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THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILISATION TO GLENEAGLES

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We are the network, all of us who resist.

Subcommandante Insurgent Marcos

News that the 2005 G8 summit would be held somewhere in the UK (at this point none of us knew where) was first discussed in a workshop at the 2003 Earth First! Summer Gathering near Ripon, North Yorkshire. A second meeting, which actually became a series of meetings, took place at the Anarchist Bookfair in London in October later that year. Amongst those who attended each of these events, there was a general feeling that the radical movement in the UK had been in decline since the hugely successful day of action in the City of London on June 18 1999,¹ and that the G8 summit could potentially provide an opportunity to reinvigorate, broaden and develop the movement in the UK, and allow for the development of more meaningful relations with groups and movements elsewhere.

A NETWORK FORMS (SO THAT WE WOULD BE WINNING...)

Around a month after the Bookfair, in November 2003, a UK-wide meeting was held in Nottingham and the Dissent! network was officially born. The meeting was attended by people who had previously been involved in the ecological direct action movement in the 1990s, London Reclaim the Streets, the Wombles, the anti-war movement, a few people who had been active in the anarchist movement in



the 1980s and a few who had been involved in the worldwide Peoples' Global Action (PGA) process and mobilisations around international summits.²

It was at this meeting that the PGA hallmarks³ were adopted by Dissent! as a means of articulating both its organisational principles and its political orientation. In essence, the hallmarks were an expression of a commitment to decentralisation and horizontality, to developing a structure which allowed for and promoted autonomy, to recognising and rejecting a multiplicity of structures and mechanisms of domination, and to direct action and disobedience as a means of resisting the summit. Whilst some of us had been involved with, and were sympathetic to, the PGA process, there were others who were either disinterested in, or sceptical of, Peoples' Global Action as a network. In other words, the adoption of the hallmarks was, from the outset, intended more as means of articulating the politics of the network than as a statement of affiliation to the PGA.

Over the months which followed this meeting, a number of pre-existing locally-based radical groups joined the network, whilst others were established explicitly in response to the G8 summit. By June 2005, there were almost thirty local groups listed on the Dissent! website – although it must be said that the actual existence of these groups was far more real in some cases than in others. Meanwhile, a number of working groups focused on specific aspects of the mobilisation: producing publicity, fundraising, building and maintaining a website, producing an irregular newsletter and so on. As the summit drew closer, action

groups were set up to organise specific events (the Carnival for Full Enjoyment, actions around the issue of climate change, the hill-walking actions and so on...), take on practical 'support' roles (legal observation, medics, media 'counter-spin'...), and provide the logistical infrastructure for the 'convergence' spaces which were opened in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Stirling.

Most local groups met on a regular weekly or bi-weekly basis to plan local mobilisations, fundraise and, in some cases, to open social centres – self-managed spaces in which resistance to the summit could be planned and local groups and networks developed and strengthened in the process. Working and action groups generally communicated via email lists and irregular meetings. A generic e-list was used to maintain communication between the various nodes of the network and bi-monthly (and as of January 2005, monthly) Dissent! gatherings served as the network-wide decision-making space, in which budgetary decisions were 'ratified' and an overall strategy developed. The gatherings, as with the various local, working and action groups, were open to all those who subscribed to the PGA hallmarks.

Whilst the concrete objectives of the mobilisation against the G8 were never explicitly articulated by Dissent!, and the level of priority given to certain aspects of the mobilisation in relation to others differed from person to person and group to group, there nevertheless seemed to emerge five distinct objectives that were either worked towards or stated as key motivating factors by those involved in the mobilisation.

First of all, the physical disruption of the summit was for many a high priority. The function of direct action carried out against the summit was generally understood as two-fold: (i) as an expression of 'our' collective power; and (ii) as a means of hindering the expansion and intensification of the neo-liberal project, and the smooth reproduction of the capitalist system as a whole.

Secondly, there was a recognition by some that the mobilisations in Seattle, Genoa and elsewhere had gone some way towards destroying the myth that, following the end of the Cold War, the 'end of history' had been reached, that liberalism had won, that there was no alternative. In this sense, displays of radical, anti-capitalist opposition to the summit made sense to the extent that they could open up a political space in which alternative modes of social organisation could at least begin to be discussed.

