Van Deusen On North American Black Blocs 1996-2001

David Van Deusen/Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

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Dave Van Deusen On Harley, 2017

Black Bloc Tactics Communiqué: A Communiqué on Tactics and Organization to the Black Bloc, from within the Black Bloc

(*This first document was crafted by Columbus ARA & the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective, which Van Deusen was a member of.*)

July, 2001 -This Document is directly applicable to the particularities of the Anarchist movement in North America.[1] Any applications of the below analysis and tactical proposals to the particularities of the struggle in different regions, should entail a general modification of content in order to maintain an obvious and sufficient relevance.

[1] The first edition of this essay was written exclusively by David Van Deusen and adopted by the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective. This second edition which appears here includes changes made by the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective and Columbus ARA-Ohio (Columbus ARA members at the time included Lady, Jerry, Andy, Dustin, Shawn, Noah, and others). These changes were penned primarily by Van Deusen and Lady at the direction of GMAC and ARA. The essay (first edition) was first published in Barricada Magazine, 2000. The work (first edition) was first published as a pamphlet by Kersplebedeb Publishers, Montreal, Quebec, 2001.

Introductory Notes From The Second Amended Edition

The edition which you are currently holding is the product of extensive conversations between folk from within the ARA and GMAC. Through these conversations, consensus was reached regarding certain principles of revolutionary organization. Key changes were made to the sections proposing the use of reserves, affinity groups, the tactical facilitation core, as well as minor changes throughout the document. We feel these changes make for a stronger proposal. We, of course, welcome further discussion and amendments where necessary.

Introductory Notes From The First Edition

The following document is presented with the intention of furthering the basic effectiveness of our movement by advocating various tactical practices that we hope will be adopted by the Black Bloc as a whole. The inspiration for this work comes from our complete love for the creative ability/potential of humankind and our uncompromising dedication to social revolution. Portions of this work tend to take on a militaristic tone. This tone should not be misconstrued as a back door justification for arbitrary hierarchical models of organizing. Rather, the reality of our militant struggle necessitates the language used in order to most accurately depict our objective circumstances and the methods we must employ in order to come closer to victory. Here it should be pointed out that under no circumstances do we advocate any organizational model that in essence is not compatible with those utilized democratically by Anarchists and revolutionary workers as practiced during the Paris Commune (1871) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). In order to put this work together, we reflected on our own collective experiences as well as looked to history to learn what works within an anarchistic framework and what does not.

It is our intention here to present an accurate, yet brief, analysis of the present state of the movement generally, as well as the steps we (the Black Bloc) must take in order to further the cause. Also, the below proposals are directly intended for Black Bloc incorporation only. For any across the board Anarchist adaptation of the more militant proposals (such as found in the section Preparations For Increased State Repression) would lead to the weakening of the all-important above ground community organizing efforts. We view these efforts as primary to the general cause in that it is through them that the wider populace is brought over consciously to the Anarchist Left. Our struggle must be conducted at all levels. Lastly, we encourage you to read this work and discuss it within your collective and/or with other folk within the Black Bloc anarchist community. It is our hope that such collectives and interested people connected with the Black Bloc will sign their names (not necessarily their given names) to this and implement the tactical proposals suggested below. In the likely case that the below document is partially unacceptable to our community of struggle, it is our hope that such points of contention be discussed, debated and amended as necessary in order to reach Black Bloc consensus. We here ask that the various Anarchist newspapers and periodicals open up their letter sections for this purpose.

-Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

-Anti-Racist Action

Our Movement Grows

During the course of the past year and a half (since the Battle of Seattle) we have been witnessing/participating in a maturity of the larger social protest movement as well as the smaller (yet growing) revolutionary Anarchist movement.

This is a result of eight basic reasons:

- The experiential emptiness of intensified neo-capitalist commodification of pseudo-reality and its necessary results of mass alienation, anxiety and Boredom.
- The continuing failure of the present system to alleviate material deprivation (poverty) amongst certain sectors of working class and poor.
- Overt attempts by leading neo-capitalist powers to homogenize world economy/ culture through elitist centralized organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization has triggered a populist backlash and motivated the usually dormant trade unions.
- The reconciliation of previously splintered counterculture (urban "punk," rural "hippy," etc.) has allowed for a wider base from which shifts in popular social consciousness are disseminating.
- Increased communications abilities throughout the populace have resulted in organizational/mobilization advances amongst the social protest and revolutionary Anarchist movements.
- Experience gained by organizations throughout the last decade has vastly increased the practical ability of the movement as a whole.
- The generational maturity of the children of the 60s and 70s has now come to full fruition. This is a fact that should not be overlooked as we intend to build on and further destroy where our mothers and fathers left off. And finally,
- Police repression as experienced throughout the United States and Canada during the course of this last year and a half has had the result of radicalizing 10,000s of previously Liberal demonstrators from one coast to the other and back.

Anarchism and the Broader Movement

While the broader movement has affected some important practical and consciousness building victories, it is still too malleable and indecisive to put an uncritical trust in its visual organizations (as encapsulated in the Direct Action Network).

As revolutionary Anarchists we must continue to support and encourage its participatory and directly democratic currents while steering it away from its unconscious tendencies towards spectacular abstraction and Liberal capitulation. We must continue to do this through the dissemination of revolutionary Anarchist theory as well as by DIRECT example, both of the kind on the streets, in community organizing efforts and in regards to our lifestyles. This must continue to be a priority both at demonstrations as well as within the particularities of our local communities.

In this capacity we must be vigilant not to limit our dialectical interactions with the movement itself. In a word, we must continue to reach out to the yet included masses. For it is only through their direct participation that the present system of oppression will be forever disintegrated and thrown into the wastebasket of history.

The Development of the Movement

For all of the above reasons, this past year and a half has been marked as a progressive stepping-stone towards the continuing resurgence of the revolutionary Anarchist movement. This in spite of certain painful setbacks such as the demise of the Love and Rage organization. The objective historical situation, as well as our newfound practical abilities, has resulted in us moving two steps forward for every step back. However, before we become full of conceit, let it be said that we have many, many dangerous steps to traverse before we reach the end of this epic.

Our Local Communities

It is in our specific communities that we (Black Bloc and Anarchists generally) are able to push the evolutionary Anarchist movement forward through diligent and relevant community organizing throughout the ranks of the disenfranchised. Here we must continue to do this by forming workers' cooperatives, community centers, newspapers, the creation of Anarchist art as well as by direct political action whenever possible. At the large demonstrations we are able to push our movement forward by the organizing and subsequent action of our Black Bloc.

At Demonstrations

It is by virtue of the uncompromising militancy of this (our) Bloc that Liberal demonstrations are transformed into insurrectionary happenings. By physically defending ourselves against State (police) attacks, we add a serious dimension to an otherwise timid movement. By effectively defending non-violent protesters against the assaults of the police (such as at the A16 action in DC) we demonstrate the extra-symbolic power of the people while increasing the relative effectiveness of the overall action. By attacking and destroying Capitalist private property (such as in the Battle of Seattle) we go beyond rhetoric and actually inflict real material damage upon the urban out-posts of the oppressive and totally uninteresting commodified empire of the new Capitalists. By our method we transform indecisiveness and restraint into REAL action.

Those upper middle class Pacifists who clamor that we are wrong by virtue of our demonstrated principles should be reminded that the only legitimate goal of mass demonstrations is to effect relevant social and revolutionary change for the benefit of the working class, poor, and declassed peoples. It is not, nor never should ever be, to be arrested and brutally beaten for the sake of some vain association with Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Furthermore, let us all reflect upon the fact that India today is presently in shambles due to continued Capitalist exploitation, and the American blacks are still treated as second-class citizens by the State apparatus and plutocracy alike. These are travesties that only a genuine and victorious international revolutionary Anarchist movement, utilizing both violent and non-violent methods, will be able to fully rectify.

It is in this very real context that we fight. We will not, nor should we, compromise our hatred or love any more than we will compromise our goal of complete social revolution, Anarchy, and the dream of all of humanity unshackled from the chains which are both seen and unseen.

We make no apologies.

The Necessity Of Increasing Our Tactical Abilities

However, the forces of the State (specifically the FBI and police) have been studying us for some time. Hence it is absolutely necessary that we further develop our tactical understanding and practical street abilities if we are to maintain, in fact increase, our militant capabilities.

In this regard there are some basic steps that we must take in order to meet this challenge:

1. Increased organization of street fighting force;
2. Regular physical training in between actions;
3. Facilitation of pre-emptive strikes;
4. Preparation for eventuality of intensified State oppression and the shifting of the movement of social protest into that of direct social revolution;
5. Increased internal social and political education between actions and development of theory.

At the present time, the mobilization of our forces is done in such haphazard manner that our ability to combat well-trained and disciplined State forces is limited. In fact it is only by virtue of our revolutionary dedication and iron constitutions that we have been able to combat these forces with the level of relative success that we thus far have. They (the forces of the State) fight out of hatred of diversity and free expression and for a paycheck. We fight out of hatred of oppression and love, and simply because it is the just thing to do.

However, as the agents of the State modify their present tactics, based on their direct experiences and vast intelligence reports from Seattle to Quebec City, they can be expected to achieve a further level of effective superiority over us in the near future. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that we begin to reorganize ourselves in such a way as to again bring certain advantages to our side.

Increased Organization Of Street Fighting Force: The Formation Of An Elected Tactical Facilitation Core

Our experiences over the course of the last year and a half have taught us a lot regarding the actual and potential effectiveness of Black Blocs during large demonstrations. A16 demonstrated the effectiveness of a large Bloc when used in tight conjunction with non-violent, direct action oriented contingents. It showed us how the combined tactics of physical self-defense (from the Bloc) and non-violent lockdowns can, at this historical juncture, result in effective occupation of large sections of the city-scape. J20 showed how a tightly knit Bloc, lined with defensive banners around its perimeters, can help foster confidence and act as a more substantial deterrent to targeted police arrests. A20 showed how even a relatively small Bloc (as on Saturday, the 21st) can

become a substantial fighting force when the physical and mental commitment is there. However, our experiences have also illustrated certain shortcomings that we thus far are yet to overcome. Specifically our lack of a democratic tactical command structure has hindered our abilities to act with more punctuating speed and tactical ferociousness. In certain circumstances this failure has resulted in us becoming bogged down in indecisiveness (specifically regarding movement), and hence has put us in danger as well as led to arrests (i.e. on the Monday of the A16 action) . Therefore, we contend that we need to develop a democratic tactical command structure that heightens our mobility while simultaneously not compromising our Anarchist principles.

In regard to this, we propose that the present use of elected affinity group spokespeople be expanded to that of acute tactical facilitator (a-tacs). The role of this person should be to help facilitate the organized movement of their immediate section as recommended by the general tactical facilitation core (*to be discussed below). In addition, each affinity group should also elect an alternate in case the first is incapacitated due to injury or arrest.

