

"You feel euphoric, you know. Because it's one of the best buzzes personally I've had in my life. Better than any drug. And you know it was just that... It was a feeling of standing up straight against an institution that's been historically has always been brutal"



to be continued...

The Scoundrel

Feb 2012



"We're showing them that we're bigger than the police... Fair enough, we are breaking the law and everything, but there's more of us than there are of you. So if we want to do this, we can do this. And you won't do anything to stop us."

The Scoundrel SAYS

Greetings and welcome to a new paper that we hope will give the powers that be some discomfort over the coming months.

The Scoundrel is an offensive and probably illegal publication that isn't too bothered about becoming respectable or even acceptable. We want to bring a bit of oxygen to the glowing embers of social warfare that lie all around.

The Scoundrel is not a mouthpiece for any organisation and does not have a political manifesto. What is printed here is material that we think is useful in struggling for total freedom and the survival of the excluded.

The powers that be have had it far too easy in recent decades, thanks partly to the left, the unions and other specialists of struggle who want everyone to play nicely and not threaten their privileged roles. Thankfully people are starting to wake up and take their lives into their own hands.

We welcome people who like what they see here to get involved, send us your ideas and spread the word. And most importantly, go out there and do something.

The Scoundrel

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Television

Occupy Everywhere, ITV1, 5pm

Groups of youf vie with each other to occupy ever more obscure locations before the authorities catch up in this crusty lifestyle show. Sadly no one can remember why.

The Insurrection in Everyday Life, More4, 7pm

Channel 4 have brought together an all-star cast of leftist intellectuals and academics and locked them in an abandoned shopping mall in Luton, stocked full of weaponry. Live public votes will decide whose theories are worthy of attention and whose rhetoric is weak as ideologies are put to the test in epic bloody struggle.

Dubstep Riot, BBC4, 11pm

A three hour montage of footage from the August riots set to K-hole inducing beats and bass with occasional commentary from that bloke off Newsnight, bourgeois racist David Starkey and Bez out of the Happy Mondays. Spark up a spliff and get ready for a long night.

Confessions of an undercover cop, Ch5, 3am

The nasal whinings of yesterday's man, Matt Kennetty, who clearly still thinks there are people out there remotely interested in what he has to say. This documentary is 3 parts self-pity and 1 part out of focus, slow motion dramatic reconstructions of dodgy looking people on the phone. The key question is left unanswered: How long are we going to have to wait for this cunt to do himself in?

Shoplifting is a way of life for many. When you don't have much money how else are you going to get the things you need and want? The real crime is not the taking but the economic system that allows the rich to wallow in luxury whilst the majority go without.

Now there's nothing particularly revolutionary about sticking bottles of wine down your trousers but maybe it's better than buying into the system and paying with your hard earned cash. Let's not accept our immiserated existences - let's go out and steal some cool stuff!

Usually the biggest obstacle is not the physical capability to conceal something and get away with it (the vast majority of shoplifters do) but the spook in your head that tells you that it's "wrong". This is just capitalist conditioning - the sooner you get over it the sooner you'll start getting your goodies.

Start off small, always be careful and use the hints and tips in the links below and soon you'll be getting some excellent direct action discounts. Try not to look out of place in your dress or behaviour and have some suitable pockets or sleeves to discreetly stash your stuff in. Don't do anything in front of cameras or other shoppers who could be security.

If you're already an experienced 'lifter, why not plan a mass expropriation like Yomango or the Greek anarchists who raid supermarkets and then give the stuff away for free.

<http://anarchist-theft.net/theft5>

<http://www.revleft.com/vb/shoplifting-techniques-t35894/index.html>



The sound of the police

Over the past few months Nottingham has witnessed a "an attempt to criminalise acts of peaceful protest and civil disobedience" according to the newly formed Nottingham Defence Campaign. In September, two protesters were arrested for refusing to leave a protest against workhouse-suitability bureaucrats, Atos, and then in December a UK Uncut day of action ended with three protesters arrested. Notts police are using aggravated trespass and Public Order Act legislation to limit the effectiveness of demonstrations against corporate and state interests in the city centre. As one of the officers who arrested people at Atos said "There's been too much of this sort of thing going on and we've been told to crackdown."

POLICE DO NOT CROSS

Whilst it is, without a doubt, a worry for those facing charges, it is worth putting these police actions into context. Nottingham residents who took part in anti-police riots in August have been subject to a roundup with somewhere in the region of 80 arrests made so far. Many were remanded pending trial and have been given longer prison sentences than usual as a result of the gloves-off approach of the state to dealing with them. 18 year old Ahmed Pelle was given 2 years 9 months for incitement via Facebook status updates. Meanwhile, central and local government have threatened benefits suspensions and evictions for those found to have been involved. Whilst some of Nottingham's anarchists have shown solidarity with the rioters through offers of support and an anti-evictions demo, the response has generally been too little and too late.

