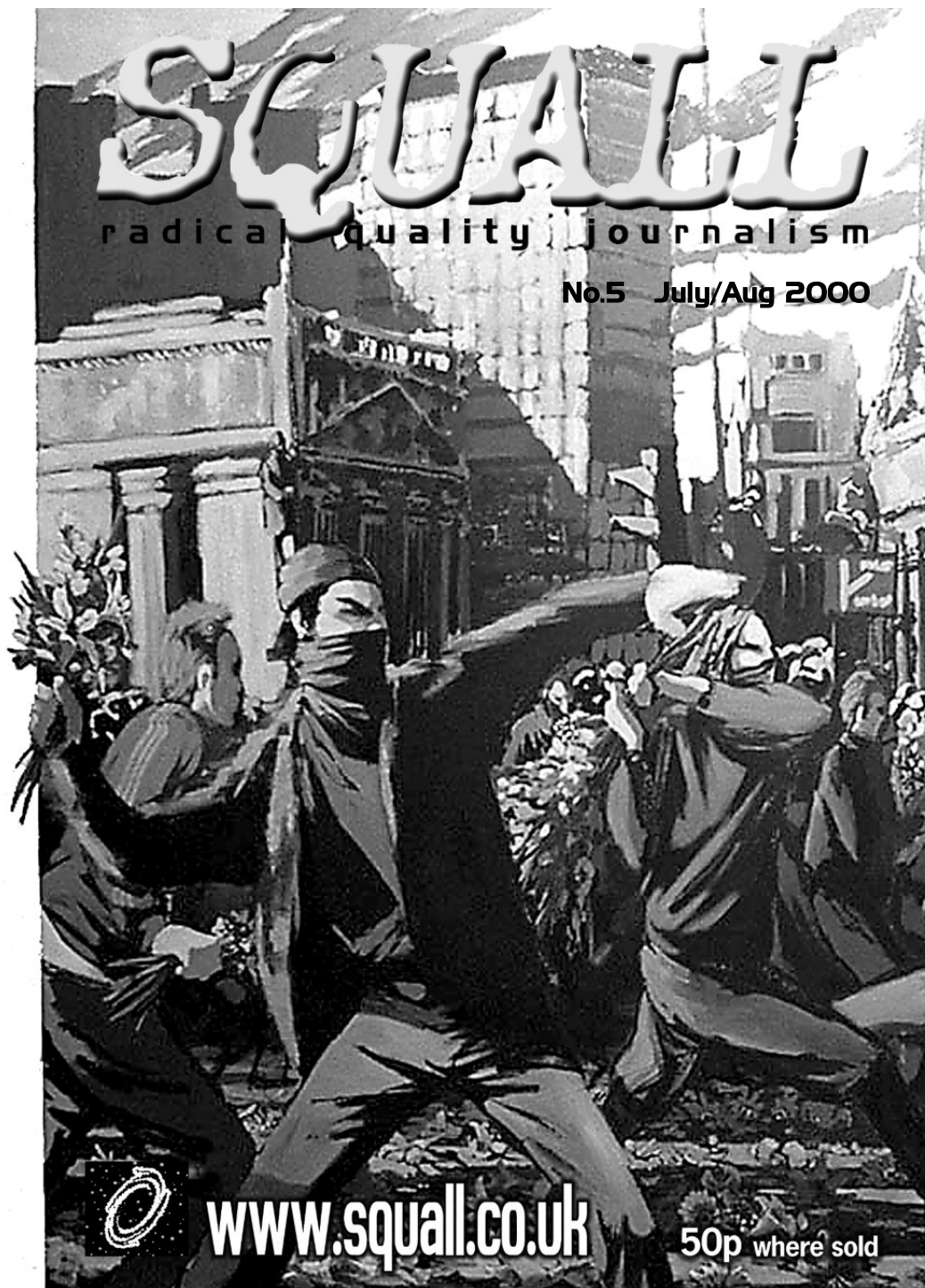


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THE STATE IT'S IN – EDITORIAL

Poisoning in the guerilla garden



Pic: Tim Allen

In this land of hasty critics, it isn't difficult to inflame levels of self-criticism so destructive that the team - our team - is bound to lose, whatever.

It has often been repeated that British heroes are only promoted with applause in order to provide fodder for future lambast.

