains that the most likely cause of death for an under 14 year old in Britain is being hit by a car, that 1 in 3 children in the UK is brought up in poverty and 50% of this country's ancient woodland has been destroyed since 1950, all in the name of profit. Surely that is the violence that should be splashing the front pages.'* -- Reclaim the Streets

Much of the earlier violence was against national monuments, spray painting of monuments. Whilst those who carried out the acts may not have liked what they saw as symbols glorifying war they should have nevertheless respected what are national monuments. Would they have attacked Stonehenge if they had a dislike of astronomical timepieces? The behaviour was no different to the Nazis attacking the Jews and Jewish culture, Turkish jackbooted thugs in Cyprus desecrating Greek Churches. They could just as easily have spray-painted their slogans on the pavement, where they would have had the additional advantage of their slogans remaining in place as they would have been unlikely to have been cleaned off. The desecrated monuments became an icon upon which the tabloid media and rabid politicians could hang the protesters. ...

Reclaim the Streets are often accused of organising violent protest, the police of turning a protest into a riot. May Day 2000 found neither side at fault. Activists did their best to clamp down on Anarchist thugs, the police in the main remained cool under extreme provocation. It took only a handful of mindless thugs to turn a peaceful May Day celebration into an orgy of mindless violence.

In the absence of any meaningful opposition the Blair government has been looking for any excuse to clamp down on peaceful protest. A handful of mindless thugs masquerading as demonstrators has given them that excuse.

Anyone who has any remaining doubts as to the government's intentions only has to look at their recent track record. The fast-tracking of Draconian legislation already mentioned which will curb fundamental civil rights, the clamp-down on Free Tibet demonstrators during last autumn's state visit by the Chinese leadership,



the vicious campaign against London Mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone for daring to advocate direct action and telling the truth that global capital is responsible for killing millions of people. ...

*Anonymous 3*

## **'I utterly condemn the violence and destruction of property by mindless thugs.'** **- Ken Livingstone**

*'It is only because of the bravery and courage of our war dead that these idiots can live in a free country at all.'* Tony Blair

*'... I was the first MP to call for air strikes to defeat his [Milosevic's] aggression.'* Ken Livingstone

It may seem surprising that the politicians responsible for the dropping of 23,000 bombs and missiles on Serbia should be so outraged by the small amount of graffiti and window breaking on May Day. However, hypocrisy is second nature to most politicians. Every Remembrance Day they solemnly lay wreaths at the Cenotaph, pretending to care about the suffering of war. The next day they are back in parliament justifying more violence, whether it is arms sales to repressive regimes or more air raids on Iraq (a country where sanctions have caused a million deaths since 1990).

The Cenotaph was unveiled on Armistice Day 1920, just three weeks after hungry unemployed ex-servicemen had fought running battles with police in Whitehall. Ever since then politicians have manipulated people's grief over war with eulogies to what the Cenotaph refers to as 'The Glorious Dead'. In an attempt to keep us passive, they endlessly promote the idea that the 'war dead' died for our freedom. No one could seriously argue that the soldiers slaughtered in the trenches died 'glorious' deaths for freedom. However, it is a common belief that World War Two (WW2) was all about fighting fascism.

The truth is that Churchill heaped praise on fascist Italy, while members of the royal family, and papers like *The Daily Mail*, unequivocally supported Hitler. Britain had slaughtered millions through slavery and empire building across the world and Hitler essentially wanted to be left alone to do the same in Eastern Europe. However, this threatened the pre-eminence of the British Empire so the British establishment eventually turned against him.

Even so, WW2 was largely won by Stalin's Russia. Stalin had already killed ten million people by 1940, so his war with Hitler was hardly a fight for freedom. Meanwhile Churchill delayed the Normandy landings, hoping that the German and Russian armies would wear themselves out. The result was that 20-30 million Russians perished and millions more died in the concentration camps.

The Allies refused Axis offers to send them Jewish refugees and they never acted on desperate pleas to stop

the exterminations by bombing the rail lines to Auschwitz. However, they did make great efforts to bomb German and Japanese cities, killing perhaps a million civilians. The culmination of these atrocities was the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; bombings that were authorised by the 1945 Labour leadership even though Japan was ready to surrender.

After the war, tens of thousands of German POWs starved to death in Allied prison camps, as did many civilians in a devastated Germany deprived of food aid. At the same time the Allies recruited prominent Nazis like Klaus Barbie, 'the Butcher of Lyon', and Walter Rauff, the inventor of the gas chambers. They then sent them to Latin America where the US also introduced Nazi counter-insurgency techniques to maintain their control of the region.

