

**No Globalisation... and a good few
'no's when it comes to
anti-globalisation too!**

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“We’re building a mass movement!” I heard Jason shouting as we were being dragged off some bridge in London. That happened years ago, around the time of Twyford Down. It was the first I’d heard of the mass movement thing. My first thought was “No, we’re getting dragged off a bridge by the cops!” How wrong I was. Looking back, it seems we were building a mass movement, though many of us had not the slightest intention of doing so. But now it seems we have such a movement, and it expresses itself through such organisations as Globalise Resistance (GR).

No Analysis

It’s not the intention of this article to go much into who is behind it all, such as the SWP; that has been well covered elsewhere. That very debate is obscuring deeper problems with the ethos of globalising resistance. Those are the things I want to investigate in this article.

The *raison d’être* behind such organisations as GR is that because capital (or oppression, or whatever your favourite enemy is) is global, so should resistance to it be. There is little if any talk of exactly WHY this should be so; it seems that it is considered to be self-evident. That so many people accept this shallow prognosis at face value and do not wonder about it shows a lot about our movement, and society as a whole.

Television, and more recently the internet, have had an incalculable effect on us. People generally are less able now to assimilate complex ideas. In the busy busy global village, where information spews incessantly from every electronic orifice, we need to have ideas pre-digested for us, then vomited out in bite-sized chunks by authority figures such as the news readers.

Instead of having a good overall view of what is going down in our own communities, we have a selection of decontextualised fragments from pre-chosen sources all over the planet. Meanwhile most of us don’t even know the names of our neighbours. Globalise Resistance reinforces this by giving us nice little sound-bite ‘causes’ like Gap sweatshops and the Zapatistas. Very few people would know much about any of these things, just what GR’s info sheets give; the lives, loves, history and desires of millions, summed up in a paragraph or two by a person who doesn’t know them. A few snippets of semi-random information does not constitute a planetary perspective. What GR purveys is more like ‘Global Awareness to go’. You want fries with that?

No New Thought

Conspiracy or not, the media control our communications to a larger extent than anything else does, and hence they shape our society. Recognising this, many activists have decided that it is important to get our voices onto those media. Other activists have argued that it is more important to organise ourselves and use our own media (including word of mouth). This is the more difficult path, and makes less sense in the context of this society. It is much easier to convince someone with just a few words of something they already understand, than to try to introduce something that goes against what they understand.

If you talk about ignoring the media and just getting on with local actions in small groups, most people do not understand what you're talking about. Most people think that if an act doesn't get big media coverage, it is not worthwhile. We have all been brought up to understand this idea. Pop stars, film idols, Great Leaders and Entrepreneurs have been rammed down our throats by the media from the moment of our birth. They are the only ones who can achieve anything. So when the call goes out for thousands to turn up at the next meeting of the Great and Famous G8 or World Bank meeting, it makes immediate (if misguided) sense, and can easily drown out the little voice that is asking for help to stop the local allotments from being sold off for development, or to stop a local woodland being chopped by a greedy farmer.

No Change

But it wasn't like this a few years ago. Something has changed, and this is where we come to the inevitable swipe at the boring left-over Lefties. Back in the late-80s and early-90s, the Left was only beginning to realise that they were no longer relevant. Their ideas were rooted in the Sixties and Seventies, a pretty dismal time not many people wanted to remember. The Left were no longer sexy, and a new movement was emerging that was out-sexying them massively.

Ecological direct action was arriving in Europe, imported from the USA by groups calling themselves Earth First!. These people were jumping on diggers, building tree houses and tunnels, blockading timber depots and occupying construction sites in the most in-yer-face way imaginable short of total revolt. Being mostly young and not from political backgrounds, their rhetoric was devoid of all the boring legacy of socialist dogmas. They fired the imaginations of many and for a while there were camps and actions going on all over the country. The movement was growing exponentially, and in a very decentralised way. Groups formed and

took action locally, networking with their own local communities, attracting help and inspiring similar things all over the world.

But this wasn't to last. The Left was looking and learning (after a fashion). Gradually they infiltrated this movement and sometime in the late-90s, it dropped the 'ecological' and became just the 'direct action movement'. The hierarchically-minded politicians who moved in on the initiative started by EF! and the ALF didn't like the loose and uncontrollable nature of this movement, and neither did they like most of the ideas, so they are now in the process of changing both. Rather than change their ideas, they choose, the the way of all conservatives, to take the funky packaging and wrap their own unchanged dogmas in it. Is Genoa etc physically any different to, say, Paris in '68? Have they really learned anything at all?

