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You Make Plans - We Make History

Ecological Collapse, Science, the Anti-Globalisation
Protests and Reclaim The Streets

Anonymous

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You Make Plans - We Make History
Ecological Collapse, Science, the Anti-Globalisation Protests
and Reclaim The Streets
September 29th, 2001

Retrieved on September 21st, 2016 from
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September 29th, 2001

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eryday life, which get repressed and forgotten about in any war, including amongst those who oppose the war. War becomes an opportunity to campaign separate from daily life, whilst often the same people campaigning have to submit even further to the miseries of work/ home/ leisure/ the street.

Much of the present gearing up for war is co-opting the superficial critique of this build-up by emphasising that it is not innocent people who will get killed, but just the armies. This doesn't just mean that when 'ordinary' people get killed we'll hear little about it, that, as in the Gulf war, when well over 100,000 civilians were killed by the Alliance, all we'll be shown is videos of pinpoint attacks on precise targets. Nor does it just mean that the media will avoid pointing out that the press-ganged conscripts who'll get blown to bits, are as innocent as the vast majority of Afghans. It may well mean that, after the inevitable mass starvation etc., Afghanistan's cities will be heavily invested in (whilst guerrilla warfare will probably be confined to the mountains), like some equivalent of the Marshall Plan, a kind of military Keynesianism. This, to show how great the values of democracy etc are, like some 21st century equivalent of West Berlin. Meanwhile, parts of the rest of the world will be economically disinvested to make up for the loss of immediate profit. The daily toll of 20,000 kids dying from starvation and easily curable disease will increase but it won't specifically be America which is to blame but the world economic system, whose subversion will be defined as 'terrorist'.

Written on September 29th, 2001.

FOOTNOTES

The totalitarian nature of modern capitalism is not the monolithic authoritarian dictatorship as imagined half a century ago in the "Brave New World" and "1984" novels, but a more subtle regime ruled by a bewildering diversity of means penetrating more and more into areas of life previously uncolonised and uncommodified; in the realms of the geographical, sensory, emotional, genetic, etc. The technological growth of the capitalist mode of production that fuels these new invasions is an increasing threat to the chances of simple biological survival.

In this Age of Indifference, most just don't want to know. They block it all out, stick their heads in the sand. Doom and gloom only makes people feel even more impotent (or, worse, they join Friends of the Earth). If ecological catastrophe is mentioned at all, it's usually mentioned with all the anger and sadness that people talk of a dead hedgehog on the road, then change the subject.

Some think of the End of the World as humanity paying for its sins - humanity is so wretched, we deserve to die. This misanthropy is there as much in those who seem resigned to the collapse as in those who claim to oppose it. For some of them, Nature is sacred - human beings profane. Hence so many ecologists justifying misanthropy with Malthusian fervour. Many ecologists fence off nature, like those wardens belonging to

¹ One of the best incidents at an RTS event was, famously, the punk makeover of the genocidal Winston Churchill (May 2000), his statue graffitied, which was later made into a great sticker under which was written: "THIS WAS HIS FINEST HOUR". One of his lesser known contributions to being "Britain's greatest Prime Minister" (Ken Livingdeath) was his deliberate mass starvation of the Bengalis during World War II. When Churchill requisitioned the Bengalis boats, essential for the distribution of rice, Earl Mountbatten made arrangements for 10% of the space on his battleships to be put aside for rice distribution. Churchill promptly withdrew 10% of Mountbatten's battleships. 3 million died. "They'll reproduce themselves soon enough", Churchill was meant to have said. With the possibility of 3 billion or more dying in the future apocalypse, today's Malthusians hope the reproduction process will be far slower.

wild life trusts, particularly English Nature, who can barely tolerate the presence of visitors on their reserves so great is their bitterness against people in general (they must have been naturally selected for the job because they possessed this qualification). Because of the runaway devastation of nature, this contempt for a lost humanity is a growing - and scary - tendency, ranging from the more fanatical animal rightists to the US Earth First! (UK Earth Firstists tend to be a lot less Malthusian, a lot more anarchist): it may yet become the basis for supplanting in horror the genocide of 3 million with that of 3 billion.¹ But most will more than likely have gone mad by then, you and me included maybe.

Such fatalism is an excuse to avoid looking at who and what are more to blame than most and consequently an excuse to not struggle with integrity to get to the roots of it. Some fatalists, being so used to being spectators, somehow feel detached from this End, as if they aren't going to live through the progress of this catastrophe, as if they're going to die suddenly, or as if it's only going to happen to others, without them experiencing the misery of this long drawn-out horror. Others even look at this disaster with cynical expectation, some grandiosely psychotic sado-masochistic glee at the decomposing decadence of it all. Most regard any sense of desperate urgency as an inexplicable intrusion, or, amongst the Middle Class, an irritating nag of guilt that makes them write out a cheque to Greenpeace. No matter what, life must carry on as if ecological collapse is not really happening, or, if it is, it's just another 'subject' to talk about, like Big Brother.

Mass flooding and the diversion of the Gulf Stream away from Europe, both caused by global warming, both causing a collapse of agriculture in areas where agriculture has thrived for 14,000 years, both with a not unlikely chance of happening, are predictable possibilities clearly looming on the horizon. An American climatologist proved that the diversion of the Gulf Stream had happened over 15,000 years ago through examin-

measures (such as the proposed introduction of ID cards, or the right to intercept and read e-mails - oh so very very useful in the fight against terrorism) are also showing, this atrocity is being used as a cover for the massive reinforcement of the causes of such atrocities. Let's talk about what we can do before the State, under the cover of "security" brands all the attacks on "the world economic system" as being the same.

ONLY A MASS SOCIAL MOVEMENT COULD BEGIN TO OPPOSE THIS WAR

ONLY A MASS SOCIAL MOVEMENT COULD BEGIN TO OPPOSE THE TOTALITARIAN TERROR OF ALL 'SIDES'

BECAUSE ONLY A MASS SOCIAL MOVEMENT COULD ENCOURAGE THE POOR IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD TO SEE WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON.

A workers demonstration erupted in a city in Iran (Sabzevar) just after the terrorist attack with slogans and banners proclaiming "Death to God!" (an improvement on "God is dead!"), This city has been in an insurrectionary mood for some months, though with virtually no publicity in the media. Independent self-organised strikes, General Strikes, road blockades etc. have been going on for a couple of years now. At the end of August, demonstrations about having the city designated the regional capital erupted ;into big battles with the police, barricades and the blocking of the equivalent of the M1 - the highway to Mashad. 2 were shot dead, but there were instant demonstrations at police stations for the immediate release of those arrested, resulting in attacks on police stations. At the same time there have been big movements against the non-payment of wages amongst key industrial workers. Nothing of this has got reported in the rulers' media. Likewise, the uprising in Algeria, involving millions of people, which was as much against the Islamic fundamentalists as against the State, and which started in the Kabylie in April and continued up till fairly recently, went unreported. It is these kinds of movements, which have at their centre the practical critique of ev-

nimity” between Islamist terrorism and the anti-globalisation movement. Which is why, in the name of ”the supremacy of our civilisation - which has brought us democratic institutions, civil, religious and political rights of our citizens, openness to diversity and tolerance of everything”, he’s ordered his cops to raid 60 autonomous social centres in Italy. The same is happening in Germany, as well. Everywhere foreigners are being deported, in the name of ”diversity” and democracy. On the internet, security blocks are being put up against such websites as ”Rage Against The Machine” and Cornell and Columbia University chatrooms. In the land of the free, campus demonstrations at 150 or more U.S. universities are not mentioned in the media. Vigils in New York, including by the families and friends of some of the victims, go unreported. As for ’free speech’. What about the cleaners at a Land Rover factory in Solihull who were sacked for exercising this ’freedom’ when, during a 2 minute silence for the victims of the attack, they shouted out slogans (what they were wasn’t reported). Freedom of speech is nothing more than the freedom to repeat the monologues of the various factions of the ruling class, and the duty to remain silent when your bosses tell you.

Everyone with a minimum of anxiety about what all this means knows that the instability that wreaks horror that wreaks the sense of utter helplessness has to be opposed. But of course ’how’ is the central question. But sometimes anything’s better than petrified watching the events unfold. That’s why people go on demos. It’s not enough, of course - but it has, occasionally, led to more vital challenges to capitalist social relations (e.g. Genoa, or, even better, Poll Tax 1990)

People who hate this mad world are going to have to be brave enough to speak out and demonstrate and clearly oppose all sides in this mad battle of the terrorist multi-millionaires. As the initial immediate actions of Israel, led by the man who ordered the mass slaughter of thousands of Lebanese refugees in 1982, has shown, and as the intensification of State security

ing bore samples from the mud bed of the Atlantic. He then combined this with research by a British scientist in the 1950s who, analysing rock samples in Cumbria, discovered that the previous Ice Age had taken a mere 10-20 years to develop. Speculating on a repeat of this scenario due to the decline in salinity in the Gulf Stream conveyor caused by the melting Arctic ice cap, this climatologist was awarded a medal by President Clinton himself. Apart from providing this scientist with a lucrative income, such spectacular recognition means fuck all. Already at the end of the 70s scientists could measure how much pollution their pollution-measuring instruments added to the atmosphere whilst they measured the pollution ’ clear scientific proof of how wonderfully objective science is.²

Too Much, Too Early

Dominant ideology claims that global warming will begin to have severe consequences within 50 years. Combined with a serious ”something must be done” tone, such propaganda is designed to reassure people that something will be done, that long-term concerns will be met with reforms by those who know best and that there’s nothing very immediate to worry about. The inability of world governments to agree on reductions of greenhouse gas emissions by even 5% when scientists say reductions of 50% are quickly necessary to combat global warming only show that the immediate interests of competition in the global marketplace always override any rational long-term ecological planning for capitalism. It’s even planned

² One of the best critiques of the history of science in English and its present day totalitarian application is Phil Mailer’s *And Yet It Moves*. Although little read (oblivion and silent censorship today nearly always surround real critique) it far surpasses those liberal left critiques like Stephen Jay Gould’s etc. Now updated by Campo Abierto in Spain this text is, however, insufficiently forceful, insufficiently urgent and insufficiently updated from when it was first published in the mid-80s: it’s rather bland and lacking edge.

that there'll be a form of Stock Exchange for dealing in the trading of emission reductions between countries; richer countries will be able to trade off any reductions allocated them by international agreements to poorer countries so as to carry on happily polluting. The logic of the commodity, in which everything is reduced to a quantifiable measurable equivalent, reveals in its movement towards this perfection its perfect inhumanity. Never mind 50 years, in closer to 5 years many of us will be seeing the outcome of this insanity. The rich might trade life on Earth for life on Mars³ or up Uranus or wherever they fantasise fleeing to, but unless the logic of trade, of exchange value, of the economy is destroyed probably most of us shall be destroyed. 50 years? If you'd told a Jew in 1895 that there'd be an unprecedented quasi-extinction of his race in 50 years time, even if he'd believed you it would've meant nothing much. 50 years into the future might affect some of us a bit, and would affect most of our children in their late middle age, but it's sufficiently distant to feel that it won't be so bad because we'll adapt to it. And many millions are utterly dominated by an ideology of the here and now for whom focussing on the past or on the future is meaningless: for them, 50 days is pure abstraction, let alone 50 years. They have more pressing problems (well, don't we all?). But the iceberg looming over Titanic Earth is probably very near whilst official science is looking at it from the wrong end of a telescope. Sure, for some of us it might just be a slowly rotting decay, but for many one ecological horror could easily have a domino effect on many others.

