

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

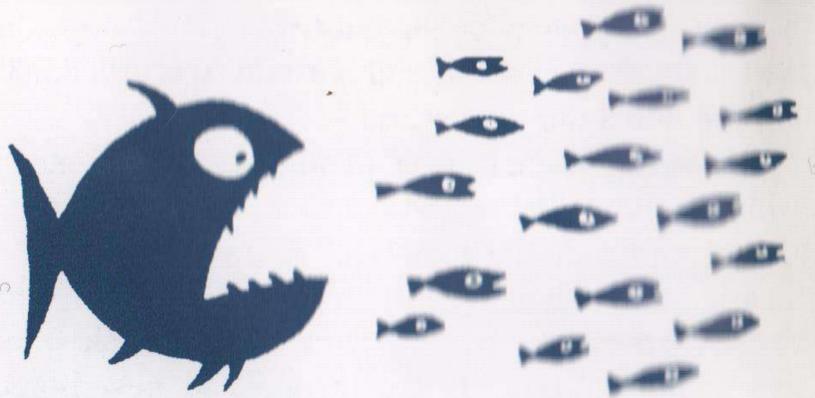
Thanks for all the articles. Let the debate continue:

A mayday over MayDay

Third wave vs. third way

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

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



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

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

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

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

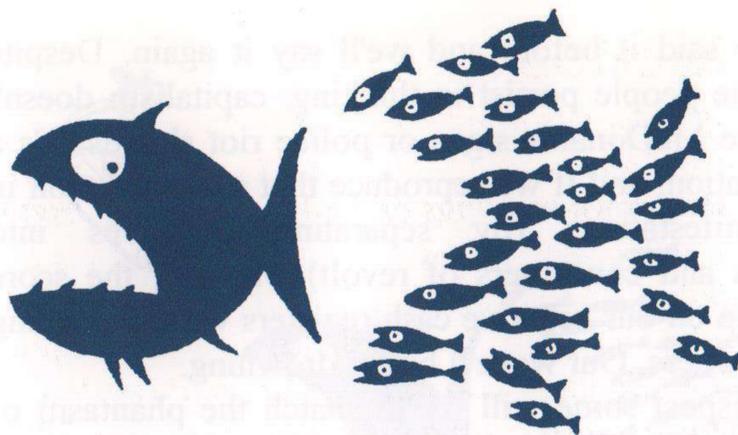
However, there's been parallel developments in the wider sphere which could cut against our isolation. Since Labour's fully-fledged embracing of neoliberalism and its almost total silencing of the old Left, 'mainstream' politics has closed up. The Third Way has taken the First and Second Ways off the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

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

Divide and defuse

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tearful Tony and the media deluge

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

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

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

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

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

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

Out of siege mentality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bash Street Kids

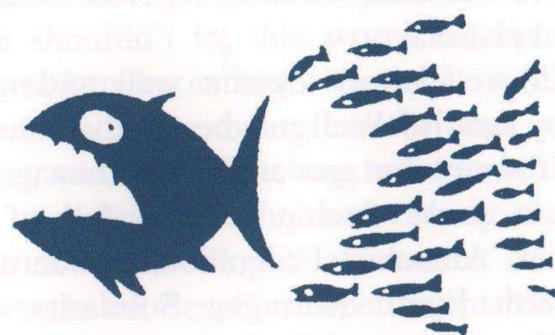
Dope springs eternal from May Day riot

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

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

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

'The Guardian', Thursday July 6, 2000



Was it worth it?

Where did M2K come from?

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

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

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

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

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

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

But there were problems!

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

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

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

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

Police intimidation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Violence

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

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

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

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

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

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

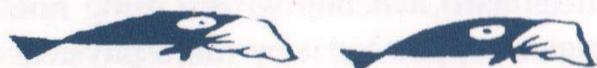
We also need to question why some elements of any demonstration feel they need to side with the forces of the state against fellow protestors. Yes we may disagree on tactics, but in the end of the day we need to see what side we're on. Let's not try and sort this out when the cops are attacking us. If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