A large part of the problem is that some do not want to be associated with the rioters because they don't consider them to be "political" or they disapprove of certain acts of violence, looting and criminal damage. In The Scoundrel's view, these attitudes are symptomatic of a cosy, liberal approach to activism that seeks to sharply define its

own borders and form a gated community of protest, where a carefully orchestrated pantomime of dissent can be played out undisturbed. When actors who are not considered to be part of the set organise themselves to take up arms against the state, it is often perceived as a threat by those whose roles are usurped, especially if that insurrection seems more potent and empowering than the set-pieces of "political" theatre. We need to resist any attempts to exclude the "criminal", the "violent" and the "uncontrollable". If we agree with even one tiny bit of what happened during the riots then we must include its participants in our solidarity.

Another piece of contextualisation that seems necessary is that this is nothing new. As popular methods of protest evolve so too does the law in order to crush them. As soon as the new offence of Aggravated Trespass was introduced in the mid-90s, hunt saboteurs, anti-GM protesters and anti-roads protesters were prosecuted using it. Whole rafts of new legislation have been brought in to crackdown on the burgeoning animal rights movement during the last few decades to such an extent that in 2008 protesters who did a legal banner drop outside a company linked to HLS were subject to home raids. The role of the police is to maintain "order", the status quo, and as a result, to prevent protests from changing anything. We shouldn't expect them to do anything else.

The Uncut style of protesting has become a new big thing. Its decentralised structure and easily replicatable template of disruption has hit many high street names at the retail outlet. When it first went viral the police couldn't work out what to do about it and so the protests were successful and empowering for those involved. However, like any protest template, after the initial explosion of successes the police work out a containment strategy at which point the organisers of the protests have to evolve too or they are

STREET REPORTS

"Demonstrators blockaded the road with crowd control barriers and a giant tripod. For 2 hours the sounds of music and dancing and the tinkle of tea on china replaced the roar of the traffic."

"Police didn't know about our plans (we were quite well organized for the first time. Everybody knew only what he had to know)"

"Now the forces of darkness could only look on helplessly as tables and chairs magically appeared and an impromptu street cafe sprouted on the highway. A bewildering array of international folk dances were performed as the carnival continued for nearly 2 hours."

"One banner seemed to sum up the atmosphere perfectly. It simply said, 'Reclaimed.'"

"Some guy felt inspired to jump up and down on a traffic box stark naked, gesticulating wildly at the unamused massed ranks of officers."

"More police vehicles had agglomerated behind the crowd but they ran into the small problem of overturned dumpsters barring the street--which the crowd flowed through as water through rocks."

"At the same time some participants rushed to demolish television sets in the center of the intersection, as others took parts of the furniture and constructed a bonfire."

"Let this be a premonition of a time when the present conditions of our lives will be no more than a memory."

LINKS

RTS London: <http://rts.gn.apc.org/>

Do or Die article: <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no6/rts.htm>


Urban 75 reports: <http://www.urban75.com/Action/reclaim2.html>

Marion Hamm article:

http://republicart.net/disc/hybridresistance/hamm01_en.htm

time and again by RTS, was the process of enclosure, through which the commons was forcibly taken from the people for private interests or to be leased back under strict conditions: "It's about reclaiming the streets as public inclusive space from the private exclusive use of the car. But we believe in this as a broader principle, taking back those things which have been enclosed within capitalist circulation and returning them to collective use as a commons."

As such RTS situated itself in the rich history of revolutionary struggles: "From the Peasant's Revolt to the resistance to the enclosures, from the land occupations of the Diggers to the post-war squatters, on to the recent free festivals, peace camps, land squats and anti-roads movement." "The great moments of revolutionary history have all been enormous popular festivals - the storming of the Bastille, the uprisings of 1848, the Paris Commune, the revolutions of 1917-9, Paris '68."



"Everywhere, extraordinary people have continually asserted not only the need to liberate the commons but the ability to think and organise for themselves."



RTS saw something inherently oppositional to the status quo in the carnival, a space of "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order; it marks the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions." "[P]opular festivities have always been looked on by the authorities as a problem, whether they have banned, tolerated or semi-institutionalised them." This fear of the carnival was due to the empowerment of its participants, giving them "utopian urges" to change society.

doomed*. It seems to me that Uncut need to find a way around the new police crackdown before supporters get demoralised and leave in droves. Experimentation with flash mobs, moving away from the concentration of state power that is the city centre, and new methods of disruption are some ideas for the future, and thinking outside the box of lawful, peaceful protest too.