The barrage of criticism heaped upon Reclaim the Streets from all sides subsequent to the guerilla gardening action on Mayday provides an ample case in point; staggering both in its complicity with mainstream political strategy and for the inanity of its pointless self-destruction.

We're used to the likes of the Daily Mail and the Sunday Times proffering the 'Anarchist yobs take-over' and 'RTS stockpile weapons' style of coverage. But this time the usual suspects were joined by an onslaught of critical barrage from pseudo-friends of the movement like Oxbridge journo, George Monbiot.

Content to have established a career based on his connections to the UK direct action scene, it is a bitter truth that Monbiot might accept thirty pieces of Guardian silver for an exaggerated kiss and tell.

For those who missed George Monbiot's bilious attack, a wade through the spluttered outrage can be spared with a summary of his main points. Liberally peppered with the language of utter condemnation, he stated that RTS's ranks are swollen with violent and uncaring thugs, and that, having lost the plot completely, RTS are "a part of the problem not the solution". Furthermore, and

perhaps most hypocritically, he stated that planting seeds outside the Houses of Parliament was a "futile" action against capitalism.

Four years ago, Monbiot was content to wallow in the acres of column inches which revolved around "The Oxford don and his rag-bag army" when as one of a hundred or so activists on The Land is Ours' first action at Wisley, he planted vegetables and trees on a small stretch of long disused WW2 airfield in Surrey. Monbiot launched his career in British journalism off the back of his association with that action, with the Daily Telegraph running a whole page on the "ideological leader" Monbiot and his French aristocratic ancestry. There were many of his co-activists on that direct action who felt the agenda being pilfered even at that stage.

Four years later there's an undeniable hypocrisy in Monbiot's preparedness to describe the Guerilla Gardening action on Mayday as a futile gesture when, at the very least, it was evidently a far more full frontal and significant action than planting up a wooded Surrey copse miles from anywhere and already full of wildlife.

If Monbiot was alone with his extravagant criticism, we wouldn't waste our column inches talking about his. But his criticisms sat complicity alongside a raft of hysterical exaggerations and dire warnings which appeared on BBC and ITV news that evening and in most national newspapers the next day.

Stoked further by the Labour Party's desire to associate Ken Livingstone with those who sprayed the cenotaph, coverage of the event became a laughable circus of hyperbole; an exaggerated monstrosity of self-inflated condemnation portraying all anti-capitalists as mindless thugs who would spit on the grave of the war dead.

In the latent belief that there is no smoke without fire, people believed it. The media steer babbled on relentlessly until people were whistling its tune without thinking twice about the source of the subliminal melody. Even those with previous direct action associations began parroting the position that RTS had lost the plot.

AND SO, SQUALL would like to present a few unreported facts to remind ourselves that staying on our toes is a permanent requirement.....

FACT: Reclaim the Streets publicised a guerilla gardening action in Parliament Square. Their

publicity stated that it was not a protest but a constructive action to highlight the necessity to reclaim public space. The horticultural nature of the event was consciously designed to attract those genuinely into 'greening the streets' rather than just getting pissed and exercising their lairiness.

FACT: The event in Parliament Square lasted for seven hours and there was no violence whatsoever, even when towards the conclusion of the day police tried to hold everyone in the Square against their will. The samba band played, seeds were planted, the road was turfed, banners were unfurled, a maypole was erected and activists filed reports and thoughts onto Indymedia UK's new roadside-laptop website. The day passed off as a success. Some activists even hung around with bin bags and cleaned up the Square afterwards. How many people heard about this. Six weeks later Parliament Square was covered in plants as the Mayday sown seeds sprung into action.

FACT : A van full of compost, straw bails and seeds bound for Parliament Square was trailed from west London, intercepted by police and impounded for being unroadworthy. Two days later police allowed the driver to drive it away. It was evidently roadworthy. Five weeks later when the van was put in for a service, the garage mechanics found that every nut on the two back wheels was about to fall off. The garage informed the owner that he was fortunate to be alive.

FACT : For three weeks up to Mayday, British mainstream media incessantly publicised the event as a riot. "British army on standby" roared the Evening Standard. More people in the UK learned about the event through the mainstream media than they did through RTS leaflets. If certain people arrived in London looking for a riot, it wasn't an RTS flyer which attracted them.