Thirdly, there was a desire to develop and articulate a critique of the summit which would go beyond that which we expected to be expressed by the 'mainstream' mobilisation. Of course, in the early stages of the Dissent! mobilisation we had no idea quite how mainstream the mainstream would become. We were expecting Susan George and Caroline Lucas, not Hilary Benn and Bono.

Fourthly, many hoped that the models of self-management and ecological sustainability that we intended to put in place at the convergence centres would provide a means of demonstrating and engaging people in organisational forms and processes radically different from those which we tend to experience in our

daily lives. And finally, we hoped to both broaden and strengthen local and global anti-capitalist networks which would last well beyond the summit itself.

THE INTERNATIONAL MOBILISATION TAKES OFF (SO THAT WE WOULD BE EVERYWHERE...)

From the outset, there seemed to be a consensus within the Dissent! network that the mobilisation against the summit should have an international character. In other words, it was not only hoped that ‘internationals’ would travel to Scotland and take part in the counter-summit, but that they would get involved in the organisational process itself.

With this end in mind, in Spring 2004, an international call was drawn up, translated and circulated around the world.⁴ In effect, the call was an invitation to those involved in social movements elsewhere to discuss in their own groups and networks the means by which they thought the summit could best be resisted. They were invited to feed their discussions back to Dissent!, and to take part in a series of international discussion, networking and planning sessions.

The general sentiment within Dissent! appeared to be that the events in Seattle, Prague, Gothenburg, Genoa and elsewhere had indeed achieved a great deal. Not only had they opened up a space within which an anti-capitalist politics of the post-Cold War era could begin to be articulated, but they had contributed substantially to the development of real and meaningful networks of resistance. In other words, the organisational and networking processes leading up to the various events; the experience of collective action on the streets; and the ‘follow-up’ work (prisoner support, de-briefings, processes of reflection and discussions about the future) carried out after the events had contributed to the development of an inter-connected global ‘movement of movements’ which is in many ways unprecedented.

However, there was a feeling that the response to international summits was becoming increasingly predictable, and that serious critical reflection was needed if we were to move beyond merely fulfilling the roles that were expected of us. This first international call, then, was not intended as a direct call to action, but to reflection, consideration and discussion. It explained, ‘This is not a call to action yet because we don’t know what action people will choose to take... This is a call to learn from our history and our successes; a call to assess our current position and our current strengths; a call to debate and strategise; a call to formulate a response to the heads of the world’s most powerful states meeting in Europe next year.’

THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING GROUP SETS UP (SO THAT OUR RESISTANCE WOULD BE AS TRANSNATIONAL AS CAPITAL...)

The Dissent! International Networking group was set up shortly after the call was written. As was the case with most of the other working groups, its ‘membership’



shifted throughout the mobilisation, and its precise remit was never made explicit. Broadly speaking, however, its function basically became: disseminating Dissent! publicity (posters, leaflets, stickers and so on...), and other information relevant to the mobilisation, to groups and movements around the world; providing a contact point for those outside of the UK involved or interested in the mobilisation; translating and disseminating various texts produced by Dissent!; and attempting to 'internationalise' the mobilisation, primarily by organising a series of workshops at international events which aimed to both share and build upon the collective experience of those in attendance (many of whom had direct experience of mobilisations against international summits), and to provide a space in which those based outside of the UK could begin to integrate themselves into the organisational process.

Efforts towards internationalisation were, to a great extent, successful. The European PGA conference in Belgrade in July 2004 served as an initial catalyst for this process. It was here that a number of us involved with Dissent! met with many of those who would later take on the important role of disseminating information about the counter-summit in their regions and throughout their networks. On top of this: information and publicity was distributed; insightful and inspiring discussions about the function, limits and future(s) of counter-summits were held; a call for a global day of action on the opening day of the summit was drafted and agreed upon by the conference's final plenary;⁵ and practical tasks (such as the

setting up of an international email list and the hosting of an international planning meeting in the final months before the summit) were taken on.

This process was accelerated at the 'Day of Dissent'⁶ held at Beyond ESF, one of the autonomous spaces surrounding the 2004 European Social Forum in London. Here, several hundred people, many from outside the UK, took part in a series of workshops, some of which were designed as educational and informative: discussing, for example, the history of the G8, its food and agricultural policies, its links to climate change, war and oil and so on. Others were intended to provide practical information: legal information, advice about direct action tactics, information about the alternative media mobilisations and so on. And others still were intended as 'purely' networking sessions: in other words, as opportunities to exchange experiences and ideas, and to intensify the international coordination against the summit.

