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'THIS IS HOW WE DO IT'

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From the beginning there was no well-thought-out master plan for shutting down the G8 summit at Gleneagles. In fact, some of us even dubbed the march we were about to embark on the 'Suicide March'. At three in the morning, a large group of militants dressed in black slipped into the darkness of the night as the first rain of many days dumped down on them. The air was thick with the eerie presence of a thousand determined individuals beginning to walk along the deathly still road. Besides the occasional attempt at a chant the group was quiet, perhaps reconsidering the slim probability of success. Five miles and a heavy police presence stretched before us and our only destination in sight: the M9 motorway. This motorway was one of the crucial roads that delegates and support staff to the G8 summit expected to travel down in a few hours.

Wednesday July 6 was determined to be the day of blockading the G8 by calls to action from Peoples' Global Action (PGA), the same loose network that had called for the day of action against the World Trade Organization in Seattle six years ago. The idea of blockading was ratified at the five-hundred person international anarchist assembly in the ancient halls of our convergence space at Edinburgh University on Sunday. The next day a street party called the Carnival for Full Enjoyment (as opposed to full employment) took to the streets of wealthy downtown Edinburgh in order to protest wage-slavery and the G8. Any doubts about the no-compromise nature of the militants, who had converged here in



**ROAD CLOSED
HERE
11/7/05
FOR 1 WEEK
1900 TO 0700**

southern Scotland, dissipated rapidly on Monday when police attempted to stop the Carnival only to be met by quick-moving breakaway marches and a frontline that refused to be intimidated. And this was only the beginning, a taste of what was to come.

We left Edinburgh for Stirling. Our destination was the Hori-Zone, the point of strategic coordination, encampment and support for the vast network of anarchists and other activists who had come to Scotland in order to halt the G8 summit meeting on its opening day in Gleneagles. The camp was organised by Dissent!, an international anti-authoritarian network of resistance against the G8. The small town of Stirling is practically equidistant from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Gleneagles, and historically has been the major cross-roads upon which all battles for control of Scotland had been fought. Gleneagles, a ridiculously luxurious golf course and hotel, became the heavily fortified home to the G8 meetings but it has very limited facilities. Thus, most of the delegates and support staff for the G8 were staying in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the two major cities in Scotland.

Since Stirling nestles between these three sites, the eco-village provided the perfect location for launching the rolling blockades against the G8 on Wednesday, especially along the crucial M9, the motorway that eventually reaches the front door of the Gleneagles Hotel itself. The Wallace monument stood silently against the gentle skyline on a hill above the eco-village as we prepared to blockade a total of thirty miles of highway. Built in 1869, this 220 foot monument is said to be where the legendary Scottish rebel William Wallace observed the English coming across Stirling Bridge in 1297 before descending into a fierce battle with them. One cannot help but notice the parallel between the ancient anti-colonial battles of Scotland and the battle against the G8 that was being waged in the rolling green hills of Scotland.

At the eco-village we assembled at the very last minute to determine how we were actually going to blockade the G8. As the deadline for the action came closer and closer it was decided that the initiative to carry out the blockades should be left to autonomous affinity groups and each departed to find their own route to the motorway and blockade it by whatever tactics they chose. A major factor in this decision was the unfortunate location of the eco-village. The campsite was surrounded by the River Forth and had only one exit, which could be easily sealed off by police. To avoid such an entrapment, affinity groups began leaving the site around twelve hours ahead of time to situate themselves in the forests or small towns along the motorways that fed Gleneagles from all sides, allowing them to spring into action as the delegates arrived in the morning. While groups were streaming out of the site, about two hundred people were meeting to determine whether or not to have a large mass march leaving the camp, and if so, how it would be organised. This is how the suicide march came about.

'Suicide' was not a word chosen hastily. How could such a group possibly

make it to the distant M9 without being stopped and contained by a ten thousand strong police force assigned to the protests? However, even if the march had failed, it would have provided a crucial cover for the clandestine groups to launch their siege on the various junctions of the motorways. The group decided against all odds that the risk was worth it, and the march would begin shortly. At 2.00am it finally felt like it was on.