Although WW2 had nothing to do with fighting oppression, this has not stopped the media and politicians justifying more recent wars against Saddam or Milosevic as vital struggles against 'the new Hitler'. It has also not stopped them stirring up racial hatred against asylum seekers in a way that would not have been out of place in Nazi Germany!

A major reason that politicians get away with all this hypocrisy is that the left still claims that WW2 was a 'just war'. They still believe that, no matter how much they oppose democratic capitalist politicians, they need to join with them against any threat from dictators. But history shows this can only lead to massacres and war crimes - from WW2 to the Gulf to Kosovo.

A better way to oppose dictatorship is for people to make revolution against it and every other aspect of capitalism. This is not just sloganeering. It was shown to work in Spain when armed workers prevented Franco's coup in 1936 and proceeded to take over and successfully run industry and agriculture. Tragically, their 'anarchist' leaders then thought they could fight fascism by joining, rather than overthrowing, the 'left' Republican government. However, this merely gave the government the opportunity to destroy the workers' collectives and ruthlessly repress all opposition in the name of the anti-fascist war effort. Franco still won and the Spanish civil war set a precedent for the mass mobilisations of WW2.

During WW2, people joined anti-fascist resistance movements just to survive. But the only way to really stop the carnage would have been for soldiers to turn their guns on their officers and make revolution. This may well have left them vulnerable to attack, but it could have also sparked off revolts behind enemy lines. After all, the end of WW1, Armistice Day 1918, occurred in the wake of mutinies and revolution across Germany inspired by the Russian revolution.

Wars are often ended by mutinies; examples include the US army in Vietnam, the Iraqi army in 1991 and the Serb army last year. Such a scenario was not impossible in WW2. Indeed the Allies had to violently crush anti-fascist resistance movements in Korea and Greece, as well as to occupy every inch of Axis territory, in case revolutions broke out. Certainly revolution was the only

scenario worth fighting for and, whatever its outcome, it could not have been worse than the fifty million deaths of WW2, the worst massacre in human history.

Livingstone's support for the Kosovo war dissuaded many from opposing Britain's first major war in Europe since 1945. This not only led to the deaths of at least 500 civilians but it can only encourage more wars. Some of the graffiti on the Cenotaph was pointless; some, like the slogan: 'Why glorify war?', was appropriate. But let us hope the hysteria about it encourages all of us to think about why we were so ineffective during the Kosovo war and how we can better oppose the next war.

See [www.freespeech.org/mayday2k](http://www.freespeech.org/mayday2k) for sources.

## **Our offensive words:**

### **WHY GLORIFY WAR?**

**- Cenotaph graffiti, May Day 2000.**

**'We were promised a land fit for heroes. All we got was the bloody Cenotaph.'** - An ex-soldier dying from the effects of being gassed in World War One.