Although we have to talk about "the end of science" we have to be broadly clear about what this means. It certainly doesn't mean a renewed primitivism without medical knowledge, electricity etc. However it would have to involve a large reduction

³ Amazingly, scientists are already doing research into how to make Mars fertile and habitable, by producing greenhouse gases on it to increase the temperature.

new powers were needed to prevent Britain becoming a police state." - Guardian report, 24/9/01.

"In order to save the village we had to destroy it" ' U.S.General, during Vietnam war.

The mad self-contradictions of capitalist ideology and practice are intensifying by the day. Soon, in the name of economic "realism" reality for the vast majority could be destroyed, not just by war but by ecological collapse.

Although this will also be a war to serve the interests of American (and to a lesser extent British) capital against their rivals, the war being unleashed is primarily a war against the poor, the dispossessed, the marginalised, those living precariously, those who sell their labour - what some of us intransigents still call "the working class". Already the GMB Union has shown their clear policing function by saying that now is not the time to push the struggle against privatisation. Osama Bin Liner, trained by the SAS and the CIA, has provided capital, on the eve of a very predictable recession, with a perfect alibi. Class struggle in the USA was on the increase, fuelled by some victories (e.g. the janitor's strikes), and one could have expected mass redundancies in the airlines, already on the cards before September 11th, to have been resisted. Now ' what's the chance?

Apart from all the other consequences, the consequences for the anti-globalisation movement, as with all opposition, could also be disastrous unless people start to make sense of what's happening and start to oppose the terror of all sides, which some have begun to do. A new European Union anti-terrorist law defines terrorist offences as criminal acts, including damaging property and urban violence, committed with the aim of "intimidating and seriously altering or destroying the political economic or social structures of countries". Gordon Brown has said that with the mass murder in New York, it's the power of "the world economic system that's under attack" (13/9/01). More clearly, Burlesquoni has said that there is a "strange una-

cal contribution into playing the theorist role, to insist on 'theory' as the central mediation in their communication. In fact, the contradictions of this milieu, of which some of us are to a certain extent a part, are merely a different version of the contradictions everybody else lives. The theoretician role is as much a symptom of the retreat from the critique of daily life as the activist role, both being symptoms of the enormous defeats of the class struggle ' and a resignation to these defeats, and to a specialism, by those who don't want to admit it. Saying this doesn't mean we're above the contradictions of our epoch but by understanding them, which means trying to change them, we can contribute to a movement that will do far more than just talk and write and participate in one-off actions.

One could ramble on a lot more but let's just leave it at this:

The comfortable specialised roles of activist, theorist, media representative become, at the end of the day, accommodations within capitalism. It is not enough to occupy the bourgeois terrain - we have to abolish and go beyond it.

Capt. Pugwash, Tom the Cabin Boy, Seaman Staines & the rest of the crew of The Black Pig,

**B.M.Combustion, London WC1N 3XX,
9th September 2001**

P.S. As the date shows, this was completed two days before the kamikaze destruction of the twin towers and part of the Pentagon. The following is a draft of a leaflet which may or may not have been produced by the time you read this:

THE KAMIKAZE BOMBINGS:

DON'T TAKE SIDES - MAKE SIDES!

"Mr.Blunkett admitted that some of the measures, including wider powers for the police to detain terrorist suspects, will directly clash with civil rights legislation but claimed the

in the use of electricity. Even in the form of wind, wave and solar energy, electricity has a damaging effect on the earth: one has only to look at the carcinogenic effect of high voltage pylons to see this (one of the best riots this summer was on the island of Cyprus, where a large demonstration against the building of a massive phone bugging mast, well known for causing leukaemia in kids, broke into the British Army compound where the erection of the mast was planned to take place, attacking security guards and destroying loads of army vehicles).

Some people say that science and technology is innately capitalist, like money. We disagree, although obviously it has formed, and is formed by, capital. But then, so are the buildings, streets and countryside, which also have to be transformed. One might just as well say that we shouldn't use fire because fire was invented during humanity's struggle against the alienation of nature. Money, on the other hand, cannot be transformed - it is only a means of social control, a way of reducing people to wage slaves etc. Paper and metal can be used in lots of different ways, but as money it's only purpose is to serve the economy. A castle can be a defence of feudal power or an aspect of the tourist industry, but constantly changed by the people who use it it can also become an area of experiment, a vast adventure playground, a place to live and discuss and whatever. Technology, like a castle, would no longer be fixed and fetishised. For us, 'the end of science' means a transcendence of science whilst retaining what is useful in scientific methodology in the context of an emerging social movement. Some scientific specialisms like climatology (especially its history) and some of the many offshoots from astronomy put together in a scientific inter-disciplinary way could be dynamite if applied in a greater coherent totality by a social movement ending the capitalist function and specialist nature of such insights (a couple of million light years away from that old Trot, Piers Corbyn, who turned his particular insights into the effects of sunspots on long-term weather into a cool couple of million). There's

no way any present day Anton Pannekoek, for example, could keep their excellent insights into social contradictions separate from the insights they developed in their careers as scientists. Pannekoek was a fairly important astronomer, but we wonder just how many of his fellow astronomers realised he was a significant social theoretician? Pannekoek's social theorising, in Lenin as Philosopher for example, does occasionally use astronomical concepts. But his distinction between bourgeois sensationalist materialism and historical materialism was essentially a neutralist conception leaving out the realm of praxis ' the notion that man made history but not natural history. Now, though, capital is on the verge of creating 'natural history' with Jurassic parks, Frankenstein foods, designer babies, etc.

Capital regularly re-writes social history in its own image but now it desires to re-write the biological future according to its own blueprint. Its insatiable desire to re-cast everything in its own image opens up Capital's new frontiers of conquest: messing with evolutionary characteristics by genetic engineering is, in a sense, to re-write both our inherited past and evolving future biological history. Our genetic history will not be what it was.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAGH!!!!!!!!!!!!

A sector of Hollywood continually sells catastrophe back to us, with its endless digitalised graphic presentations of Earth-crashing asteroids, gigantic floods, colossal fires and deadly epidemics, etc.⁴ Some catastrophists - and we're all catastrophists now - believe that future disasters may not be solely due to a rate-of-exploitation-induced global warming but to natural fac-

⁴ Post September 11 footnote: The terrorist attack on the twin towers has caused a terrible disaster. For Hollywood: "real life" has surpassed the endless catastrophe movies, previously seen as unrealistic, so this sector is no longer profitable - for the moment at least.

liefs, romanticism wasn't passive at all in relation to nature but wanted to work on nature too but only in great sympathy with it).

Many of those who have a critique of political economy link up with ecological movements mainly on the basis of playing the teacher role - "Here is the theory which fills the gaps", as if a critique of political economy is something you 'have' and can patronisingly impart. There is in these encounters, and in their apparent fluidity, the beginnings of some real attempt to go beyond an ecological critique and to go beyond merely 'having' a critique of political economy, but in the way each side contains a partially true critique of the other the dialogue becomes merely a swapping of monologues ' neither side really want to be influenced by or to seriously influence the other. And yet, if people seriously want to win, or at least get further, such an influence could spark off fresh insights and initiatives coming from an inspiring acquaintance with each others separations. Practically, this might take the form of thinking of ways to support the next Post Office strikes or the next fuel protests or.¹³

However, when theory is above such a movement its only function is as some prestigious mediation between people who think that they somehow carry the consciousness of the class struggle. They think they embody as a milieu the struggle to transcend the contradictions of this epoch more than anyone else who rebels in ways that don't fit into some "theory". The theoretician tends to subtly push people who make a theoreti-

¹³ It's to RTS's credit that it gave some positive reference to the fuel protests in their paper at the time of Prague, particularly so considering the moralistic contempt coming from most ecologists, and the equally arrogant dismissal of these "petit-bourgeois" coming from much of the ultra-leftist critics of political economy. But Prague was occupying their thoughts and arrangements so much that they never considered connecting to this movement which had created the first national crisis since Poll Tax. See Looks As Though We've Got Ourselves A Convoy - on the September - November 2000 fuel protests, available from us.

their own hierarchical ambitions) into an ideology of scientific progress which was the intellectual justification for the most brutal history of capital accumulation ever (Stalin's Russia). But it's the tendency to a one-sided stress on "consciousness", product of the division of labour and of the struggle to realise and suppress philosophy, that makes some of Marx's viewpoints authoritarian and bourgeois. Marx didn't seriously try to turn this bit of Hegel on its head: capitalist technology and science is only potentially progressive in the hands of the proletariat using technology outside and against any commodity uses of it, outside and against its production as an alien force subject to property laws and the law of value. Capital was meant to be progressive in this sense - in centring history on human beings it provided a far clearer material base for the potential conscious determination of history by humanity than was possible in, say, Spartacus' time. But only as underlying potential was it 'progressive', not as a reality, which is why our abstract critics of political economy are useless when coming to deal with real situations (just as Marx most of the time had relatively little to say, often skirting over problems because of political expedience, when it came to those moments of class struggle when this potential transcendence manifested itself practically).¹²

Although it can be said that both Hegel and Marx marked an advance on romanticism there was also a common connecting thread between them in the sense that all of them wanted to change the present situation (against all commonly held be-

¹² This is certainly not to affirm some abstract pseudo-critique of the notion of progress which is post-modernism's revelry in meaninglessness - a lifeless relativism which, like the commodity form itself, makes everything - all histories and societies - interchangeably equivalent. The progress of alienation, the progress of the potential of the struggle against it, the progress of the immensity of our tasks are realities that can't be philosophised out of existence. But to be simply positive about such progress is to be deaf, dumb and blind.

tors: as far as the Earth's crust is concerned, capitalist factors have so far been negligible, only triggering minor disturbances, although we should all be aware of what a nuclear explosion might do one day.