The march leaving from the eco-village in the early morning was an international contingent with its members coming from the UK, Spain, Germany, Ireland, France, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States. Morale was high as the rain poured down steadily, but little did we know that this thousand-strong militant group would have to battle through five police lines to reach its destination. The determination of the anarchists was heavy, and as we swelled in numbers a small group with thick pieces of wood around seven feet long moved to the front with the purpose of clearing the way for the march to proceed. Another group, clad in shields made from trash can lids and with foam padding taped onto their clothes, bore an ironic banner declaring 'Peace and Love'.

The police force, mobilised from around the UK to protect the G8 summit, was completely incompetent. Poorly assembled police lines were sometimes composed of front-line officers who, instead of arriving in riot gear, came wearing fluorescent yellow jackets to face protesters. The police were often armed only with batons and tried their best not to use them. Perhaps this was a de-escalating tactic, considering that the police seemed to be primarily set on avoiding violent engagement with protesters and instead sought to simply contain them and apply their infuriating Section 60 orders that allowed them to stop, surround and search any suspects for weapons. Had this been any other G8 country, many of the plans implemented on the day of the blockades, especially the Suicide March, would not have accomplished their goals.

The quick-moving group proceeded uninterrupted for fifteen minutes until the Scottish police finally got their act together and moved a line of cops into the group's path. This happened at a roundabout surrounded on all sides by car dealerships, though at this point the group was not distracted by damaging corporate property. We had set our eyes on the prize: to disrupt the roads leading to the G8 summit. The determination was there, but there was no back-up plan. After a quick assessment of the situation, it was decided that the line of police was too deep to take on, and the group began moving back in the direction it came from.

Retreating in order to find another path to the M9 meant building barricades on the way out of the previous path. We found a big stack of pallets in a nearby construction site and piled them into the street. During the somewhat chaotic process of finding another road leading to the highway, the crowd stumbled upon a suburban mall area which included a branch of the Bank of Scotland, and franchises of Burger King, Pizza Hut and Enterprise Car Rental. Some members wanted to keep on moving and not be distracted by the corporate property, but



the sheer rage against the corporations could barely be contained and windows were smashed and walls were spray-painted with slogans.

When the bloc left the corporate oasis we found a sign to a road leading to the M9 and the march surged. A couple of shopping trolleys were taken from the shopping district and were filled with fist-sized rocks from the sides of the road; perfect ammunition for the class war. A German comrade with a bicycle was amongst the group and able to ride ahead as our scout and alert the rest of us of intersections and police movements. He came back and told us of a police line forming in our path. A few people moved into the field on the left to outwit the police. The rest decided that this was the moment when it was necessary to throw down.

The police line was weak and did not have any riot gear apart from their shields. Those with big sticks moved to the front lines and the militants behind picked up stones from the shopping trolley. We marched right up to the lines and began smashing through with stones and sticks. The police were not prepared at all for such determination and after thirty seconds they scurried away. When their retreat was obvious, I heard a thick German accent scream, 'DEESS ISS HOW VE DO IT!'

The road was wide open as we marched the long distances from one roundabout to the next, following the road signs to the M9. We came across four people wrapped in trash-bags, who peeked their heads out from the side of the road in



amazement at the march passing by. They were part of the hundreds that had left early to hide among the trees, completely drenched by the continual rainfall.

Our crew had a significant number of locals who were eager to represent their own culture of resistance. One middle-aged Scottish member of the group from Glasgow carried a *bodhran*, the traditional Celtic drum historically used in battles and parades. Another Scottish youth had a didgeridoo that was blown at crucial moments of battle to build up the energy. In the face of such a crowd, it looked as though the police had given up. We had made it to the onramp of the M9. This was it: victory. After trekking five miles in the rain and through police lines, we only had 70 feet to make to the highway. But these things are never so easy. Scores of police vans appeared from around the corner and unloaded hundreds of riot police. It seemed to be too much to take on and we moved back. This time the police seemed as determined as we were and brought another line of riot police to block our only exit.

There was one option left: to battle our way out. The re-stocked trolleys rolled to the front and stones began raining down onto the police, thumping against their shields to the steady battle beat of the *bodhran*. In one of the most creative uses of local resources, even the shrubbery was turned upon the police. This area of Scotland is known for a poisonous plant called Giant Hogweed that causes huge welts and blisters when touched. At one point the bloke from Glasgow grabbed one of these plants from the stalk and beat the police with it. After five minutes the police lines were pushed back fifty feet and a small path leading into a suburban residential area was revealed to one side. As we walked down the path into suburbia only 250 people remained. Most of the initial crowd had separated at various police lines to disappear into fields or return to camp. Though we were few, we had demonstrated our determination and open defiance.