Following the general meeting of the Black Bloc, at which the broad plans for the day's action should have already been discussed, debated and then decided upon based on consensus, all such elected a-tacs should meet in private (such privacy here is recommended as a security precaution) . At this meeting a general tactical facilitation core (g-tacs) should be elected, again by consensus. These g-tacs should act as the facilitators of Bloc movement in such a way as it complies with the general plan of action as defined at the prior open meeting. The identity of the g-tacs will be made discreetly known to all trusted affinity group members through their elected spokes/a-tacs as befitting following the conclusion of the closed spokespeople's meeting. Any affinity group which has had their a-tac elected to the tactical facilitation core should elect a new a-tac.

In cases in which the Bloc is expected to be large and to march en masse, affinity groups should be made responsible for specific positions within the Bloc; specifically the front, right side, left side and rear (this should be done at the general open meeting). This would essentially create four main perimeter clusters within the Bloc. (Note: the use of clusters is further discussed below.) In turn the elected g-tacs should number 12 persons. These persons should emanate out of the perimeter clusters, which they will be responsible for (this will be further discussed below). These twelve should be further divided into four groups of three. In turn these three should be positioned as such:

1. A person at the specific perimeter cluster, which they will be directly responsible for (front, rear, left or right);

2. A person near the middle of the Bloc where they will be together with the representatives of the other perimeter clusters;

3. A person to act as a runner between their perimeter cluster g-tac and the g-tac group in the middle.

In general, all time sensitive decisions specifically regarding movement should be recommended by the consensus of the central g-tac core based on information emanating from the specific perimeter tacs, and reliable reconnaissance information.

In addition, these g-tacs should also entail certain role-specific support persons in order that they are able to function efficiently and safely. Hence, all g-tacs stationed at the perimeters should be equipped with two persons from their affinity group or otherwise, one of which should be

responsible for maintaining radio communication with reconnaissance teams and/or other important constituents. The other should be present in order to watch the tac's back. We must be aware of the fact that these folk will quickly be identified by the forces of the State, and therefore will likely be singled out for arrest. Likewise, the central g-tac core should also be equipped with a few persons on radio, and a few persons concerning themselves with security.

Also, the specific roles of the various g-tacs, be it runner, perimeter person or core group, should be rotated as the day's action ensues. Again, such a rotation is to limit any developing trend aimed at a psychological tendency towards authoritarianism amongst the central g-tac core. And again, it should be reminded that the function of these folk would primarily have to do with Bloc movement (i.e. which road to take, which way to go at an intersection). They will not be playing the role of generals or abstract leaders in any way.

Here it is important to stress several things. First, we do not advocate the creating of a permanent officer clique. These elected positions should only last as long as the action at hand. If the action lasts more than a single day, then it would be good to elect new tacs for the different days. Also, their positions should be revocable by the general whole at any time.

Lastly, the influence which they shall wield will not be beyond the role of facilitators of a general plan adopted to the general meeting of the Black Bloc. Any steps they may attempt to take beyond these perimeters would be grounds for dismissal. And of course, we are not advocating the formalization of any authoritarian army structure. It must be made clear that all participants in the Bloc innately reserve the right to disobey tac suggestions as well as to desert. In this the adoption of such a structure would be consistent with Anarchist principles of organization. The Anarchist militias recognized the need for such structure during the Spanish Civil War and so should we.

Individual Affinity Groups

Affinity groups, generally numbering between 3 and 10 persons, should organize themselves in ways in which they see fit to reach their goals in the specific action at hand. Determining the focus of your affinity group in relevance to the specific action allows for the creation of a specialized affinity group.

Within these affinity groups, it is suggested that there be one person who carries a skeletal assortment of first aid equipment (saline solution, vinegar, lemon peels, water in a squirt bottle, rescue remedy). Furthermore, it would seem a very sound suggestion that every person involved in the Black Bloc take a basic first aid course, or have general knowledge of protest-related first aid practices. Like physical training, being trained in first aid would heighten our overall combat abilities.

It should be decided if the affinity group must use a radio/cell during the action. Radio/cell use may be needed in certain affinity groups, but by no means is it necessary to overflow the streets with unneeded communication devices. Communication can in turn be lost by the trampling of channels and untrained use. More radios will never be the answer to organization and information, but the strategic placing and use of these devices will forever enable our effectiveness. Roles of the other persons in the affinity group, in addition to the aforementioned role of the medic and possible use of a radio/cell operator, depend upon the type of affinity group (function) . The affinity group should solely decide this themselves.

Types of specialized affinity groups include, but are not limited to, a front line (defensive), offensive, reconnaissance, property related, medic, support, noise, and pre-emptive.

A front line affinity group would contain shields and/or heavy body armor. This type of affinity group would potentially oversee the formation of the front line. They would motivate and call for other shields from within the Bloc, in aiding the formation of a solid line. This affinity group would provide a rally point to help provide the Bloc position. They would not be a part of a charge line, but instead hold as a point to retreat back to if the charge proves faulty. In addition, this affinity group is at the correct position to oversee the building of barricades.

An offensive affinity group should be highly mobile and enthusiastic. These affinity groups should be prepared for confrontation. The offensive affinity group can also come prepared to fill specialized tactical needs. Creativity is encouraged. The definition of this group will be left at this.

A reconnaissance affinity group operates outside of the Bloc, gathering information. Communication is held closely with the larger Bloc, keeping them informed of police movements and numbers. When State weaknesses are detected, this affinity group should inform the Bloc of opportunities for advancement.

The Bloc should have their own medic affinity group. For optimal coverage, medic groups could split to cover all sides of the Bloc as a whole. Having our own medics does not mean that they help only Black Bloc members, but ensures their movement with the Bloc.

Property-related affinity groups also exist in our movement. The roles of these people should not be known to anyone who is not in that specific affinity group. In relation, information on affinity groups who form for pre-emptive strikes against the State should also be held from the Bloc. Any information on the plans or existence of these two groups will only weaken their security.

There are also support affinity group roles. One idea is an affinity group dedicated to dealing with panic situations. This group would number no more than a few groups per cluster/side (the use of clusters is explained below).

There could also be a supply and networking affinity group responsible for carrying food, water, and handing out communiques to neighborhood people and non-Black Bloc protesters. The carrying of water also has a dual purpose of use for eye washing if necessary.

A noise affinity group is useful in keeping enthusiasm and drive in tiring situations. The sound of music can create sudden drives of energy and joy within the Bloc where none exists, and can send a contradicting message of power to the enemy in battle. Creativity is also encouraged in this area; i.e. Black Bloc bagpipe players would bring immense courage and enthusiasm to many, as does radical cheerleading to others. We should continue to embrace, and forever elaborate, on this humanistic approach to battle through music and cheer. For this is in our favor, and the State is forever unlikely to employ such an emotional tactic.

Clusters

An affinity group should strive to be a part of a cluster of 5-10 diverse affinity groups. Each cluster should have its own flag to serve as a rally point. These flags, distinguishable by different patterns or colors, would be used as markers. The purpose of these markers is to serve as a point of retreat, or simply as a visual aid if a person(s) is severed from an affinity group. Each cluster

should be able to function as its own entity. To facilitate this, affinity groups should strive towards communication prior to attendance at the action.

Clusters naturally form based on trust relationships between diverse individuals and collectives, and should continue by these means. This being said, the general meeting of the Black Bloc should still be used as an opportunity for practical networking; such as what specialized affinity groups are needed to complete the offense, defense, and support of a cluster, enabling the cluster a fully functioning body. When a pre-organized cluster decides that it is lacking in certain of these categories, and when that cluster feels comfortable incorporating a relevant at-large affinity group into their fold, then by all means they should do so. Here, the more balanced and self-contained we can make the various clusters the better. And, the more affinity groups are connected with larger functioning clusters, the more effective and secure the overall action will be.

Each cluster should take responsibility for certain aspects of the Black Bloc as an entity. The basic options for a cluster to choose from should be 1.) perimeter clusters, 2.) at-large clusters and 3) reserve clusters (*reserve clusters are discussed below in the section titled 'reserves'). The organization of the clusters into the above roles should be done at the general meeting of the Black Bloc, before the spokes/a-tac meeting.

The Black Bloc as a physical entity in motion should be defined by the formations of four perimeter clusters. One taking its position at the front, another at the rear, and the other two on the right and left. As mentioned above, each of these four perimeter clusters should be equipped with a distinct flag, so as to provide an obvious rallying point.

These perimeter clusters must take responsibility for maintaining a tight line of security around all edges of the Bloc as a whole. Specifically, they should concern themselves with the section which they are directly situated (front, rear, left, right).

It is also desirable that the various defensive and offensive affinity groups and persons of each perimeter cluster work in organized conjunction with each other during times of need. For example, if the Bloc finds it necessary to retreat from a given position, all persons from within the effected perimeter cluster and all noncluster/at-large cluster folks carrying defensive equipment such as shields should maintain a position in the rear, facing the enemy, in order to cover the retreat from rubber bullets, bean bags, etc. Likewise, during offensive maneuvers, all persons equipped with the relevant offensive gear should place themselves in the front, as should a limited number of shield bearers in order to limit the effectiveness of the enemy baton. When necessary, relevant reinforcements from the other perimeter clusters should be prepared to move into the fray. However, this should only be done when absolutely necessary in that it is always desirable to maintain a strong defensive perimeter around the Bloc as a whole. This is all common sense of course.

At-large clusters should maintain positions within the space created by the formations of the four perimeter clusters. They should act according to their own direction, yet be prepared to reinforce the perimeter clusters, if attacked. Also, a major task for the at-large clusters should be the organization of charging lines prepared to go over and through police/military defensive positions when and if desirable and/or necessary.

Towards this goal, it may prove desirable to utilize tactics previously practiced by (among others) German black blocs. Namely that the interior of the Bloc be organized by straight lines (from right to left), each line being one or two affinity groups. In turn, affinity groups forming an at-large cluster should consciously position themselves in successive lines. Such lines make for

tighter internal security, while clearly allowing for the Bloc to conduct sustained and successive charges against the enemy if and when such an action becomes necessary.

Property related affinity groups, be they connected with an at-large cluster, or independent, should be allowed free access in and out of the body of the Bloc by the relevant perimeter clusters as necessary.

The organization, or rather ability to call for the practice of such above discussed maneuvers, should often be expected to emanate from the g-tacs as manifest through the cooperation of affinity groups. For it will be the g-tacs who are generally most informed about the overall combat situation, and positioning of the Bloc. This is a tactical practice that the g-tacs should be prepared to responsibly facilitate.

All and all, the further incorporation of the above cluster model can be expected to result in ourselves achieving a higher level of immediate situational tactical ability than we currently possess. In addition, the demonstration of such abilities can be expected to frighten and demoralize the enemy.