One theory put out in France a decade ago was that the spread of nuclear power and the decline in deep shaft mining has contributed to increased seismic activity along the fault lines. Hence the big rise in earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Regardless of the validity of this theory, it's well-known that the inequality of capital investment causes very different results for an earthquake in San Francisco than for a similar one in Turkey or wherever. However, some disasters have little to do with capitalism. Though it's essential to be sceptical of official ideology pushing the natural line when it comes to disasters, we shouldn't automatically go the other way and assume that all disasters are made by capital. Sure, capital makes the consequences of accidents - and some things are accidents - far far worse than any possible rational organisation of the world (one has only to look at how the Turkish Army ripped off loads of the stuff donated across the world to the earthquake victims).

We have been quite remarkably spared major catastrophes such as an asteroid crashing into the Earth, which some scientists say is inevitable in the long term, or the eruption of a giant caldera (volcano) over the last 2000 years or so. An eruption of the Cumbre Vieja volcano in the Canary Islands could collapse a western facing mountain and start a giant Tsunami (a massive tidal wave) which could spread across the Atlantic causing waves to crash hundreds of miles inland in certain parts of the North American eastern seaboard. It's happened before in the immense paradigm of time in geological history. Happening now, Wall Street would be wiped out, but only geographically, not as a force. Millions of anti-Americans would probably get off on the whole thing, happily watching scenes of underwater MacDonaldis on the News, but the outcome will be globally hor-

rific. Revolutionary optimists might wishfully claim that it'll all provoke a revolution but couldn't the situation be so desperate that instead of a rationally based, moneyless order emerging, it would be endless mayhem? Enter stage left - our saviours, the professional ecologists, shooting down looters like partridges.

But in the end do we indulge in these catastrophic future hypotheses in order to play the role of Cassandra, making prophecies that no-one believes or to somehow prepare for, and harden ourselves against, the worst (that way we'll never be disappointed) - or just as a perverse form of morbid entertainment - or as a way of making us feel better in the present just for surviving and for making us happy it hasn't happened to us yet or are these crazy scenarios designed to resign ourselves to sod's law ' if it's possible it'll happen ' does knowing about these possibilities make us try to change these futures or are we just kidding ourselves that that's what we're doing or what?

Whatever happens, the accumulating consequences of more Chernobyls, more BSEs, more epidemics, more GM "accidents",⁵ whether consciously recognised or not, dominate the fate of the world and its inhabitants. Revolution or no revolution, the toxic fallout from this society will be a feature of life for Earthlings for the foreseeable future. Even many of those causing this disaster will suffer its consequences, though at a slower rate than the rest of us. They think they can buy their way out of it with the very cause of it - with their millions and billions they think they'll be able to live their dream - make the perfect environment in a space capsule boldly going forth, finding adventure in infinity and beyond. As for us Earthlings, we'll probably only get to know the answer to "What planet are these guys on?" if there's a successful revolution which then sends them off to Pluto or further.

⁵ "When asked, the P.M. said the Blairs eat organic. 'But that doesn't mean other food is unsafe.', he asserted." - News of the World Sunday Maga-

Hegel on nature is in other respects fascinating, his general outline that human activity has modified nature would also be fine if it wasn't so domineeringly triumphalist. Take, for example, Hegel's note to one of his 1805-6 lectures: "wind, mighty river, mighty ocean, subjugated, cultivated. No point in exchanging compliments with it - puerile sentimentalities which cling to individualities". A page of exclamation marks would not be sufficient to register our collective shock. Two hundred years later we know the "mighty ocean" currents of the Atlantic and Pacific are far more likely to subjugate us and we are only beginning to appreciate the catastrophic consequences (it's ironic that the philosopher of historical progress attributes to science powers that were laughably attributed to a King ' Canute ' over 800 years previously).¹¹ Let's face it: the scientific-technological utter transformation of the world has always been partly counter-revolutionary, even if it presented unprecedented revolutionary possibilities.. Whilst its demystifying force was in some ways progressive in the 19th century ("God is dead"), it's the tautological role of the intellectual to put a top-heavy overemphasis on the progress of this kind of practically detached consciousness. And from religion to science has not been progressive in a simplistically positive way. "Scientific" consciousness, the fetishism of science and technology, becomes even more a brutal justification for class power than religion, the fetishism of the omnipotent & omniscient. Sure, Marx was far more experimental intellectually than those who reified the bits of him they liked (the bits that fitted into

¹¹ Interestingly, a little later the beginnings of ecological critique began to be formulated by individuals as disparate as Thoreau in America and Ruskin in England. Apart from Reclus (an anarchist geographer), the 19th century revolutionary movement took no account of this critique. Despite Ruskin's obnoxious proposals desiring an ultra-authoritarian and statist rule by an all powerful, personally hand-picked intelligentsia, he nonetheless correctly intuited that the new iron and steel industry situated on the west Cumbrian plain was altering the climate of the Lake District, a link-up that earlier romantics like Wordsworth, Southey and de Quincey just couldn't make.

a genuine critique - e.g. in its attack on the work ethic and on money (taking, for example, the form of Free Stores, where people could donate anything they didn't want and/or take anything they did want in a non-exchange relationship).

In opposition to Zerzan's simplistic primitivism, it's worth pointing out that absolutist ultra-Leftists going completely the other way, tend to dismiss ecology entirely as having nothing to do with social revolution. For all their belief in the autonomy of the proletariat, the theory of most of these Marxian autonomists is not autonomous, not developed from a dialectic of their own struggles and a critical expropriation of the struggles of The Good And The Great, not developed from their own point of view but is much more like the very unautonomous old style CP theoreticians who used to ask themselves, "What would Marx have thought in this situation?"

In fact, much of the petrified reductionism of the critics of political economy stems from weaknesses in their Grand Master, Marx himself. Marx, despite his contribution to a marvelously hateful summary of Capital's workings, was notoriously limited by his Hegelian notion of historical progress when it came, for example, to a comprehension of the Luddites, whom he dismissed as being opposed to capitalist progress (which Zerzan himself rightly criticised during a far less ideological period of his life - in the 1970s, when he also wrote an excellently informed piece, *The Practical Marx*, on just how bourgeois Marx's everyday life was)). What's the point in having a great insight into the general workings of commodity fetishism if your notion of progress prevents you from connecting to a practical movement to subvert the miserable use of this progress, however limited and backward-looking its consciousness? Marx shared one thing in common with Hegel: the alarming view that mankind was progressively dominating nature, reducing nature to a "social category". In their day it was understandable, especially seeing that geology was still in its infancy, though now it has become inexcusable. Although

"Humanity is quite willing to be scorned and ridiculed, but it is quite unwilling to let it be said in explicit terms that it is being scorned and ridiculed. Violated in fact it finds refuge in mere words"

- Custine, *La Russie en 1839*.

Already independent science is receiving independent funding from such independents as the oil and car companies to come up with the Goebelldeegook that global warming is "natural" in order to get people to just accept it. Official analysis is already proving beyond a doubt that the planet has warmed up at these temperatures before, deliberately forgetting that the 3, 4 or 5 degrees easily attributable to CO2 emissions makes all the difference.

The very closeness of ecological disaster, the knowledge of it as a constant possibility, defines this age we live in and the consciousness and practice of both capitalism and its opposition. It is our intention here to look at the limits, contradictions and possibilities of some aspects of this opposition as a means to clarify what's happening and how to advance it: for ourselves, first of all, and anyone else who finds a use for it.

GENOA

The eruption in Genoa certainly upped the stakes on both sides of the hierarchical divide, but the killing was not unexpected: for weeks the ideology of the G8 and its police and media defenders was designed to get the mass of spectators to adapt to the idea that killing some of these mad anarchists would be utterly justified. At Gothenburg the shooting of a demonstrator in the back was initially treated as a major deviation from democratic norms, but within the hour, the State had reassured journalists that it was no big deal and after 36 hours

zine, 19/3/00. (All food served in the Houses of Parliament is now organic).

it was already so passe as to be considered stale news. The virtual denial of the sad 'right' to demonstrate on May 1st in the West End here, instigated by Tory Blair and Ken Livingdeath, was also an upping of the stakes by the powers-that-be, with very little assertion of angry dignity against such a depressingly boring humiliation - a few windows broken, a CCTV camera wrecked - (perversely, some anarchists hailed this caging in as a victory). It was small surprise that Burlesquoni, with all his media power, would use the slightly cruder methods that a traditionally murderous semi-fascist police force encourages (in this country, class deference amongst many of the cops has often put a brake on vicious attacks on middle class demonstrators, at least since the killing of Blair Peach in 1979). But the killing of the 23-year old working class anarchist Carlo Guilliano and the beating up of some very conservative pacifist protestors sparked off demonstrations outside police stations and, possibly, some strikes, though media blackouts and State censorship of the Internet make it hard to know what's really been going on. We know, despite the media attention on politicians, that the demos against globalisation in Genoa also involved thousands of Genoan and Italian youth and workers, including a large block of striking steelworkers. So one can see how much more popular it was than Prague. For instance, the Stefano steelworks in Brescia came out on strike against "the ferocious violence of the police" demanding the release of a local steelworker shop steward arrested in Genoa. However, a lot of the anger after Genoa was channelled into safe demonstrations as the giant CGIL trade union federation and the more combative (although very recuperative) COBAS co-ordinating committees got involved.

against its reactionary side, in order to explode capital's contradiction" (George Forrestier, "Wrong Direction: On Reclaiming a One-Way Street", the longest, and worst, article in "Reflections on June 18"). If this suffocatingly arrogant article were the only attempt of political economy to deal with ecological/anti-globalisation issues it would be small wonder if many ecologists preferred the simplistic formulae of, say, John Zerzan's "Future Primitive".¹⁰

Zerzan provides, for those who don't want to think for themselves, a semi-religious 'answer' to our present plight; but just as he has idealised, and lied about, pre-class societies dominated by an inhuman nature as some kind of Garden of Eden, so his Future Primitive built on the graveyard of half the world's population is more likely to be some kind of Mad Max each-against-all scramble for survival than the wonderful wild world freed from the chains of technology that is his utopia. The hypocrisy of his position is blatant: technology has to be smashed but it's fine to regularly broadcast his message on American radio and even sometimes TV. This is not the same kind of contradiction, forced on all of us, as, say, the desire to abolish money and yet having to use it in this society: a spectacular use of technology has to be opposed even by those who can recognise that there might be some use for TV and radio (as technology but not in its monologuing form and ideological content) as a mediation for genuine global communication in the possible post-revolutionary society. A pretty good dismantling of much of Zerzan's "facts" is provided in the text by En Attendant, "John Zerzan and The Primitive Confusion" (B.M.Chronos, London WCIN 3XX), which is, nevertheless, over-rationalist and has a very French take on the American hippies. To be sure, when the hippy counter-culture was exported to France, it was largely just another cultural commodity, but this was far less the case in other countries, especially Britain and Germany, where it also really did have some edge. And in the States, more than anywhere else, it expressed

tique as an utterly valuable and necessary contribution to the critique of political economy.