Networking processes continued apace at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2005. The purpose of a number of people involved in the International Networking group attending the WSF was understood as twofold. Firstly, it provided an opportunity to meet face-to-face with others who were, or had been, involved in similar mobilisations elsewhere (against the APEC meeting in Santiago, Chile in 2004; the 2003 G8 summit in Evian, France; and the forthcoming World Trade Organization Ministerial in Hong Kong, IMF and World Bank Meetings in Washington DC, and the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit in Argentina). A series of workshops, all of which were held in the *Caracol Intergalactika*,⁷ provided an opportunity for people involved in each of these mobilisations to exchange ideas and experiences, and to discuss the ways in which we could support one another's mobilisations in the future. And secondly, it provided a forum in which the call for a global day of action against the G8, issued by the European PGA conference, could be distributed and discussed.⁸

Many of us involved in the International Networking group had been tremendously inspired by the displays of international solidarity which had erupted around the early summit mobilisations. The 200,000 farmers who marched through the streets of Hyderabad, India calling for the death of the WTO, and the 50,000 unemployed workers and peasants who took to the streets of Brasilia as riots erupted around the WTO Ministerial in Geneva in May 1998; the London street reclaimers who took over the City of London, laying siege to the Liffe (London International Financial Futures Exchange) building, and the 10,000 protesters who risked serious repression in order to take over and shut down Port Harcourt, Nigeria's oil capital⁹ as thousands protested outside the 1999 G8 summit in Cologne, Germany; the saboteurs who cut the power supply to the WTO Headquarters in Geneva, and the striking students from the Autonomous University of Mexico City who attacked the American Embassy in solidarity with those being arrested in Seattle, were not merely expressions of solidarity with the victims of (often brutal) repression elsewhere, but signifiers of an increasing recognition

of a common enemy and common struggles – and, importantly, a willingness to express that recognition in terms of concrete action.

The global days of action provided a means by which a huge multiplicity of singular struggles could begin to be woven into one, without the very real differences between them (in terms of political histories, forms of resistance, and the material conditions in which movements found themselves) becoming obscured in the process. However, as mobilisations around international summits appeared to reach their peak in Genoa in July 2001, so too did the international mobilisations which coincided with them. Whilst, to be sure, actions continued to take place in the build-up to, during and (in particular) after summits – perhaps most notably, in terms of the international solidarity with those arrested and held in jail following the EU summit in Thessaloniki, Greece – none of them paralleled either the scale or the extent of the mobilisations which took place in the period from 1998–2001 (the period in which, as some have said, we *were* winning). We hoped that, alongside the call issued at the European PGA Conference and its subsequent distribution around the world via email lists and independent media outlets, our visit to the Forum would contribute to the resurgence of global days of action as a means of further developing global solidarity. To this end, a statement entitled *Global Resistance 2005: A Call to Action* was issued from the final plenary of the *Caracol Intergalactika*, calling for coordination, communication and collaboration amongst those involved in the mobilisations against the international summits coming up later that year (the IMF and World Bank in the US; the G8 in the UK; the FTAA in Argentina; and the WTO in Hong Kong), and for global days of action to be held on the opening days of each of the summits.¹⁰

The final ‘big push’ to internationalise the mobilisation against the summit took place early in 2005. For three days in February of that year, around 120 people from 23 different countries gathered in Tübingen, southern Germany, for an international networking and coordination meeting.¹¹ For many of us from the UK, the meeting was a tremendously inspiring experience and, in many ways, marked the beginning of a *real* international collaboration. To be sure, a number of people based outside the UK had by this point already been working hard for a long time to try and mobilise people from their networks and regions to come to Scotland, to take part in local solidarity actions during the summit, or to provide material support for the Dissent! mobilisation. The Tübingen meeting, however, allowed for a whole number of many-to-many connections to be made between people involved in various aspects of the mobilisation. Medics from the UK, Germany and the Netherlands were able to meet with one another, share ideas and begin to coordinate. Catering collectives joined forces. Action plans were exchanged and new ones were hatched. Pleas for equipment (vehicles, marquees, IT resources...) were both made and answered. Moreover, face-to-face contact allowed for the development of a greater feeling of both trust and common purpose than any amount of communication mediated through anonymous email lists ever could have done.



