

that Georgetown can sell its hats and sweatshirts at a higher profit. These motivations may be reformist and bourgeois. They are certainly not as tough-sounding as 'class interest', for example. But I doubt if such distinctions matter very much to the 16-year-old girl, chained to her sewing machine, stitching hats for a few dollars a day.

**Kristian Williams is the author of *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America*, Soft Skull Press, 2003**

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**Resources:**

» US-based information, including how to get involved:

[www.sweatshopwatch.org](http://www.sweatshopwatch.org)

» Detailed info on starting and maintaining a campaign:

[www.maquilasolidarity.org](http://www.maquilasolidarity.org)

» *Sweatshop Warriors*, by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie, South End Press, 2001

**Traffic moves sluggishly** through the grey London haze. Suddenly people dart into the road with scaffolding poles. They quickly erect a tripod and someone climbs to the top, balancing gracefully 20 feet above the tarmac. The road is now blocked to traffic but open to pedestrians. Louis Armstrong's "What a Wonderful World" drifts from a sound system as thousands of people pour out of the nearby underground station and fill the street. People shinny up lampposts and hang huge banners, some supporting the striking public transport workers, others saying "Breathe", or "Street Now Open". A band plays from the roof of a bus stop, people dance, a choir sings, and a tonne of sand is dumped onto the tarmac, turning it into an instant beach for children. Welcome to a Reclaim the Streets party.

Reclaim the Streets (RTS) emerged in London from the campaign against the construction of the M11 link road, the environmental direct action movements of the early 1990s, and the unusual network of ravers, travellers, and protesters brought together by the Criminal Justice Act of 1994. By using creative tactics which fused carnival and rebellion they reintroduced notions of pleasure and play into radical politics. RTS also merged social and ecological principles into a wider cultural critique; their agit-prop questioned: "Won't the streets be better without cars? Not if all that replaces them are aisles of pedestrianized consumption or shopping 'villages' safely protected from the elements.... The struggle for car-free space must not be separated from the struggle against global capitalism."

The creative audacity of RTS proved to be contagious and spread across the emerging activist networks. In the late 1990s, street parties began to pop up across the global North, and a new generation of activists was inspired to rethink political action. In July 1996, RTS ambitiously reclaimed a motorway, the M41. While 10,000 people partied, huge carnival figures were wheeled through the crowd. Hidden underneath and drowned out by the sound system, people were tearing into the tarmac with jack hammers and planting saplings. This story tells how RTS pulled it off ...

# Reclaim the Streets: an arrow of hope

by Charlie Fourier

I have a pain in my stomach. As the fog of sleep gives way to daylight, dawn and the strangeness of someone else's house are the first things of which I'm aware. I don't want to remember why. But my memory, usually unflinchingly bad, lets me down again. It's strange, this morning has been the object of so much nervous pondering over the last six months. Will it be raining? How will the police intervene? Will I panic? Will we panic? And now, as future and present collide, it's as if there never was a past, there had always only been this day.

I'll explain. There's a group organizing what we hope will be a massive illegal street party. We want to fire an arrow of hope and life into the heart of our dying city. We're going to take back the M41, reclaim it, steal it back from the machine. But occupying a motorway is no easy business. You can't just walk up saying, "Excuse me, could

you go away, we're going to have a street party here." We've been planning this for about five months. Everything has been looked at in detail. Every possibility scrutinized and coordinated. Even the likelihood (certainty?) that we'll miss something. Backups for mistakes, contingencies for backups. It's our own Frankenstein's monster. Our own Catch 22. Once we've realized it's essential to stop, to back out, it's become impossible to do so.

This is the basic plan. The crowd meet up at Liverpool Street station, the meeting place we've advertised in advance. Then when there's around two thousand people, they're directed onto the tube by people in the crowd. Then they're taken right across London to Shepherd's Bush where they're directed out of the station in groups of eight hundred, and onto the motorway. The basic plan is quite simple but it's the smaller details that really hold it together. The crowd block the northbound traffic, but for technical reasons they can't stop the southbound traffic. That's our job. At exactly the same time as the crowd arrives at Shepherd's Bush, we have to drive onto the south lane, block it (by crashing two cars together and

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dockers completely shut down the port for six days.