This ignorance is defended by an ideology of progress inherited from Marx and Hegel from a time when the ideology of science and progress, particularly in its battle with religion, blood ties and superstition, was far less problematic than it is now. With the fallout from capitalist progress threatening the very existence of humanity, it's pig ignorantly abstract and glib to come out with, "Revolutionary politics are based on taking advantage of the progressive dynamism of capital

¹⁰ Though far less pretentious, another article which tends to dismiss RTS etc. out of hand is the Brighton-based "Undercurrent", which after June 18th came out with the conclusion, "in its present form, the direct action movement is going nowhere". Considering what has happened in the couple of years leading to Genoa disproves this. Whilst we agree with much of their criticisms of the written ideas of the direct action movement, it seems ridiculous to judge these actions almost purely on the least significant part of them - their "theory". Such Marxists - sorry, Marxians - have forgotten the excellent anti-ideological perspective of the young Marx - "This does not mean that we shall confront the world and proclaim: Here is the truth, on your knees before it! It means that we shall develop for the world new principles from the existing principles of the world. We shall not say: Abandon your struggles, they are mere folly; let us provide you with the true campaign slogans. Instead we shall simply show the world why it is struggling, and consciousness of this is a thing it must acquire whether it wishes or not." (Letter to Ruge, September 1843). Equally, when Marx says, "Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such an epoch of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life" this can also be applied to Capital's real or apparent opposition - and to those who judge them. Forrestier's, and to a lesser degree, Undercurrents', essentially intellectual and ideological relationship to the real movement only exposes the material basis of such ideological roles - i.e. the academic environment of the University. (To be fair, Undercurrents have revised their views of this movement and have produced useful material on other subjects.) Forrestier's attitude particularly is not to engage with, but, rather, to dismiss from on high those who don't possess the correct usage of marxist categories/terminology: so proud is he of his own little 'correct' marxist repertoire.

VIOLENCE - IN BLACK AND WHITE

"In terms of historical function, there is a difference between revolutionary and reactionary violence, between violence practised by the oppressed and the oppressors. In terms of ethics, both forms of violence are inhuman and evil ' but since when is history made in accordance with ethical standards? To start applying them at the point where the oppressed rebel against the oppressors, the have-nots against the haves, is serving the cause of actual violence by weakening the protest against it." - Marcuse, "A Critique of Pure Tolerance", 1966.

"If we are able to mobilise all our violence, we might, perhaps, be able to overcome brutality." - J. Genet.

Those non-violent activists who are so determined to "keep it fluffy" on demos and preserve the purity of their peaceful spectacle that they are willing to denounce and identify troublemakers and directly or indirectly finger them to the riot cops illustrate the truth of Marcuse's statement (after Seattle, a section of the Black Block put out an excellent statement about this and other matters). In a world dominated by the permanent violence of hierarchical social relationships, the state and capital rule by the apparent consent of its passive citizens, but when this "consent" is withdrawn or challenged it is revealed to be founded on and, when all else fails, ultimately enforced by boots, bullets and batons. But for the fluffy pacifists the only irreconcilable difference is not between oppressors and oppressed. - but between their ideology of non-violence and those oppressed who oppose it in practice. And some of them are happy to help the cops physically enforce this repressive pacifism. Not all of them are though - some dislike this complicity almost as much as they dislike the violence of rioters and cops: at least they are consistent in their purity. But they do nothing about their dislike of this fingering because that could involve a fight.

Violence is a tactical question and we neither morally condemn it nor uncritically support it. It has its appropriate and inappropriate moments.

In the situation of a demonstration violence is often made possible by the presence of those who remain non-violent. The minority more capable, confident and inclined towards violence can, when necessary, escape into the larger non-violent crowd whose presence and occupation of space makes police manoeuvres more difficult. This was the case with some of the Reclaim the Streets demos in London, at least up until 2000. In Genoa this didn't work because the cops just laid into fluffies and spikeys indiscriminately.

It has become the dominant ideology amongst the respectable 'opposition' to claim that the attack on the Genoa Social Forum proves that the State fears the pacifists more than the anarchists. Some claim that the police stood by and watched the anarchists wreck shops and residents' cars and did nothing. Whilst this may well be true of one incident, everyone knows that the cops and the black block had been attacking each other Thursday and Friday, with the technological equipped and armoured cops inflicting far worse than they got, of course. And the cops had been beating up people well before the particularly sadistic attack on the Genoa Social Forum. Moreover, not all those who stayed the night at the GSF were pacifists. Also, as is well known, the guy who got killed was from the black block, so it's a lie to say that the pacifists got a worse beating than the non-pacifists. But why let the facts get in the way of a good ideology? In fact, the pacifists are just competing for martyrdom with the anarchists (doubtless we shall see in the near future some of these Statist 'pacifists', particularly a few of the famous ones, trying to gain some credibility by getting nicked over some act of so very civil disobedience). If anything the lesson of this is that it doesn't matter what tactics you employ, the cops and the State are still your enemy and see you as theirs'. Undoubtedly peaceful tactics also work

righteousness that comes from having a moral cause, linked to a proud notion of standing on your own two feet.

This lack of a critique of capitalism as a set of social relations, this idea of capital as being just "out there" has been stated by innumerable people, some of whom have been involved in RTS. But many have merely substituted the "theoretician" role as a reaction to the activist role, thus reproducing the very hierarchical social relations they claim to have criticised: wherever there is a division of theory and practice the division of labour dominates. It's a symptom of this petrified counter-revolutionary epoch that saying this is a billion times easier than doing something about it.

AUTHORS' HEALTH WARNING: What follows is a fairly abstract ramble, with fairly concrete implications, much of which will be of interest to fairly few people, yet which needs to be said.

THE TWILIGHT OF THE INTELLECTUALS

or How to Theorise with a Comfy Cushion⁹

The theoretician role is as problematic as the activist role - and writing this doesn't exempt us from recognising not just its limitations but how "theory" which doesn't contain its own critique can become something separate from the struggle to practically overcome these limitations, can become just another "here is the Truth 'on your knees before it" type monologue.

This theorist role is particularly debilitating in the attitudes of some ultra-leftists to the glaring absence in dominant ecological ideology of a critique of political economy, which leads them to arrogantly dismiss the anti-globalisation/ecology movements because of its dominant trends. They ignore or too easily dismiss the fact that the best of the ecologists are transcending ecology using their experience and ecological cri-

⁹ "MacDonalds Today - IKEA tomorrow!"

ance for the role of cultural critic, of specialists in creating a nice 'creative' image for "the movement", as if the world of images wasn't our enemy. Whilst many in this scene absolutely oppose anything but the barest minimum contact sometimes necessary with the media, they have yet to seriously question those who are somehow into that "exploiting the media" shit. This is linked to the misunderstanding of capitalism as something external in the form of banks, multinationals etc rather than a social relationship between people that dominates and colonises us all.

This simplistic populist notion of capitalism is linked in some way to how the Middle Class, who formulate these notions, relate to their work. Much more than proletarians, the Middle Class tend to have a need to pursue self-fulfilment, dignity and meaning in their work and for it to be seen to have intrinsic social importance, for it to appear to be more than just wage labour done out of economic necessity. To generalise - maybe over-generalise - workers tend to struggle about what capital does to them in their lives (riots, strikes over conditions, wages, rent etc.) while the Middle Class tend to assert their power by protest about more external issues of capitalism's practice (it's inefficiency, unfairness and destructiveness, consumer issues, etc). To give an illustration that's been pointed out before: proposals for a campaign of collective resistance against the introduction of the New Deal/Workfare for dole claimants were met with total lack of interest by RTS and other eco activists: despite the fact that many were claimants who would face the increased hassle and many road protests and other activism had been largely financed by the dole. Obviously this would appear less heroic, noble, glamorous, high profile and sexy than protesting to save the planet and convince others to adopt this role. This is linked to a Middle Class aversion to being seen to have to combine to defend one's direct economic needs. It would mean giving up the self-image of altruism, the self-

in certain situations, like the destruction of GM crops. But to make an ideology out of tactics usually means you end up as a cop - at least you police your own thought, feelings and behaviour with a detached moral superiority to the obvious fact that none of us are above the shit.

The presentation of the conflict between violent and non-violent action is epitomised in support for the nice people in white (Ya Basta!) against those nasty people in black (the black block). But the subversive truth against such a religious vision is beyond good and evil. If we had to simply "take sides" we'd be with the black block, because they at least made sides in this conflict, unlike the vast majority of demonstrators who were mostly merely numbers or victims or make their money as professional ecologists, NGOs or whatever. It was them who had the courage to make history. However, taking sides changes nothing: it's only by looking at some of the contradictions in all the sides in this movement that one can contribute to everyone going beyond the ideological sectarianism or its false opposite - phoney consensus, that's such a barrier to dialogue within this movement.