No Local Roots

By making big anti-globalisation actions, GR et al take away the autonomy of the locally-organised action. All that local groups of concerned people can now organise is the buses to get there. The agenda and location is set by the World Bank or the IMF, or the G8, and relayed by a few self-appointed leaders who won't even admit that they are leaders. It doesn't matter what is happening in your local area. Or even, for that matter, what connections your own groups have. A visitor from West Papua to Dublin was invited to a GR meeting. Thinking this would be a good opportunity to get some support for his people, who are being massacred by Indonesia, he went along well-prepared to talk about what is going on and what people here in the West (where the problems all stem from) can do to help them. He didn't get the chance. For the whole meeting, he had to listen to them talk about their recent visit to Genoa.

No History

Globalise Resistance and its look-alikes are apparently a reaction to the globalisation of something or other. Just what has globalised varies depending on whom you ask. Such a movement should claim its roots in the pirates of the Spanish Main, or the bandits who attacked pilgrims on their way to the various 'holy lands'. Somebody must have given the Phoenicians trouble too. I haven't seen any such references. It's as if the Empires of the last six thousand years never happened, and all this global commerce and oppression started just after the miners' strike.

Resistance To What?

Now there is almost nothing going on locally, and if you talk to anyone remotely ‘radical’ they will babble on until closing time about Genoa or whatever, even if they only know the cousin of someone who went. Even just a few years ago, you would hear people talk about the issues, the things supposedly they are opposed to, and some ideas for other ways to do things. No, it is all about the spectacle itself. Who went there, who got arrested, who met whom, which clubs and gigs they went to, what the cops did, what the crowd did. Never a mention of why.

No Continuity

For those who can make it (get time off from the wage slavery everyone is now stuck in) these big anti-acronym actions may be real, but for the rest of us they are quite literally a spectacle with absolutely no relevance whatsoever to our own situation, our own lives, or even to the effects we have on the people who live in the places the raw materials come from to create our jobs. Even for the people who go to them, there is no real relevance. Like all the other media-driven moments that make up modern life, they are an experience to be consumed then added to the bank of ‘experiences’ which make up the totality of our fragmented lives.

Having smashed up a Gap or McDonalds in some far away place, we come back and do nothing to rid our towns of them, and wait for the Next Big Thing to be handed down to us from on high. Empowerment has become a bad word, a cliché, and the thing it refers to is also disappearing.

With this globalisation of resistance we lose the very thing we were struggling to recover: our autonomy. The only way to express our autonomy in such situations is to break the ‘rules’ of the organisers, by rioting, smashing things up and so on. This might seem fine, but isn’t it really the same thing as resisting rule in everyday life? Why should we have rules in our ‘movement’? Why go all the way to Genoa to smash up a McDonalds? Isn’t the whole thing about globalisation that things are the same everywhere?

Small actions, easily reproducible, requiring unsophisticated means that are available to all, are by their very simplicity and spontaneity uncontrollable. They make a mockery of even the most advanced technological developments in counter-insurgency. This is what capital and the State are afraid of, this is the news that never makes the headlines, but is carefully concealed from the public eye.

— *Willfull Disobedience*, Vol. 2, No. 6, ‘Against the Logic of Submission: Hatred’

The truth is that our movement (and that's a whole other can of worms not to be opened here) was seduced into this course of action by the mass media, via a bunch of inadequate people who were not good enough to make it in the cut-throat world of business, and instead imposed their mediocre organisational skills on us, who were doing fine without them. Thousands of small acts by groups of friends and even single individuals got no coverage at all, while the bigger actions got onto the national news. We were thwarted by our own obsession with the state's media. Direct action, by definition, needs no coverage. If state media is needed, then the action is not direct.

No Real-World Network

Computer technology is what allowed capitalism (or globalisation or whatever) to be manifested in its present form. In fact, it formed our present system, which was designed precisely to fit in with what could and could not be done with computers. Not surprisingly the same symptoms can be discerned in the new, globalised anti-G movement as in other aspects of computerised society. Depersonalisation is the first to come to mind: we are all just sheep, running around where the sheepdog directs us. When a few of us do try to strike out alone, we find it impossible because the majority of the sheep are doing as they're told and we never get enough people interested in local actions to get anything meaningful established.

