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1998

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Resistance on the move

A round up of recent demonstrations

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Recent weeks have seen a large number of demonstrations called by a variety of groups on a number of issues. Here we report back on these events.

Picket of the Irish Embassy, London 23rd April

A request for solidarity demonstrations was sent over the internet by Irish anarchist groups the Workers Solidarity Movement and Organise/IWA. Marches were being organised in Ireland to protest against the racist treatment of refugees arriving in Ireland and anarchists were asked to picket outside Irish embassies all over the world to coincide with this. Organising a picket simply involved London ACF contacting all the London anarchist groups and Irish newspapers in London and writing a leaflet so we'd have something to hand out on the day. About 15 people- including comrades from the Solidarity Federation- turned out for the event and we even managed to leaflet another march going to the Turkish embassy around the corner! In Ireland, 1200 people marched in Dublin and 600 in Cork. there were also other solidarity actions in Belfast and at four other embassies around the world

Reclaim The Streets, Birmingham 16th May

This was organised to coincide with the G8 meeting of the leaders of the world's richest countries which was held in Birmingham at the time. Similar events happened in as many as 37 other cities! Thousands of people turned out to party around the biggest roundabout in central Birmingham. Traffic was brought to a halt and we danced away in the sunshine. Though there were some of the inevitable fluffy idiots present a lot of people were very clued up about the danger cameras are and we were able to discourage one camera man from setting up opposite the point of most conflict. On another note people were still throwing things at the cops from too far back and hitting demonstrators. People doing this have to be stopped as serious injuries happen. If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well.

Anti-Fascist Demonstration, London 23rd May

The National Front were having a march to Downing Street so the Anti-Nazi League/Socialist Workers Party had called a counter-demonstration. Fortunately most of the demonstrators were wise enough to not get stuck behind the police so avoided waving lollipops and chanting robotically miles from the actual fascists. On anti-fascist demos the only way of doing anything effective is if you can avoid getting penned in by the police. If you stick in small groups with people you know there is a chance of getting to grips with the fascists to explain the error of their ways. It's all very well calling for mass action but there aren't often masses of us!

Unfortunately, most of the people who were 'up for it' were later trapped by the police outside Downing street, though after successfully stopping the fascists getting there to hand in their petition. This left only a few small groups able to still go after the fascists. They came across four of them lurking around the end of the fascist contingent, one of whom inexplicably threw himself at their feet, causing some of them to stub their toes on him and even accidentally drop a bottle on his head!

March for Social Justice, London 30th May

The first March for Social Justice last year, coming during the middle of the Liverpool Dockers struggle and the only major 'left' mobilisation last summer saw 30,000 people on the streets of London and some serious confrontation with the police. This year the march drew about 600. The march, in support of the Dockers Charter, a left-wing wish list which came out of the struggle, had a sizeable libertarian contingent including comrades from the ACF who handed out a leaflet calling for Social Justice through Social revolution, a perspective which did not go down too well with the Stalinists and social democrats present.

Reclaim the Streets, South London, 6th June

This event started with a crash despite police attempts to sabotage it by closing down the nearest tube stations. This only backfired as people marched all the way from Kings Cross to seven Sisters to join in the fun, stopping even more traffic along the way. This caused one hysterical radio reporter to warn motorists "The Reclaim the Streets movement has taken over the whole of north-east London". The police decided to adopt a fairly low-key attitude, as opposed to the massed ranks in riot gear we were treated to in Birmingham. They did still manage to capture a tripod though, so perhaps we need to look into defending them better- the tactical moving of a sound system certainly helped get people where they were needed.

Reclaim the Streets, South London, 6th June

The South London event started with less trouble than in the North with staged car crashes at each end of Brixton High Street. The coppers tried to grab the legs of people climbing lamp posts to put banners up and cover the CCTVs but with the crowd surging forward they soon saw the error of their ways. After that we could settle down to partying away on a beautiful day free from traffic fumes.

There were a few minor scuffles at the end, particularly as the sound systems left, but the cops quickly backed off. They

did have their teams of photographers present throughout the day as well, so next time we'll have to remember to come prepared with counter measures.

Next stop Cardiff!

ACF comrades from South Wales, London and Leeds attended a demonstration in Cardiff on Saturday June 13th to demonstrate against the European Summit being held there. There were less demonstrators than on the Social Justice march earlier in the month. Comrades handed out 1,000 leaflets produced by South Wales ACF and marched behind the Ffederacion Comiwnistaidd Anarchaidd (Welsh ACF) banner along with 3 huge ACF flags and with other libertarians. Again the revolutionary message of the leaflet didn't seem to go down too well with the Stalinists and Trotskyists on the demo, though they went down a lot better at the Reclaim the Streets Party that occupied the bridge over the River Taff later in the day. A total news blackout followed, just in case you were wondering.

Revolutionary Prisoners Day Picket of the Italian Tourist Office, London

On Friday June 19th the ACF were amongst the initiators of an informational picket of the Italian State Tourist Office in Central London. We were drawing attention to the repression the Italian anarchist movement had been experiencing for the past two years. Alongside ACFers were people from the London Anarchist Black Cross, independent anarchists and one person from the Revolutionary Communist Group. We distributed 1,000 leaflets and talked with many people concerning the events in Italy (see separate article in this Organise!)

Picket of the American Embassy 26th June- Free Leonard Peltier

The ACF called a picket of the American Embassy to coincide with a demonstration outside the White House called by supporters of Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist serving two consecutive life sentences for the killing of two FBI agents

in a shoot-out. The U.S. government now admits that there is no evidence to link him with the killings but the parole board is refusing to free him. The ACF distributed a leaflet calling for his immediate release.

The ACF are looking forward to a hot summer...why don't you join us?