FACT : The media and those they managed to attract got their riot. Not much of one as riots go but just enough of a ruckus to weave the story around. A plethora of groups ranging from the Socialist Worker Party to the Rover workers to Turkish communists to pissed punks to unaligned anti-capitalists and bemused tourists were all corralled in Trafalgar Square and refused exit by truncheoned police lines.

FACT : For the first time in four years of anti-capitalist demonstrations, a McDonald's Burger bar

right in the middle of the demonstration was left undefended by policemen. Nearby riot police waited for twenty minutes before going in to disperse demonstrators who had by this time smashed the place up. A pre-event action outside McDonald's on the Strand earlier that morning was swarming with police and intelligence officers. Why did they leave the Whitehall McDonald's undefended?.

Let those who got caught up in the scraps with police, those who sprayed the cenotaph, those who threw tarmac lumps in Kennington Park later that evening; let them defend their own actions.

Some property-damagers like the ex-British army soldier who daubed fake blood on Winston Churchill's statue had very good reasons for doing what they did and deserve applause for their courage of conviction. Both for their action and their willingness to be emphatic about the political reasons for their action when a "sorry m'lud" might have reduced the sentence. Some were just the pissed lunch outs you'll always find somewhere. A tiny minority amid the thousands.

The barrage of critics laying blame for the Mayday skirmishes and the subsequently overblown media backlash at the feet of Reclaim the Streets are well wide of the mark. In their critical haste they are ignoring the creative work that went into facilitating a remarkably successful event in Parliament Square. An event that was imaginative, politically symbolic, well executed, well attended, forceful yet non-violent. Very few people seem to realise that this event even took place. And yet this was the RTS event, as advertised by RTS, in Parliament Square.

A malevolent media so keen for dramatic copy and so capitalistically complicit, continues to foster and ferment the outrage, relishing and inflaming the very riots they pretend to abhor.

The more insidious part of this agenda is the cold political calculation. To split the spikies from the fluffies, the NGO's from the direct action groups, middle England from street folk, one section of society from another so that disunited, we affect nothing. The straggled survivors from a thousand massacred social causes are uniting to provide a significant challenge to the manicured PR of unfettered capitalism; a threat unparalleled in recent years. Beware the wedge now being driven strategically into the joins.

"If you're not careful the media will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing"
Malcolm X

LEGAL HIGH BOOSTS EXODUS SPIRIT

Exodus meeting with police and landowner results in first legal outdoor rave

A new era of legalised underground raves could be inaugurated in Bedfordshire this summer after an auspicious meeting between the Exodus Collective, Beds Police and landowner Lord Howland.

The new Bedfordshire Chief Constable, Cliff Dickson, met with Lord Howland and Exodus members on June 9 to discuss an Exodus rave planned for July 29. The rave is to take place on a stretch of Lord Howland's land near Junction 13 of the M1.

As reported previously in SQUALL (see 'New Deal Down on the Farm' Issue 3 and 'Praise from the Lord' Issue 4), Lord Howland has been involved in several spirited conversations with Exodus members over the last year and has also paid a visit to the Free the Spirit Festival held on Exodus's newly secured

farmstead last summer. These negotiations have resulted in the selection of a rave-suitable piece of the 135,000 acre Bedfordshire estate managed by Howland on behalf of his father the Marquess of Tavistock.

The Collective's first fully licenced outdoor rave will now take place on July 29. The Collective plan to start the event at 8pm and run through to 10am the following morning.

"By the end of the summer we are hoping to be fully licensed but on our terms. There must be no compromise on the spirit," said Exodus collective spokesperson, Glenn Jenkins.

Beds Police have agreed to confine their duties to traffic management on the night and have also agreed to waver their usual insistence on payment for their services. Beds Police spokesperson Des

Lawless told SQUALL that Exodus had "shown they were capable of policing themselves" and that "police would only come on site if there was a major incident".

The cost of paying police to attend live events has been a persistent financial obstacle to the organisation of community events around the country and Exodus's insistence that the dances remain profit free looks set to establish a new precedent. Beds Police have also promised that none of the police officers involved in previous operations against the Exodus Collective, many of which are the subject of legal proceedings for malicious prosecution, will be involved in the process.