>> **December 1** >> United States Congress approves joining the WTO without having read the treaty. Prior to the vote, an offer of a \$10,000 donation to the charity of choice had been made to any congressperson who had read the entire thing and could answer ten simple questions about its contents. Not one member of congress accepted, until after the vote was

postponed, and then one Republican, a "free" trade supporter, stepped forward to the challenge. He answered all ten questions correctly and then held a press conference, stating that he had planned to vote in favour, but after reading the text of the agreement, he had changed his position.

>> **December 2** >> Hundreds of indigenous people from Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Bolivia march in Temuco,

Chile to protest against Chile joining in the North American Free Trade Agreement, decrying the ease with which multinational corporations would be able to take their land.

>> **December 3** >> Police arrest thousands of people heading for a demonstration in Bhopal, India, on the tenth anniversary of the chemical leak from the Union Carbide plant that caused 7,000 deaths. As one Bhopal

putting up tripods), and drive trucks carrying the sound systems, bouncy castles, etc. onto the road to meet the crowd. I'm in the group driving the trucks from their secret location to two points. One about two miles away, and then on signal, to another one about quarter of a mile from the motorway. A short wait, one more phone call, and we drive onto the road, block it and unload all the gear. That's the plan anyway.

I make Andy some tea. I'm staying at his address because it's one the police don't know. We guess they might bust the main organizers the night or morning before the event. It sounds paranoid, but it turns out to be sound thinking. I leave the house on my bike around 9.00 am. I don't exactly feel calm but I'm on automatic, I'm pre-programmed. It's a beautiful day. The bleached blue of sky cuts strange shapes against the jumbled horizon of a city full of question marks. I hope we can answer, I hope we can pull this off. After half an hour I arrive at the factory, our secret rendezvous. A group of Spaniards are squatting it and holding parties every now and again. Ian, a man with siesta in his blood, has sniffed them out and for the last few weeks we've been storing equipment and practicing the erection of our forty-foot tripod which is to be used for blocking the road. The Spaniards hung out, sitting cat-like in the sun, looking sexy and listening to weird mixes of Mozart and techno. I think they liked us, the way you might like a furry alien. We must have seemed strange. Coming in at all hours, dropping things off, being very secretive. Then we'd rush around the courtyard, putting up creaking tripods in minutes with

military precision. Well almost. Sometimes the contrast was ridiculous. Their endless dreamy siestas, us charging up and down shouting and sweating. One morning we caught the tail end of one of their parties. There were about 20 Spaniards lying around tired and happily stoned listening to very ambient, end of party music. We were there in the courtyard putting the upper section of our tripod on for the first time. Twenty bodies melting into the furniture haphazardly strewn around, us 12 maniacally constructing. Just as we lifted the last 20 foot section into place, the DJ started playing a dramatic remix of the Space Odyssey 2001 soundtrack. I realized that they were willing us on, hoping we'd succeed in our bizarre project.

It's quiet when I arrive. The sound crew are in the warehouse. They've been packing the trucks all night and their techno sculpture is now complete. My arrival is greeted with tired hostility which turns to laughter when they realize it's me. But it's the laughter of people bemused, worried even. The sound system people treat us with some suspicion. It's not surprising. Ask anyone from a rig what they do and their answer will be reasonably clear. Ask someone from RTS and the answer will be as clear as the Thames on a foggy night. Ours is the politics of the margins, the margins where words fear to tread. But a shaman needs an audience, a religious site, and they know that we'll try our best to provide it.

Soon the RTS road crew (yeah I know) arrive, and yet despite enjoying the feeling of comradeship, the feeling of purpose, this feels like the spinning point around which

months of fantasy become a terrifying reality. The two trucks are parked behind each other in the bigger of the two warehouses. The front truck contains one sound-system and three tons of sand (a beach for the kids). The other truck has a huge sound system and four 20 foot tripods, which together make the 40 foot tower. After some last-minute running around looking for that crucial remix, petrol for the generators, and so on, everybody is on board. Two drivers, two co-drivers, and the sound crews happily hidden in the back with their systems. It's one of life's rarer moments. Everything's organized, we've taken our responsibilities seriously, and everything is going to plan. I feel like I'm going to burst but there's also a sense of calmness that preparation allows you. Dean and I are in the front truck. Dean's driving, the others are waiting for us to move off. "Shall we...?" I venture. "Give us the keys then." "Oh yeah, the keys."

