

Where did the anti-capitalist movement come from?

Andrew Flood

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The strength of this movement is that it has come from many places, that it is a network without a head or a central committee that has successfully united many issues in a combined opposition to what we have been told was unopposable. If the demonstrations of the last years have achieved anything it is that they seized the neo liberal slogan 'there is no alternative' by the throat and dashed it into the ground. From Seattle to Melbourne to Prague hundreds of thousands of ordinary people have stood up and proclaimed, 'here and now we are creating an alternative'.

As such this movement has no single starting point. That said if for reasons of personal involvement alone I will point to one of the places we are coming from. I believe there is a debt to be acknowledged to the people who declared 'Ya basta!' to the new economic order on the 1st of January 1994.

I'd trace my involvement in this new anti-capitalist movement to Mexico and to the '1st encounter for humanity and against neoliberalism', held in Zapatista camps in Chiapas in 1996. This meeting of 3,000 people from 43 countries resolved to "*make a collective network of all our particular struggles and resistance's. An intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity.*

This intercontinental network of resistance, recognising differences and acknowledging similarities, will search to find itself with other resistance's around the world. This intercontinental network of resistance will be the medium in which distinct resistance's may support one another. This intercontinental network of resistance is not an organising structure; it doesn't have a central head or decision maker; it has no central command or hierarchies. We are the network, all of us who resist".

There is much in this that appears to predict the structure of the growing anti-capitalist movement although in reality even at that time it was clear that we were actually sketching something that was already coming into existence.

Whatever about the 1st encounter the link becomes clearer when you look at the meetings that were inspired by it. Immediately after the 2nd encounter (the following year in Spain) some 50 of so activists stayed behind to begin the practical task of co-ordinating this network. From this meeting the 'People's Global Alliance' emerged which played a major part in later mobilisations including those for Seattle. A host of more local events also took place including the Bradford

Mayday conference in Britain in 1998. These and other meetings served to make the links and bring together the activists that would later play a significant role in events in London and Seattle.

Prague S26 can be seen as the next “*day for global action against neo-liberalism*” called for by the ‘Politics table’ in Chiapas back in 1996. Of course it is much more than this, there are many key people in the movement who have no awareness of these meetings. But if we were to pick a point that the movements against neoliberalism moved from the single campaign/issue to global anti capitalism the perhaps that point is found in the jungles of the Mexican South East some four years ago

This ‘historical’ introduction is relevant to where we are going. Some left parties who don’t understand this history are trying to take control of the movement in the hope of building their organisations, of becoming our leadership. They don’t understand that this movement was built on a rejection of such building of “*A new number in the useless enumeration of the numerous international orders*”. The protests lack the guiding hand of the party not because we have not realised the need for one but because many of us have explicitly rejected the experience of this authoritarian method of organisation.

That is not the path I want us to follow. Instead let us move towards creating our new world in the shell of the old. Let us take the methods that have worked in London, Seattle and Melbourne of direct democracy and direct action against the institutions of capitalism home with us. Let us use these methods in our workplaces and in our communities.

In truth I know we are not only already doing this but the methods that emerged in Seattle were merely the fruiting body of movement(s) that had formed impressive networks of roots in the places we come from. These are not invisible to those involved but are not covered by the media because it has little interest in the local struggle of ordinary people for a better life. This is why we must also build on the incredible network we have already developed to communicate between ourselves and exchange our news.

Our aim in all this must not be reform of the World Bank – we don’t want different people or a different policy running the world on our behalf. The World Bank and the IMF are figureheads at the top of a rotten global system based on exploitation of the many by the few. We don’t wish to reform this society, we wish to destroy it.

We want a society based on equality, a class less society in which everyone contributes to the overall wealth according to their abilities and from which everyone receives according to their needs. We want a free society that is really democratic in all areas of life. This includes democracy in the workplaces, where decisions must be made by all wage earners. We want a society in which we all stand together, without borders.

Let us all stand together to radically change this current society

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This text was given as part of the counter summit before the World Bank riot in Prague. The sessions was 'The nature of economic globalisation: Where do we come from? Where do we go to?' other speakers were Silvia Federici, George Caffentzis, Mark Leven and Naomi Klein.

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