Reconnaissance and Communication

It is necessary that the Bloc contains a sophisticated system of combat reconnaissance and communications. Reconnaissance should be conducted by pairs and/or affinity groups on bicycles equipped with radios and/or cell phones. In turn, the general tactical facilitation core should also be in possession of radios and/or cell phones. Throughout the action, reconnaissance teams should be scouting out all possible avenues of Bloc travel and consistently be reporting back to the g-tacs. This way, the mobilization of the Bloc will be able to be conducted with a reasonable level of educated decisiveness.

Other elements of the reconnaissance folk should be operating in action zones not immediately in the vicinity of the Bloc. The purpose of these is to keep the Bloc informed on the general situation of the broader action, and in turn, be able to notify the g-tacs of potential hot spots where Bloc presence is required.

Individual affinity groups who are in possession of radios should be informed as to the channels on which such communications will occur. This way the Bloc as a whole will be generally informed in regards to the broader situation.

Also, non-Black Bloc affinity groups involved in acts of civil disobedience should also be informed as to the channels of radio operation as well as the numbers of the relevant cell phones, so as to allow them the ability to call in for assistance when and where necessary.

Finally, as alluded to above, persons directly involved in reconnaissance should be expected to emanate out of the various clusters. However, a more desirable method would be for a whole affinity group to converge on the action prepared to act as a specialized cell in and of itself. Preferably this group would reside in the city in which the action is taking place, in that such persons would be in a better position to scout such already known urban terrain. In addition, those who choose to act in a communications role need to have radio skills. Various codes and channels to use should be discussed only with other Bloc members who hold radios. There are several tactics which can be used when doing communications. Each cluster should arrive to the action with methods for communicating internally.

Reserves

Historically many battles have been won by the situational deployment of reserves as a tactical force. This tactic has traditionally been practiced and proven successful by the United States military and police departments. The use of a reserve force is not currently a tactic adopted by the North American Black Bloc. It is important that we consider this tactic as one that could potentially enable us to better combat the brawn of the State.

The State has always had the advantage over us when it comes to brute force. Their ability to use reserves, bringing in busses full of fresh, new, geared up soldiers, will always be a threat to us. We, on the other hand, spend hours/days fighting with the same gear and little, if any, relief from our strains. In all fairness, we must study the military tactics employed by State forces and adopt those elements which are relevant, effective, and consistent with our beliefs as Anarchists.

The potential use of Black Bloc reserves could prove empowering for several reasons. One being that the use of reserves has historically proven to be successful. Second, imagine the psychological effects this somewhat sophisticated tactic would hold over minds of the State. Both these points being said, this does not mean that reserves should always be used when a Black Bloc has presence at an action, it is only to say that such possibilities can be discussed during the general meetings of the Bloc. Deciding whether reserves will be used should occur in planning, before the acute manifestation of the action at hand.

When a reserve force is organized at an action, they can be used when the larger Bloc is surrounded by police. In this circumstance, the reserves are called in to fight a police line from the other side, resulting in the police being surrounded by the Bloc as a whole. In addition, reserves can be used to hold a location for the larger Bloc to later use as a destination for retreat. Sending in a smaller number of reserves could also be ideal for added force to push through a police line or barricade.

The U.S. Army holds one third of their people back as use for reserves. This is an ideal number for a fighting force that can make a strong push when an optimal battle point is reached. With this in mind, when the Black Bloc reaches over one thousand, it would be desirable to hold 300 or so in reserve. This number should change with proportion. If the Bloc reaches two thousand, numbers held in reserve should reach about 600. If the Bloc is less than one thousand, no reserve should be posted. With such small numbers, a reserve force would only result in the general weakening of the Bloc when we need all able bodies for immediate release on the streets.

There are pros and cons for our Bloc to discover when and if there is a decision to use a reserve force. These must be recognized, and therefore it is important that options be discussed. Cityscape (i.e. are the roads narrow or wide?), Bloc/police size, and the situation of the action on hand (are large portions of the city occupied by non-violent lockdowns or are police/national guard free to roam the urban terrain?) must be weighed. This should all occur at the general meetings of the Bloc. The details of forming a reserve, if any, and means of communication should be discussed after the election of the g-tacs at the spokes/a-tac meeting. Following the election, such sensitive information can be worked out at a g-tac meeting where only those with an immediate interest are present.

This meeting should establish the location of the inactive reserves, as well as radio/cell communication procedures. This reserve force should maintain radio/cell communication with the body of the Bloc by communicating with the g-tacs. Decision to mobilize should be placed in the hands of the g-tacs. Note that the g-tacs receive their information on the seriousness of combat

and the need for reserves from cells of the larger Bloc. The g-tac's decision to mobilize a number of inactive reserves is given when groups within the larger Bloc call for backup. Relying on this is important in order to consider the many needs of the active members of the Black Bloc.

Deployment (where and how many) of the reserves should be left to the g-tacs. Specifics of how to meet this deployment through which streets to take, etc., should be left to the affected affinity groups. When speed becomes an issue, the elected a-tacs within the effected affinity groups should be prepared to make educated suggestions (which those affected are free to adopt or not) . The exact location of the reserve forces should not be revealed to the Bloc as a whole. The only people who should be informed of their exact location should be the g-tacs. It is also suggested that location of the reserves are formally decided upon at the last moments, when the position is soon to be held. This is necessary in that the common knowledge of their location would expected to result in this information leaking into police hands through common infiltration techniques. In turn, this knowledge would almost certainly result in the State (police) attacking our isolated forces.

All reserve forces should be divided into reserve clusters of roughly fifty persons each and be strategically placed around the action zone. Reserve clusters of fifty would be desirable in that such a number is small enough to maintain optimal mobility and non-visibility (to the searching eyes of the State), while being large enough to maintain a minimum of self-contained fighting ability. Such a reserve cluster would be large enough to fight their way through a regular police line if necessary (one row deep 24 across or two rows deep/12 across each), to reunite, when called for, with the larger Bloc. Dividing these forces into such smaller, more manageable reserve clusters, allows for them to be called in as needed. It essentially skips the step taken to divide numbers of the reserved Bloc, and allows for greater security in the event that reserve locations are discovered by the State (where it is possible that one cluster is uncovered by the State, it is unlikely that all will be).

As alluded to above, it is not always necessary when reserves are needed, to call all of their existing numbers. The further division of these reserves into smaller clusters allows them to be called in based on geographic proximity and/or required force, and will result in optimal mobility.

When a relatively large number of reserves are called in, say three clusters of fifty, they could converge on the acute scene of battle from several directions. When properly utilized, such tactics could be expected to confuse and stifle the State's comprehension of the developing combat situation. It is also conceivable that such tactics could be coordinated so as such enemy forces are effectively flanked, thereby forcing the enemy into retreat, or routing them entirely.

When the reserve force is inactive, a low profile must be maintained. They should keep a distance that places them away from acute attack, while being close enough so that the police cannot easily break their reemerging with the rest of the Bloc. The distance the reserve clusters fall back from the larger Bloc could be just a few city blocks, but nonetheless should be decided by the reserves clusters themselves, with g-tac input.

Lettering of the reserve clusters would be beneficial for g-tacs to better manage the location of these reserves. For example, reserve cluster B resides on the East side of the larger Black Bloc, and the g-tacs know this. The g-tacs are then able to call for reserve cluster B, (simply by referring to 'cluster B') without giving an extraneous amount of directions and information over the radio/cell, therefore resulting in less information for the State to get their hands on. We should assume always that there are infiltrators leeching around us, and the word 'reserves' should never be used when communicating in public.

Prior to the reemerging with the Black Bloc, combat with the State should be avoided by these reserves, unless in self-defense, or unavoidable. Maintaining a low profile is vital. It is desirable that the reserves de-Bloc and become 'regular.' Black Bloc clothing should be worn underneath 'regular' clothing. This enables the reserves to blend in better and become less distinguishable as members of the Black Bloc to police helicopters and informants of the State. When they are called for by the g-tacs, the reserve cluster(s) should remove their 'regular' clothing to reveal their true colors underneath. The 'regular' clothing could be discarded and thrown away. Keeping a change of clothing on your person for later use is, of course, a personal decision. However, anything which is not of absolute necessity, should not be carried.

The absolute condition necessary for reserve effectiveness is deployment speed. Without this, they may be prevented from reemerging with the larger Bloc and/or fail to reach the scene of acute action at a time when their force can swing the immediate struggle in our favor. For this purpose the reserves should be organized as a sort of light infantry. They should possess only the minimum of riot gear to refrain from their being weighted down. This means that they should eliminate gear which would obstruct quick lightweight movement, such as helmets, shields, heavy body armor, or large backpacks. They should be equipped only with gas masks or vinegar-soaked bandannas, and a minimum of offensive gear (as individuals and affinity groups see necessary). The only exception to this should be the medics, who should carry a skeleton assortment of related equipment. It would be ideal if all reserves were equipped with bicycles so that the greatest level of mobility could be reached. Such bicycles can be used for offense and defense, and must be discardable. However, in the absence of such bikes, reserve clusters should be composed of affinity groups/individuals who are in good cardiovascular shape. These forces must be prepared to run up to a mile at full speed, and then immediately engage in battle. This is something to keep in mind when such forces are being initially organized.

When and where this reserve is utilized correctly with speed and strength, it can be expected to cause surprise and demoralization among the ranks of the enemy. The very fact that we demonstrate these fairly sophisticated maneuvers can be expected to result in the enemy questioning their personal security and apparent tactical superiority. It is just such objective and subjective shifts and developments at the acute scene of conflict that can and will lend itself to the swinging of fighting momentum to our side. Of course, this positive development can and will only be sustained if the Bloc holds fast in the face of the increased police ferociousness and brutality in the conflict at hand. This situation should be expected to occur in direct relation to police feeling that they are in real danger due to our utilization of serious tactics. Here, one should recall that all animals are most dangerous when they are backed in a corner and sense their own demise.

Additional Security Precautions: Maps, Radios, IDs, Names, Etc.

While it is sensible that all affinity groups (all persons for that matter) have a detailed map of the area of operation, it has been proven that such maps must absolutely be marked only in code. During the R2k action in Philly, at least two Black Bloc individuals were arrested in a preemptive strike approximately forty-five minutes after a Black Bloc meeting (at which they were in attendance) and an hour and a half prior to the demonstration proper. On their persons were maps of the downtown equipped with penned-in locations of the various Black Bloc emergency convergence sites as well as areas where the Bloc intended to focus their activity as well as loca-

tions where they planned on marching in order to accumulate material for barricade construction when and if the day's developments demanded.