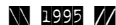
I am water. The plug has been pulled. I've forgotten the keys. I'VE FORGOTTEN THE FUCKING KEYS. The keys to the truck. The truck with the stuff. The truck in front of the other truck. The other truck with the rest of the stuff. The

truck with the tripods for the blockade, the truck with the sound systems, the beach, the everyfuckingthing. Two trucks. Eight sad tons of useless metal. One small piece of brass, a shudder of electricity, compression and life. But the key, the key whose ninety degree shift gives meaning, is four miles away. I slip from a rigidity of shock to a catatonic nothingness. It takes half an hour to drive to Muswell Hill. We've got to be parked up in three quarters of an hour. Without these two trucks there will be no blockade, no sound systems, and probably no street party. People are getting out, wondering what the hold-up is. I'm sitting in the cab shaking, unable to move or speak properly. This event confirms all my most firmly held doubts about myself. That: (1) I am, and always have been stupid. (2) I am not worthy of love, friendship, or trust. (3) That I will have a miserable life. Dean is staring at me from the driving seat. His eyes say it all. I know he's thinking that I'm totally stupid, utterly untrustworthy and deserving of a miserable life. People, having discovered what's going on, are pacing the courtyard like a troop of headless chickens. I pull back into my vacated self and maniacally start scraping every

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activist puts it, "Bhopal is not something unfortunate that is only happening to the people of a central Indian city. It is happening everywhere around the world. The routine poisoning of living systems that accompanies the storage, transport, production, consumption and waste treatment of hazardous chemicals are part of our industrial society. The silent and slow Bhopals that are happening in everyday life

often go unnoticed and are seldom resisted."



>> **January** >> Wildfire wins a victory as a result of one of the most successful actions of Earth First! at Warner Creek, Oregon, US. Activists maintain an 11 month blockade of logging roads, through harsh winter snowfall, and frequent visits by curious tourists! The camp, christened Cascadia Free State, features a

watchtower, a moat and drawbridge, a wide variety of barricades, and frequent trainings and planning meetings for establishing other "Free States". As part of the fallout of new "salvage logging" legislation, the forest service had plans to log over 1,200 acres after the second largest wildfire in the region. In addition to the blockades, activists hold a thorough educational campaign explaining the ecology of fire, and the natural

pore of my bag in the forlorn hope that.... A woman arrives in the courtyard in her car. It's an old Fiesta, which to us shines with the perverted curves of a sports car. Like zealots we explain our plight to this goddess of fortune. She hands us the keys and a ghost of sadness shadows her face as we leave in the car, that in a strange, human way she kind of loves. Turnpike Lane passes in a blur as we speed towards the Hill.

Somehow we get to the flat in 15 minutes. I charge up to the top floor. There are the keys. I run back to the car, clenching the key in fearful grip, a tiny sliver of brass thawing the ice that has entered my body. Dean's smile mirrors my relief, and we race back towards the factory, our fragile hopes of success alive again. We arrive at the factory ten minutes over the 30 minutes we had in hand. A phone call to Liverpool Street establishes that the crowd has started to gather. I ask them to give us an extra ten minutes to get in place. Now we have to drive the trucks across London, park up in a quiet industrial estate and wait for a phone call which tells us to move to a final pitch less than half a mile from the motorway.

We drive across London, every now and then spotting a group of people obviously heading for the meeting place at Liverpool Street station. I'm too vain not to feel a sense of pride, and too scared for it to make me feel anything but more nervous. We join the Westway, which rises majestically out of the chaos like a giant silver-backed reptile winding over the city. I feel young, like a child on a great adventure, the blue skies echoing our new found mood. London seems

**“We are basically about taking back public space from the enclosed private arena. At its simplest, it is an attack on cars as a principle agent of enclosure. 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.”**

– London Reclaim the Streets agitprop, 1996

to be waiting, almost conspiring with us, as if somehow it's a living participant in the day's events. We pull off the motorway and drive to our first pitch.

The industrial estate is virtually deserted. A jumble of silent, blank warehouses. Our cars, which are to crash and block the road, are parked at the back of the estate. With the cars are the four people responsible for the block: Louise, John, Anna, and Beth. You can tell they're nervous. You would be if you had to stage-crash a car on one of London's crowded motorways. A tailback of a thousand overheated motorists and you caused it. On purpose.

