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London Calling

The Bulletin of London Class War

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PO Box 467, London E8 3QX

classwaruk@hotmail.com

Our (May) Day Will Come!

Report & Reflections

The London CW picket of Wilkinson's, Stratford, got our May Day off to a good start. Well attended, and well policed, we received a positive reception from shoppers. This was but one of a series of pickets we'll be holding to highlight Wilkinson's use of prison slave labour. Once we arrived in the West End, however, it was clear that the main event of the day was not going to go as smoothly as we'd hoped. From the first it was clear that the police had the upper hand: the rapid encircling of demonstrators at the assembly point outside Lockheed Martin showed what to expect from the cops. What was particularly perturbing with this inauspicious start was that many experienced activists were trapped behind enemy lines!

When things did get underway it was clear that numbers were well down on last year. Many people I spoke to thought they were seeing one part of a much larger demonstration. I didn't have the heart to put them right! Whilst May Day did cause a huge disruption of trade throughout the West End, much of that was due to shops being boarded up in fear of violence. The stroll round the West End did cause some surprise, but outside the immediate vicinity of the demonstration life proceeded as normal.

The confusion caused by the disruption of the assembly point caused events throughout the day to go awry. The 'green' route appears to have been the only one to appear. This, combined with the low turnout, combined to ^{leave} prevent the police retaining the upper hand throughout the day. We got to the day's destination - Shell's HQ on the Strand - earlier than the 4 o'clock convergence hour, and by four few people were left in the Strand.

Though many people had headed off down Whitehall, the day was effectively lost by the time the last stragglers had left the Strand for a pint or five. Though people hung around Trafalgar for ages - some forced to - it was plain the police had initiative on their side. The police presence was sufficient to prevent any trouble being worth the effort, and there was little talk in the pubs later of success.

There are some several reasons for the disappointing events of this year's May Day. The publicity was tardy. May Day fell - again - on a weekday, with all the associated problems for turnout. Many people have already filled their year's quota of demonstrations. Past May Days have shown what sort of policing to expect. Maybe some people were put off attending because they didn't want to get nicked for stuff they'd done before. But another possibility is boredom...

This brief summary of the events of this year's May Day may sound pessimistic: it isn't supposed to. Rather, it is time to re-evaluate May Day strategically and tactically. We cannot go on without reflecting on what went wrong on the day, as well as what went right. Essentially, it's time to ask ourselves what we want from May Day. Is it a day to trash a McDonald's? A day to have a ruck with the filth? A day to bring the West End to a halt? If it is, then we're failing dismally.

As long as we keep going back to the West End every year, we're making a strategic mistake: we divide ourselves from the very communities we wish to influence. Tactically it makes no sense. If we're looking for a rerun of June 18, we're looking in the wrong place. Each year May Day has a different theme, with a different idea of how to get the better of the cops. Each year the police manage to disrupt these plans. At the end of the day what has May Day become but a great training day for the Met and City filth? The last four May Days have been positive and vibrant events, but that avenue of opportunity has run its course. It is now time to stop making a fetish of holding May Day in the West End and to act more imaginatively.

By focusing exclusively on the West End and the targets there, the targets on our own doorsteps are neglected. Hackney, Lambeth, Camden, Islington and Haringey Councils all affect the everyday lives of working-class Londoners more than Lockheed Martin. The bread-and-butter issues which most people lose sleep over are not represented in the West End but in the town halls of London. To regain the initiative on May Day, and to reconnect with our communities, we feel that it is vital that the anarchist movement look away from the glittering spires of the West End. If we carry on in the same vein we are going to continue alienating the anarchist movement from the very people we hope to influence.

Next year May Day is on a Saturday. We feel that if May Day '04 is to be the success we want it to be, then we must start looking honestly at what happened this year and drawing lessons from it. In the run-up to next year's events, we'd like to encourage people to get involved in organising it so that the burden is not unfairly placed on a few people. We salute the efforts made by this year's May Day Collective, and feel that their work should have been crowned by greater success. That it wasn't was due to factors outside their control. Only through greater collaboration and solidarity between groups, both formal and informal, can we hope to improve the planning for next year's May Day.

Onwards and upwards for 2004!