These maps were not encrypted, and therefore, by detaining, searching and subsequently recovering these maps from these individuals the police achieved the advantage of knowing the intended movement of the Bloc before it happened. It is impossible to know exactly what effect this intelligence had on the day's events (as it is also difficult to surmise whether or not the police had informants at the prior meeting as some have maintained), but regardless, this mishap represented a major slip in security. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that from now on all such maps be encrypted so as to avoid this slip up.

In addition, all radio communication should be conducted with the use of preplanned codes and frequencies where and whenever possible. All such codes and frequencies should be made known to all parties who have a legitimate interest in maintaining radio communication with us.

Also, it should go without saying that nobody, under any circumstances, should carry any form of ID or personal contact information. If you get arrested with this information it will only be used to fuck you.

Lastly, do not refer to yourself or others you know by your real full name while in the vicinity of the action. The less we make public our actual identities the better off we are regarding possible legal action and State harassment.

Communiques

It is important that all Black Bloc actions be followed with a comprehensive communique, which is whenever possible composed by a large representative volunteer committee from the various affinity groups. This communique should discuss the action in terms of why it occurred, why specific conflicts/tactics developed and how this immediate struggle is connected with the broader Anarchist movement towards a liberated and creative world.

To achieve this, a post action meeting should be arranged at a secure location. The details of when and where it will be held should be decided upon at the pre-action meeting of elected a-tacs/spokespeople (after all other issues are resolved) or at the general pre-action meeting of the entire Black Bloc (also after all other issues are resolved.

Such communiques are important in regards to reaching out to the broader populace, as well as in debunking the demonization of our activities as can be expected to emanate out of the corporate press (and also often from the Liberal Left and orthodox/conservative Communist press).

In addition to a post-action communique, it is also important that separate communiques be composed prior to the action and distributed during the action. These should also discuss the reasons why we take to the (our) streets the way we do as well as address the broader social issues which brought us to the action at hand. The individual affinity groups should facilitate these. In turn the affinity groups and/or relevant support persons/support affinity groups should take the responsibility of distributing them during the action to the public and the Left-independent media as they see fit. All such communiques should be signed with the name of the responsible affinity group or individual as to maintain accountability. All anonymous statements must be assumed to emanate out of the bowels of State, with the purpose of discrediting us.

Anarchist Principles of Tactical Leadership

The idea of setting up such a democratic chain of command is not to diminish the free spontaneity of the Bloc, but is simply to increase the general mobility and fighting ability of the Black Bloc during time of need.

The primary functions of the above discussed general tactical facilitation core (g-tacs) will simply be to guide the direction of Bloc movement and the ability to call for the deployment of reserve clusters. In regards to the former, this would minimize regrettable time consuming debates as to "which way to go at various intersections." The more we can avoid such time-consuming indecisiveness the better, as such slowdowns carry with them the potential to put the whole Bloc in danger of police surrounding and subsequent immobilization. And given the forces of the State's advantage in weaponry, immobilization is akin to defeat. Such was the case during the A16 action on Monday, where shortly thereafter the tail end of the Bloc (who was then immersed with non-Bloc elements) was cordoned off by police and subsequently arrested.

In regards to the latter, such ability to call in reserves at relevant times could be the difference between immediate victory or defeat. And in this case it is necessary to place this ability in the hands of the elected g-tacs in order to guard against any misuse brought on by agent provocateurs, and/or to prevent general time-consuming tactical debates which the heat of direct conflict does not allow for.

With this proposed organizational model, a relatively small Black Bloc (containing no reserves) numbering roughly 200 would have the effectiveness of twice that number in regards to our present abilities. And likewise, a larger Bloc numbering 700, with a reserve force of 300, would dramatically gain in tactical ability.

Physical Training In Between Actions

In between actions it is of vast importance that we increase our physical abilities through the practice of regular exercise, muscle building and self-defense training. At present, the Black Bloc is considerably lacking in certain of these compartments. This is true to the point where individuals who possess muscle tone are sometimes distrusted as potential police agents.

The fact is, if we are going to defend ourselves against the forces of the State, we should take our physical conditioning at least as seriously as our enemy does, and preferably more seriously. The reactionary police and military are aware of the importance of this in regards to their own effectiveness, and so should we.

Pre-emptive Actions

The forces of the State are regularly known to take pre-emptive measures against demonstrators prior to their actions. They regularly infiltrate us and make arrests before any general demonstration or acts of civil disobedience begin. They also start their tactical mobilization long before the sun comes up prior to the demonstrations on any particular day. In order to neutralize this advantage, limited elements presently engaged in Black Bloc actions should independently take countermeasures. Here sabotage of police (and when necessary, National Guard) equipment is our best bet.

If one of the primary advantages of the forces of the State is their mechanized mobility, then we should strike out against these repressive tools by effective, clandestine means.

Separate affinity groups under their own direction should voluntarily coordinate such actions. These groups should number very few in relation to the broader Bloc, and should not take part in any subsequent above ground actions thereafter during the day's events. In addition, the intent and identity of these groups should obviously remain absolutely secret to the Bloc as a whole.

There can be no chain of command between them and the rest. They must operate completely on their own, voluntarily, and by structural models of their choosing (as long as they are consistent with Anarchist principles of organization). Such clandestine activity, if performed effectively, holds the possibility of considerably disrupting the abilities of the enemy, and therefore can substantially place new advantages with the Black Bloc.

Preparations For Increased State Repression

The stronger our movement becomes, the more likely it will be that the State will more thoroughly criminalize Anarchism, specifically of the Black Bloc variety. As we speak, we must assume that the FBI has already compiled a dossier on many of us. We must also assume that many of our local Anarchist organizations and collectives are already being watched and that infiltrators are working on penetrating our ranks; in certain cases we have no doubt that they already have.

In addition, as our movement progresses into more serious phases, we must anticipate a much more violent State reaction against us. This clearly occurred in the late 60s and we must fully understand that it will happen again. This tendency is already developing a clear trajectory. The shooting of three demonstrators at the Gothenburg protests, and the killing of Carlo in Genoa illustrates this as an undeniable fact.

As committed revolutionaries of practical mind, we must prepare for eventualities. This is no game. In such we must form clandestine networks wherein we can maintain the ability to exist as an underground fighting force if and when the circumstances demand. Such an underground force must entail, among other things, access to alternative identification, known and trusted safe houses, friends in strategic positions, access to materials of necessary subsistence (i.e. food, medicine, etc.), an underground means of communication, ways to pass unseen through international borders and the know-how to continue our militant activities underground.

The fact of the matter is, when our above-ground activities draw the response of police shotgun blasts, the mass long term incarceration of our militants, or when it all becomes a socially acceptable farce within the blanket of the spectacle, then we must be prepared to meet the challenges of the State by other means; still militant and concrete, yet underground.

Furthermore, it must be understood that when extreme crisis situations occur, the kind which would force us underground, there will not be the time to organize the basic means of such an existence. Likewise, when the greater social breakdown of the presently dominant system occurs, there will not be time to organize a solid popular fighting force. Therefore, we must prepare now for that which we recognize as an inevitable outcome of our revolutionary activities.

We must and will attack the leviathan head on, then from the shadows, and then again face-to-face. The only result can be social revolution.

Here we would like to remind you that firearms are still legal, as of print, and easily attainable in the United States.

Development Of Our Social and Political Understandings

Lastly, we must practice self-discipline in regards to our continuing practical and theoretical studies of social and political ideas during the times in between actions. For the Anarchist movement, as stated by Bakunin, is driven by "the instinct to rebel," but it is also done so by the conscious emergence of a revolutionary people. The folk who make up the Black Bloc should be examples not just of Anarchist fighting courage, but also of Anarchist awareness. We should study the histories of the Paris Commune, Revolutionary Ukraine, Kronstadt, Spain, as well as the Paris revolt of '68. In addition we should read the writings of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Mahkno, Emma Goldman, Meltzer, Guy Debord, and Bookchin to name but a few.

In a word, we must expand our relevant understandings in order to completely transcend the oppressive indoctrination that the State has perpetuated on us since the time of our birth. We must exercise our capacity for understanding in order to realize our creative consciousness. And finally, we must strive to further develop Anarchist theory in directions directly relevant to the contemporary modes of neo-Capitalism; namely that of radical commodification and consumerism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this communique is put forward with the intent to spark the constructive development of our revolutionary abilities. It is not meant to be authoritative as much as it is intended to facilitate a positive internal dialogue. However, it is our hope that at least some of the above suggestions are seriously debated and then adopted by our fellow Black Bloc Anarchists.

We encourage you to replicate and distribute this communique however you choose (as long as it is not done for Capitalist profit).

In Solidarity,

-The Green Mountain Anarchist Collective

-Anti-Racist Action

1996: Two Thousand March Against Democratic National Convention & In Support of Political Prisoners[2]

A coalition calling itself "Not On The Guest List" organized a march on the Democratic National Convention [Chicago 1996] in solidarity with domestic political prisoners. Participants included Vermonter David Dillinger (Chicago 7) and Dennis Banks (American Indian Movement). The march was supported by a several hundred strong Black Bloc [largely organized by the Love & Rage Revolutionary Anarchist Federation]. The procession of protesters quickly strayed from its approved parade route so as to pass directly through the heart of a Chicago housing project. There it picked up hundreds of local supporters. Upon entering the "security zone" surrounding the United Center (site of the DNC) the protesters were met with hundreds of police (pedestrian

[2] This article was first published in the Fifth Column Press, Marlboro VT 1996. Fifth Column Press was briefly the leftist publication of a group called The Liberation Movement which Van Deusen was a member of. Fellow members/participants of the Liberation Movement included David Croken, Tino Ferraro, Katie Steward, Ariane Burke, and Parisa "Dove" Norouzi, (who went on to co-found Empower DC).

and mounted) which blocked their entrance to the convention grounds. Thousands of police in riot gear were warehoused just blocks away.

At that point Dillinger led a sit-in across an intersection [in front of one of the convention entrances] while elements of the anarchist bloc formed a protective and confrontational counter-line to the police line [which faced it]. The police dared not break up the rally; the [anarchist] counter-line was not challenged and the protest continued.

After a nearly two hour stand-off, the 'official' leadership of the march decided to call for an end of the protest. David Dillinger proclaimed "We have proven our point. Let us go home and protest again tomorrow." With that many, including those sitting across the intersection, left. On the other hand, anarchists and local supporters from nearby housing project refused to give up their counter-line or the streets.

Hundreds of people held the streets in the vicinity for several more hours into the evening. At one point a large fire was lit in the road. An American flag and cardboard effigies of prisons were burned. Still the police dared not attack the protesters (the world was watching…).

Eventually the number of protesters grew dangerously small. With this realization the anarchists (who were the bulk of the remaining demonstrators) marched in unity several blocks away. There they can in contact with a multitude of delegates seeking to leave the convention on busses. Without hesitation these activists (now numbering a couple hundred) blocked the streets a prevented the busses from moving. All this occurred while angry chants of "FREE LEONARD PELTIER, FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL, FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS, END CORPORATE WELFARE, SMASH THE FASCIST STATE, were echoing through the crowd.