In any given town, it is relatively easy to get a group of people together to go swanning off to some big event, but not to plant fruit trees or close down a local parasite. It is easier to sit in a cybercafe communicating with other cyber-revolutionaries than to get a small meeting together in the local pub.

If we make the internet the basis of co-ordinating our struggles, for communicating our projects, actions and dreams, then our struggles, our projects and all that inspires them will become the kind that can be communicated through the internet — that is, projects, struggles and dreams that can be broken down into interchangeable bits of information where people, their passions and desires are of little importance except to the extent that they are useful in producing marketable bytes. This is because the kind of communication and co-ordination that can happen through the internet has already been organised before we start to use it, and it has not been organised in our interest, but rather in the interests of the social order of domination.

— *Willfull Disobedience*, Vol. 2, No. 6, 'The Internet and Self-organisation'

The same thing is true of the globalised resistance movement itself. We are diverting from impossible to control small-scale actions towards the mass actions which can be easily policed. Police forces prefer the Saturday night trouble to be confined in to one or two big night clubs than to be scattered all over town where they cannot control it. That's why many dodgy clubs continue to stay open. The same principle applies to insurgency.

No More

Properly speaking, global thinking is not possible... Look at one of those photographs of half the Earth taken from outer space, and see if you recognise your neighbourhood. The right local questions and answers will be the right global ones. The Amish question "What will this do to our community?" tends towards the right answer to the world.

— Casey Neill

Eco means 'home', it comes from the Greek word, oikos. We need to put the eco back in our actions and use the global networks to enhance rather than destroy or consume our own local ones. Ultimately the global networks must be disconnected, as humans seem unable to cope with such concentrations of power. Whales have had global communications for millions of years, termites are good at civilisation, and buffalo are good at herding. Humans should concentrate on what they are good at, and not try to manage everything.

We need to push this eco aspect of our work, and not to let all and sundry dictate or misuse our actions. We need to redefine what movement it is that we are part of. How can we support the rights of workers when we are opposed to the place they work in, the materials they use and the end product of their labour, not to mention wage slavery itself? If supporting workers' rights is a 'clever' way of getting them to listen to our views, why then do we not do the same with fascists? Socialism is no more relevant to a viable future on this planet than fascism.

Things happen locally or they don't happen. Things happen locally all over the world. Nothing happens globally, except comets and asteroids. A sweatshop may be nominally part of a global corporation, but its physical reality is most definitely local.

A corporation (or a nation, for that matter) is an unthinking entity, it follows the line of least resistance, the path of most food. Managers are a figurehead, they have no real control over the direction of an organisation; that is determined by

the survival needs of the organisation itself. If a manager acts against the interests of the corporation, he is rejected.

As Oliver Stone once said, the beast doesn't know it exists. These Statesmen and leaders, the G8, the IMF and so on, are powerless outside of their respective organisations. The power they wield is not their own. They like to parade around as key decision-makers, VIPs, but the reality is that the organisations they are enslaved to have needs, and the will of the individual manager is irrelevant. All they have power over is the re-direction of a small percentage of the cash-flow into their own personal coffers, and that only if they fulfill the demands of their organisation.

By eschewing the local reality of capitalism / civilisation / whatever in favour of large-scale gatherings around VIPs we not only obscure the true nature of our enemies, but also give credit to the illusion of power those VIPs generate. What is needed now is not a mirroring of the power structure of the state, we need to attack the real source of that power, in our schools, factories. Road-building projects, and all the other local issues that together make up the global catastrophe. Most of all, we need to understand what things we do ourselves to support that system in our everyday lives, and to persuade others to do likewise.

Within every revolution are the seeds of what follows it. For anarchy to work at all, it has to be done locally, so a globalised resistance can do nothing to further our aims, only to make them more distant than ever by setting the stage for yet another power structure to emerge in place of the old one.

We don't need anyone to speak to the IMF or World Bank on our behalf, we already spoke to them in countless places all over the world. We spoke to them in Seattle and Genoa too. Now it is obvious to even the most optimistic idiot that they have no intention of disbanding themselves. What is there to talk about? The big 'global' actions may have served a purpose, but now it is time to move beyond that. We need not a mass movement but a massive movement everywhere, built on local initiatives which are not answerable to anyone but the local communities themselves. No more building of platforms to be used to misrepresent us, no more collusion with devious (but not good enough for business) power-seekers.

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