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Fifth of May Group

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Reclaim the Streets (RTS) which played an important role in the “May Day 2000” preparations that started a year ago, originated about five years ago as a spontaneous street movement, non-hierarchical, non-structured, and self-organised. RTS is a network of direct actions and relations based on participation, initiative and responsibility of individuals recovering their self-will to change and re-create the conditions of their existence. RTS very much differs from the well-known classical static forms of organisations in that it is dynamic, flexible and is difficult for the police to pin point, “you can’t get a handle on them.” The participants definitely do not recognise the systems legal constraints, put into practice their own decisions when and where they choose and then disperse to reunite again. RTS rejects all of the classical organisational forms of tactics such as leaders, officials, representatives, spokespeople, decision mechanisms, committees, membership, program, plans made

in advance, forming front or coalition, organisation leaders sitting around a table establishing “alliances” or platforms.

But how are thousands of people to be mobilised to meet at a specific time and place without the above mentioned forms of organisation? First of all, it must be pointed out that the movement (here we mean the movement Enragé as a whole, which includes RTS, opposing the globalisation) depends on numerous persistent local as well as country wide (along with many international connections) “chaotic” activities. There are hundreds of local, national and even international groups who work together and support each other in activities from opposing the government’s proposed “Fight Against Terrorism” project to small and large groups fighting against racism and sexism; from legalising hashish to resistance to the “Refugee Law” project; from the opposition to MacDonald’s that has been going on for years to protesting the intervention of NATO in Kosova and the embargo against Iraq; from closing of streets by cyclists (“Critical Mass”) to Bastille Movement to free prisoners; the boycotting of cosmetic monopolies that use animals in their experiments such as Boots and “Body Shop” to boycotting of the elections; resistance to the reduction and elimination of aid to the unemployed or hiring them without pay, Labour Government’s applications of “New Deal” and “JSA” to genetic engineering; from the homeless and squatters who organise themselves to those who volunteer to help “refugees” who are being deported; from the movement of the “handicapped” to the movement against censorship; from co-ordinating the shoplifting activities to supporting of subway workers; from opposing the arms trade (trafficking) to stopping of the trains carrying nuclear waste; from sabotaging fox hunting to opposing the fur trade, from anti-monarchy movement to sexual freedom movement etc., etc. At the local level this manifests itself as a complex whole consisting of relations linked by meetings of diverse groups and individuals who gather for various reasons to exchanger ideas, to learn about each others aims and “dreams”

through practical struggles, to know each other better and to become friends by common work and support concerts (“gigs”). Each individual in her/his subgroup takes on a task of her/his choice freely, participates in activities not out of obligation but to have fun, to assume responsibility, to take initiative. Based on such functioning, there arises a decentralised resistance movement that is a complex whole built from bottom to top where the individuals determine the group, which then constitutes the local groups and determines the relations between them, and they in turn enter into wider relations and determine the global activities.

Until now, the global movement has developed without leadership of an individual or a group. Certainly, this does not mean that there are not activists who play relatively major roles in organising practical activities. But their functions are entirely determined by those who participate. If for any reason they failed to fulfil their responsibilities, these activists, who are not specialist engendered by division of labour, are replaced by others.

Enragés are not bound by the legalities of bourgeois democracy. Though it is allowed to do all sorts of buffoonery at “Speaker’s Corner” in the world famous Hyde Park, it is forbidden to even display a banner within one mile of Parliament, never mind staging a demonstration in front of the building. RTS knew that in occupying the Parliament Square during the last 1st of May activities it was attacking the sacred ground of Western democracy.

The anti-capitalist movement, parallel with the above-mentioned diversity of social classes, harbours a wealth of ideas. It includes anarchism of all sorts (greens, primitivists, individualists, pacifists, anarcho-syndicalists, anarcho-communists, anarcho-feminists, anarcho-nihilists, anarcho-gays, Durrutists, Mahnovists, etc.), Council Communists, libertarian Marxists, situationists, Jewish socialists, the Animal Liberation Front sympathisers, eco-warriors, sexual liberation movement, anti-war activists, blacks for anti-racism, libertarian education movement, expropriate the land movement, anti-monarchists, etc., etc. Two

days of conferences held in the same building preceding the 1st of May well illustrated the colourfulness of the theoretical and practical ideas.

George Woodcock wrote in 1939, in the aftermath of the Spanish Revolution, that the anarchist movement in practice had ended. The anarchist movement in Britain, except for ephemeral outbursts, had not transformed the known anarchist ideas into practical struggles in daily life and become a social movement. And in so far as it did succeed, it was ignored by the institutions of power, in particular the media which, in addition to its rejection of the anarchists (adding to its rejection by the anarchists), consciously censored them, and so the anarchist movement was forced to be marginalised and live in ghettos. Yet the growing social movement at the present time, expressing itself and developing practical projects, is nourished and inspired by anarchist theory and practice. Despite having had an inactive existence until the appearance of the punk movement in the 1970s, the British anarchism of today, by joining the present social movement, has become a living force beyond mere theories and an ideal.