As police began to arrive in large numbers, the demonstrators swarmed through the streets in a frenzy in the direction of downtown (which was about a mile away). Following a change of mounted police, the group became divided. Out of the mayhem a group of 50 regrouped and continued marching on the city. Police kept vigil but did not block their passage.

For this bloc of 50 the first stop was the former sight of the statue commemorating the police who were killed at the Haymarket incident in 1886. The statue was blown up by the Weathermen to open the Days of Rage in 1969, and blown up again by the Weather Underground in 1970. There the protesters spent several minutes paying respects to their comrades in struggle who came before.

Next, the group came across a restaurant which was playing host to a DNC delegate/congressional party. There they verbally brought their message of discontent to party goers. Following the mass arrival of police, the protesters moved on.

The demonstrators continued to Michigan Avenue (the Art Institute) where JFK Jr. was holding an event for his Democratic cronies. The protesters, now massively outnumbered by police, attempted to storm the party but failed. Their attempts to break police lines resulted in several grappling contests between them and the pigs. The anarchists did however manage to taint the Democrats made-for-tv evening by vocally and visually putting forward a voice of opposition to the capitalist ruling party and showed that The People can and do have the desire & ability to bring their message to the streets.

An hour after arriving on the scene, obviously exhausted by the days and nights events, the anarchists decided to break down into small affinity groups and quickly vacate the area in order to meet at a secure prearranged location to further plan actions for the following day(s). No official arrests were made.

48 hours later law enforcement illegally raided the Counter Convention (in retaliation?). Throughout the day police swept the city and made close to 20 arrests of suspected activists and leftwing sympathizers. Three people had to be hospitalized as a result of this police crackdown on freedom of expression. A law suit is presently being organized against the City of Chicago.

1999: Anti-WTO Protests &The Battle of Seattle

Seattle is the action which has put the present [2002] social protest movement on the map of North American mass consciousness.[3] It did not mark the beginning (or end) of a movement. Rather it represented the first significant expression of social unrest against the capitalist slave system in the U.S.A. in a generation. With the joining in of the North American population, the movement against the contemporary modes of capitalism has truly become international, and everywhere.[4]

Seattle was a glorious rebirth of a demand for an end to the insulting and deadly march of corporate power. The world is in the hands of irresponsible, money starved vampire organizations who feed themselves by the selling and trade of increasingly trivial and noxious products. The most powerful of these organizations are the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). The functioning fact of these intensely authoritarian, abstract and elitist organizations unquestionably warrants a protest, if not a global civil war.

To begin to completely understand the significance of Seattle, one must first understand the international movement against neo-Liberalism in which it is situated. America is, in fact, a rather late bloomer within the scope of protests pertaining to the global problems endorsed and pursued by world Capitalist organizations. Protests against the WTO and the IMF and other like organizations ran rampant throughout the world long before Seattle. In 1998, over 28 countries held anti-Capitalist protests on June 18th (J18), timed to coincide with a meeting of the Group of Eight (G8). The most notable among these were in India and Brazil where in the former, hundreds of thousands took to the streets. During that same year the United States itself began to rumble with protests, small riots, capitalist property-related arsons and bombings (most of these were claimed by the underground Earth Liberation Front).[5]

[3] This essay was written in 2001 and was first printed in The Black Bloc Papers, Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002.

[4] Personal note from the auther: I was not in Seattle or even North America when it hit. At the moment I was living in Seville, Spain. By the fall of 1999 I was vaguely aware of the planned protest (a flyer made its way to the farm I was working on in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont), but I saw no reason to ascribe historic dimensions to this looming protest. When the demonstrations did hit, I was as surprised as the rest of the world when it was front page news in the Spanish newspapers. In my neighborhood in Spain (Alameda de Hercules) the local branch of the Socialist Party organized discussions about the actions (which I attended). I also took it upon myself to spray-paint a large statement of solidarity with the protesters on our local government building.

[5] Personal note from the auther: The Statute of Limitations having past, I will say here that I myself took part in an Earth Liberation Front action in 1998 in West Nyack NY (which is the home town of my mother, Cheryl "Partridge" Van Deusen, and the entire maternal side of my family). The action, which included CP, targeted a developer who was clearing woods in order to construct expensive upper middle class homes. The woods in question were located in the edge of a working class neighborhood and were used by locals (including my personal friends and family) for outdoor recreation. The action included the pulling up of survey flags, spray-painting ELF graffiti, and the sabotaging of heavy equipment. An ELF communique (which I no longer possess) was sent to the local daily newspaper, but as far as I know was never published.

In addition, large sectors of the world were and continue to be in a process of de-stabilization due to popular uprisings against a forced Capitalist program (i.e. the continuing Zapatista revolution in S\southern Mexico, the popular uprisings in Bolivia and Ecuador, the increasing riots in Europe, and serious workers strikes in Russia).

At N30 (November 30 1999 in Seattle) up to 100,000 people from within organized labor and the Left took to the streets in order to put forth their opposition to the World Trade Organization. Within this vast array of demonstrators, an Anarchist Black Bloc took to the streets in order to inflict material damage upon corporate banks/businesses, correctly viewed by them as real incarnations of the economically and culturally homogenizing Capitalist force we are beholden to. The Bloc, following police attacks on non-violent protesters, proceeded to move through the streets of Seattle smashing bank and corporate windows. In some cases the contents of the business in question were expropriated from the building and subsequently left in the streets. State officials contend that the Bloc inflicted $10,000,000 in damage. This is most likely an overestimation designed to blame the Anarchists for damage caused directly by the police force, and at any rate is most likely just misinformation.

The main thing to remember when thinking of N30 is that it was an action of such scope and power that it caught the American public by surprise, thereby giving birth to a momentum which has continued to provide a positive revolutionary impetus within the confines of American society.

That being said, it did not materialize out of nowhere. Rather it was the flower of a decade of domestic organizing and hard won movement and growth. But still, Seattle marked the time when it all came together. We had our own sophisticated Independent Media Center (IMC). We had training and years of proven tactics at our disposal. We had dedicated radical legal teams. We had an intended program of 'jail solidarity.' We had the rank and file union workers turning out in common cause. We had the radical environmentalists. We had a diversity of tactics ranging from legal rallies to port side strikes/shutdowns, from non-violent sit-ins/blockades to physical self-defense and corporate property destruction.

A significant part of this mass mobilization was organized through directly democratic and participatory means via open spokes-councils (these pre-planning meetings were open to all protesters and functioned through the vocal participation of spokespeople from the numerous affinity groups involved). In short, we finally had the functioning mass coalition that has been lacking in the United States since the Great Depression of the 1930s. We finally had a chance; and for that we could not be ignored.

In all, the protests consisted of four main days which coincided with the scheduled 'behind closed doors' meetings of the WTO delegates. The delegates' stated task was to map out an economic strategy for the new century/millennium. The direct action oriented protesters' stated task was to shut down the undemocratic and anti-worker proceedings. Given the mutually exclusive goals of these factions, it was clear that only one or the other would succeed. And in this case, we, the people, won.

The opening day of the WTO meetings (Tuesday, November 30th) were met with thousands of direct action protesters occupying all key access routes to the planned site of the meeting. Police responded with violence (tear gas, rubber, wooden and plastic bullets, batons, etc.) but the protesters would not relinquish control of the streets. Elements of the Black Bloc met police assaults with acts of physical self-defense and counter-aggression. Bottles, rocks, etc. were hurled at advancing police lines. Dumpsters were dragged out onto the street and lit on fire. Also, a

highly mobile Black Bloc roved the downtown smashing corporate property and demolishing all police vehicles and limousines that they came upon. In addition a 50,000 strong Trade Union march slowly made its way through the city. Of those, a smaller number of the rank and file (primarily from the Longshoremen, Sheet Metal Workers, Steelworkers and, of course, the Industrial Workers of the World—the IWW Wobblies) diverged from the sanctioned parade course and made their way to the front lines of confrontation.

The result of these large numbers and demonstrated diverse actions was that only 350 of the expected 3,000 WTO delegates were able to attend the opening session. Subsequently the opening session was cancelled. The price? Several hundred injuries and 68 arrests.

The following two days were also filled with thousands of protesters engaging in acts of civil disobedience, this despite a government declaration of the downtown as a "no protest zone." In response to the continuing militancy of the demonstrators, additional police authorities were brought into the fray including hundreds of National Guard troops. This time was marked by severe police brutality more than often directed against nonviolent protesters. Subsequently the reports of injuries skyrocketed as did the numbers arrested. On December first alone more than 500 were incarcerated.

By day four -Friday, December 3rd- the city and the WTO meetings were in disarray. While city officials and Capitalist delegates seemed to be disheartened, the demonstrators remained committed. On that day a labor march of more than 10,000 defiantly paraded through downtown in protest of the "emergency" ordinances banning free speech and free assembly. This was done in conjunction with other direct actions which targeted WTO delegates. At the end of the day (actually sometime into the night) it was publicly announced that the meetings had utterly broken down due to internal rifts (and external pressure) and that no 'progress' was made concerning the economic agenda of the coming year… The meeting was shut down.

The aftermath? Again the poor and working class the world over were reminded that the ruling class is not omnipotent, not even in their primary home nation. They can be defeated when we stand united. As a final thought let it be said that the United States is the home of Capitalism, and to have gained a serious foothold against this beast in its own lair is a victory, a clear signal to history that the time for change is coming.

2000: A16: A March On The Capitol

Between April 15th and April 17th [2000] over 40,000 people converged on Washington DC to protest against global Capitalism and specifically against the continuing practices and policies of the International Monetary Fund/World Bank (IMF/WB) which are consistently devoid of any substantive environmental concerns and are clearly in contrast to the interests of the world's poor and working classes.[6] The protests were called by various elements of the Left in response to meetings being held by these organizations which were to take place during this time at the World Bank building.[7]

[6] This essay was written in 2001 and was first printed in The Black Bloc Papers, Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002.

[7] Personal note from the auther: I attended these rallies. I made the decision to attend days before the demonstrations took place, feeling that they would be historically significant as the next large action following Seattle. At the time I was briefly working as a maintenance dispatcher in an apartment complex in Haverstraw NY; a job given to me by good friend Jessie Isaacs as a means to build up a few bucks in order to hit the road. Jessie went on to become

As with most recent [2002] large demonstrations, the protest constituency was composed of three elements:

1. A large number of Liberal/Reformists from within Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and organized labor (i.e. AFL/CIO). This contingent was present in mass on April 16th, and primarily concerned itself with a legal rally at the Washington Monument. Their number can be estimated at 30,000.