A number of other, smaller, international events also took place closer to the summit itself, most notably perhaps the Festival of Dissent! (held in Scotland in April 2005) and an international meeting in Thessaloniki (in May 2005).

THE MULTITUDE ARRIVE (SO THAT ANOTHER WORLD COULD BE POSSIBLE...)

Almost a month before the summit began, internationals began arriving in the UK to lend their support to the Dissent! mobilisation and to initiate and develop their own projects. Bringing resources, inspiration and – at this stage, most importantly – energy, the influx of people from outside the UK contributed enormously to developing the material basis upon which the mobilisation could function (helping set up the camp, cleaning out and making habitable the convergence spaces) and adding a sense of possibility to the days and weeks which lay ahead at a time when many of us who had been involved in the organisational process for well over a year were beginning to feel a little shaky.

As the final days before the summit approached, thousands poured into the UK from continental Europe, the US and elsewhere. The international dimension to the mobilisation contributed enormously to the perceived successes of the counter-summit.¹² The gathering of large numbers of people from different backgrounds, with varied social, cultural and political histories, and the experience of organising within a huge breadth of social movements, allows (often uncon-

sciously) for a form of collective intelligence to emerge which is far more potent than a more homogenous event of a similar scale could ever be. The knowledge and experience that people were able to draw upon; the breadth of action forms that people adopted – from explicitly non-violent blockades and clowning, to militant actions and sabotage; and the organisational forms (affinity groups, black blocs, spokescouncils...) that were experimented with meant that people were exposed to – and often became involved with – forms of political action and organising with which they had previously little or no experience. Of course, it's not always easy to adjust to ways of acting, organising or relating to one another which are radically different from those we are used to, and there were certainly problems, conflicts and clashes. However, observing and experimenting with other ways of acting plays an essential role in the development of movements, helping avoid stagnation. As each of us return home from events like Gleneagles, we take with us the experiences and lessons that we have learned from others – of course, sometimes we end up learning what doesn't work at least as much as what does.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL (SO THAT ONE DAY, WE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD WITHOUT ANYBODY TAKING POWER...)

The history of capitalist development is a history of crisis, rupture and struggle. Capital's greatest crises have, more often than not, been precipitated by a period which can best be described as an international circulation of struggles. It would not be impossible – and indeed some have tried – to chart a history of capitalist development in which the intense circulation of struggles have created periods of crisis, followed by a phase of restructuring and, ultimately, another period of struggle. Recognising this, then, our task is to develop and ferment struggles capable, eventually, of breaking this cycle – of pushing through capital's rule and coming out the other side.

The international circulation of struggles described above has, on occasion, been described as spreading like a virus in which localised revolts contaminate other areas of the globe, spreading both common desires and common practices. The slave revolts which proliferated throughout the Caribbean in the early nineteenth century; the workers' soviets and councils which erupted during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial struggles and guerrilla movements that blossomed across Africa, Asia, South and Central America, Europe and the US during the mid-twentieth century are all examples of this. Each of these cycles represented, more often than not, not only the recognition of a common enemy – slavery, industrial capitalism, colonialism, imperialism – but common forms of struggle and ways of organising.

Others have described the proliferation of struggles through the analogy of a mole – appearing in one place, in one moment in time; only to disappear, suddenly, out of sight and reappear somewhere else. Of course, the mole doesn't ever really disappear entirely. Rather, she burrows beneath the earth and into a

subterranean world – always travelling, making her way from one ‘moment’ (in place and time) to another, undermining the foundations of the current world in the process.

The hugely successful actions which took place around the WTO Ministerial in Seattle in 1999 have been described, on more than one occasion, as the ‘coming out party’ for the current global cycle of struggles. Implied in this is a recognition that the event not only inspired a number of similar mobilisations (in Quebec, Prague, Sydney, Gothenburg, Sao Paulo, Genoa, Cancun, Gleneagles...) but that it also ‘revealed’ a previously hidden past, i.e. the *real* origins of the current cycle – the numerous mobilisations against the projects, institutions and policies of neoliberalism which had already taken place in the ‘global South’. The Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas which began on the day in which the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was due to come into effect; the ‘IMF riots’ which by this point had taken place over ten years previous in Sudan and elsewhere; and the popular resistance to World Bank sponsored projects such as the Namada dam in India were (almost instantly) understood as singular elements within a common cycle of struggles to which the Seattle events belonged.