We've bought the two cars for 100 pounds each. Scrap on wheels and it shows. One has died on us. NO amount of

mouth-to-exhaust can bring it back. Blocking the road with one car is going to be difficult. Luckily we have a backup car. I call Des, the driver, who starts heading over. Now it's just a case of waiting and hoping. Waiting for the call to say "move", hoping that Des arrives before the call. So, of flesh and beating hearts we wait among the silent and formless warehouses. People are out of the trucks and lolling about in the sun.

The phone rings. "Pete, it's Des. I've run out of fucking petrol." Maybe it's right and proper that a group who claim to be against car culture should be jinxed when it comes to using them. Anyway, we're going to have to manage the road block with just one. These problems aside, I feel surprisingly confident. It feels like some kind of miracle to be in this nowhere place waiting to pounce. If we can get this far, anything is possible. Every now and then the mobile rings. Things are OK at Liverpool Street. The crowds have started moving off and are heading towards us on the tube. And we wait. I feel like we're on some strange island, isolated from a world we can only dream of. And then this guy wanders over, wearing a big coat and black clothes to match his long

black hair. He seems vaguely pissed or stoned or both. "So, what's happening?" "Errh... nothing much." I sound nervous as hell. "So, what's in the trucks?" It may have been a casual inquiry, but it's like someone has thrown a bucket of icy water over us. I'm staring at the others and trying to look relaxed at the same time. Lee tries to shake him off, "What's up, what you doing down here?" "Oh, my truck's broken down. I'm parked up round the corner. Is that a sound system in the back?" Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. This is getting stranger. I'm feeling panicky again. My next words sound hollow, "Yea we're doing a party in Hampshire tonight, should be good." He ignores my synthetic voice and carries on, "Oh right, did you hear about the Reclaim the Streets party?" The words hang in the air like branding irons. He mutters something indiscernable and wanders off, leaving us to our paranoia.

Then, as if to balance things, Des arrives. He'd managed to hitch to the petrol station and back to the car in under 20 minutes. Recent strangeness is soon forgotten as we explain the practicalities of the road-block to our new arrival. The crowd is on the way. We wait some more. The mobile rings

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regeneration that will occur if allowed. The blockade ends when a presidential decree withdraws the salvage sale and the forest is allowed to continue its cycle.

>> **January 1** >> The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) becomes the World Trade Organization (WTO).

>> **January 25** >> Protesting tuition hikes and education cuts, the Canadian Federation of Students

take action on the Pan-Canadian Day of Action, as 16,000 students take to the streets in Montreal, and at least 100,000 participate nationwide. As a result, tuition fees are frozen in the provinces of British Columbia and Québec.

>> **February 12** >> Over 100,000 people demonstrate in Mexico City demanding that the military withdraw from Chiapas, in response to the issuance of arrest

warrants for 11 Zapatistas, the "unmasking" of Subcomandante Marcos as a former philosophy professor, increased military aggression in Chiapas, and the government's breaking of the ceasefire with the EZLN. The aggression backfires, as not only do the Zapatistas fight off the Federal Army troops and retain control of most of the southern regions of the state, they turn the offensive to their advantage by organizing

again. It's John. "The first tube's gone past Marble Arch!" Now we have to move to the final pitch. It's only just down the road, but we want to be as close as possible when the final call comes, so we can time our arrival just right. The next parkup is next to a riding school squeezed in behind a block of flats. We pull up and park in a line next to some bushes. This time there's no lolling about, no jokes, just the weight of our nervous anticipation. If the plan goes well we shouldn't be here for more than five minutes. The mobiles are going mad. There's a call from Dee, her gentle nervous voice sounding strange amongst the aggressive chaos. She



©Gideon Mendel/ARTS archives

says there are police vans crawling all over the location, but that her group is in place. She's part of a group of ten hiding behind a wall next to the motorway. When our cars crash, we pull the trucks up next to the wall and they all jump over, get the tripods out and put them up. We thought the police might work out where we were going by looking at the map and the direction we were heading. Our hunch was that by the time they'd worked it out we'd be too close for it to make any difference. Still, their arrival is like salt water to our already flayed nerves.

