

Report from second Finnish Black and Green days

Held in Tampere 29.-31.1.1999

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I tried first to have someone else to write this, because I was afraid my article would be too critical... I must say festival was a great event — thousand thank you's to all the organisers for efforts.

And then the critics... I think maybe 600 (!!) people participated at least one of the two concerts, 200 to some of the demos and 80 to some of the working groups. This gives some image what most of the participators were looking after. Punk is not a problem, even if only punk concerts are organised... but it is a problem if the most visible thing of ongoing festival is crowds of punks and others puking and pissing around the city and central railwaystation. Such view only strenghtens the jail of subculture anarchist movement has been trapped in. I say we count the real strenght of Finnish movement(s) in a day when an event where a chance to drink yourself unconscious is not the main attraction is organised.

I can't blame organisers for the state of the world... punks shouldn't be shamed because only one third of them are political, but the regulars should be because as much of them are not. If I lived in a city like Tampere, I would clean a toilet after a punk party anytime to organise a decent demo (sorry I didn't do it this time!).

Guess this was enough moralising...

First event of the festival was demonstration against McDonald's... I came to city after the beginning, and demo didn't last very long due to weather (-20C). Nice thing was big number of participators (150), and the fact that only very few of those faces I had seen before. Latter one is the best side of B&G days — festival attracts youth from all around peripheria, from places where all political activity is very un motivating. Still I got a sort of deja-vu feeling, just a demo like all the other demos. Big number of people is not enough to create spirit. Of course, there was so much work with the festival that it can't be expected organisers would invent something special to "amuse the audience" (we just have to live with the fact that many people think demos are a sort of entertainment). We tried to enlarge message of the demonstration from "one-caseness" with some friends by shouting "Long live free soviets" and "Life is for living — anarchy is for reclaiming it" instead of regular "Crush McD's", but people didn't join us... they have a lot to learn;-)

In friday only other program was the concert... I don't waste space to report about it although it was one of the bests I've been. Organisers did everything they could to avoid age-limit, but maybe kids should have been encouraged to try to come in anyway because there was no control after all.

SATURDAY

In saturday first working groups to begin were motorway resistance and anarchist practice. We were 9 people in motorway resistance group. During 1998 there has been at least 15 traffic related actions — 3 street parties (Helsinki, Turku, Jyväskylä), 6 critical mass demonstrations in Helsinki, 5 machine occupations in motorway construction sites and 1 anti-motorway demonstration in Helsinki. Still I wouldn't say there is a movement against motorways, all anti-motorway actions and most of the other demonstrations (Street parties being exception) are organised by very small group of dedicated people.

There has also been huge sabotage damage against motorway construction, mostly arson attacks against machines, some parts of a bridge were burnt in december. Economic damage

against road construction is bigger than against any other industry in Finland, and no sabber has ever been caught. We had large consensus in working group that people doing sabotage shouldn't work in "Boot to motorways" campaign because it has already claimed it has no connection to sabotage actions. There is also several other good reasons, such as the fact that sabotage has so tiny support among Finnish people. Motorway resistance is impossible without support of local regulars.

Solutions to existing problems weren't found... people don't come to movement because it's so small, and movement remains small because people aren't coming (heard before?). It was decided to organise similar kind of NVDA as before in larger areas than just around Tampere, and just hope people realise how fun it actually is to jam the sites for at least a couple of hours. A pamphlet about motorways will be made as well...

I also visited a short while in anarchist group, discussion was quite far from concrete proposals, and maybe that's not a bad thing at all.

I missed anti-fur demonstration, but I came to Food not Bombs early enough to realise all the food was eaten. This time poors didn't get a lot, because hungry festival guests ate everything. Maybe action still made some sense.

Then there was demonstration for car-free city. There was a bit more noise than in friday. It was still -20C, but demo lasted one hour anyway. During the demo there was working group for EVR (ALF) supporting group, but I know nothing about the results (all the time there was overlapping program, because there is no place where all the participators would have been same time).

Subject of the days panel discussion was "Autonomy and self-sustaining economy". I didn't expected a lot because subject was so wide, but surprisingly there was a lot of interesting in the discussion because of the guests — an Italian autonomist, a member of exchange circle of single-parent families of Tampere and a guy from eco-Village of Keuruu. Expecially two latter ones were from outside the scene, and thus their views could give something new to bite.