YA BASTARDS

What about our heroes in white, "Ya Basta[rds]!"⁶ Significantly they have strong connections with the Refoundation Communists, particularly local councillors, but also MPs, the ones who are performing their phoney opposition in Parliament. Indeed, these connections protect them from any attacks by local cops. And apparently some of their set-piece confrontations have been rehearsed in the weeks before demos with these local cops (it was the national cops who were drafted into Genoa who administered the beatings). It is a strictly hierarchical Organisation (well, what Organisation isn't, regard-

⁶ See Do or Die! no.9 for an excellent article on them in Prague.

less of any non-hierarchical pretensions?), running on semi-military lines, composed of leaders and followers, all competing for fame and complements from the respectable 'opposition'. The Middle Class may praise Ya Basta! for not returning the blows of the cops but these moral pretensions are virtually the only reward for such abject masochism. Nevertheless, there are occasions when some of their tactics have worked ' for instance, the Wombles, who imitate Ya Basta!, managed to get through the police cage on May 1st, Oxford Circus, using their padded costumes.

But what about our anti-heroes in black ' the black block? An amorphous bunch, no doubt, made up of anyone who was up for a fight, including flag-waving Maoists. This is not intended as a criticism of the black block as a whole: any riot, strike or occupation will involve people with a wide variety of ideological stances. In the late 1960s the Situationist International praised workers' sabotage of industry and were aggressively dismissive of Maoists. Yet some of these same worker-saboteurs were also Maoists. Whilst the S.I. was certainly right to criticise Maoism, it doesn't help if criticism of an ideology implies a dismissive attitude to everything the holder of the ideology does, although the stupidity of an ideology will undermine any movement towards sabotaging capitalist social relations.

Doubtless there were also some police infiltrators in the black block, but then they infiltrated all the main political groups, and nobody would say the pacifists were agent provocateurs (but maybe they are'?). But then the reconstructed Stalinists, the main accusers of the anarcho-agent provocateurs line have merely reconstructed their well-rehearsed traditional slanders about any movements outside of their control. As for the accusations, usually by the angels of Ya Basta!, that the black block look a bit grim and gothic, this is about as relevant as complaining that the Good Guys look like Michelin men. Though it looks like a uniform, the logic is that if everyone

on stilts with an enormous tent-like dress was used to conceal someone with a road drill beneath her skirts who dug holes in the tarmac).

But while the DIY movement is a partial break with conventional politics and its representatives it nevertheless still shares some of its outlooks: we have to try to understand the relationship between the political activists and the rest of society or, as some see it, between the actors and the spectators.

With the present mood being one of general apathy towards organised conventional politics, we may see a continued growth of eco-DIY politics; probably up until the point where the social question of class struggle and power is once again raised (after a long absence) by working class combativity on a large scale. For the eco-scene the question will then confront them as to what their relationship to a class movement is to be. The more reformist elements who see class struggle as only an outdated struggle for job security within the existing polluting forms of industry (ignoring the contradictory possibilities of the proletariat's situation) may continue to cling to an increasingly irrelevant high moral ground of an exemplary lifestyle and consumption whilst, looking down their noses at the meat-eating, car-driving workers. (Others may become born again leftists and be just as irrelevant).

Others will be part of the real movement and contribute what they can from their own situation and perspective.

For the moment, the eco scene lacks any real critique of politics and culture as categories of separation and representation that must be gone beyond. Alternative politics and culture imply instead a co-existence with what one is being an alternative to; one determines the DIY content of these categories without transcending them. Whilst some of them accuse people who are violent against the State as using the enemies weapons, they feel fine about using the enemies weapons when they take a cultural form. For example, in their ambiguity towards the media, whilst creating their own media, one can see the toler-

RTS, to its credit, felt obliged to issue a leaflet apologising, and organised a clear-up of the gardens etc.

"The best moment of the Tottenham Street Party was not in Tottenham, but was the spontaneous occupation of Euston Road before it, with drummers and kids dancing across the road blocking it for over an hour. Otherwise, despite, the good-spirited child-friendly set up of spontaneous sand-pits and play areas across the road and the novelty of a picnic in the middle of what is normally a heavily polluted utterly weary area, after a while these lost their novelty and I felt I was just left with the alienation of a routine party where you half-know a few people but never find anything really to talk about. except say 'Hi!' and where I was constantly distracted by little entertaining circus-type scenes leaving me feeling kind of empty"

"The victories of art seem bought by the loss of character."
Marx, 1856.

The RTS events always have a sense of performance and theatre about them. For some activists this is a chance to embody their political ideology as they display their exotic dress sense and more ethical and environmentally sound lifestyle as a fine example to the rest of society. (These choices that are felt to be so important as self-definitions are lifestyle and consumer choices - bikes over cars, veg over meat, small over large etc.) .

But there is the tension of contradiction within the display of costumery on show. On the one hand, dressing up in carni-va]esque gear is a coded message to the cops that you are a fluffy, non-violent, non-threatening participator and so should be treated as such: but with a commitment to non-violence one tends to reduce one's options to symbolic and representational acts. In the context of a demo a fluffy dress sense is both an assertion of a "radical" life-style as a theatrical role and also a submission to the role of citizen exercising your democratic right to protest as a symbolic presence rather than an active subject. (But this theatrical passivity can be turned on its head, as at the M4 street party in July 1996, when a giant woman

who wants to fight wears black then it makes it a lot harder for particular individuals to be picked out from CCTV afterwards, which in Britain at least, is how the cops get most of their arrests. Demo fashion statements have little to do with it. Sadly, so far, we haven't seen a Trojan horse version of these demo styles: people dressed in Michelin men gear, rushing into a phone booth and changing into Blackblockman, but who knows what you could do once you start thinking about it?

Exclusively focussing on violence, however, can blind some anarchists to other, possibly more appropriate, tactics. As far as we know, there was no large occupation of a building in Genoa other than those permitted by the council which could have served as a centre of discussion not just about the obvious aspects of globalisation but about all the different problems faced by most people: the education factories, the increasing misery of work, the worsening stupidity of culture, the cramped housing conditions, the claustrophobia of the family, the collapse of community, the tedium of shopping and all the other horrors with which the economy sucks the life out of us. But then activists too often think that everything's been said, talk is cheap and only violent confrontation speaks louder than words. Some undoubtedly thrive off the negative publicity they get, and a few even have a kind of symbiotic relationship with the media they rightly hate ' posing on top of a wrecked car, seeing the media response as the event, their link to history. Whilst it's good that they physically attack the professional liars of the media, the contradiction is that some of them really love getting their picture in the paper.

And the media really get off on the story even as they spout out horror shock at the rioters and moan about how powerful they are because it's their fault - "If only we hadn't given them the oxygen of publicity" as some Guardian hack scrawled echoing Thatcher's desire to censor the IRA (thus planting a subliminal message - "All anti-State violence is the same"). And

then he has the arrogance to start hand-wringing about "no-one wants censorship" This at a time when there's been virtual silence about the uprising in Algeria. Whilst seeming to battle censorship, the liberal press spontaneously censors whatever doesn't fit their excuse for producing a newspaper in the first place - supply and demand ideology.

Equally, despite an apparent critique of Leninism, a few of the Black Bloc have a vanguardist notion of themselves 'hoping to invisibly direct the movement. The full-time activist substitutes him/herself as the radical subject in place of the proletarian in struggle. They are the authority on struggle. That's why there's a lot of hierarchical activist bullying, and manipulative emotional blackmail to "go on the demo", as if demos are the main terrain of struggle. But they have only come to seem so because of the marginalisation of workplace and neighbourhood-based struggle over the last decade. For dominant ideology, the anti-capitalist activist has become a simplified caricature of what it means to oppose this society, which ignores the struggle of the precariously dispossessed - within the activist themselves first of all and in the struggle of the working class and the peasantry globally ' as the more central movement threatening the ruling class (hence, for instance, the virtual blackouts about the uprising now going on in Algeria and the strikewave in Argentina).

Some of the worst of the anti-globalisation ideologies is that globalisation means giving up the power of the local democratic state, as if the State hasn't always been a function of the market economy (see Do or Die! no.8). Blair, as a result of Genoa, is rapidly getting the leaders of South American and African countries to sign up to the glories of globalisation, because it'll make their class and its control of the nation-State very wealthy and powerful, though a few Leftists will excuse them "because they have no choice". Liberal-Lefties hailed the defeat of the multinational drug companies by the South African state in a court ruling as a great victory for the progres-

cal progress towards these aims, a process over time, not on its failure to spontaneously launch an assault on the totality of commodity relations from the moment of the insurrection, a magical absolutist fantasy that has little practical meaning: an ideology of conversion to an ahistorical truth. Conveniently, the critique of this 'totality' of commodity relations that this intellectual perspective involves excludes a critique of the specialists in consciousness. So much for an assault on the totality. Moreover, it's just as destructive of subversive initiative to submit to the dictatorship of the minority as it is to submit to the dictatorship of the majority.

RTS as a crowd-puller

In RTS the repression of contradiction also functions as a crowd-puller - as maximum numbers are needed to attend street parties for them to take the site and hold the ground, the publicity and some content is deliberately tailored to appeal to as broad a constituency as possible. To take just one example - whilst the majority of RTS can't stand Techno-music (whose main advantage over other forms of music commodities is that it doesn't bother to pretend to express anything life-loving, emotional or passionate) they knew that having loads of Techno-sound systems would draw in the thousands of punters from the Rave scene. But most of these people don't even have the limited notion of struggle that RTS have. In a rare attempt to get away from the fixation on Central London as a venue for street parties and demos, one of the RTS events was held in High Street, Tottenham (summer 1998) in an attempt to reach out to the workers. However, the crusties and others from the rave scene had no desire to connect to the local 'community' and some proceeded to cover the garden walls and bus shelters with meaningless graffiti advertising their little bands, record labels and fanzines, urinating without permission in the neighbourhood gardens, whilst chucking loads of litter into them.

chiefs. Open Democracy for the Masses - Secret Dictatorship for the Elite - the cry, in different forms, of the ruling class everywhere. Politics, like commodity production, is so precious that it should always be attended by a bodyguard of secrets. The defenders of the Zapatistas claim that they are not opportunists, that they have integrity, that they're not Leninist - as if many Bolsheviks before they came to power in 1917 didn't also have integrity and took enormous risks. The point is not that vanguardist manipulators can be defined as purely cynical opportunists (unlike those in Power) but that the logic and practical form of "democracy" allows people to be manipulated ' it's mostly based on the resignation of individuals to the limit of externally defined notions of acceptability, to what everyone else says and does. Usually it involves resignation to those who specialise in taking the initiative and to the experts who can put their nebulous feelings into words. The experts in making speeches only express the lowest common denominator of the mass of individuals at the assembly: the different nuances of autonomous self-expression in struggle never get a word in. Especially because of the fear of being ostracised or made fun of, of being humiliated for daring to criticise those who command hierarchical respect. Manipulation falls on the fertile ground of everyone's anxiety of being "incorrect", of making their own mistakes; it falls on the fertile ground of the gang mentality, the corruption of the desire for community.