"It's a victory for common sense, reasonableness and social inclusion," commented Exodus spokesperson Glenn Jenkins after the meeting.

MI6 MAN OILS WHEELS OF INDUSTRY

MI6 top knob joins oil corporation

The links between British Intelligence services and large corporations were further strengthened at the beginning of May with the appointment of a former senior officer of MI6 as a vice-president for the oil giant BP Amoco.

John Gerson retired as director of security and public affairs at MI6 at the end of last year and, with the approval of cabinet secretary

Sir Richard Wilson, has now been appointed as vice-president responsible for government and public affairs at BP Amoco. The latest appointment, conspicuously absent from BP Amoco's press releases, increases concern over the revolving door between high level ex-army and ex-intelligence personnel and well paid appointments with arms and oil corporations.

SQUOTES

"The Saudi Arabian government spares no effort to keep its appalling human rights record a secret, and other governments have shown themselves more than willing to help maintain the silence. Secrecy and fear permeate every aspect of society in Saudi Arabia. There are no political parties, elections, trade unions or human rights organisations. Torture is endemic."

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ON ONE OF THE UK'S MOST FAVOURED TRADING NATIONS. REPORT ON TORTURE. JUNE 2000.

POLICE PAY OUT TO THE McLIBEL TWO

The Metropolitan Police have paid a £10,000 out of court settlement to the McLibel Two after being prosecuted for disclosing supposedly confidential police information to investigators working for the McDonald's Corporation.

Helen Steel and Dave Morris, sued both the Met Police commissioner and Detective Sergeant David Valentine after Sid Nicholson - McDonald's Head of Security and a former Met Chief Superintendent - revealed in court that agents working for McDonald's had easily been able to view confidential police files on Morris and Steel. Nicholson stated from the witness box that all McDonald's security department were ex-policemen and that if they ever wanted to know information about activists they go to their contacts within the police force and simply ask for it. The McLibel Two subsequently sued the Met commissioner and DS Valentine for misfeasance in public office, breach of confidence and breach of their right to privacy.

The case was to have been heard in June but the Metropolitan Police pulled out of the process and agreed to pay £10,000 to the McLibel Two plus all their legal costs. They also agreed to "bring this settlement to the attention of the three area commanders of the

Metropolitan Police Force and ask them to remind their officers of their responsibility not to disclose information on the Police National Computer to a third Party".

Under a consent order finalised in early July, DS Valentine also stated that he "regretted any distress of the claimants caused by the disclosure of their details" to a private investigator hired by McDonald's to infiltrate the activist group, London Greenpeace.

In a joint statement, Dave Morris and Helen Steel said: "At the 11th hour the police pulled out of facing a case which would've demonstrated illegal police practices. In recent years there have been a number of publicised incidents of the police passing information about campaigners to private companies. It's clear that their claim to be impartial defenders of the public is a hollow one. This collusion reveals the political role of the police in ensuring the wheels of big business keep turning. This case has forced the Met to warn all London police officers against such practices."

SATURATED ROAD-STOPPERS UNDEFLATED BY SHOW-STOPPER

Ireland survives bouncy castle disaster to stage first RTS action

Ireland's very first Reclaim the Streets demonstration took place in Dublin at the end of May despite a last minute hitch with the bouncy castle. Traffic was brought to a standstill as hundreds of activists streamed onto the bottom of O'Connell Bridge holding the bridge for an hour before being shoved off by the Garda (Irish police). Despite driving rain, activists then marched through the city blocking traffic for another hour before the persistent torrential rain brought matters to a close.

The action almost went wrong from the start when two different locations for the meeting point were circulated in a mix up reminiscent of the Easter rising of 1916. Then as activists gathered on O Connell Street, news arrived that the bouncy castle which had been hired for the day wasn't



going to show up. The factory which makes them had burned down the night before with the loss of 80 bouncy castles.

Finally, however, an old banger car equipped with a sound system arrived to bring heart to the drenched activists and the action got under way. Irish RTS now intend to meet on the last Tuesday of every month in the Cobblestone pub, North King St., Smithfield.

An art activist from Bristol has been causing a right ol' stir with his brazen approach to conscious graffiti. Recent hits on the checklist include Regents Park Zoo and the Tate Gallery. **Si Mitchell** holds the ladder and manages to grab some chats with the elusive but awsomey prolific Banksy.