**'People were sitting on the pavement playing a bloody gramophone ... All the bloody street was ours.'**

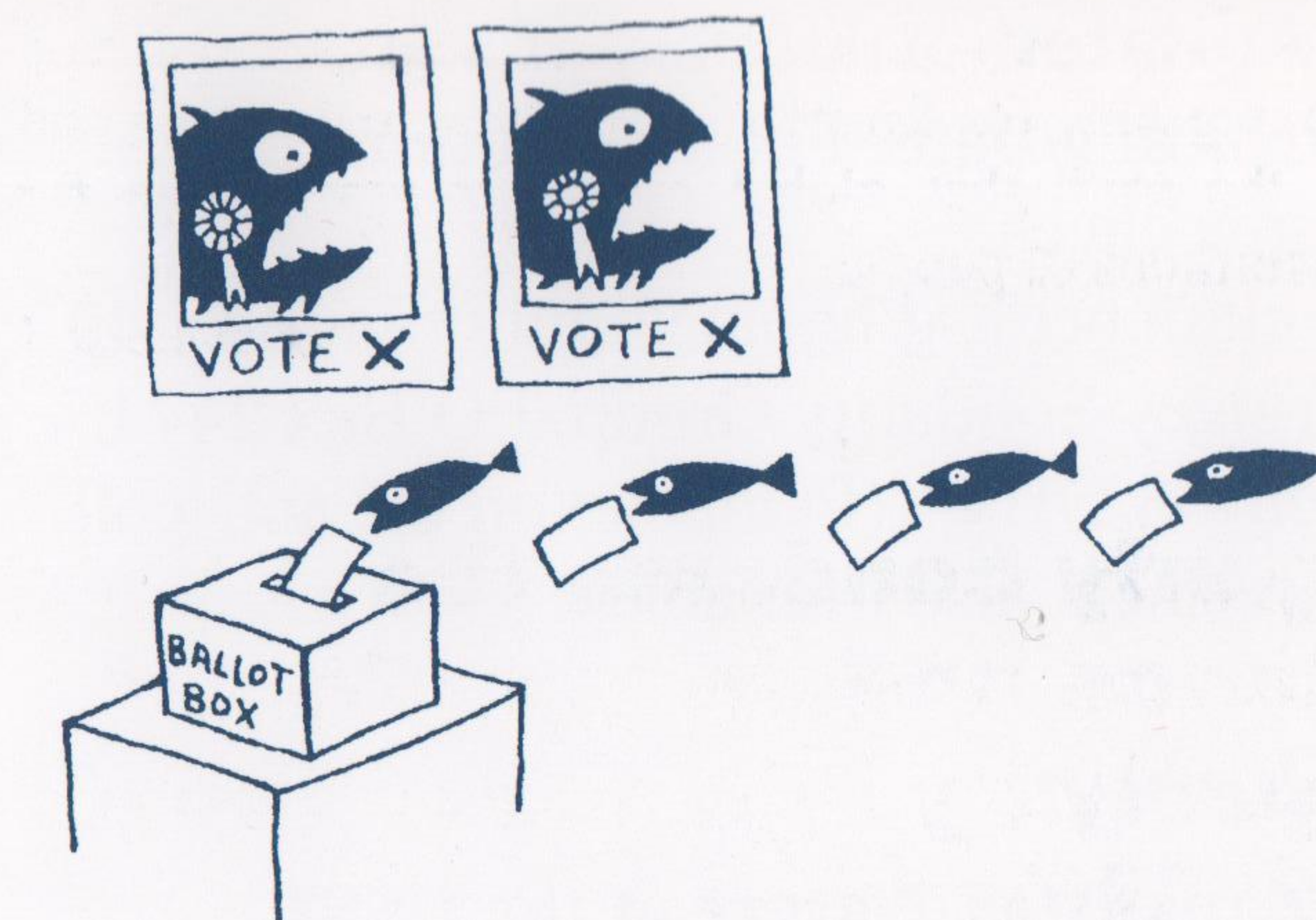
- A participant in the riot in Luton on the day the first Whitehall Cenotaph was unveiled in 1919. People were angry at the treatment of ex-soldiers. They burned down the town hall, pulled pianos out of a music shop and played: 'Keep the home fires burning'!

**'We are not sorry the unemployed hit back last Monday; we congratulate them and only wish they had hit out harder.... Before the capitalist system goes crashing down, much more than ballustrading and windows will be smashed up with it.'**

- Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought* statement on the Whitehall Riots of ex-soldiers three weeks before the unveiling of the permanent Cenotaph in 1920. Many workers and suffragettes were inspired by the way WW1 had been ended by mutinies and workers' councils across Russia and Germany. Pankhurst was an anti-parliamentary communist and was very critical of the later 'official' Communist Party.

**'We demand Workers' Councils not parliamentary democracy!'** - One of the slogans of the workers' councils set up in Northern Iraq after Iraqi army mutinies ended the Gulf War in 1991.

**'We won't go to Kosovo!, You won't fool us any more!'** - Slogans of the deserting Serb soldiers during the anti-Milosevic demos that helped end the Kosovo war.



## **Their offensive words:**

### **TO THE GLORIOUS DEAD**

**- Cenotaph engraving, July 1919.**

**'I have always said that if Britain were defeated in war I hoped we should find a Hitler to lead us back to our rightful place among the nations.'**  
- Winston Churchill, 1939.

**'Hitler might take us up on any such offer and there simply are not enough ships in the world to handle them.'** - Anthony Eden's poor attempt to justify Churchill's refusal to rescue Jewish refugees from the gas chambers.

**'An offensive of extensive bombing could sap the moral of the enemy providing it is directed against the working class areas of German towns.'**  
- Professor Lindemann, Churchill's adviser, 1942.

**'They'll still breed like rabbits.'** - Churchill's response as 3 million died in a famine in Bengal in 1943 when he restricted grain imports. A year earlier the army had used public floggings, the burning of villages and the machine-gunning of rioters to crush the independence movement.

After the war the British military was too weak to hold onto India. However they used torture, mass executions and concentration camps to suppress revolts in Kenya and were also ruthless in colonial wars in: Greece, Palestine, Vietnam, Indonesia, Aden, Ethiopia, Korea, Malaya, Egypt, Cyprus, Togoland, Muscat, Oman, Kuwait, Brunei, Ireland, The Falklands, Iraq and Sierra Leone. Half these military adventures were launched by Labour governments.

**'The NATO operation was not designed as a means of blocking Serb ethnic cleansing ... not in any way.'**  
- General Clark revealing the truth of the 'humanitarian' propaganda during the Kosovo war.