However, the critique of the assembly form can go too much the other way, dismissing mass decision-making in favour of the 'clarity' of the communist minority. This is the typical line of the Bordigists, for example. That Bordiga, apparently till the end of his life, supported the crushing of the Kronstadt commune is illustrative of how intellectual, abstract and elitist this notion of the 'correct' minority is. Whilst every struggle may have a minority of people who are clearer about the necessary aims of the movement these perspectives have to be argued openly, and a movement should be judged on its practi-

sive independence of the nation State. The victory was hailed as a victory for AIDS sufferers in S.Africa, who would now have cheap access to government subsidised drugs. The spin was that this kind of modern social democracy could honestly affirm its independence from the multi-national-dominated world market. What was not given so much publicity was the fact that a few weeks later the S.African government decided to spend the money saved and their freedom to lower prices not on anti-AIDS drugs, but on drugs for other less debilitating illnesses. AIDS victims are just going to have to work fucking hard to get those expensive drugs (and most won't make it) regardless of the apparently benevolent potential of the State. This is the logic of market relations whether local or international ' to insure an ever worsening hierarchy of misery as a prod to work harder. Unless they produce surplus value, AIDS sufferers are surplus to requirements.

Tony Benn is one of the more famous representatives of this dominant pro-democratic nation state tendency. After Genoa he said, with stunning originality, "In Britain, we have to channel some of the energy that now goes into protest back into the ballot box". Doubtless he hopes that this could be the same kind of energy that he was Minister of back in the late 1970s, when he armed the Atomic Energy Authority and, like Thatcher after him, shut down loads of coal pits because they were "un-economic" (people's memories are so short that, just 5 years after losing his ministerial position, he was welcomed into the struggle of the miners against pit closures). However, after June 2001's lowest election turnout in the UK ever (1918 doesn't compare - there were loads of soldiers waiting on the Continent to be demobbed, not to mention women under 25, who couldn't vote) one would have expected a subtler reference to bourgeois democracy (there is no automatic reason for optimism in this low turnout: the USA has, for a long time, had elections where under 50% of those entitled to vote haven't, but this has not meant a corresponding increase in class strug-

gle). Given the intensified conditioning being meted out to the young in the form of "citizenship" classes in schools and nauseating propaganda like that, Benn's reflex verbiage about ballot boxes shows him to be as reactionary as Blunkett or Estelle Morris. The ideology of spreading this kind of democracy is merely an ideology of democracy of form. Submissive to the utterly undemocratic content of the commodity economy, it's a largely unrealisable capitalist utopia, involving voting for your own Police Authority, your own boss, your own concentration camp commander. Whilst we seek a social movement which is anti-hierarchical and inclusive as possible and which may when appropriate use such democratic forms as voting and revocable delegation subject to immediate recall by those who delegate them, yet we do not uphold what is currently called 'democracy' as any sacred principle or ultimate goal. That would be to fall into the same trap as the Green scene's stifling consensus obsession that we criticise in this text. It's the content of this struggle that will determine whether voting and delegation extends the collective power of individuals or ties them ideologically even closer to the complexities of the commodity form. The fetishisation of organisational forms which makes a measurable equivalence of each person's vote, but which reduces that person to a mere number, is the mirror image of the commodity form.

If people accept this pro-nation State point of view it's not merely that they have the wrong ideas. In most cases, if they don't wish to develop a critique of politics and of the economy it's because of what it means practically as well. It would mean giving up on the gang mentality which is the basis of the nation state; giving up on some hope in some external authority, hope in some hierarchy or another. It would mean questioning their scene, their milieu, their party, the whole notion of, and identification with, 'country' (the nation, the party, the milieu, the family, which appear most protective of the individual are, like all protection rackets, in fact, the most debilitating for individ-

worse bourgeois scum, this seriously dented the illusions of the less ideological participants in the French contingent. In retrospect, one suspects the armed battles in San Christobal de las Casas in January '94 were in fact bargaining ploys in this political perspective (sacrilege!). Doubtless a future brutal attack by the Mexican State against the population of Chiapas will rejuvenate flagging international support for Marcos and co., and one might feel fury and horror at such a possible development, but the form and content of this nationalist struggle has nothing in common with any independent anti-State activity.

Contradictions of the Assembly Form

The Zapatistas are hailed by the anarchists and other ideologists of the assembly form for their non-hierarchical form of decision-making. They see what they want to see. The genuine desire for mutual self-determination latches onto a form of organising which is certainly necessary in many circumstances but which usually doesn't go far enough in its refusal of external authority. It ignores the fact that the assembly form has, throughout history, been more than just occasionally compatible with capitalist progress. For example, in Maoist China (the inspiration for the Mexican fore-runners of the Zapatistas, dating from the 70s and 80s) mass self-management within each local commune helped to develop State capital. Significantly, the self-management of local production and distribution was carried out by collective 'non-hierarchical' decision-making but within an externally-defined framework whereby the national comprehension and organisation of this production and distribution was the exclusive, and secret, terrain of the Party (however, some of these projects, such as 'The Great Leap Forward', were so weirdly ideological that they hardly helped develop State capital, or, for that matter, anything else apart from an atmosphere of utter fatalism). Mao had his central committee, his distant Zapatista heirs have the secret circle of Indian

sometimes masked as positive theorising, of the Zapatistas., when it's been known for 5 years at least that Marcos and co. are another protection racket, more all-embracing than most. Take what an Australian woman said of the 1996 encuentros: " - the women doing all the cooking and cleaning, including of toilets, invariably without any footwear (the men had the boots), even after heavy rainfall - . Harry Cleaver said "Well, maybe they like it""the workshops organised like a bourgeois University - compartmentalised into separate categories like 'Indigenous Culture', 'Politics', 'Economics' etc.'the impossibility of questioning anything openly in the meetings" She then went on to describe how, when Marcos gave the red carpet treatment to a French journalist who'd just recently slagged off and lied about a wave of strikes in the public sector, a total bourgeois whom Marcos welcomed into his open arms and treated with far greater respect than the vast majority of the French contingent (who, for example, were forced along with lots of others, to endure, without shade, a 2 or 3 hour wait in the scorching shadeless midday sun), the French contingent, the biggest contingent there, revolted a little, and presented Marcos with a letter objecting to this complicity, an insult to the movement in France. A meeting was arranged to discuss this in the middle of the forest at night, in the pouring rain. After some wait, Marcos rode up on horseback with his entourage and, giving a monologue lecture, withdrew the letter from his coat and proceeded to contemptuously read it in a dull monotone (a crude contrast with his normal dramatic poetic style) to the gathering below him, at the end throwing the drenched letter into the mud below, saying "Well, politics forces us sometimes to meet with our enemies", which says how little this movement embodies a critique of politics. . At least one of the French critics was woken up in the middle of the night, ordered out of his tent and was confronted by a few armed Zapatistas, who abused him verbally for his lack of submissive respect for his hosts. Coupled with Marcos' star treatment of Mme.Mitterand, an even

uals). It would mean saying what you liked and disliked, what you liked, wanted and hated, and being consequential about it. It would mean recognising your isolation in these very different collectivities and the differences in your points of view and struggling to communicate this with neither one-up-manship nor giving in to the apparently most articulate.

There's no business like no business

In the discussions which followed Genoa and earlier anti-globalisation riots many, particularly the Middle Class, claimed that the wrecking of small businesses was an expression of uncontrolled stupid anger. MacDonalds and Starbucks, ok - but "small is beautiful, man". But if small businesses are not our main enemy, they are still part of the world of business which is. Many of the multinational businesses which are the critical targets of much of the professional ideologists of this movement, started off small. Size is unimportant: it's what you do with it that counts. Support for small business is not just support for exploitation on a small scale, but also support for a method of surviving utterly determined by the alien economy. Someone who still has as an ideal a nice commodity economy will always despise the good reasons for attacking all the immediate representations of the commodity, however relatively petty. A market trader writes: "I'd be pissed off if a riot through my workplace destroyed my stall, but I'd be so overjoyed to see my workplace wrecked that such economic realism would be reduced to an "oh well" shrug of the shoulder". Riots outside of the strict activist definition of political protest always attack the shops, and there were some good examples of proletarian shopping in Genoa, and not just by activists. Some people feel annoyed by it, and undoubtedly some of the shop owners are ok people forced to do this stupid work by the collapse of the traditional mass workplaces or whatever; equally, some are rich

and some are mean petit-bourgeois morons. To only have politically correct "political" targets ignores over 200 years of working class riots. Likewise, in setting up barricades, it's kind of obvious that it won't just be Mercedes and Rolls Royces that get trashed, but those who can afford to be aloof from the reality of confrontation invariably display their outraged disapproval at the rioters apparent lack of discrimination. In Paris in May '68 nobody was worried that their car got used as a barricade: "what is a broken car to a broken skull?" one car owner said.

Until we transform social spaces currently occupied by the logic of business into places of "public dialogue" then trashing them is the next best thing. Until we take over buildings, neighbourhoods, shops, restaurants, theatres, factories, offices, schools, parks, determining our lives directly, non-hierarchically, without external authority, rioting and looting will remain the most ready-to-hand assertion of our collective power.

Waiting for Monbiot

"By contrast to the hundreds of thousands of people who, like me, spent their working lives making polite representations, [Carlo Giuliani] was acknowledged by the eight men closeted in the ducal palace - all those of us who lead moderately comfortable lives tend occasionally to forget that confrontation is an essential prerequisite for change."- George Monbiot, The Guardian, 24/7/01.