METAPHYSICAL GRAFFITI

“**T**he only problem was the penguins. I didn't realise it, but they're kinda vicious really.”

It's the middle of a starry Sunday night, and Britain's most maverick painter and decorator, Banksy, is up a ladder in downtown Bristol. A ten foot monkey has leapt from the spray can in his hand and has started to trash a particularly insidious looking CCTV camera.

Whilst I'm standing there at the base of the ladder he's recalling his last bit of natural history graffiti work, in Regent Park Penguin enclosure just a few days earlier.

“It's deathly quiet in the zoo at 3am. Then the penguins all started jumping in the water. I'm going: ‘Shh... for fucks sake.’ And they're splashing about, making a right racket. I'm writing things, that I assume a penguin would write if it was writing graffiti, right close to the floor. About a dozen of them all got out of the water and start edging towards me in a little gang making this ‘aaaaarr’, Mars Attacks sort of noise.”

You won't have read about Banksy's antics in the BBC's Wildlife magazine. Of how a flock of renegade Emperor Penguins managed to daub ‘Laugh now, but one day we'll be in charge’ and ‘I'm bored with fish’ on the walls of their Regents Park enclosure.

The zoo caper was what Banksy would describe as a “well executed” piece of graffiti. Like Fume's thirty foot Westway tag, or his own stencilling of a London Underground style ‘Mind the Crap’ on every step leading up to the Tate gallery on the night before last year's Turner Prize.

Banksy came to his art form pretty late. He left his native Bristol in 1993, to hang out with Nottingham's DIY free party posse, after a baptism by repetitive beats at the now legendary Castlemorton Common free festival. He got into drawing when asked to do a flyer, and from there into graffiti.

“Spray paint's actually quite hard to use, and I found myself painting embarrassingly bad pictures, illegally on a wall, at 21 years old. That's not acceptable.”

He pauses while a police car idles at some lights not fifteen feet from where we're painting.

“Fifteen years ago there weren't 24 hour supermarkets and boozers open round the clock. You could paint for 40 minutes on a main road without a car going past. Now you're lucky to get fifty seconds.”

To overcome both his own incompetence and the need to work fast, Banksy began using stencils. Five years on, there aren't many grey walls in Bristol that don't attract the odd passing smile with an inimitable Banksy stencil.



Apart from getting grief from the Bristol stalwarts he left behind when he recently moved to London (his reply to them was to tag a monkey riding a bomb towards Big Ben all over the city on his return), Banksy found the capital offered its own pitfalls.

"I don't have a motor and the nightbus to Brixton is not the speediest of getaways. Also, I got lost after doing the Tate and ended up in front of Buckingham Palace. 4am with twelve cans of paint and a bunch of stencils in the most heavily policed part of Britain - I was lucky to get out of that one."

Back in Bristol, the monkey has developed an evil glint to his eye. "It's kinda my logo at the minute. I love animals, they don't have any malice. But you can make a monkey fucking malicious... if you want." He tags tonight's picture and we pack up and go.

"It's amazing the way people take different meanings out of things. I did this piece in Soho, with a masked man throwing a bunch of flowers over a giant barcode. I put 'Pest Control' on it, meaning 'the pests control the city', as opposed to the pests being controlled. This mate of mine rings me up and says: 'Are you homophobic?' I'm like, no not at all. But coz it was in Soho, and had a geezer throwing flowers, that's what they thought. Its fantastic

in a lot of ways. You don't want to explain yourself too well. I guess, if I could explain it in words, I wouldn't need to do the picture. Its being fluffy in a militant way - something about going round in a balaclava and splashing colour onto buildings, its all tied in there."

When asked about the people who inspires him, Banksy cites the women who trashed the Hawk Jet bound for East Timor, before naming any artists.

"I got politicised during the poll tax, the Criminal Justice Act and the Hartcliffe Riots - that was Bristol's Rodney King [sparked by the death of two local lads whose motorcycle was chased into a wall by the police]. I can also remember my old man taking me down to see the Lloyds bank - what was left of it - after the 1980 St Pauls riots. It's mad to see how the whole thing of having to do what you're told can be turned on its head, and how few people it takes to grab it back."