2. A significant number of Left Liberals, Greens, Socialists, Communists, environmentalists and Anarchists. This contingent, organized in part through the Direct Action Network, utilized a participatory consensus based means of democratic organization and was committed to following through with acts of non-violent civil disobedience. This group's stated goal was prevent the meetings from taking place. Their number, as of April 16th, can be estimated at between 10,000-15,000.

3. A tightly knit grouping of militant Anarchists known commonly as the Black Bloc. This contingent was organized internally through the various revolutionary Anarchist federations and informal networks. As a group it also utilized directly democratic, consensus based organizational means, while maintaining a fluid yet distinct identity/relationship with the larger protest contingents. Tactically, they hoped to maintain themselves as a highly mobile regiment capable of absorbing and reversing police and/or National Guard assaults if deemed necessary. Disrupting the status quo of Capitalism was definitely a conscious goal. Their numbers on April 16th can be estimated somewhere slightly over 1000 and somewhat less on April 17th.

The combined tactics of these three groupings culminated on Sunday, April 16th with large parts of the city being effectively occupied by demonstrators. All the obvious above ground access routes to the site of the meetings were cut off. Police were prevented from moving freely throughout these areas. Additionally police assaults on non-violent blockaders from the second contingent were, on several occasions, beaten back by physical means by the Black Bloc. By nightfall, 40 were arrested. However, the protests failed to shut down the meetings. This can partially be attributed to the government's likely use of restricted underground access ways into the convention center as a means of transporting IMF/WB delegates.

While April 16th was the most effective day and involved the most people, actions were also conducted by small affinity groups during the week prior to the main event. Also, on April 15th a large march against the prison industrial complex involving a couple thousand people took place. This march lacked a formal Black Bloc. Subsequently, while in a state of peaceful disbursement, the police blockaded approximately 600 people from the rear of the march with relative ease. At that point the police proceeded to arrest (nearly) all of these protesters. To our knowledge, only

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the author of the book Seventy Thousand Words Between Strangers. So after work one day I took a Greyhound Bus to DC, alone. On April 15 I was caught up in a mass arrest of hundreds of protesters (there being no Black Bloc that day). I managed to escape, along with fellow anarchist Carlos Pecciotto of Chicago, by opening a manhole cover and descending into the city's sewer system. On the 16th I marched with the Black Bloc for the day where we clashed with police on a number of occasions. On the 17th, while fighting as part of the Black Bloc, I was arrested. Having ditched my ID, I took part in jail solidarity actions from inside the DC Jail. These actions included a hunger strike and non-cooperation with prison authorities. After five days we won; all being released without having to provide proof of identity and only being subject to a minor fine (which was either waived or paid by outside supporters).

two of these individuals escaped incarceration by descending into the sewer system through a manhole (they were both Black Bloc anarchists, one being this writer).

In addition, April 17th saw more mass protests. However, this day was marked by relatively heavy police repression (supported by the presence of the National Guard) and bloody street fighting between the Black Bloc and the State. By the end of the day, over 700 more people ended up in jail (bringing the several day total to 1350), including approximately 20 from within the Black Bloc. A total of three federal felony charges were filed, including at least one directed against a Black Bloc anarchist. What ensued was a 5 day period of jail resistance from within the penal system under the banner of 'Jail Solidarity.'

This strategy called for collective bargaining of release conditions, non-violent resistance/ non-cooperation, a building of respect and solidarity with the general prison population and functioned according to consensus. Of those arrested, 155 persons took part, including a small number [including myself] from the Black Bloc. The presence of the Bloc in jail proved important in that it curtailed what would have otherwise been a Liberal, Pacifist tone of the prisoner communiques. In the men's wing of the prison, such Anarchists helped (not without non-Bloc support) push the social/political analysis of the jailed activists in a more thorough/radical direction. This was achieved through the democratic consensus process by which the prisoners made all collective decisions including the official endorsements of composed messages to the outside. In this way the few individuals attached to the Bloc were able to block any motions which publicly endorsed simple reformism and/or ideological Pacifism.

Overall, the strategy of Jail Solidarity meet with relative success which included a lessening of charges and fines of $5 and the release of prisoners without having to present identification. The prisoners were released on April 21st and April 22nd. The A16 action is considered a success as it proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Seattle was not a fluke. Once again, thousands mobilized and confronted the Capitalist State while risking both physical harm and jail. In short, even though the IMF/WB was still able to meet, the demonstrations proved that such an arbitrary organization of the world economy towards the elitist ends of the ruling class cannot freely occur without popular resistance.

In addition, the activity of the Black Bloc proved effective in conjunction with other means of direct action. Importantly, the Bloc managed to make inroads into the consciousness of the larger social protest movement by providing non-violent activists physical protection from State brutality and by fighting fire with fire. The combined tactics of April 16th utterly demoralized the police, causing them relative confusion and immobilization.

2000: R2K: Philadelphia and The RNC

During the Republican National Convention (August 1-3 2000), between 7000 and 10,000 people (mostly left liberals, Greens, socialists, anarchists and communists) gathered to demonstrate against the rightwing policies of the Republican Party of the United States and their presidential nominee: George W. Bush.[8] The bulk of protest activity took place on July 29th and August 1st.[9]

[8] This essay was written in 2001 and was first printed in The Black Bloc Papers, Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002.

[9] Personal note from the auther: Myself and comrade Ali M of Detroit (a past writer for The Fifth Estate) was arrested in in downtown Philly, pre-emptively, after leaving a Black Bloc spokes council meeting and spent three

The first day was marked by an unpermitted march from downtown to the convention center and beyond. It was sponsored by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. This march attempted to draw attention to the plight of the urban poor. It was explicitly nonviolent and even went so far as to coerce protesters (through the use of parade marshals) to march in one lane of traffic and in single file. Although some persons later composing the more formal Black Bloc did take part in this social stroll, many chose to stand aside and save their energy for the following day's events.

This march resulted in no serious conflicts and no mass arrests. It even received 12 or so seconds of distorted CNN media coverage where it was claimed that 2-3000 (as opposed to the more accurate 7-10,000) were involved and that 'it appeared peaceful.' Other than that, the corporate media failed to address any issues the march hoped to bring to the public attention.

Day two was marked by mass acts of civil disobedience. The target of these actions centered around downtown Philadelphia (as opposed to the heavily guarded convention center located on the outskirts of town). There, thousands of protesters effectively shut down the city center, relying primarily upon non-violent tactics such as lockdowns and sit-ins across intersections. A smaller Black Bloc contingent numbering approximately 200 employed more confrontational methods including resisting arrest, throwing rocks at police lines, smashing luxury cars as well as police vehicles and spray painting of revolutionary messages.

The State responded with straight brutality. In addition to pre-emptive infiltrations and arrests (including approximately 70 at a political puppet-making warehouse), as well as the use of tear gas and billy clubs, jailed activists (numbering over 400 and including a small number from the Black Bloc) were subjected to harsh treatment as well as torture. At times, prisoners engaged in a hunger strike were cut off from any source of water. Access to attorneys was consistently denied. Others were threatened, hogtied and beaten. Bails were set excessively high regardless of the relatively minor misdemeanor charges filed against them. Some initially reached as high as a million dollars while the majority were between ten and twenty thousand dollars.

Despite the practice of 'jail solidarity' by approximately 150 prisoners, a significant number of protesters were not released until weeks after being arrested. In the aftermath of this action police commissioner John Timoney called for a federal investigation into the activities of protest organizations themselves. The idea here is to paint the activists as anti-social terrorists, and in that way justify large-scale legal crackdowns on all related above ground organizers that effectively fight against the status quo of global capitalism.

What makes R2K significant is the obvious collaboration of the mainstream political parties, police, corporate media and others in a joint effort to disrupt and misrepresent this growing social movement. Philadelphia is a Democratic city. The convention was being held by the Republicans. The two major local newspapers are owned by the same corporate assholes. The entire two days of protest were whitewashed and then criminalized by the large money interests through their media conglomerates and legal stooges. This, in conjunction with the continuing attempt to maximize the legal penalties inflicted upon arrested activists, represents a very real move by the state to coordinate a "containment" of the movement via, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

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days in jail before being released pending a court hearing on various charges. A day previous to this arrest we had the pleasure of meeting Johnny "Rotten" Lydon (of the Sex Pistols/PIL) at one of the early rallies. –As a side note to a footnote, I continue to be impressed with the fact that Johnny Rotten has publically stated that the most important album is Can's *Tago Mago*. Great fucking album. I have Erynn Sarno to thank for turning me on to Can.

While they may succeed in punishing some of our comrades, the state should be reminded of the words of the late Black Panther, Fred Hampton, "You can jail a revolutionary, but you can't jail the revolution."

Note: The Black Bloc and other protesters also mobilized against the DNC in Los Angeles. There, over 15,000 demonstrators took to the streets demanding more than the Democratic Party was willing to grant. As usual the Black Bloc fought with police.

2000: Communique From a Wanted Black Bloc Anarchist

On Monday, August 1 [2000], during the Republican National Convention, in the city of Philadelphia, I was arrested along with one other brother in a preemptive strike ostensibly aimed at those, like myself, who intended to protest the U.S. social/political system through means of direct and uncompromising action later that day.[10]

While walking down the sidewalk in downtown, we were surrounded by 10-15 bike cops and soon after put into custody at the Roundhouse jail complex. This all occurred an hour and a half prior to any known acts of civil disobedience, street fighting, corporate/private property destruction or legal demonstrations.

At the Roundhouse, I was charged with (1) Possession of instruments of crime, and (2) Possession of instruments of crime, conspiracy. My bail was eventually set at $10,000 [only due upon failure to appear in court], and on Wednesday, August 3, I was turned out pending further court hearings, despite the fact that I refused to sign my release forms.

SOLIDARITY

My court date is set for September 16th [2000]. By the time this communique is made public, I will already have refused to appear and a bench warrant will have been issued for my arrest.