If Monbiot is treated with an inordinate respect by some sections of the anti-globalisation movement it's because he is capable of digging up many a revealing fact - after all, it's part of his well-paid job. Those whose working lives involve being paid to make "polite representations" to the scum in power and who "lead moderately comfortable lives" have good reason to forget, and not just occasionally, that confrontation is an es-

ence. The media is a pleasantly lit window onto the dominant world that constantly entices you in, and into a polite dialogue with it round the apparently warm hearth of spectacular recognition. But refusing all that cynical shit is the only way to have some margin of dignity, some sense of self-worth and honesty, and some degree of clarity. If you want to be able to look yourself in the mirror and not lie to yourself, then just say fuck off to all that flattering crap.

A symptom of the repressive consensus of RTS is the cliched content of most of the anti-globalisation propaganda. For instance - Evading Standards, Financial Crimes or the Monopoly glossy brochure for May 1st are just different forms of theorising-by-numbers. They're almost exclusively rewritten stuff most of which has been around for donkeys years and is always written as a message for others. The problem with all this stuff is that the authors think that their revolt is complete and that it's just a question of getting others to rebel. An approximate agreement with a lowest common denominator critique stops people developing their precise point of view, their differences, as if doing things with other people necessarily involves shutting up about these differences. When they write, it's not to discover - there's just no spirit of questioning and self-questioning. In all their texts supporting this or that struggle there's never any attempt to look at some dialectic between what they want and what these struggles express ' the struggles are always seen as some direct action which somehow connects up to a global movement because in some vague way they challenge the system. But the contradictions are completely glossed over.

VIVA ZAPATA! ABAJO MARCOS!

The obvious contradiction glossed over in the anti-globalisation movement is the virtually uncritical eulogising,

along with this because of the hangover of the special relationship, but in the future recessions and crises no relationship is special.

However, with the greatest respect to Riesel for continuing to fight with such generally lucid intransigence, we don't entirely agree with Riesel's stance. After his initial and mostly excellent "interview" book (*Declaration sur L'Agriculture Transgenique et Ceux Qui Pretendent S'y Opposer*) with the *Encyclopaedie des Nuisances* he too, like Bove, gives media interviews - in, for example, *Liberation* and the right-wing *Ecologist* magazine run by the reactionary, Teddy Goldsmith, whose deep ecology led him to support the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia for their destruction of industry and the push into the countryside. Brother of the late Jimmy Goldsmith of U.K. Independence Party fame, he supports a return to pre-industrial values, such as primitive religion (pantheism etc.), defends feudalism and serfdom, and maintains a continuous dialogue with various eco-fascists. Though the content of Riesel's interviews is far more radical and profound than Bove's, such a complicity reinforces an ideology of free speech without consequences, of dialogue with the ruling world, which undermines his intransigence. Contrary to the normal world of obnoxious control freakery-cum-editing, practiced often as much by revolutionary autonomists as by the straight media, it might well be that in the case of Riesel he's ensured that they don't alter one word of what he's saying. Nevertheless it gives credence to these bankrupt ideological outfits. But maybe the guy just doesn't have time to make a written text by himself because farming demands a daily hard graft we don't know. Though he imagines that this gets his ideas across to a wider audience, Riesel has forgotten that the media's seductive methods of co-opting rebellion weakens and softens whatever radical perspective he tries to convey, making him a victim of his star status: it isolates him with an aura of personal radicality rather than encourages others to equally daring risks; the audience remains an audi-

ential part of change (and not just a prerequisite for it): after all, they have yet to be confronted with the sickening nature of their self-satisfied role, their niche in the spectacle of opposition. Monbiot's tactic here is to acknowledge or pre-empt a possible criticism in order to avoid recognising how his material position effects everything he says and doing something based on that recognition. He's a little apologetic about being Middle Class but only to cleverly show his Middle Class contempt for hooligans and vandals and violent anarchists, which, however aesthetically dressed up, is the same as the cliché of the powers-that-be: "Mindless Violence!" Up to the defeats of the 1980s, when the liberal-Leftist Middle Class were possessed by an almost overwhelming sense of guilt about their position, a guilt brought about courtesy of an intransigent insurgent working class, someone like Monbiot wouldn't have dared show such Middle Class contempt. But Monbiot is very much a semi-idiotic product of the crushing defeat of the working class and its libertarian allies (squatting, etc.) and the conservative reaction we are still unbearably living through. Whilst in the 1980s some of the Middle Class felt pressured into justifying proletarian violence as an understandable reaction to the attacks of the State, nowadays, for the Middle Class, violence is always mindless unless it is informed by their minds. For those who have no desire to get to the roots of anything, 'intelligent' anger always has to be hierarchically organised and respectful of their 'intelligence'. For them, this is the essence of order, regardless of the disorder it imposes on the vast majority. On the other hand, independently expressed anger is always, by definition, 'uncontrolled' because it is uncontrollable.⁷

⁷ As *Do or Die!* has pointed out, the demonstrations/street parties are mostly organised by the Middle Class, but most of those arrested have been Working Class. *Do or Die!* often has some of the best articles about what's going on, but also has a lot of Lefty articles supporting Left-wing would-be capital, which doubtless make some of the *Do or Die!*ists cringe and squirm, but these differences never become explicit.

Monbiot is a total dumb fuck compared with more suss recuperators like the more internationally famous Canadian, Naomi Klein. After all, in No Logo she praises the June 18th 1999 rampage through the City of London, along with the 1997 battle in Trafalgar Square, as inspirational jumping off points for a more combative anti-globalisation movement than previously experienced. Unlike Monbiot, she carefully doesn't condemn such violence (despite her partner being a right-on TV current affairs commentator). Though she gets off on appreciating the salutary effects of such violence - if only on grabbing media headlines - it's doubtful she's ever gone near to caving in a Starbucks's coffeehouse window. We should be as wary of this operator as of Monbiot, because, plain-as-day, the stab in the back will surely come.

Later in his article on Genoa, Monbiot quotes enthusiastically from an 18th century British government law which said that the state could dismantle any commercial enterprise "tending to the common grievance, prejudice and inconvenience of His Majesty's subjects". I'm sure the millions of workers who were the victims of one of the more overtly brutal developments in British history - the forcing off the land, the growth of the 14 hour day, the extraction of absolute surplus value - would have been well consoled by Her Majesty's governments' fine words of concern for their grievances and inconveniences. A believer in the Good State is also a believer in words and polite representations: on paper everything can be made to look good. Although he says at the end of his article "Words alone are not enough" that means something very different coming from someone who can justify the 18th century British State than from someone who realises that writing a text is not enough. It's a classic leftist myth, based in his own political aspirations, to hail the idea of the Good State. But there's never been any example of a State which didn't have the blood of the poor on its hands. Not one - from Cuba, to Lenin's Russia to Atlee's Britain to Roosevelt's America. In fact, most of Mon-

would start to fragment; more fundamental differences tend to be repressed for the sake of unity - a unity based on the lowest common denominator. This kind of ecological alliance seems to be reproduced globally. For example, Rene Riesel describes the Confederation de Paysan (the French small farmers federation); it "gathers together socialists, hippies, repentant lefties, Greens - a rather paradoxical circle of ideas that works through consensus so as to present a united front, with all sorts of tendencies which cohabit without ever going to the bitter end of discussions..."

Who is this guy, Riesel? An ex-member of the Situationist International, who played a significant part in the May '68 movement, now a sheep-farming peasant, Riesel got nicked, with a couple of others, destroying a granary-full of GMO grain simply by drenching the stuff with water. He received a year inside suspended for 5 years. Subsequent sabotage increased the suspended sentence by another year. Having been close to Jose Bove, he broke with him partly over his moronic wallowing in media fame, partly over his social democratic Statist outlook, partly over the fact that he moves in quite obnoxious circles - even being courted by the French National Front, without him rejecting these flattering come-ons in the slightest: he's even been photographed shaking hands with Pasqua, the former Minister of the Interior who makes Michael Howard, Jack Straw or David Blunkett look like liberals. Bove gets his credibility from the careful dismantling of a MacDonalds, for which he'd got prior approval from sections of the Socialist Party-run State, and sections of the police. Thousands have attacked MacDonalds(9) before and after him, but he gets a name for himself because the attack was done with a polite nod to and from the powers that be. Clearly he is being used to bolster French capital against American capital. Isn't this the political future? - European capital increasingly in conflict with American capital using the anti-globalisation/ecology movements as their socially concerned image in this power battle. Blair has yet to go

and refusal to confront contradiction in order to maintain the almighty consensus.

The ideal of consensus is an important principle in the decision-making processes used by organisers and activists in the DIY scene. Yet because of the nature of the events organised, such as street parties, and the security needed to successfully pull them off, they are inevitably organised in detail by small secret groups - so while consensus operates at one level in open meetings etc at another higher level of crucial decision making it is dispensed with in favour of conspiratorial groups. This form of organising is determined by what is being organised - i.e. the kind of event that requires clandestine planning in order to outwit the intense police surveillance directed at the targeted inner circle of organisers.

In the original, first printing of this text, there was a critique of one of the significant RTS organisers. We include the original as a footnote. Since this was first published we've heard that this guy does not support the ideology of ethical investment. Certainly at the beginning of 1999 he did: one of us heard him arguing with a friend about it, with him saying that RTS didn't have a party line on it, and that an advocate of it should come along to an anti-capitalist meeting preparing for June 18th. Certainly people change, and we must obviously accept that this guy is now against such bullshit. Also, we took the Evening Standard's account of his accounts at face value: a bad mistake. We should have tried to check. We also got it wrong about RTS propaganda supporting this ethical investment ideology; certainly leaflets advocating ethical investment were around RTS meetings in 1999, though we have been informed that RTS never put their name to them. Unqualified apologies for getting it wrong.

The "consensus" that appears as a noble conviction or principle also functions as a means of maintaining the fragile alliance of this broad church of activism; the minimum agreements reached by consensus are the limits beyond which the coalition

biots State-oriented prescriptions read like a litany of hapless, pie-in-the-sky offerings, always missing the point. Underlying Monbiot's perspective, shared by all sorts of professional ecologists, is a kind of newly painted on Keynesian social democracy.

Keynes' project, put simply, was to curtail the power of private capital, which he rightly associated with constant economic crises such as the Depression and thus also curtail the consequent proletarian struggles in response to these crises threatening the very existence of capital. He proposed massive State intervention in, and regulation of, a more consumer-led industry alongside the massive extension of the Welfare State, policies which influenced all the main political parties at the end of World War II. But the margin of freedom such an acknowledgement of working class needs provided gave people the space to fight for far more in conditions of relative affluence, threatening in the late 60s and 70s to destroy the power of capital itself. The right-wing criticism of Keynesianism was "Give them an inch and the bastard's will take a mile" and has involved the clawing back of this inch of freedom to the suffocating narrowness we have now. We've come full circle: the dominant ideology of anti-globalisation is little different from the position of Keynes in the 1930s.