Mayday Across the World

BERLIN: At the end of a 4000-strong protest in Prenzlauer Berg, violence "erupted". A group of 200 anarchists took on 7500 cops. They pelted the filth with rocks, bottles and fireworks for three hours, fighting behind burning barricades and beside smashed up shops, losing 97 to arrest. 27 cops were injured, as well as an unknown number of rioters and bystanders. The German capital has been a venue for Mayday revels since 1987. Spiky Rating: 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟

BERNE: Swiss police used water cannon to prevent 300 demonstrators from entering a state-owned arms company. SR: 🌟🌟🌟

ZURICH: 7,000 people marched peacefully. SR: ☹️

Moscow: Pro-Putin parties and trade unions eclipsed Communist supporters, with a 25,000-strong march. The peaceful, flower-waving crowd cheerfully marched down Moscow's main thoroughfare, joined by the Moscow mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, and Mikhail Gorbachev. SR: ☹️

SEOUL: 20,000 attended a rally demanding a shorter working week, better conditions and job security. SR: 🌟

MANILA: 10,000 marched, demanding better working conditions. Some wore masks, symbolizing the harmful effects of globalization on local industries. SR: 🌟

You're supposed to fry them!

Tokers at Hungary's first cannabis march and festival were forced to take an early bath after anti-drugs campaigners pelted them with eggs and tomatoes. Although cops kept the two sides apart, the way the "antis" hissed and booed, together with their incessant rain of veg, brought the do to an end an hour early.

Shenanigans in US

American Postal Service Inspector General Karla Corcoran has come under fire from a watchdog group and 2 senators. It seems that she authorised a variety of "team-building" activities which would get most people the sack. Among the concerns raised about the bizarre and unusual practices she had staff

participate in were building gingerbread houses, dressing up like YMCA band, the Village People, and performing strip-teases at work. Additionally, they criticised her "rampant waste, cronyism, questionable management and personnel practices".

Come in SO595, your time is up!

You really could **not** make it up. The Met have just announced they're going to launch a range of cop "action men". They're kicking off, appropriately, with a riot cop. According to the BBC, "the male action figure is equipped with telescopic truncheon, riot shield and handcuffs", and can be dressed up in a flak jacket, boots, helmet and gauntlets. It also has its own number (SO595). This feisty filth will be joined by a female sergeant, cop van, helicopter & air observer. For some reason the Met seem to think this is a good idea. If they want to portray themselves as vicious thugs, who are we to differ?

Unlikely Heroes

For many years there have been rumours that, in the US, librarians keep tabs on what people are looking at. Rumour no longer! The US "Patriot" Act forces librarians to give the FBI the reading, research and internet records of any & all library users. Librarians are even prohibited from telling you your records have been seized by the Feds!! This is no idle threat: librarians across the United States are reporting FBI agents making many hundreds of record requests. However, librarians are not taking this lying down. From issuing warnings and spreading news of the new law, many librarians are turning to direct action! The most used piece of equipment in many libraries now is the humble shredder, which many librarians are now using routinely to foil the evil machinations of the Bush despotism.

Sports News

News reaches us of a recent football match between the British Ulster Association and Eastway Rangers FC, a 6 Counties unionist outfit. The game ended Eastway Rangers 6 BUA Mainlanders 2, in this memorial match for John Gregg and Robert Carson. The BUA had the grace to say Eastway were the better side. One BUA player sadly had received a broken ankle, and was hospitalised. The rest of the team retired in solidarity.

Lo*nd*n Calling

Over the next month, we're going to be revamping *London Calling*. We're going to see if people want to get it via email, and *London Calling* will also carry more reviews and international news. You will have seen our international Mayday notes above: our team of newshounds are on the look-out for similar stories for the July edition. If you have any information, news or diary dates for *London Calling*, please email us at classwaruk@hotmail.com, or send the info to *London Calling* at the London PO Box.

WAR NEWS

Throughout the war on Iraq there've been strange goings-on. Now the dust is beginning to settle, it's interesting to see what the peace has revealed. Taking two points here – the archives and Jessica Lynch – shows a bit of a dichotomy between what we're told and encouraged to believe, and the truth.