By now, we've stopped walking and are standing on a corner, outside Bristol's Central Police Station. "Now the police," says Banksy whipping a stencil out of his bag. "They are the bane of my profession. I have to think about the old bill all the time." He gaffer tapes the cardboard to the station wall, and proceeds to spray on a stencil of two running officers.



"So much about my images is governed by the police: where I put them, how quickly I can slap them up. But maybe it gives them an edge they wouldn't otherwise have." He finishes the stencil and draws in a chunky little stick man hot footing it from the cops. "You know, sitting in a studio in Cornwall where the light is beautiful. What good does that do you?" The plan was to paint the same stencil flipped round twenty yards down the wall, with a bunch of toolled up stick men chasing the cops back, but two policemen choose that moment to bundle out of the main doors. Banksy white's the eyes of the stick man and we leg it

"I've never actually been nicked for graffiti," Banksy admits half an hour later, over a beer in a St Pauls blues bar. "But we've had some scrapes. We were painting 'Late Again' in eight foot letters on this passenger train and they came over the tracks in a transit. They were making a right racket, it must've ripped the bottom out of the van. But there was these high steel railings that ran as far as you could see, we had this one loose strut, that you could move and then move back. So by the time they got round the train, we were on the other side

and all they could see was an unbroken fence."

'Late Again' was gone by daybreak. As Banksy points out, the more politically uncomfortable the message, the quicker it disappears.

"We did this painting on the waterfront, and this geezer turned up who actually owned the wall. I told him we worked for a mural company, gave him a blag number, and told him to go and ring my boss. He fucks off and we stick the lyrics on it, tag it and wheelspin off round the corner. It was a TV with: 'All this noise, but you aint saying nothing.' One of the speech bubbles said: 'HTV makes me want to smoke crack.'

The piece is still there, but someone has carefully edited that bit out.

A week later we meet at his studio. He's cutting out stencils to the strains of a Radio 4 phone in.

"Occasionally you get images that speak to you, from people who don't have a voice. That's what I want to do. It's not about making money," he says in reference to flogging every picture exhibit on the opening night of recent show in Bristol.

"But its a means to an end for me, not a hobby. If you go into it for any other reason than wanting to get up and put a bit of power back, then you're fucked up and you won't do well."

"I just want to make one fucking great image that goes out real cheap to every mothafucker," he says. But there's more to it than that. Unlike many of his contemporaries, the message imbedded in Banksy's paintings isn't 'look at me', but 'look around you'. They are a wake up call to the unwittingly oppressed. "To make a piece of art that actually provoked something serious to happen? I couldn't even dream of that... but yeah...I guess that's the aim."

TWO FREE FOR NOW

Cambridge Two freed on bail

The two charity workers jailed for supposedly allowing drug dealing in the homeless drop-in centre where they worked were freed from prison on bail pending appeal on July 12.

Ruth Wyner and John Brock were given five and four year prison sentences respectively when, as director and manager of the Wintercomfort drop-in Centre in Cambridge, they were held responsible for heroin dealing amongst homeless people on the premises. The drop-in centre operated an open door policy with cheap food for the homeless and offered help to anyone who needed it.

It took a police surveillance operation lasting several months to show that heroin dealing was going on in the premises. The prosecution argued that Wyner and Brock should have known about the dealing and should have informed police.

The police operation involved 300 hours of footage shot from a secret camera across the road and two undercover officers posing as homeless persons Ed and Swampy, who claimed they had been offered heroin on eight of the twelve occasions they had visited the shelter.

The original trial judge asserted that the Wyner and Brock had operated the centre as a "haven for drug dealers". The prison sentences he gave the pair were longer than that given to most of the heroin dealers caught during the police surveillance operation.

The appeal court judge Lord Justice Rose sitting with Mr Justice Holman and Mr Justice Moses, granted leave to appeal

on the grounds that the original trial judge (Judge Jonathan Haworth) had wrongly prevented the jury from considering a key part of the pair's defence. Namely that

heroin use is quite prevalent amongst homeless people and that Brock and Wyner's role as charity workers would be severely compromised if they went to the police everytime they knew a homeless person was breaking the Misuse of Drugs Act.

