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King Mob : A Critcal Hidden History

David Wise

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“I met a prostitute – Angela W – from the fishing port of Grimsby on the mouth of the Humber in the North of England. I instantly fell in love with her in an all consuming way. The pain inside my body, so massively accumulated with the death of hopes for the social revolution…was wrenched away from me as she slowly…shambled towards me.”
So begins Dave Wise’s first hand account of King Mob, the late 60s London based political grouping formed after core members were excluded from the Situationist International. From a radical, working class perspective, Wise recounts their attempts to move “from the Situationist salon to the street”, whilst frankly outlining identifying tactical, strategic and theoretical holes in the groups’ day to day actions.
Plans to blow up waterfalls, getting arrested on demos dressed as pantomine horses (the back end got off in court, on the grounds he didn’t know what the front end was doing…), sharing oversized baked bean costumes with ultra-Maoists on Vietnam marches.
Getting high and hungrily devouring Coleridge, De Quincey, Rimbaud, Marx, De Sade, Breton, Joyce and Hegel. Urinating over the lectern whilst declaring the death of art at the 1968 English Surrealist convention, being (falsely) put in the frame for the 1969 Newcastle School of Art firebombing; perhaps most infamously dressing up as Santa Claus in Selfridges toy dept, Xmas ‘69, and watching the chaos of consumerism unfold before them as crying children had the King Mob freely-gifted toys wrenched from their arms by employees.
As the downturn of the early 1970’s approached, and with it the apparent end of any hope for imminent social revolution, some of King Mob drifted off into various strands of bourgeois counterculture, whilst others faced up to the harsher realities of the “capsized utopia”. Some didn’t make it through, as an at times unintentionally moving epilogue here recalls.

“A Critical Hidden History” is a living, breathing account of a brief moment in time, when the light got through the cracks in the wall, and a new world felt possible. As we career into the 21st century, the relevance of the playful, life affirming, non-hierarchical, anti-capitalists King Mob seems as great today as it ever did.

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