A woman in a white bathrobe walked out of her house, baffled at the march going through her community at 4.00am. The police would later report that damage was done to people's homes, cars and satellite dishes. However, the only property damaged was corporate and police property and the police eventually had to retract their statement. In fact, the woman in the white bathrobe was friendly and she waved at us. We even asked her for directions towards the M9 and she showed us the way.

We had been thrown off our original route and now had to find a new way to the motorway. The police had mobilised a much larger force and were coming toward us from multiple intersections. As we rambled through the unfamiliar suburban streets police would appear from one side, retreat under the force of the bloc, and appear again from a new direction. The sun, which only sets for about four hours between midnight and 4am in Scotland during summertime, was now peeping up over the horizon. We were feeling wet, cornered and lost. Another resident of the area stopped while passing in his pickup and pointed us toward the highway. His directions weren't the most conventional: 'Go down that road

and climb down the valley, across the fields, through the trees and that's where the motorway is.'

We had come this far, there was no way we were going to turn back, even if it meant hiking through the fields.

Standing on the edge of the hill, next to a golf course, one could see the trucks travelling on the highway far away. We quickly referred to a topographical map, concerned that there might have been a big drop to the side of the highway that couldn't be climbed. Those of us remaining of the international anti-capitalist black bloc, tired from hours of breaching police lines and soaked to the bone, began a journey towards the motorway we knew we had to blockade to prevent the G8 from meeting.

In a moment of bizarre humour, one of the Scottish blokes amongst us was understandably concerned about marching on the golf course and warned the rest of us: 'Don't walk on the green!' I turned back to observe how many of us were left and was confronted with the surreal scene of hundreds of comrades dressed in black hiking in single file through the luscious green landscape of Scotland. Seeing us there, hours and miles later and still on the move, I realised that most likely the Scottish rebels fighting the English had also passed through these fields centuries ago.

We continued on like this, passing through scenes of another history, through a golf course, three different cattle pastures and knee-high grass as we walked towards a quickly approaching future of our own. Under a pale blue sky we finally reached the motorway. We were the first group to make it on to the highway, but definitely not the last. At that moment the rain stopped.

Delirious from walking and drunken with success we all began to assemble anything and everything we could find on the side of the road – tree trunks, rocks, branches. It was 6am and both directions on the M9 were blockaded.

Walking back to the campsite later we passed the residents of Stirling trying to go to work on the backed-up roads. The reactions we got were varied but at the same time clearly split into two different groups. People who were in private vehicles were upset at the delay and called us many things, most notably 'Bastards!' Those who were in buses and vans and could be identified as construction or roadside workers by their bright yellow vests were fully supportive. We were greeted by raised fists, cheering, and others shouting 'Power to the People!' out their windows.

We returned to the eco-village. At the entrance to the camp there were two permanent flags strung high to identify the political nature of the inhabitants: the red and black flag of social anarchism and the rebel skull and crossbones of piracy. Inside was a vast space of camps, organised by either the geographic origin of the inhabitants (e.g. the Irish 'barrio' – or neighbourhood) or by clusters of affinity groups working together (e.g. the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, CIRCA). A central corridor was lined with different activist support tents,

eight different kitchens, medical services, an independent media centre, trauma support, action trainings, and huge tents for the periodic spokes-council meetings. Beyond this central corridor was the multi-coloured sea of hundreds of personal tents. Many of the tents had one version or another of black and red flags with the anarchist circled 'A' flying above. We had arrived home.