In the distance we can hear police sirens above the low grumble of traffic. What is usually the slightly annoying sound of somebody else's problem, today strikes fear into our hearts. There are probably only two or three of them, but to us it sounds like thousands. Then Clive calls. Clive is the spotter at Shepherd's Bush, who will give us the final go ahead. He tells me that there's a thick line of police blocking the crowd in at Shepherd's Bush and they can't get through onto the motorway. His words crash through me like a vandal in a greenhouse. In the background I can hear the noises of the crowd. It almost sounds like the party's started. I tell the others, a desperate gloom envelops us, and our collective mood shifts with the speed of a retreating tide. I have spent months telling myself that even if we failed it will have been worth it. I could never have carried on if I'd thought everything hung on success. Now I see I've been conning myself. I feel sick. Everyone looks crushed. Jim calls. "Pete is that you?" "Yeah, fuck's sake what's going on." "We can't get through. We're going to have to have it at

Shepherd's Bush. You'll have to go round the back." Even through the electronic echo I can hear the tension in his voice. He knows as well as I do that Shepherd's Bush is a dire location. A strip of dog-shit covered lawn squeezed between two hideous shopping parades. It seems pretty unlikely that we could drive through the police cordons, and even if we could, would it be worth it? How could all those coppers get there so quickly? Why can't the crowd break through the cordon? The hopeless, pointless, questions of loss drown out my thoughts. A mood of desolation fills me like the first cold rains of winter. It's over. We fought the law and the law won.

Sitting there in that truck in the London sunshine with those people feels like the end of hope. We start looking at the A-Z trying to work out a back route to Shepherd's Bush. There's no enthusiasm, this is a job now. Jen calls. She was to call if things were going badly. This call signifies a last ditch attempt to rectify things. When Clive sees there's no way through he calls Jen. She's waiting at the nearest station. She runs down the tube and tells people coming from Liverpool Street that there's no way

through. They then get out and approach the motorway through some back streets. "There's a hundred or so people heading down through the back route." By this time a small group of us are gathered round the front truck, analyzing all the information as it arrives. Everyone looks at everyone else. Hope releases tiny vascular muscles and blood lights our pale faces. A straw is floating out there on the stormy waters.

This is the moment the plan comes alive. It's like the question of artificial intelligence. I viewed the plan a bit like that. It was so complicated (too complicated) and intricate that I felt it might develop a life of its own. For months we'd worked on it in meetings without end, a tangled mess which often threatened to pull us under. Now, on the day, the plan is boss. Dean takes the initiative. "Come on, let's fucking go for it." The change of mood is instantaneous. A recklessness born of desperation, grabbing at straws that can give us our dreams back. This is it. The beginning. It's like being interviewed for a job you don't want – you can take it easy. An action that can't succeed. I feel almost relaxed. As the convoy pulls off I'm hit by a

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a popular consultation of the people, or *consulta*.

>> **April 13** >> Huge solidarity demonstrations erupt in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, following the brutal eviction of 200 workers who had occupied their electronics plant and shut it down, demanding their back pay. The police attack, killing Víctor Choque, a 37-year-old construction worker, and wounding 60 other workers. The Metalworkers' Union and the Union Front, which

includes government employees, teachers, taxi drivers, and sanitation workers, organize a general strike.

>> **April 15** >> International protests take place to mark the 40th anniversary of the opening of the world's first McDonald's restaurant, and to celebrate ten years of coordinated international resistance to the corporation. There are actions in at least 20 countries including Aotearoa/New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, Poland,

Denmark, Australia, Czech Republic, Croatia, Netherlands, Germany, Finland, US, and the UK.

>> **April 19** >> Following a six week strike against privatization by Bolivian teachers, a general strike is called in solidarity with them, and against the neoliberal policies of the government. Roads are blocked throughout the country and one southern province declares independence from the government. The



wave of guilt. We may well be consigning thousands of pounds worth of other people's equipment to the scrap heap. Appallingly, I ignore these moral qualms – my sense of relief is too great.

It will take us a couple of minutes to reach the location. I swing between elation, "Thank fuck we're doing something," and profound doubt, "We're doing this because we can't face not doing it, we should be going to Shepherd's Bush." The cab is silent. Too much emotion, too much tension, words, forget it, they come from another dimension. I realize I haven't called Dee. With fingers of lead I fumble desperately with the mobile. "Dee, we're on the way." "Oh, OK. I think we're ready." She doesn't sound confident. We circle the final roundabout which leads onto the M41. There's a riot van waiting on the roundabout. My sense of fatalism sets like concrete. We drive past, followed by the two cars. We take the second exit and follow the gentle curve of the slip road onto the motorway, a black unflowing river, the motorway of dreams. The slip road is held aloft by giant concrete pillars. A thin concrete wall bounds each side; on the left behind the wall there's a skateboard park and our twelve hidden activists.