As soon as the fighting was over the looting began. Both in Basra and Baghdad teams of Iraqis carried off anything they could lay their hands on. And good luck to them! The curious thing was finding Class War in strange company. Donald Rumsfeld and Geoff Hoon are not known for their positive stance on free shopping, yet both condoned the looting. All manner of useful and not so useful things were taken: three men were seen in Basra pushing a grand piano down the road! Buildings in Baghdad were pillaged and set on fire. And where were the forces of law and order during this shopping frenzy? Sat back, **encouraging** the looting! Whilst the looting of the National Museum has grabbed most of the headlines, the looting of the archives has not received the same attention.

Consider: in Afghanistan, every computer and video tape discovered was trumpeted as the likely panacea to all the US & UK intelligence problems. All carefully taken away and investigated. All nice and above board. In Iraq, by contrast, the cities were thrown open and pillaged, not by the invading forces, but by their own populations. No attempt was made to secure any ministry (except oil).

Now, after the buildings were just smoking and it was safe to enter them, all sorts of goodies started turning up for anyone bothering to look about. So much turned up, in fact, that two journalists were able to find the same document on the same day that linked Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda. They even scraped off the same tippex – separately! (See Sunday Telegraph, Toronto Star, 27 April.) And both claimed a world exclusive... Similarly, there have been plentiful finds of material to tar Galloway, and by implication the anti-war movement. But **nothing** about weapons of mass destruction. Nothing about where Saddam Hussein (or his corpse) is. And now, about seven weeks after the fall of Iraq, the US is scaling down the teams looking so hard for the wmd's. The looters have already been blamed by senior members of the Bush administration for nicking all the documents about the weapons. Handy people, looters!

JESSICA LYNCH may be out of the headlines at the moment, but it's likely not long till she reappears. The story of her capture and dramatic rescue was instantly tipped as the next 'Black Hawk Down'. As the Toronto Star noted, "All Hollywood could ever hope to have in a movie was there in this extraordinary feat of rescue – except, perhaps, the truth".

For example, two days before the "rescue", Iraqi troops had scarpered. Hospital staff then tried to return her to the US forces, just over half a mile away. But when the ambulance got near the US lines, it was fired on! Later, a waiter who worked nearby was approached by US Special Forces and asked if any Iraqi soldiers were still in the area. "The soldiers were very nervous", he reported.

The night of the raid, all the hospital staff expected the Americans. "Everyone expected the Americans to come that day because the city had fallen", said Dr Anmar Uday, "But we didn't expect them to blast through the doors like a Hollywood movie." But even more like a movie was the way the Americans had brought along two cameramen and a still photographer!

The *Toronto Star* interviews with the hospital staff make it clear that there was no ill-treatment of Lynch while she was in Iraqi hands. Had there been such ill-treatment, one would expect that the doctors would have been arrested! Instead, a couple of days after her, er, recovery by the US, an American military doctor came to the hospital to thank them for their superb surgery on the wounded GI. What really troubles the medics in Nasiriya are the allegations that Lynch was abused while in their care. One of the nurses who took care of her was taken aback by suggestions that Lynch had been subjected to inappropriate treatment: "This is a lie. But why ask me? Why don't you ask Jessica what kind of treatment she received?" We can't. Jessica Lynch may or may not be suffering from amnesia: the US military has issued a press statement saying she cannot remember what happened to her in captivity, but dismissing claims of amnesia. It seems that if a memory is not laid down, one can't remember *but* isn't suffering from amnesia. It seems somewhat similar to alcohol blackouts.

But Lynch won't be talking. Despite the reports of Iraqi doctors and nurses that she was very friendly to them, and they to her, the US military wants her to keep quiet. Lt-Col Ryan Yantis: "Until such time as she wants to talk – and that's going to be no time soon, and it may be never at all – the press is simply going to have to wait."

...Remembering the Past... ANNIVERSARIES FOR JUNE

1 June: 1903: Fire at master's house at Eton College; two boys lost their lives.
2 June: 1994: 25 intelligence agents killed in helicopter crash in Mull of Kintyre; the dead are some of the top RUC Special Branch and MI5 officers from the Six Counties.
3 June: 1844: Insurrection in Dominica.
4 June: 1913: Suffragette Emily Wilding Davidson trampled to death by a horse at the Derby.
5 June: 1878: Birth of Mexican revolutionary Pancho [Francisco] Villa.
6 June: 1780: Newly built Newgate prison destroyed during Gordon riots.
7 June: 1896: Bomb thrown at religious procession in Barcelona; several killed.
8 June: 1809: Death of Thomas Paine, revolutionary.
9 June: 1946: Ananda Mahidol, aka King Rama VIII of Thailand, found dead in mysterious circumstances.
10 June: 1843: Disturbance at Carmathen by 'Rebecca and her daughters'; toll gates in county destroyed.

