

Violent clashes in the City of London

Home Secretary threatens further arrests

Our correspondent
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Around 50 people were injured and 16 arrests were made in violent clashes between police and demonstrators in London on June 18. Between 6,000 and 10,000 protestors, under an umbrella movement of anarchist and environmental groups called J18, assembled in the City of London, the capital's financial district. The demonstration, dubbed the "Carnival against Capitalism", was timed to coincide with the G8 summit and had been heavily promoted by a dedicated web site. Protests also took place in 40 other countries.

Six men were charged with public order offences. Magistrates bailed four of the men and remanded two in custody. Further arrests from a follow-up operation based on viewing closed circuit TV footage have been threatened. Home Secretary Jack Straw told Parliament that eight police officers had been injured in the clashes and claimed that the violence was "plainly premeditated".

The police used the occasion to mount a massive operation encompassing the Metropolitan and City (of London) Police and the Transport Police. It was the largest in the City since the anarchist "Stop the City" protests of the mid-1980s. All police leave was cancelled.

Earlier, the media had warned of "shadowy extremists" and "anarchists" and noted that maps on the J18 site specified the location of banks and insurance houses, McDonalds, The Gap, Vodaphone, and Smithfield Meat Market. Memos were sent to City staff urging them to avoid Liverpool St. Station, not to carry copies of the *Financial Times* and to "dress down".

In the morning, around 300 cyclists disrupted traffic around the Bank of England in Threadneedle Street, carrying banners with slogans like "Money Kills". Two activists were removed from Tower Bridge after they tried to climb it. Campaigners daubed pink paint on the

door of the London Metal Exchange. Initially peaceful, the main march erupted into violence in the afternoon after police blocked its path and a police van reversed over a female protestor. She suffered concussion and a fractured leg. After demonstrators retaliated police mounted horse charges.

The protest continued in Trafalgar Square until Saturday morning, with sporadic confrontations over a period of six hours. Offices, hospitals and restaurants in the "Square Mile" were damaged in attacks with bricks and scaffolding poles. Banks were targeted and a McDonalds hamburger restaurant was gutted. The glass doors of the London International Financial Futures Exchange (Liffe) were smashed, as hundreds tried to gain entrance to the trading floor, and the escalators were damaged. Four thousand people were evacuated. Outside the building, a motorist was hauled out of his car and covered with bleach. There were other attacks on a number of luxury cars. Tube and mainline stations were closed.

The *Daily Telegraph* boasted of the hostile reaction of city gents to the demonstrators. Money brokers jeered out of their windows. "One pointed at his wristwatch and shouted 'See that? It's a Rolex.' Another tore-up five-pound notes and threw them at the protesters below, who retaliated by squirting him with a fire extinguisher. Dealers at another firm crowded round their office windows, taunting the mob by waving their gold American Express cards." One private banker is quoted as saying, "I loathe these people. But we must try to be cheerful. The way I see it, yesterday I was at Royal Ascot and today I was at a riot. It's all part of the fun of working in the City."



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