Behind us the cars are slowing down to block the traffic, they hit each other, stop, and the road is sealed. We pull up next to the skateboard park and jump out. The tripod team are scrambling over the wall to join us. Now things just become a frantic chaotic blur. As we heave the tripods out of the truck I can see coppers coming through the blocked traffic towards us. Three tripods are up within 45 seconds

and we're trying to join them together. It's like trying to communicate in a gale, we can't hear each other above the adrenaline. The others look at me for direction, but my map has blown off in the wind. Only Dee knows what's going on but she can't raise her voice above the din of maleness. People climb the tripods. Incredibly the road is blocked.

I look round and see the M41 stretching away from us like a desert. Utterly empty. No thousands of people, no hundreds, no-one. In the distance I can see the two trucks parked up on the hard shoulder. They're already surrounded by coppers and still no party goers have arrived. I don't think any of us know why, but we just start running towards the trucks. We arrive and find that Carl from Express Sounds has managed to dodge the police and get to our side of the wall. He looks dazed and wanders about aimlessly. He's probably just lost his sound system. Just over the wall the police are arresting people and rifling through the lorry cabs. On the one hand I recognize that the street party is probably over, deep down I'm bracing myself for the humiliation of failure. On the other hand we're all clutching at every straw, filled with a belief that even now it might still be possible. We realize that we've got to get onto the truck roofs. The police will want to move them, but the longer we can keep them there the more the chance of the mythical crowd appearing.

The police are concentrating on their conquest. Flushed with the joy of victory they fail to see us skulking just feet away on the other side of the wall. They're already arresting the drivers and searching the trucks. We see a space, a lucky

moment when their attention is distracted. We haul ourselves over the wall and launch ourselves at the trucks. As we begin climbing I'm struck by a trembling fear that some unseen hand will grab my leg. But the police are too slow and two of us find ourselves standing on the thin aluminum tops laughing with relief. The coppers have handcuffed the drivers and sound crews, more of them are arriving all the time. Three hundred and thirty yards to the south, a wall of police vans and cop infantry has formed what looks like an impenetrable barrier blocking access from the roundabout. Anyone who managed to get through the cordon outside the tube station would be faced by this.

And then we see it, our mythical crowd, shimmering mirage-like at the roundabout. They've managed to get through at Shepherd's Bush. Ian and I start jumping and screaming at the crowd, our hopes alive again. Then, like a giant beast stumbling, the police line falters, and somehow the smallest breach seems suddenly to threaten the stability of the whole. The faltering becomes panic, police vans drive madly all over the place, and then the crowd bursts through. At first a trickle, the odd person sprinting onto the

silent tarmac beyond the police line. Then, with sheer determination and weight, the dam bursts and 3,000 people charge onto the waiting road. At this point I look down and see a senior police officer walk over to the people under arrest and pinned to the wall. "De-arrest them." If he hadn't, we would have. I almost feel sorry for him. Within moments what was empty motorway, hot strips of tarmac, utterly dead, is living and moving, an instant joyous celebration. It is our moment; everyone and everything seems incredibly and wonderfully alive. Seconds later a sound-system fires up and our fragile dashed hopes become resurrected in the certainty of the dancing crowd.

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**Charlie Fourier is a pseudonym**

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**Resources:**

» **For photos and more accounts of the day:** [www.reclaimthestreets.net](http://www.reclaimthestreets.net)

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government imposes a 90-day state of siege, and over 1,000 trade union, student, peasant, and political leaders are arrested.

>> **April 24** >> The government's firing of 12,000 bus drivers and its closure of bus routes in Mexico City generates a demonstration of 50,000 people. The bus drivers, members of SUTAUR, the independent and militant Mexico City Bus Drivers' union, continue their

daily protests. Two days later, students seize several buses in support of the drivers and hold them for several days. The following year, after a dogged struggle which includes countless marches, constant clashes with the police, the year-long imprisonment of 12 union leaders, several 40-day hunger strikes, and an offer from a union leader to crucify himself on Good Friday, the union becomes a worker-owned cooperative, taking control of

two of the ten newly privatized lines, and struggling to increase their control and regain jobs for the thousands who remain unemployed.

>> **May 1** >> One and a half million demonstrate in Mexico City calling for an end to NAFTA, an increase in salaries, and declaring their support for the EZLN. The government declares a ceasefire, for the time being.

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