I AM A REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHIST

As such, I do not recognize the authority of the State of Pennsylvania judicial system. I refuse to appear before them in order to plea my "innocence". In addition to being absurd, such an act would confirm a recognition of legitimacy upon them which I refuse to give. Besides, the court system is simply a tool of the State, and as such, it too is my sworn enemy. Therefore, my

[10] This communique was first published in We Dare Be Free in 2000. Personal note from the auther: I never did appear for my court date or any time after that. When the communique was written, it was my feeling (and that of other Black Bloc anarchists) that the state was gearing up for a much more oppressive conflict with the domestic left. While that conflict has greatly intensified, it did not reach the levels we expected. As for my political activity post this arrest, since a radical intensification of state oppression did not occur at the levels we were anticipating, since PA does not presently extradite for misdemeanor charges (such as those leveled against me), and since the bulk of my organizing work has since been focused largely in Vermont, it never proved necessary to organize activities in the shadows as a result of this issue. Even so, I have tried to stay clear of PA because of this pending warrant, and when I have been compelled to be in PA I have sought to keep a low profile. It is also worth mentioning that in 2001 I was also arrested in Columbus Ohio at a demonstration against the prison system. There I was charged with a class IV felony, destruction of government property. While those charges were reduced to misdemeanor levels, I ended up vacating the resulting probation requirements and therefore am wanted in the State of Ohio to this day, were I caught I would owe them three months in prison. Therefore Ohio is another state I seek to avoid, or stay under the radar in if and when I am compelled to step foot in it.

necessary relations to it will never be and can never be that of "innocence." To state it plainly, I am GUILTY; GUILTY of working towards the destruction of that very same court system which seeks to place judgement on me and others; GUILTY of working towards the absolute demise of the whole life denying State apparatus; GUILTY of dreaming of a liberated world where wo/men's consciousness and material relations will at last be free to develop creatively in a society of love, equality, abundance and direct participatory democracy. In a word, all I am willing to confer to Pennsylvania, the Federal Government, as well as any and all authoritarian, bureaucratic and innately oppressive STATES is the absolute hatred and rejection that all exploited people feel and know towards their natural enemies.

However, let it be known that my hatred runs only as deep as my love for humanity and the dream of complete Social Revolution.

Therefore, I have come to the decision to continue my small role in the ongoing social and political revolution by semi-underground means.

From struggle comes victory and dignity. Strength and courage to the Black Bloc.

—from somewhere in the New American Dawn. David

FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

2001: J20: DC and Inauguration Day

Inauguration Day, January 20th 2001 in Washington D.C.[11], was marked by the largest protests against the swearing in of a United States President since Richard Nixon in 1973. Of the more than 20,000 demonstrators, over 600 were composed of Black Bloc forces.[12]

The majority of the protesters were of your common leftist stock, with a small number composed of Democrats angered over what is widely viewed as a false or fixed election result. These assertions, that Al Gore was the rightful victor, are probably accurate, but are ultimately irrelevant from an anarchist perspective. This plan was coordinated by the Justice Action Movement (JAM), a liberal coalition open to dissenting Democrats and the nonviolent liberal left, and openly hostile to the non-pacifist Black Bloc. The strategy of these protesters was to fan out along the Presidential parade route in groups of less than twenty-five, as such small groups do not require a permit for their 'legal' presence. The idea was to line the entire parade route with a visual presence of anti-Bush, anti-Republican protesters. That way they believed their voice of dissent could not be as easily ignored as would normally be expected. Of course, the corporate media still managed to do a fine job of not mentioning them.

The State responded to the presence of these protesters by forcing citizens to pass through police and Secret Service check points where they were subject to arbitrary searches, where all banners and/or flags posted to poles of more than a quarter inch in diameter were confiscated and where select individuals were even denied entrance if the law enforcement agents deemed it necessary. This was the first time in U.S. history that public access to the Presidential parade route was restricted in such a manner. Welcome to the Police State.

[11] This essay was written in 2001 and first printed in The Black Bloc Papers, Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002.

[12] This Black Bloc action was organized largely by the Barricada Collective who (along with the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective) was part of NEFAC.

The day's events became interesting at two major junctures. The first being when approximately 250 persons from the Black Bloc were surrounded by police and threatened with mass arrest. This situation was resolved when a large number of demonstrators from within the National Organization of Women (NOW) and JAM surrounded the police and demanded the release of the prospective prisoners. The police, being greatly outnumbered, caved in and allowed the continuing movement of this Black Bloc faction. This act of solidarity demonstrated an underlying recognition of common cause on the part of the rank and file constituents of the growing social protest movement, despite the official liberal leadership's hesitance to embrace a more radical analysis and tactics.

The second interesting event of the day occurred with the Bloc's charging and toppling of a police/Secret Service check point, and its subsequent forced immersion into the direct vicinity of the Presidential parade route. This act proved once again the vulnerability of law enforcement in the face of mass militancy. The myth of the invincibility of organizations such as the Secret Service is quickly being dismantled through the demonstrated abilities of the people to subvert their physical machinery and organization.

The ramifications of this act rest with the likelihood that as more tactical victories are achieved by the Bloc, the Bloc will grow more confident and hence more militant in future actions. Of course this will not occur without State escalation, which in turn will demand tactical modification on the part of the Bloc.

The day's action drew a few arrests, and was marked by several militant confrontations between the Black Bloc and law enforcement. These clashes, the most significant of which occurred at the Navy Memorial along the Presidential parade route, routinely resulted in tactical retreats on the part of the police.

It deserves mention as a final point that the Bloc managed new tactical displays of competence by adapting Autonoman-like regimental structure by marching in a tight-knit formation organized according to affinity groups, and by lining their perimeters with banners in order to make select arrest of constituents a more difficult task. This is a positive development in that it shows the willingness and ability of the Bloc to refine its practices according to practical needs.

In the end, the action of the day created an atmosphere of dissent towards the ruling clique of bureaucrats. President George Bush Jr.'s limo was pelted by bottles, eggs and rocks from the Black Bloc, and he was forced to witness protesters throughout his so called victory march. It was a day well spent.

2001: The Battle of Quebec City

The April 2001 protests in Quebec City against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) were the most serious and militant in North America in recent memory.[13] Certain moments began to take on the air of civil war. Scenes from Palestine emerged and faded in the course of two days and nights in the northern spring. At least one protester was critically injured after receiving a rubber bullet to the throat. One unconfirmed report has come to this writer's attention that an elderly woman, who was a resident of the city, died of causes related to ingestion of massive amounts of police tear gas and/or other chemical weapons. A multitude of others were

[13] This essay was written in 2001 and was first printed in The Black Bloc Papers, Insubordinate Editions, Baltimore MD, 2002.

hospitalized. I saw one person carried off with two broken legs. Also many cops were injured, at least one seriously. The police fired thousands of cans of tear gas and other like agents at us (often directly into the crowd). They utilized water cannons, liberally fired beanbags and rubber bullets at us. They attacked us with batons and made use of attack dogs. Anarchists and militants generally protected themselves with homemade shields and responded with bottles, clubs, rocks and molotov cocktails. In the days leading up the clash prospective anti-Capitalist militants were arrested with small explosives in Quebec. Some others were nabbed with dynamite while attempting to cross the border. Things have changed. The movement is becoming more serious; more complete. And it will only get heavier as we begin to win.[14]

The A20 actions were geared against a meeting of North, South and Central American heads of State (4/20-23) assembled to discuss the proposed expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to include all American States with the exception of Communist Cuba. Such a functioning agreement would utterly fuck the North American industrial working class as well as the indigenous and working people of all Latin American Nations. In contrast to this convergence of heavyweight puppets, 75,000 people made their way to the streets of Quebec City in order to unmistakably make their opposition known. This on top of a large positive turnout from the local city population may have brought the numbers up to closer to 100,000.

The two primary days of mass organized resistance took place on Friday, April 20th and Saturday April 21st, with smaller actions occurring on the 22nd. The first day, primarily organized by CLAC and CASA, both being more or less Anarchist influenced organs, were the smaller of the two, numbering well over 20,000. Here the barricades erected around the older part of the city, where the conference was being held, were challenged by thousands of militants. At one point protesters, the majority of which can be considered Black Bloc Anarchists, managed to topple 150-300 feet of the chain link security fence. However, the police were able to maintain their lines, not without some intense struggle, and hence the meeting was not stormed. However, the meeting was delayed. Word on the street is that this was due to President Bush's concerns regarding the security of the perimeter. I suppose he remembers us from Inauguration day?

Street battles continued all afternoon and into the evening, and were complemented by sophisticated cyber-attacks targeting corporate and State interests via the internet. An extended siege took place in front of a theater where Black Bloc Anarchists battled police with projectiles. Here protesters suffered some injuries due to rubber bullets and tear gas canisters fired directly at them, but fortunately many potential casualties were averted due to the heroic defensive action of a group of maybe 10 Black Bloc Anarchists armed with shields. These brave folk faced down countless volleys, putting themselves between the police and the protesters. It goes without saying that they absorbed many rounds of police projectiles that would have otherwise connected with the crowd. They did this and suffered their own related injuries in the process. I witnessed one Quebecois give them a twenty spot in order that they get a beer on him later in the night. If you ever meet any of them, I suggest you buy them a pint for their efforts as well. They deserve it.

Eventually the crowd was forced back by riot police. The protesters' numbers began to diminish as the day began to wane, and at some undefined point all dispersed, and retreated to

[14] Personal note from the auther: I took part in these actions along with members of Anti-Racist Action-Columbus Ohio. Prior to action the Green Mountain Anarchist Collective smuggled these ARA members into Quebec, crossing the a thickly wooded border mountains of the Northeast Kingdom on foot under the cover of darkness. A number of Vermonters provided logistical support including farmer RH, "Sean", "Seth", and "Barb."

wherever it was that they slept, or drank, and began to contemplate the clashes guaranteed for the following day.

The next morning brought tens of thousands more into the fray. Thousands of Quebecois Left-Nationalists emerged poised against the Capitalist status quo. Tens of thousands turned out for a rally called by organized labor. Thousands more, made up of Greens, Socialists, Liberals, Anarchists and Communists, students and workers, fanned out across the city creating a virtual carnival of resistance; loud and unmistakable if not sometimes obscured by thick clouds of tear gas and the 'BANG! BANG!' of police weapons. And yes… A Black Bloc emerged from this. I say emerged because its initial organization for the day seemed to be lacking. Instead of all meeting in a defined spot and moving as a large group, black clad Anarchists and affinity groups simply began to find each other and in such several smaller Blocs eventually surfaced. Some smashed bank windows (one bank was lit on fire), others went to the front and engaged riot police with rocks and bottles. Some from the Bloc also helped facilitate the toppling of the security fence at several junctures throughout the day.

The total number is hard to estimate. Possibly there were several hundred from the Bloc present at the day's action. One of the largest cohesive sections numbered around 75. This contingent launched several attacks on sections of the perimeter fence, and unloaded a number of petrol bombs at the police in the process. These attacks were more charges, brief clashes and tactical withdrawals than sustained battles. However, wherever they marched in the residential working class neighborhoods, they received healthy cheers from residents and other protesters alike; the only noticeable exception emanating from a contingent known as SalAmi (French for 'bad' or 'dirty friend'). This group booed the actions of the Bloc. It has been reported that in at least one instance individuals connected with this group went so far as to attempt to physically restrain persons engaged in militant direct action. While this contingent of self-proclaimed "non-violent" activists marked the exception to the general rule, their demonstrated hypocrisy in engaging in violent acts against the Bloc, justified in the name of ideological non-violence, deserves mention as a sickening example of non-solidarity and counter productivity. For the most part the Bloc ignored them to the best of their abilities, deciding that any internal conflict would be better dealt with after the demonstration at hand. Eventually, the above mentioned section of the Bloc made its way to a portion of the city which the highway entered upon. There, a long battle was sustained by themselves and more than 1,000 additional protesters in the rear. It was there that protesters fought with police for a matter of hours. At that juncture a police line stood exposed. This seemed a tempting target as most police enjoyed the relative security of a chain link fence separating them from demonstrators. However, this line was covered by sharp shooters armed with "non-lethal" fire arms and tear gas grenades. Despite this advantage in armament, Black Bloc Anarchists consistently hurled gas canisters back at these cops and on occasion made attempts at charging the line. Unfortunately all such attempts were driven back by force of police projectile weapons. After several hours a phalanx of riot police swooped down on the protesters from the rear and after another extended battle forced them from the scene. The Black Bloc Anarchists and protesters generally fell back to positions directly under the highway ramps. There they lit barricades on fire and held the police at bay for long hours into the night.