The eco-village was buzzing with activity. The intricate communications network that had been set up was functioning in full force. Bicycle scouts, who were situated at major cities where delegates were staying, along the side of the highways, and at major junctions, were providing up to date information on motorcade movements and alerting the affinity groups hiding along the highway about when and where to strike. An information tent at the entrance had a detailed large scale tactical map, providing up to date information on the different blockades of the summit. As the day progressed one note after another appeared on the map marking the points of the blockades '7.00am – Spanish bloc on M9, 7 arrested', '8.00am – 4 protesters with ropes dangling off a bridge on M9', '12.00pm – Group of 50 including CIRCA and the Kids' Bloc having picnic on the motorway with massive amounts of riot cops looking confused', 'All railroads leading north have been halted by activists locking themselves to the tracks.' This was only the beginning and the notes continued appearing throughout the day: a bicycle contingent took over the A9 at 4.00pm, the Belgian and Dutch bloc locked down on Kincardine Bridge at 4.20pm, etc.

The eco-village was the epicentre of brilliant tactical coordination. This was a result of months of reconnaissance work and a chaotic yet functional plan of blockading that provided both fluidity and agility. As soon as a report came in that one blockade was breaking or being threatened by the police, the transportation team would have vehicles ready to take people to the location and reinforce the blockade. The BBC Scotland radio station was reporting that all roads leading north to Gleneagles were backed up with no traffic passing through. Naturally, they did not mention the reason for this, and tried to hide the successful blockades behind a regular traffic update.

Everyone at the campsite was ecstatic and it felt like it was time to start upping the ante, which meant taking on the perimeter fence around the G8 summit. The legal march scheduled for the afternoon by the G8Alternatives, who were largely controlled by the Socialist Workers Party, had been called off by the police due to the disruption caused to the transportation system of Scotland. To their credit they decided to move forward and go ahead with the march at Auchterarder, the town nearest to Gleneagles Hotel.

Now that the stakes were raised, vans from the eco-village began to head straight to Auchterarder rather than to reinforce the blockades. Two hours later the news of the perimeter fence being breached at two different points reached the camp. Anarchists and Scottish socialists were tearing apart the fence and throwing pieces of it at the riot police. Some groups entered the G8 summit area



and were being confronted by Chinook helicopters unloading hundreds of riot police equipped with dogs. At 12.30 in the afternoon it appeared that the group of the eight most powerful men in the world were still unable to begin their meeting in Gleneagles.

There are many lessons to be learned from the victories won at this most recent mass action of the young anti-capitalist movement. Tactically, having decentralised actions coordinated with the same infrastructure, all given the targeted locations in the same area, was an incredible strength for activists attempting to disrupt the summit. Previous mass mobilisations have failed when calls were made for affinity groups to do autonomous direct action without a strategic frame in which to act. On the night of July 5 and into the early hours of July 6, groups in Scotland were able to scatter themselves along a geographical network of points; working together to assess the need for numbers and actions, people dispatched themselves between a multitude of different motorways and byways surrounding Gleneagles and around hotels in Edinburgh. There were threats to blockade not only the roads around Gleneagles but the roads out of the major cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. This meant the police forces were stretched thin, having to be at Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling and Gleneagles at the same time. The state was forced to provide dozens of officers to contain each small group of activists and, as affinity group after affinity group spontaneously hit the transportation corridor, the police simply could not maintain their own coordination

or mass their numbers. The Suicide March was a strong challenge to state control and proved impossible to contain, even with the strongest police effort. According to friends inside the summit, the blockades were a throbbing migraine for the G8 and it took some delegates up to seven hours to get to Gleneagles. Suffocating their critical control with a continual barrage of activity and exhausting police numbers by using quick-moving affinity groups to the best possible advantage are tactics that allow us to call the shots, whether it be Gleneagles, Buenos Aires or La Paz. The rabble-rousing group behind the blockades was extremely international in character and the links formed are going to be a major pain for global capital for the years to come. As if this wasn't enough, it was reported that while Bush was riding his bicycle at Gleneagles he ran into a police officer, sending him to hospital.

September 11 reminds most of the world of New York and some of us of Santiago. There was another September 11 more than 700 years ago. On September 11 1297 William Wallace observed the English coming in to impose their enclosure of the Scottish land. This was the day of the Battle of Stirling Bridge where the 60,000 strong English army suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of the Scottish who numbered around 10,000. The English sent two messengers to Wallace to ask for his surrender. Wallace's reply was similar to that given to the G8 by the street fighters in Stirling.

'Return to thy friends and tell them we come here with no peaceful intent, but ready for battle, determined to avenge our wrongs... Let thy masters come and attack us; we are ready to meet them.'

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