OK, I'll finish

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

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

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



Comments on MayDay 2000

Internationalism

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

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

Direct action

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Voluntarism

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

The revolutionary subject

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some MayDay Marxists

May Day 2000 conference

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

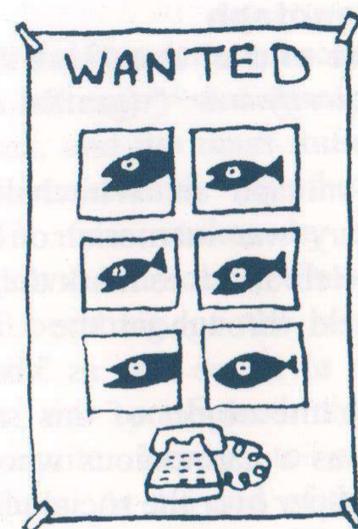
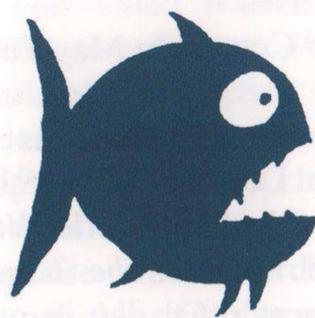
This is also why it's important to remember that we are struggling in our own personal lives, here and now, not in some abstract theoretical way. If we think of the film 'The Godfather' one of the themes running through it is 'this isn't personal, it's just business' - an idea which is used to justify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

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

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

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

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



Churchill, the Cenotaph and May Day 2000

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

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

As Canetti observed, the statues of the old order are

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

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

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

The Cenotaph and the end of the First World War

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

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

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

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

On the home front there were strikes, including on

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

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

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

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

Churchill and World War Two

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

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

The case against Churchill was clearly articulated by

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

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

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

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

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

They were also aware that the German and Japanese

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

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

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

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

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

The British Empire

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

nullifies another.

Why does it matter?

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

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

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

See www.geocities.com/pract_history for references.

Reflekshuns from K.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

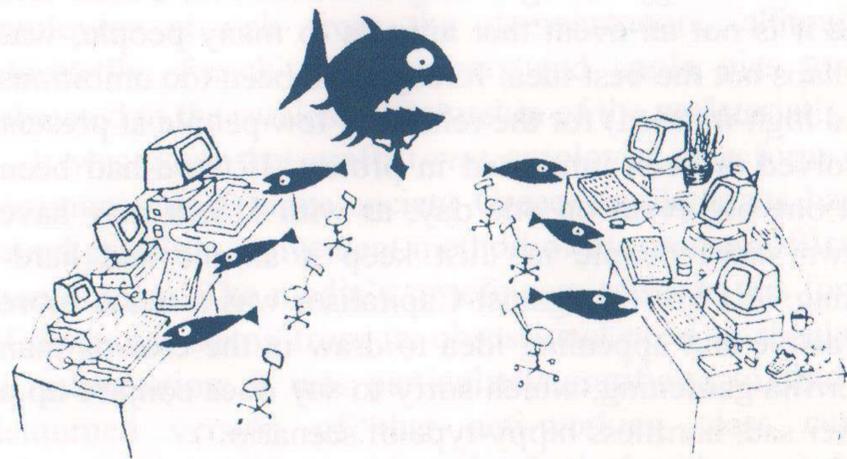
Blair's plan to ice Livingstone out of the London mayoral race, with a high profile riot in the city, may have failed. But the seed of: 'Anti-capitalist equals cenotaph defacing thug,' was one thing that Blair and his border guards of capitalism, were desperately hoping would take root after the Parliament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

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

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

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

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



'Comradely but critical'

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

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

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

Anonymous 1

One day spectacles

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

it does not have widespread working class support.

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

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

Mindful thuggery and the spectacularisation of drama

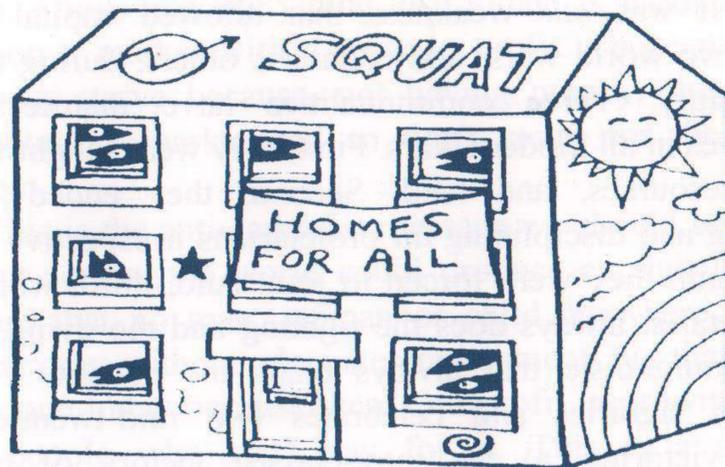
(This text comes from a leaflet distributed after 1 May)
Points worthy of consideration:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Melancholic Troglodytes

Make the Earth a common treasury for all

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AB

It pays to be critical

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

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

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

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

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

media.

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

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

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

Bill (S.P.G.B.)

Account of May Day

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

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

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

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

Most anti-capitalists are very politically literate, and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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