That day of protest, like the day before, failed to halt the FTAA meetings. But it did cause an early adjournment most likely due to tear gas filtering into the air ducts at the convention center.

All and all Quebec marked a turning point. Although it did not have the immediate psychological impact on the general North American population as did Seattle, it did result in the further

militant radicalization of the actively involved social protest population. It showed how much street power we can wield even when greatly under-supplied in relative riot gear.

This action lacked the acute psychological weight of Seattle for two reasons. 1. Seattle took the world by surprise. In Quebec, anything short of a complete shutdown of the FTAA meetings was to be expected. 2. Quebec was marked by a virtual media blackout in the United States. When protest reports did surface, numbers were put at the low thousands as opposed to the tens-of-thousands that were present in actuality. Also, to my knowledge, all reports of injuries (both serious and otherwise) were completely ignored by U.S. corporate media. As far as the mainstream media was concerned the meeting took place without a hitch or a significant display of popular opposition. This media blackout was supported by an FBI raid and subsequent functional disruption of the Seattle Independent Media Center as well as a similar attack, by Canadian officials, on the Quebec equivalent. These raids were officially justified by the surfacing of an anonymous email posting on the organization's open access website, which reportedly made threats against President George W Bush's life. The end result was that the flow of accurate independent news reporting from the scene was greatly stifled, while the corporate propaganda of CNN, NBC, The New York Times, etc., flowed more or less unhindered. However, the effectiveness of this initial campaign of reactionary propaganda can be expected to recede as protesters begin to tell the real story of events in their hometowns across the continent. The truth will spread by word of mouth alone in due course.

As far as the action itself is concerned, the events of Saturday the 21st once again demonstrated the ability of even a small, yet dedicated Black Bloc. However, one has to pause and wonder whether or not the police barricades could have been surmounted if only the Bloc was formulated in a more cohesive, organized form. Also, it demands mention that while many who took part in the Bloc(s) that did emerge were prepared with body armor, gas masks, clubs, etc., many more were equipped with no more than a black bandanna, and whatever rock or stick they happened upon. And even so, they managed to fight heavily armed forces of the State with ferocity for hours. Again one has to wonder what way the tide would have ultimately turned if a substantially larger percentage of militants were properly equipped. Of course this relative unpreparedness had a lot to do with the fact that many chose to attend with only a skeleton kit of required gear for fear that Canadian officials would conduct searches at the border crossings and at random highway check points (as was rumored) en route, and that such equipment would be used as grounds for non-entrance, detainment and/or leveling of political conspiracy charges.

To round out this report let me reiterate the numbers. In the days of protests more than 450 were arrested. A good percentage of them taking place on the night of the 21st. All told, there were 75-100,000 social protesters pitted against approximately 10,000 well equipped and highly trained Provincial and Federal police, primarily stationed behind a protective barrier. In the clashes at least one cop was seriously injured with another 71 treated in hospitals. On our side at least 100 required medical attention. In all the State fired 5000 tear gas canisters in order to repress the voice of the people.

2001: DC and the Twin Towers: A Battle Postponed

The demonstrations planed for the capital during late September of 2001 (timed to coincide with the meetings of the IMF-WB) were anticipated to be the largest and most militant yet in the

growing U.S. anti-globalization movement.[15] Coming on the heels of mass anti-capitalism actions in Europe (Gothenburg, Sweden and Genoa, Italy) many believed that these actions would mark a new phase in the domestic class struggle. Upwards of 200,000 people were expected in the streets, and the Black Bloc was expected to reach sizes at least double that of the previous year. Some law enforcement officials were publicly stating that they expected the Bloc to be 10,000 strong. While this should be considered an overstatement, it is possible that it could have reached numbers closer to 3000.

Key anarchist collectives across the continent were formulating plans which would have brought Black Bloc tactics to a new level sophistication. The two most prominent possibilities (which were not necessarily considered to be mutually exclusive) were to 1. occupy a recently closed down hospital, and 2. Organize a highly mobile street fighting brigade utilizing a more comprehensive internal structure.

In the first case, it was believed that by taking over, and holding this hospital, the Bloc would be able to focus attention upon the failure of the social system under capitalism, and the growing demand to prioritize human needs over corporate profit margins. In the second case, it was hoped that the Bloc would be able to reach a new level of effectiveness without falling into the pattern of disarray and confusion in the face of police attacks. These bold plans were not without risk. The police shooting of Black Bloc protesters at recent demonstrations in Europe added to the already intense atmosphere. With the death of anarchist Carlo Giuliani, who was shot in the head during the G-8 protests in Genoa, nobody was taking the encroaching demonstrations lightly. However, as events unfolded, these experiments in Black Bloc tactics would have to wait.

The tragedy of the September 11th attacks on the four commercial airliners and on the Twin Towers in New York City would not only compel the main event organizers, the Mobilization for Global Justice coalition, to pull out of the protests, but also tens of thousands of previously committed union members, and leftists.[16] The IMF and World Bank, for their part, eventually moved to cancel their meetings. As the World Trade Center fell, taking with it thousands of innocent lives, the Left paused. For a moment confusion and fear swept the nation. In the immediate aftermath of the attacks troops surrounded the White House, parts of the capital were evacuated, the borders were shut down, all commercial aircraft were grounded. Rumors ran wild about other terrorist attacks. Much of the government went into secured hiding. For many Americans, the situation was initially beyond their comprehension. One must keep in mind, that the U.S., unlike Europe and much or the world, has not suffered a modern war on its own soil. In short, Americans are not accustomed to living like folks are compelled to in places like Palestine, Belgrade, and Baghdad. The U.S. government came crashing into this void like gang busters.

First they told us the attacks were launched by foreign Islamic extremists. Then they told us this enemy would have to be hunted down and killed in order to preserve freedom. What they

[15] This essay was first printed in the second edition of The Black Bloc Papers, Breaking Glass Press, Shawnee Mission, KS, 2010.

[16] Personal note from the auther: On 9/11/01 myself and Lady were in western Canada driving a 1978 Ford van (with Vermont plates) across the continent. That morning we intended to cross the border into Montana, however the border was shut down. We then decided to drive to Quebec where we would more easily be able to slip back into Vermont at a remote rural crossing. I remember driving east all that night while Lady slept in the back. Listening to the unfolding news on an old Walkman (the van radio did not work), smoking the last of our BC dope, and always aware of the northern lights to my left. When the news become too much I turned the dial and the first music that came in clear enough was the Rolling Stone's Sympathy For The Devil. The apocalypse felt at hand… 'and the last man blinked.'

didn't tell us was that many of these terrorists where trained and supplied by the CIA during the Cold War. A generation ago the Federal Government hedged its bets on these people, wound them up, then pointed them at the Soviet Union and her allies. In addition to directly challenging the security of the Soviet Union's southern boarders, they hoped to limit communist influence in the Arab and broader Islamic world. One should recall that at in the 1970s the predominate, armed, underground organizations (and popular movements) were left wing and secular by nature. Groups like the Palestinian Liberation Army were found working with left wing European guerrillas like the Red Army Faction, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army. And again, Arab states, who often claimed a degree of socialism, displayed strong sympathies for the Eastern Bloc. These were trends that the Western capitalists sought to overturn through the covert support of Islamic Extremism. The maxim, 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' may, at times, be true. But what happens when your primary enemy disappears? So yes, on September 11th, 2001, just over ten years after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the U.S. experienced a horrendous act of terrorism on its own soil. These were terrorists of our own creation.

As the smoke was still rising, the government moved fast to use this tragedy not as a moment for self-reflection—not as a chance to reevaluate past foreign policies that may have backfired, but as a tool to attempt militaristic homogenization abroad, and pacification of decent within. President Bush immediately announced the intension to go to war with Afghanistan, who he claimed were shielding those responsible for the attacks. Congress pushed through the now infamous USA PATRIOT Act (rumored to have been largely written following Seattle) which essentially stripped the protections guaranteed to civilians under the Bill of Rights. Police and military spending grew exponentially. And by 2003 it became clear that 9-11 would also be used as a pretext to invade and occupy oil rich Iraq. However, let's not get ahead of ourselves.

In the days immediately following 9-11 it became clear that the U.S. would invade Afghanistan. In response the planned IMF-WB protests evolved into not only an action against globalization, but also against the impending war. The Anti-Capitalist Convergence and a new anti-war coalition (ANSWER) called for a demonstration on September 28th. Religious and pacifists organizations such as The American Friends Service Committee called for a rally on the 29th. On the 28th, an estimated 10,000 people took to the streets voicing their opposition to war. Of these nearly 2,000 were represented in the explicitly anti-capitalist contingent, including a Black Bloc several hundred strong. Simultaneously, more the 80 solidarity demonstrations were organized in dozens of other U.S. cities and across the globe. Some of the larger of these were in San Francisco (10,000), Los Angeles (2,000), and Athens Greece (10,000). In D.C. events got underway around 9:00 a.m. with the anti-capitalist contingent, behind a banner that read "No War But Class War", and the Black Bloc marching from Union Station. As this group approached the IMF building riot police encircled them. After an hour long stand-off, the pigs relinquished, and the march moved to link up with the larger protest organized by ANSWER. Along the way they passed a construction site where workers cheered their support.

After linking up with the other demonstrators, the combined forces of of thousands of people headed towards the Capital building. Both phases of the march included a limited number of confrontations between the Bloc and the police. Even so, the day was largely peaceful, and only a handful of protesters were arrested.

The following day a rally was held by overt pacifist elements drew an estimated 3,000 people.

While 10,000 anti-war demonstrators is a far cry from the 100,000 previously expected at the IMF-WB actions, the demonstration should be understood as a powerful statement against

the path that the powers that be were about to traverse. Given the level apprehension and fear cultivated by the government and corporate media following 9-11, it is a testament to human fortitude and willingness to stand on common principle that anyone, let alone 10,000 were willing to make their opposition known in the streets of Washington, D.C.

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