11 June: 1903: King Alexander and Queen Draga of Serbia assassinated at Belgrade.
12 June: 1963: Attempt made to assassinate Venezuelan President Betancourt in Ciudad Bolívar; he immediately orders the arrest of all communists and 'pro-Castro extremists'.
13 June: 1876: Mikhail Bakunin, Russian anarchist, died.
14 June: 1928: Ernesto 'Che' Guevara born.
15 June: 1381: Wat Tyler, leader of Peasants' Revolt, killed at Smithfield.
16 June: 1904: Assassination of General Bobroikoff, Governor-General of Finland.
17 June: 1966: Venezuelan guerrilla leader Fabricio Ojeda captured at La Guiara, outside Caracas, by military intelligence.
18 June: 1999: Thousands of anti-capitalist rioters trash the City of London.
19 June: 1997: Mr Justice Bell gives his mixed verdict in the McLibel trial; Dave Morris and Helen Steel fined £60,000 pounds for libel, but also finds against McDonald's for 'exploiting children', deceiving customers about the nutritional qualities of their food', 'cruelty to animals' and 'paying low wages'.

20 June: 1923: Pancho Villa assassinated.
21 June: 1966: Venezuelan guerrilla leader Fabricio Ojeda found hanged, suspiciously, in his cell.
22 June: 1830: Last man punished in pillory at Old Bailey; P J Bossy, for perjury.
23 June: 1848: Rising of Red Republican party in Paris; 3 days' fighting ensued; 10,000 people were killed.
24 June: 1917: Russian fleet in Black Sea mutinied at Sebastopol.
25 June: 1870: Erskine Childers, Irish republican, born.
26 June: 1893: Surviving Haymarket anarchists pardoned.
27 June: 1880: Helen Keller, American socialist, born.
28 June: 1905: Mutiny of Russian sailors on the battleship *Potemkin*.
29 June: 1916: Sir Roger Casement, Irish revolutionary, condemned to death for treason.
30 June: 1797: Naval mutiny at the Nore suppressed.

—Compiled by the Class War Historian—

Diary Dates

24 May: March for a United Ireland. Assemble 12 noon Tothill St (St James Park, Westminster tubes), march to Red Lion Square. Speakers include Sinn Fein rep, Ex-Hunger Striker, John McDonnell MP. Organised by Wolfe Tone Society. wts@brosna.demon.co.uk

1 June: London Class War Meeting. For those not in France! Contact London Group Secretary for details.

1-3 June: G8 Summit, Evian-les-Bains, France. Either sit at home during this summit, or go to the south of France for fun & games! Info: <http://france.indymedia.org>

11 June: Conflict gig. London Mean Fiddler, Charing Cross Road (Tottenham Court Road tube). Films, stalls, etc. Tickets £5 in advance from Astoria Box Office, Rhythm Records Camden, Rough Trade W11, etc.

15 June: Camden Green Fair & Book Fest 2003. St James's Gdns & surrounding closed streets, Cardington St, London NW1. 12-7pm. Lots of fun things to see, buy and do, admission free. Class War stall too!! Nearest tube: Euston.

20-22 June: EU Summit, Salonika, Greece. After the last Greek EU summit, this one looks like another chance to see the Greek rioters in action! <http://thessaloniki.indymedia.org/>

6-12 September: Disarm DSEi. Actions against Europe's largest arms fair. Visit www.dsei.org

25 October: Anarchist Bookfair. New venue ULU, Malet St, London, WC1. Visit <http://freespace.virgin.net/anarchist.bookfair/>

STOP PRESS

About 30 arrests on May Day. One person got 28 days for spitting at a cop, pleaded guilty. Remember, don't plead guilty - there's a fair chance of getting off silly charges like that!