John and Ruth served 207 days of their sentence before finally being freed on bail pending an appeal against the sentences to be heard in the autumn. John Brock suffered a nervous breakdown whilst in prison and is still being treated for depression. Both he and Ruth Wyner had their 50th birthday's whilst in prison.

After being freed on bail John Brock was cautiously relieved outside the High Court. Holding his wife and two sons he said: "I am very glad to be back with my family. The opportunity to be with them might be brief and so at the moment it's cautious celebration." He described the campaign to free them as a "lifeline" during his trauma filled time in Highpoint prison. His wife Louise, who has decorated their Cambridgeshire home with yellow ribbons told the assembled press: "I just want to take him home."

Ruth Wyner said: "I am



Plc: Richie Andrew

looking forward to spending some precious time with my children and some private time with my husband. Now I just want to go home and have a decent cup of coffee."

The incredulous miscarriage of justice meted out against the Wyner and Brock may have been driven by an insidious agenda. Ruth Wyner in particular had been a prominent lobbyist on behalf of building a new permanent homelessness centre in Cambridge. She was instrumental in winning planning permission and a £400,000 lottery grant to build the shelter for 25 homeless people at Elizabeth Way opposite Midsummer Common in Cambridge. The plan was vigorously opposed by both local police and the well healed Cambridge residents in the area.

See SQUALL's Frontline
Communique for words written by
Ruth Wyner from her cell in
Highpoint Prison just prior to
being freed on bail.

The campaign to clear their names
is far from over with the appeal in
autumn being the next step. Visit
www.cambridgetwo.com to stay
updated on the campaign.

FRONTLINE COMMUNIQUE

The annual meeting of the highly influential and secretive Bilderberg Group, is a

collection of the high priests of globalisation.

Every delegate, including a handful of carefully selected journalists, is sworn to secrecy. At the beginning of June, Bilderberg watcher, Tony Gosling, travelled to the site of this year's conference at the Chateau Du Lac Hotel just outside Brussels.....

Blowing the lid on the BILDERBERGERS

Euro-Green party researcher Grattan Healy and I tuck into a rare five-star dinner in the bar of the Chateau du Lac hotel, just outside Brussels. For once, our minds are not on the food, they're fixed on figuring out whether or not the secretive Bilderberg Group will have sealed off this hotel for their notorious annual meeting tomorrow.

Bilderberg takes its name from a hotel in Holland where the group's first secret transatlantic conference took place back in 1954. Original chairman and founder of the exclusive club, ex-SS Nazi Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands owned the place. Bilderberg's steering group boasts the wealthiest bankers and industrialists in the western world, no less.

Grattan Healy's research has shown how elite clubs like Bilderberg and the Trilateral Commission are managing to install more of their members as European Commissioners, at the heart of Europe. More recently links have been exposed with powerful European policymakers ERT, European Round Table of industrialists. The current Bilderberg chairman, Viscount Etienne Davignon, founded it.

Grattan's been getting embarrassing questions tabled by greens at the European Parliament. As for me, I'm curious to see these Bilderbergers in the flesh for the first time.

Mike Peters, Marxist Sociology lecturer from Leeds, who has written one of the most comprehensive studies to date on the Bilderbergers, flew into Brussels late that evening Wednesday May 31.

Arriving at the Chateau the next morning we notice rear entrances have been padlocked and chained. Around the front, the mock-Florentine lobby has a rude addition, a white plastic entrance tunnel and drive-in awning has sprung up overnight. Is this to protect chauffeur-driven guests from the rain on this cloudless day...? Or from prying eyes.

About four o'clock, the limos begin arriving. The shiny black Mercedes with their characteristic 'B' clearly displayed in the front windscreen. We can just see into the awning and film most of the participants as they emerge from the backs of the limos. Doormen attempt to hold makeshift curtains up to conceal the more sensitive guests. We manage to film most of them between the gaps.

We have a chat with a photographer and reporter for The Spotlight, a right-wing American magazine and the only people in the world able to root out Bilderberg venues ahead of the event. We had been told Spotlight were neo-nazis but what a sincere, concerned pair they seem. Chilling to think that without the

bloodhound work of Spotlight writer Jim Tucker, no-one but the participants would know this meeting was taking place.

