

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 world's 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). 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

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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).

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 decomposition) 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

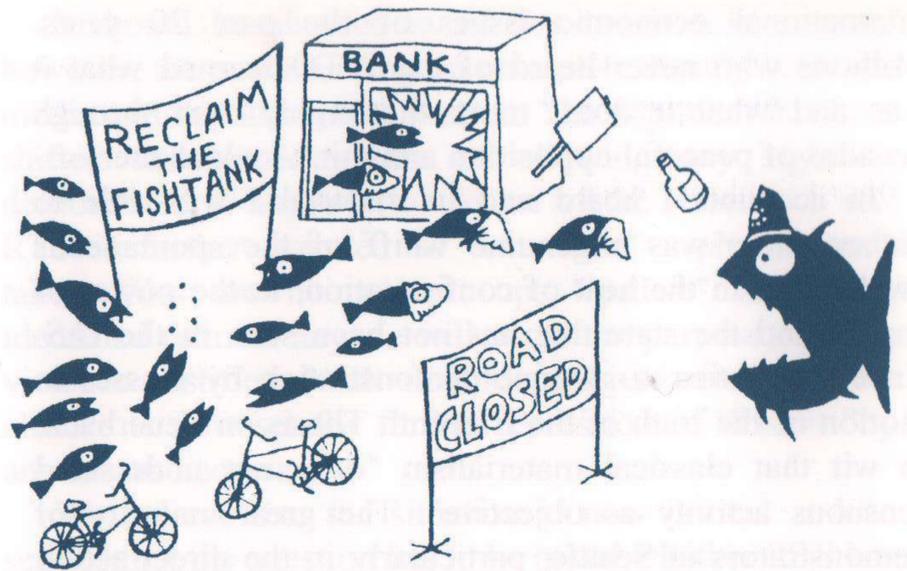
Seattle: the first US riot against 'globalization'?

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 singularly (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 jobs"

"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 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.'

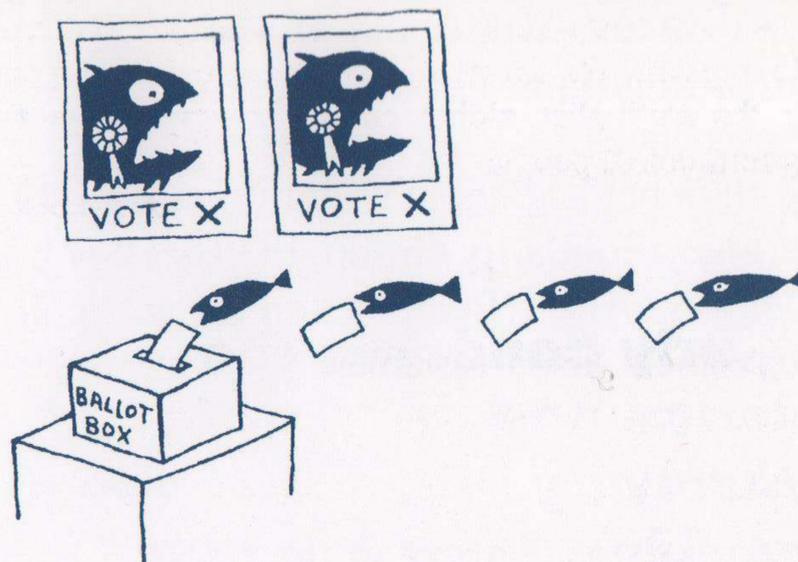
- A participant in the riot in Luton on the day the first Whitehall Cenotaph was unveiled in 1919. People were angry at the treatment of ex-soldiers. They burned down the town hall, pulled pianos out of a music shop and played: 'Keep the home fires burning'!

'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.

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)

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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 18th, pirates, patriarchy, GMOs, biodiversity, Kosovo, reviews etc. (348 pages!). £4 from 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY.

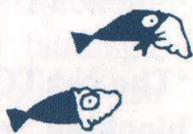
Direct Action - magazine of the Solidarity Federation. PO Box 1095, Sheffield S2 4RY.

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 1st class stamps to PO Box 2600, Brighton BN2.



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 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 18th.

The 20th 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

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.

REMEMBER:

On demos, take precautions!

If arrested, give a name and address and answer 'no comment' to all other questions.