The same can be said of solidarity campaigns. There is only so much that can be achieved through the courts and the media. Many people facing charges for anti-state activity clearly are guilty of offences designed to protect that state. Many of them aren't media-friendly and will be judged as criminals by the hangmen of the press before their trials have even begun. The Nottingham Defence Campaign is clearly an important development in defending protest locally but much more is needed to actually defeat the repressive apparatus that we face. Solidarity is about so much more than support. It means actually fighting back.



POLICE DO NOT CROSS
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*See the example of Reclaim the Streets in our main feature.

Survival

We are the excluded, the unwanted of neoliberal existence - benefit scroungers, precarious workers, the mad and the criminal. We are an underclass and we want to live, with or without the system. We don't give a shit about pensions, property, 'good schools' or careers. We scabble for scraps, take what we can, wherever we can get it.

We want to protect our niches wherever we find them - the government handouts, the squatted buildings, the pointless jobs and the reappropriation of wealth. The best way we can do this is to build networks of affinity in order to act collectively, out of self-interest. We seek to find friends in the margins and work out ways to protect one another's existences; to defend our access to food, shelter, safety and what pleasures we can obtain.

Revolution

We are by no means satisfied with this limited and besieged existence. We know that we deserve better and we don't mean the infantile addictions to comfort and luxury of the rich nor the mindless slavery of the good workers. We mean that we want to be limited only by our imaginations not by material poverty or the denial of our agency. As such we seek to overthrow the system of control that denies us the raw materials of our dreams, the ideology that denies us our voices and our humanity. This requires nothing less than the total destruction of present social and economic relations and their collective reimagining by all people.

come to challenge the powers that be, inevitably you find yourself on the curbstone of indifference, wondering "should I play it safe and stay on the sidewalks, or should I go into the street?" And it is the ones who are taking the most risks that will ultimately effect the change in society" The philosophy of RTS was to seize the street by any means that came to hand: "The streets belong to the people: they seize control of the city's elemental matter and make it their own."

The immediate enemy of such a reclamation was obvious: "The car system steals the street from under us and sells it back for the price of petrol." But RTS was conscious that the car was a symbol of a much bigger movement of enclosure and creeping social control, driven by capitalism itself.

"The privatisation of public space in the form of the car continues the erosion of neighbourhood and community that defines the metropolis. Road schemes, business 'parks', shopping developments - all add to the disintegration of community and the flattening of a locality... Community becomes commodity - a shopping village, sedated and under constant surveillance. The desire for community is then fulfilled elsewhere, through spectacle, sold to us in simulated form."

"The way our space is arranged carries on the disintegration of people that begins with the division of labour in the factory. It cuts a person ... our time, our life, into separate slices so that in each one you are a passive consumer at the mercy of the merchants, so that it never occurs to you that work, culture, communication, pleasure, satisfaction of needs, and personal life can and should be one and the same thing: a unified life, sustained by the social fabric of the community."

"The street's true purpose: social interaction, becomes an uneconomic diversion. In its place the corporate - controlled one-way media of newspapers, radio and television become 'the community'... In this sense the streets are the alternative and subversive form of the mass media. Where authentic communication, immediate and reciprocal, takes place."

"The struggle for car-free space must not be separated from the struggle against global capitalism"

A principal agent in this struggle and one that was emphasised

IDEAS

RTS is primarily remembered as an activist group, whose anarchic parties were a chaotic uprising against the state of things. Indeed, "a disorganisation doesn't have a single ideology." But it shouldn't be forgotten that the originators in London were savvy political theorists with a much bigger agenda. This article revisits the ideas of the movement through the propaganda of London RTS.

"Ultimately it is in the streets that power must be dissolved: for the streets where daily life is endured, suffered and eroded, and where power is confronted and fought, must be turned into the domain where daily life is enjoyed, created and nourished."



Photo: Alan Lodge

Firstly, RTS drew a distinction between the road and the street: "The road is mechanical, linear movement epitomised by the car. The street, at best, is a living place of human movement and social intercourse, of freedom and spontaneity." Hence the predetermined and highly controlled space of the road was to be reclaimed for a dynamic and vibrant space of human interaction - the street. The street then becomes the site of warfare between the state and the people:

"The street is an extremely important symbol because your whole enculturation experience is geared around keeping you out of the street... The idea is to keep everyone indoors. So, when you

Evolution

Such change will not come about magically through a one-off fireball of insurrection. The journey from here to there moves slowly, stage by stage, our struggle earning us small increments of progress, small loosening of our chains. Each concrete project, if successful, earns us new degrees of autonomy and small erosions of our enemies' powers.