Keynes, at the end of his life, was an extremely disappointed man knowing that unless his model was applied world-wide, and with it, bringing into existence the universal currency of the gencor, it would fail. American banks together with the strong British banks, and the far shakier banks of the other Western allies, created the IMF and circumvented his proposals. The way then was prepared long ago for the rapacious domination of Anglo-American finance capital. Keynes wanted to preserve exchange but destroy speculative currency dealings by replacing them with trade flows unlike today when the former massively outweighs the latter. Is there any reason not to believe that Keynesianism couldn't make a comeback? The economically too reductive ultra-leftists will tend to deterministi-

cally dismiss such a possibility, yet a global ecological Keynesian State, the ideal being pushed forward by those who want to save us, could become the dominant perspective if, once again, capital is threatened by all sorts of revolts amidst environmental chaos. Sure, it won't be the nicey State the idealistic ideologues like to present it as. Whilst the need for money exists it'll be more like the creation of a military-style world ecological pseudo-Keynesian ultra-authoritarian State. It will police the planet by mass slaughter induced both economically and by force of arms, justifying itself by its ability to save the world, blaming the mass slaughter on the inheritance from the Free Market epoch, always promising progress and improvement and still defending the mechanisms of a cleverly media-presented capitalist exploitation reducing life to mere survival as never ever before.

The basis of this New Economy arising from the ashes will partly be the development of clean productive forces. Already sections of capital are beginning to invest in ways of circumventing Suicide Capitalism. For example, developing the clean car which runs on water by separating and extracting the hydrogen in the water, or cars run on compressed air. It'll still be a car - gobbling up our immediate geographical space everywhere, preventing us playing and communicating in the streets. How many ecologists will be bought off with the carrot of that reward? History tells us how easy it is to buy people off.⁸ Inevitably people are going to partly welcome the building, say, of a hydrogen-based power station, once the problem of hydrogen storage has been solved, curing minor carbon emissions. That way, "come the revolution" (as we used to say) we won't have to dismantle the whole thing like we would a nuclear

⁸ A woman round RTS was really excited by the proposed transformation of parts of Camden High St. into a walkway, hailing it as a great victory. It seemed to escape her notice that these shopping areas are horribly alienated spaces utterly devoid of the spirit of experimental play that children used to treat the streets with.

bing, of having broken the picket line, thus slightly upsetting an otherwise merry situation. Despite this, the feeling of connecting in this friendly way really perked me up just before I had to shift, lift, load, transport, and finally unload and stack up a van full of heavy boxes. A couple of years later an RTS video was shown on Channel 4 at 3 o'clock in the morning and there I was, with my car, talking about money and so on. To me I looked like a pratt - TV always makes everyone look like a pratt, but others thought I was ok-. 'I'll have to get myself a manager I felt I should have demanded royalties from the Italian guy who made it, but apparently he sold it to Channel 4 and gave the money to Amnesty - it'll look good on his CV."

While this film student was making his film about RTS he was confronted in an RTS squat by an outsider about his motives. He was rightly accused of just using the struggle to further his budding film career and turning the struggle into a commodity (one can imagine the sales pitch he gave Channel 4 about how in touch with youth culture, and what an authentic voice of it, he was). The crowd of RTS activists present were surprised that someone should be so directly challenged, implying that this was not quite appropriate behaviour - and they listened to the argument in a passive and neutral way, as if it was merely a little entertainment and very much external to them, despite the fact that it should have been them, rather than an outsider, challenging the opportunist creep. Later, those whose voices had been used on the soundtrack meekly gave him the signed permission he needed for use of their speech, despite many of them being pissed off that he was giving the proceeds to the pathetically liberal Amnesty: Amnesty won't support prisoners who have used violence in their struggles and yet has as one of its leading lights Judge Hoffmann, a Law Lord who regularly turns down appeals by West Indian prisoners against the death sentence. There was no public debate in RTS about all this ' due partly to a lack of critique of the media

Sure shoppers every Sunday manage to slow down traffic enormously, anyway, which was why they probably chose the site because there was already a crowd of potential partygoers - Two cars had been theatrically crashed together, having been towed there already, and kids were wrecking what remained of them - And then you'd see these Mother Earth worshippers doing weird prayers and singing and generally adding to the circus atmosphere, the freak show'And there was this guy, a stallholder who sells coffee and doughnuts riding around on his little bike beaming'the guy's a fairly traditional young petty bourgeois ' whilst he was having fun as part of the RTS party, his employees were providing him with the means to a fairly good livelihood. Some shopkeepers said "This is bad for business", whilst others said "No, it's good for business" and I thought, "Who really gives a toss?"'And there were mates of mine - their kids smashing up the crashed cars in front of the (alternative) cameras'Later, at the end of the day, 7p.m., I had to pack up and load up the car with my stock. So I take my car round and find they're still picketing the crossroads, sitting down across the street. A couple of friends look embarrassed when I drive up. The crowd is fairly hostile. The cops want to wave me through, so I switch off the engine. The crowd cheers. I get out and explain I need the car because I need money - abolish the economy and money and we can abolish the car'or something like that, not that articulate'I explain, rather demagogically, that if I drive round, which is twenty times longer, then I'll pollute the environment a lot more than if I just drive over the bridge'With the engine off, they agree to give me a push the fifty yards I have to go. As we move off a camera and microphone come through the window - "How does it feel to have the first Green car" a woman asks. "It's not green, it's yellow", I hilariously quipped ho ho. They push the car off with some of them sitting on the bonnet, a funny event. I feel happy. A politico, a comrade, on the other side of the bridge, not having really seen what had gone on, virtually accused me of scab-

power station. And Yet It Moves mentions how some Maoist workers took over an experimental nuclear power plant during the Portuguese revolution in 1975. Not knowing what to do with the plant they surrendered it shortly afterwards. This incident certainly forces practical reflection upon us. After all, you couldn't sabotage the installation nor simply close it down like that without also running terrible risks - closing it down would require specialist knowledge. Neither though could you maintain its functioning. This was the real dilemma for these innovative and courageous workers, their Maoism notwithstanding - a dilemma which is as poignant today as nearly 30 years ago.

Genoa follows a direct line of anti-globalisation protests which exploded in Seattle in 1999, then led to confrontations in Davos, Prague, Gothenburg and a few other places. The best piece on The Battle of Seattle is available through e-mail at: lgoldner@world.std.com though there's an excellent eye-witness account by Jeffrey St.Clair in the November 1999 edition of the normally crap New Left Review, entitled Seattle Diary: It's a Gas, Gas, Gas. What happened in Seattle was clearly influenced by the trashing of the City of London on June 18th 1999, initiated by Reclaim the Streets and others. After this, some of those preparing for the Seattle conflict, said, "We wanna do what you guys did on June 18th". However, it was not just the strengths of RTS that are appearing in these massive protests, but also some of their weaknesses. To change the future we need to look a bit at the strengths and weaknesses of the past.

Reclaim The Streets

RTS and the wider eco-protest/direct action movement is directly linked to earlier direct action and mass occupation movements ' the squatting, eco and peace movements and free fes-

tivals of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the general libertarian current of that era. It also has similarities with the 19th century Romantic movement in its criticisms of how capitalism's technological advances are destructive of both the environment and social relationships, as well as echoing some of its moralism and idealism.

But perhaps its closest historical relative is the anti-nuclear/peace/CND movement of the 1950s/60s and 70s. Both share a concern with issues that could determine the ultimate fate of humanity; and as a consequence both movements have been broad coalitions, cross class rainbow alliances of humanistic concern.

Yet these earlier movements usually existed in periods of regular mass working class struggle, in dramatic contrast to the present vacuum. RTS and co have emerged in a very different social climate - the earlier period of the 1960s/70s being a post-war high point of class struggle, while the present period is the miserable result of the defeat of that struggle, with working-class confidence and combativity in the UK at its lowest ebb in living memory (and longer).

But while the left have criticised RTS and co. for the limits and deficiencies of its politics, lack of class perspective, its largely middle class composition etc - it's nevertheless true that RTS, in responding to a request from striking Liverpool dockers to organise a joint action against their bosses, immediately achieved more links and co-ordination with "workers in struggle" than all the Left put together could have imagined in their wildest wet dreams. (Paper selling just does not compare).

RTS's/Critical Mass's link up with striking tube workers was also a good practical example of making connections, however limited. "It was great rushing up the stairs of the London Transport offices, occupying the directors' room, reading through their books, cracking jokes, the security guard jumping up onto the window sill arms outstretched to prevent what he imagined would be a would-be martyr amongst us who would have

been prepared to throw themselves out for the cause, the laughter that greeted him, the conversations, the authorities pissed off" these things make us feel good - sure, a moment is not a movement but it's a good buzz, a fond memory."

Also to the envy of the left, RTS and co. have organised several explicitly "anti-capitalist" demos in central London in co-ordination with other similar international events. Thousands have attended these events, disrupted and attacked capitalist institutions, bringing riot and disruption to the commercial centres and Whitehall. (We will deal further on with the thornier question of the content and effectiveness of these actions and some common shortcomings in the definitions and understanding of what capitalism is.)

The eco-protest scene appears to have emerged more or less independently of the left wing and anarchist political arena, and is all the healthier for it, by and large escaping the senile theoretical and practical rigidity of the Left. But clinging to one's strengths and achievements can become a weakness and obstacle in time, and with RTS and co., innovation appears to be becoming orthodoxy.

The eco-direct action movement is largely a coalition of various single issue groups many of whom have gone beyond single issues; plus, more recently, entryists from various Leninist and anarchist factions who, in typically arrogant fashion, mostly see their role as delivering the necessary ideological and/or organisational leadership to an activist scene that lacks it, with the possibility of recruiting a few new members to their shrinking political groups.

"The first RTS street party was along Camden High Street at Camden Lock, on a warm Sunday in 1995. Working there, it brightened up my day ' great to see the road blocked, the carnival atmosphere was original then, though Camden has long tried to have a carnival atmosphere on Sundays and had kind of already succeeded insofar as carnival and business are not incompatible, but this was good because there were no cars.