"But we send out a press release," the Bilderberg office bleat if you bother to complain. What they don't tell you is that you have to request it from the hotel (how is anyone supposed to know where to call?) and they only release it as everybody's leaving. Too late for the press.

Thursday June 1 is a bank holiday in Belgium. Families are out in the sun, taking a stroll round the lovely Genval lake, almost oblivious to the capitalist heavyweights emerging from limos a matter of feet away inside the awning. The regulars are arriving, Conrad Black, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Kenneth Clarke, David Rockefeller, James Wolfenson, president of the World Bank.

The new Chairman, Viscount Etienne Davignon, comes out to get what - we joke - looks like a bag of drugs from his car. He owns most of the public utilities and one of the biggest banks in Belgium.

"Will you be holding a press conference Mr Davignon?" Grattan shouts. "I don't think so," Davignon replies. "Why not?"

"We don't have enough interesting things to say."

And who's that? It's Jean-Claude Trichet. The next boss of

the European Central Bank. He obviously won't have anything interesting to say either...

What about this one? That's Daniel Vasella, Chief Executive Officer of Novartis alongside William McDonough, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. That one's the boss of the Washington Post and hey, there goes George Soros! Look, it's one of the new European Commissioners, Pascal Lami! There's no doubt this is an assemblage of the elite.

The passing Belgian public are spellbound by the line of polished black Mercs. "What's going on?," they keep asking in French, as we prepare for the next arrival.

The untouchable elite continue swinging out of limos next to a busy public road and footpath. Clearly an uptight securityman's nightmare. Men with bulging sweaters or badly-fitting jackets wearing dark glasses walk back and forth.

Ah, that'll be the plain clothes Belgian secret service with their guns. I ask one if he knows what's going on at the hotel, "I dunno," he smiles, baring rat-like teeth. He's not a good actor, glad I can't see his eyes. A big CIA officer turns up and orders the Belgians around, they know their place.

This year's Bilderberg had to be hastily rearranged after the Austrian anti-EU Freedom Party was elected, one of the reason's that we and the public are so close by to the entrance point. We might never get this opportunity again. If they had met as planned in Austria there would probably have been official criticism and heaps of publicity. For a cabal, all publicity is bad publicity. They have created a vacuum. We decided to get on the telephone.

On Saturday morning Belgian daily De Morgen delivered the goods with a lead front page story by the ex-editor all about the no-longer-quite-so-secret Bilderberg conference. Critical and amusing coverage on national Belgian TV

news and in Sunday papers followed into the week.

When the Belgian papers phoned the mayor of the local Genvral principality he said they must be joking. If Queen Beatrix and Henry Kissinger were there he'd know about it he. Bilderberg, it seems, is above politics. Politicians, newspaper editors, European commissioners and civil servants who agree to enter Bilderberg swear complete secrecy. Not just about the content of the meeting but about the very existence of Bilderberg. Just as the Bilderbergers were leaving on the Saturday, two secret service agents asked the Spotlight photographer to show a Belgian press pass then threatened to beat him up. They chased him into a nearby taverna where he was rescued by boss and waiters only to be chased again at the local station. He made a narrow escape by running across the tracks to jump on a train going the wrong way. Surreal.

Was someone about to leave the hotel they didn't want photographed? Clinton was in Aachen that day, just down the road.

Bilderberg stretches our credulity. According to the hotel, this year's meeting was a croquet tournament with some well-known spectators. Another cover story was that the French football team were staying. Even the security name tags said Brussels 2000, just like the football.

These power-brokers lie too easily. The more facts that emerge about Bilderberg's key role in lobbying for a Corporate European superstate and the more lies they disseminate to try to cover themselves the more healthy suspicion they arouse.

Why, for example, might Tony Blair have said in answer to a parliamentary question by Christopher Gill MP in March 1998 that no members of his cabinet had attended Bilderberg meetings, when he himself clearly was on the official Athens conference list in 1993 and



Ken Clarke and Henry Kissinger.
Pics: Tony Gosling



Peter Mandelson attended last years meeting in Portugal.

So who's in charge? The bankers or the politicians? What about the proverb which says the borrower is servant to the lender? And are the governments of the world now just PR and tax managers for the banks?

There simply has to be a thorough international examination of this private little bankers club which has its foot wedged in so many political doors. It's time to call this elite cabal to account.

*For more info check
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