Of course, there are joyful moments when many acts come together and many small steps are made at once, but we would be foolish to see any kind of endpoint to our struggles or any kind of primary goal to obtain. Everything must be changed. We must adapt to every new circumstance and extend each new victory, pushing past each new boundary line that is drawn. There is no bigger picture - our battleground is right here, right now.

Anarchy

We accept no masters and no classes. We want the total decentralisation of our dreams. We are sick of lusting after capital's pre-packaged images of success as seen on TV and at selected retailers. Tear down the billboards - there'll be no monoliths looming over our fantasies.

Each shall be the architect of their own life with no enforcements or prohibitions, no earned incentives, no purchases and no promises. There will be no escape from one another through privilege - we will all have to work with what we've got.

Liberate all desire and annihilate all border controls! We assassinate the pantomime's director and steal the stage, armed with joy.

RECLAIM THE STREETS

Reclaim the Streets was a group and a direct action tactic that emerged in London, in the mid '90s. Although these days RTS is often relegated to the lowly status of 'colourful protest movement', it was a potent force at the time, confounding the Met to occupy busy intersections and even motorways in protest against the car and the capitalist system that produced it. The highpoint of the movement was probably the 1999 Carnival Against Capital, which used RTS-inspired tactics to bring mayhem to London's financial district.

RTS is worth looking at by the generations of anti-capitalists who have come of age since then. The way that it brought in people and organising methods from the free party scene and applied them to the context of social struggle (helped along by the Criminal Justice Act's politicisation of raving) demonstrates the importance of constantly developing new tactics and joining up different communities in struggle. RTS' use of an ecstatic party to disrupt the system was a world away from po-faced, sacrificial locking on that had characterised the direct action movement, and drew thousands of people to join in. However, it is also important to learn from the increasingly intense state repression of RTS that followed its successes. The movement had to evolve its tactics as the police found ways of making the political street party unworkable.

There was always tension within RTS' actions between the utopian, liberatory potential of the street party, and what critics described as the risk of the becoming too focused on the spectacular and the mass. It could easily be argued that RTS parties never became the space for "authentic politics" that green anarchists Do or Die hoped for, "a Street Party of street parties". However, the movement was an important experiment in the use of a decentralised power structure, as anarchy in action, placing a utopian vision of the future street in the car-clogged road of the present.

TIMELINE

- 1991 - RTS formed in London at the dawn of anti-roads movement
- 1991-1993 - Actions included putting a trashed car on Park Lane, making DIY cycle lanes and subvertising car adverts
- 1993 - Activists and residents linked up in No M11 campaign, East London
- Nov 1994 - Claremont Road, a squatted street on the M11 route renowned for raves, was finally evicted
- Feb 1995 - RTS reformed
- May 1995 - Street Party I closed down Camden High Street
- Jun 1995 - Street Party II attracts 1,000 people to a busy road junction in Islington. Kids play in a temporary sand pit.
- Aug 1995 - First RTS outside London in Birmingham
- Jul 1996 - 8,000 people took the M41 at Shepherd's Bush for a 9 hour party. Underneath the huge dresses of stiltwalkers people with jackhammers made holes in the tarmac to plant trees.
- Late 1996 - People arrested at M41 action and Liverpool RTS charged with conspiracy
- Dec 1996 - Attempt to seize a BP tanker on the M25 aborted after 200 police arrive at the secret meeting point
- Apr 1997 - Never Mind the Ballots party in Trafalgar Square against electoral politics and in solidarity with the sacked Liverpool dockers who marched to the square
- May 1997 - First RTS outside the UK in Finland
- May 1998 - Global street party with actions in 17 countries and 4 continents
- Jul 1998 - Solidarity action with tube workers resisting privatisation at Bank underground station
- Sep 1998 - RTS in Nottingham taking in Mansfield Road and the Forest. 50 arrested.
- Jun 1999 - Carnival Against Capital: Protestors converged at Liverpool Street Station and given 1 of 4 different coloured carnival masks with directions. The four blocks converged on the LIFFE building in the city which was bricked up and a street party of 5,000 people was held outside.
- Nov 1999 - Solidarity with Seattle protests. Police van torched.
- May 2000 - Guerilla gardening in Parliament Square on Mayday
- Sep 2002 - Reclaim the Future
- Sep 2009 - Reclaim the Future 5