SUNDAY

In Sunday morning's program there should have been two working groups, about direct democracy inside movement and anarcho-feminism, but it was decided to put them in the same. About 80 people showed up in working groups, twice as many as in saturday — maybe people were running out of festival-endurance. Some Swedish anarcha-feminists were invited to present the ideology, width of Swedish movement is widely known. After introduction we divided to smaller groups to discuss, all the groups were mixed. Short guidelines for discussion were distributed to all the groups, such as discussion about each other's experiences about sexism in the movement, how to deal with this problem, porn industry and abortion.

In my group people had very different personal experiences of sexism, some girls (We were only two men in group most of the time) felt it very strongly, some had ever felt the problem. Some good examples from my group was a city where one guy hold all the tasks such as leading demonstrations and being contact person for many years, and one group with only one man who lead all the meetings. I myself have met serious problems only very lately, only harrassment case I know was years ago and well solved, but no doubt such things happen althought I'm too stupid to see it.

It was a really good idea to spend a considerable amount of time to this issue, people can make tactical plans every day through e-mail for example but discussion about problems of movements is only possible face-to-face, and with such a large audience it's possible only one or two times each year. There was anarcho-feminist seminar in may 1998 in Helsinki but with only 30 participants, last time I've been in a larger discussion about the sexism in autumn -97. And ever before such a discussion has been made between people with so diverse backgrounds of movements, usually anarchist and animalrights scene are quite separate (Swedish speakers were active in both). Still the discussion was quite similar as -97, are men just so stupid that nothing changes? Or maybe it's because of lack of concrete proposals and because sexism has so many different realisations that it's difficult to even give one name to all phenomena? One concrete proposal was made anyway – it was decided to set up a mixed e-mail list about anarcho-feminism and sexism-problem, only closed @-fem list has existed this far but it seems to be quite popular, because it has maybe 90 subscribers.

Sexism is a relative of discrimination by age or experience, especially in animal rights movement there has traditionally been many 15–17 year old girls and few over 20 year old boys in many groups (nowadays situation has changed). In another hand, some people thought experience-discrimination is more common in anarchist movement because it has much stronger theoretic side than animalrights movement, making adopting of “guru-mentality” more easier.

Shortly before finishing the topic we had interesting discussion about abortion in one group, some people claimed there is people in Finnish animal rights movement who oppose right to abortion. This was completely new thing to me, hardline has never been very popular in Finland so maybe it's some sort of Hare Krishna influence. I still don't really believe it, but of course it's possible some people may adopt strange kind of ideas just because they are “opposition” if there is not any discussion about their reality in movement.

All the people couldn't participate the conclusion of sexism-discussion because other group about future of animal rights movement had began. I don't know nothing about their results either, but the topic was essential for sure because number of people participating animal rights demonstrations has dropped clearly lately. Actually it is not really strange, there has been maybe 80–150 animal right demonstrations in Finland during last four years, thus people are getting a bit tired with them. It's clear some new ideas are needed, or people will loose their motivation. Animal rights movement Oikeutta Eläimille has now almost 30 local groups, in cities of all sizes – most furthest 20 kilometers north from polar circle.

During working groups there was a demonstration against Shell, mass-media claimed there was fewer people than in three earlier demonstrations, just a hundred. Rest of the people had too hard parties. Bus to Lapland had to leave already 12 o'clock, they had 12 hour's trip ahead.

Festival finished with panel discussion with topic “Is there any justice? – animal rights activists in teeth of the system”. This discussion was a disappointment to me, calling a cop to panel is OK to me as long as the purpose is to humiliate him, I guess it was the original purpose of the organisers this time as well, but for some reason they forgot it. From the other panelists, (Jani Seppälä, guy who got most serious damage from shotgun bullets of fur farmer, one other animal rights activist from Tampere whose name I forgot and a pro-activist lawyer) the lawyer was least kind to cop. Activists and leader of the discussion had a sort of it's-like-that-and-that's-the-way-it-is attitude, without further questioning of the existing of the police in general, with just some liberal criticism of police methods. The whole festival was also a sort of media success to police, because they managed to claim “disorders were avoided because organisers did every-

thing legal way”, just like torturing and beating shit out of us wich happened one year ago was our fault. Showing that anarchists can organise events without chaos shouldn't mean playing with filth's rules.

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