Central to every cycle of struggle has been the ability to communicate news of the uprisings, for this news to be ‘translated’ so that the struggles could be recognised by others as their own, and another link in the chain added. As processes of globalisation tend towards bringing about a universalised deterritorialisation, the common condition in which we all find ourselves today is far greater, and far clearer, than in previous eras. In other words, despite the continued existence of real and important differences, the neoliberal era of capitalist development has finally enclosed the entire globe within its realm. The peasant driven off her land in Chiapas; the Indian farmer denied a livelihood by the patenting of seeds which have been sown by his family for centuries; the Starbucks worker in New York City fired for attempting to unionise; all occupy different positions of privilege within the global order. But whatever name it is given (neoliberalism, capitalism, Empire...) the root cause of the increasingly precarious existence that we are all tending to lead is clear.

Events such as Gleneagles, then, have a global importance to the extent that they allow for us to both make explicit the common nature of our current condition and, importantly, to take unified, coordinated action: building upon past experiences, creating new ones and working out ways in which we can do it all better in the future.

1 June 18 1999 (J18) was the opening day of that year’s G8 summit in Cologne, Germany. It was marked by a global day of action which – in London – involved the occupation of the City of London, Britain’s financial centre. For an account of the J18 mobilisation and the events which unfolded see ‘J18: Our Resistance is as Transnational as Capital’ in *Days of Dissent*, available at www.daysofdissent.org.uk

- 2 For information on these groups see their respective websites: <http://rts.gn.apc.org/> (London RTS), www.wombles.org.uk (Wombles), www.agp.org (PGA).
- 3 The PGA hallmarks are:
 - 1) A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalisation.
 - 2) We reject all forms and systems of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
 - 3) A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.
 - 4) A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements' struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximise respect for life and oppressed peoples' rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
 - 5) An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy.
- 4 The call for international participation in the mobilisation against the summit is available online at <http://www.dissent.org.uk/content/view/19/63/>.
- 5 A copy of this Call is available online at <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/resistg8/index.htm>.
- 6 The invitation to, and agenda of, the Day of Dissent is available at <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2004/10/298904.html>.
- 7 The Caracol Intergalactika was one of the 'barrios' (or neighbourhoods) inside the Intercontinental Youth Camp, an encampment of 50,000 people at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in January 2005. For more about the Youth Camp, see: R. Nunes, 'The Intercontinental Youth Camp as the Unthought of the World Social Forum' in *ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* Volume 5, Number 2 (May 2005). (Available at <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2nunes1.pdf>). For an excellent personal account of the 2005 World Social Forum, with particular emphasis on the goings on in the Intercontinental Youth Camp, see T. Mueller, 'Notes from the WSF 2005: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' also in *ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* Volume 5, Number 2 (May 2005). (At <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2mueller.pdf>).
- 8 To this end, the call issued by the European PGA conference was translated and distributed alongside 30,000 English, Spanish and Portuguese flyers produced by the Dissent! Publicity Group, explaining our motivations for mobilising against the summit and calling for people to take coordinated action around the world on the opening day of the conference.
- 9 A short report from the action in Nigeria, which brought together activists from the Ijaw Youth Council and the Ogoni Solidarity Movement with students and environmentalists, is available at <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/global/j18nigeria.htm>.
- 10 The call is available online at http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/resistg8/actions/caracol__en.htm.
- 11 The original invitation to this meeting is available at: <http://pl.indymedia.org/pl/2005/01/11268.shtml>. The minutes are also available to download

SHUT THEM DOWN!

from http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/resistg8/news/tuebingen__minutes.pdf.

- 12 Alongside the actions in Scotland, the various international calls for action were met by events around the world as the world leaders began to gather at Gleneagles. A counter-conference took place in Mali; demonstrations were held in Oxford, Bristol, Berlin, Berne, Minsk, Richmond (Baltimore) and Kansas City; film showings were organised in Buenos Aires; a mini-riot erupted in San Francisco; street theatre was held in Moscow, Cologne, Hanover and Vienna; and Tony Blair's house was paid a visit in South Bristol. For a fuller list, and a number of more detailed accounts of the international actions, see <https://www3.indymedia.org.uk/en/2005/07/317234.html>.