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What If the black bloc held a summit and the G20 had a bake sale?

Crudo

August 30, 2009

Last summer, I got in a small bus and headed across the county to participate in the DNC and the RNC protests. I had a small interest in the events; although I mostly wanted to meet people and also see what would come out of the protests. I met many great people, and made many connections. However, the infrastructure that was created is now gone, some friends have gotten some charges and bigger records, a lot of money has been spent, and we again enjoyed our time on the news as the “masked hooligans.”

With the coming of the g20 protests, I’ve been thinking a lot about summit protests in general; especially in the context of the lack of class struggle in the US. The general anarchist response to the summits is summed up by groups like Crimethinc, (to which I made some responses to below to the blog they wrote about the convergence). They basically go on to purpose that the summits are an opportunity for anarchists to

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prove to others that they have ideas and modes of operations which are worth checking out.

The next perspective, the insurrectionary one, which is exemplified by a close comrade, who explained their position to me basically as such. That, in such a context of a lack of class struggle, these events give us the petri dish to test our skills and play dress up for the real thing. Also, in a time of such low class struggle, these events and the conflict that they generate are perhaps some of the only real and tangible scenes of actual combat that this system sees.

Another perspective also put forth, is that of groups like Letters Journal, coming out of the German and Dutch Ultra-Lefts and writers like Sam Moss, is that basically revolutionary groups are an impediment to the self-organization of the class, and all revolutionary groups should disband for the purpose of waiting for their time to intervene in history. Thus, in this context, such actions like at the summits still are only the left of activism; even if it riots. These events are basically meaningless until class struggle heats up. (For more, check out xDon'sx 3rd and 4th issues of xTotal Destructionx, which are great.)

As to the first, the 'general anarchist response' to the summits: I disagree. Saying that summits offer us an opportunity to share our ideas to the rest of the world and they'll pay attention if we make enough of a ruckus I think is false. The time, energy, and money that goes into these events could actually be put into creating lasting infrastructure that could be used by a movement that plans to be around for a long time and intervene in the class struggle over a long period.

This logic is also kind of like, "If the Packers win the Superbowl, everyone will like the Packers!!!" Sure, a lot of people will see anarchists in Pittsburgh that go crazy (if that happens) and be like, "cool, these people want to fuck shit up." But, I think getting more people into the movement is a lot more complicated than just looking pretty for the cameras. Radicals have been successful in world events when they have intervened in their

historical contexts with a clear direction (the Ukraine, Spain, Paris 1968), often after years of organizing and ‘building the communes,’ as we are so fond of saying now days. Also, as it is stated in the new Politics is Not a Banana, there is more importance in a shared practice than a shared set of ideas. By this, I think that people will come to us when they see like we do that there is something to be gained by insurrection, occupying things, taking things back, collective mass direct action.

As to the second, more insurrectionary tendency, which I guess I have more affinity for, I guess I also disagree. Even if protests or even riots at summits are the only real examples of conflict in society, then the still represent ‘real’ leftist events like protests or marches getting out of control. Which is cool. But of course, we need this to move away from such an arena and into the stadium of everyday life. The question is how to do this. I think moving away from putting so much energy into summits is part of the solution, and using the resources that we use on summits towards such an end. I’m more interested in mobilization the ‘war machine’ around stuff that we can set the agenda on. A big strike for instance. Or occupying something.

It seems interesting that so much of the insurrectionary tendency is wrapped up in the Invisible Committee, yet does things that seem to be the opposite of what they put forward. We love to hate on activism, yet spend a lot of our time trying to be the ugly more terrible version of it.

As for the position of Letters Journal, I guess I would disagree with it, although it makes a lot of sense to me. How will we know when class struggle will explode? Would have they stated in Greece before they shot Alex that the insurrection in December was going to explode? How will we know who to intervene if we aren’t doing it all the time, where ever conflict appears, no matter how small?

Anyway. If I had the means to go to Pittsburgh, I probably would. Which seems to be part of the problem. We go because it’s fun, not because we should be spending our time and re-

sources on it. We know comrades will be there. So we go. When do we change this. When do we start to strategically start to plan riots around what we want to? Can we even do so?

Some notes on the Crimethinc blog:

"It's ironic that anarchist opposition to capitalist institutions—and anarchist emphasis on alternate lifestyles making the best of poverty—reached their peak a decade ago during a period of apparent prosperity, when they could be so much more persuasive today."

It really seems that Crimethinc is shooting itself in the foot here. They seem like they want to talk away from the "if you're not having fun, you're not doing [poverty] right" aesthetic of their past, but then they write stuff like that. If you're in poverty, dumpsterdiving, squatting, and the like may make things at times 'easier;' meaning, at least you'll have trash to eat and perhaps a place to get some sleep (while waking up every three minutes when you hear something) for about a month. But these things don't make the 'best' of poverty, they help you survive a little better. I go out and dumpster food a couple times a week here in Modesto, but besides filling up my fridge with shitty food I probably wouldn't buy in general, it just takes a very small financial burden off my wallet. This does nothing to change my class position in society, nor does it make the 'best' out of it.

Also, if Crimethinc is getting at the idea that 'alternative living' should be promoted more now, due to the recession, also is missing the point that at this time we should be promoting much more than dumpsterdiving the like. We should be promoting wildcat strikes and workplace occupations, defense against evictions and all the like.

"Since Obama's election, some of us have waited impatiently for a chance to bring opposition to global capitalism back into the public eye."

This statement makes it seem like this only happens when radicals get in the street at summits and at times get crazy and maybe even 'riot.' Do people only oppose capitalism when they are vocal that they are opposing capitalism?

"Effective anarchist resistance in Pittsburgh could shatter the illusion that Obama and his class represent the longings of the public for a better world, focusing attention on more radical responses to the present crises."

Also, I think a lot of people have lost the illusion that Obama offers anything but a new face to the same shit. Is this convergence the best way to go about 'proposing an alternative?' Which begs the question how we can propose an alternative to Capital even as we are out rioting against it? That isn't a problem, but lets be clear. When we attack capital, we aren't proposing an alternative as so much are we trying to get it the fuck out of our lives.