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Breaking The Barricades: Quebec's Carnival Of Resistance Against Capitalism

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Breaking The Barricades: Quebec's Carnival Of Resistance
Against Capitalism

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of developing counter-institutions that are antagonistic to both capital and the State, and reinforced by a mass working class culture of resistance.

We fight for an egalitarian society without borders, without classes, without sexism, without racism; a self-managed society where people contribute according to their abilities and receive according to their needs. This stateless society will be free and rooted in solidarity and built on a foundation of direct democracy. Freedom, justice and dignity are possible — The future will be ours!

tional methods and street tactics being recuperated and used to further an agenda of reformist electoral politics, national protectionism, and liberal ‘fair trade’ campaigns. For this reason, it’s important that we focus much more attention on political struggle (“the battle of ideas”) and developing long-term strategy than we do on street tactics.

If anarchism is to continue to be an influential force within the anti-globalization movement, we must be clear about our role as anarchists in this movement, and uncompromising in our vision for radical social change.

For anarchists, the struggle against globalization is inseparable from the struggle against the economic system that is the basis for it: capitalism. Anarchists oppose the FTAA, and all free trade accords, because they are the direct extension of capitalism. Capitalism is an inherently exploitive, alienating and destructive system that cannot be reformed; it must be abolished.

At the same time, we recognize that nation states are not the victims of globalization, as some suggest, but are one of the main authors and implementers of globalization. In regards to the FTAA, this trade accord is not only a strong arm approach by the bosses and corporations, but also a project that has been prepared in the offices of foreign relations ministries of the thirty-four members of the Organization of American States (OAS). The nation state, is not part of the solution. They are part of the problem. As such, anarchists reject calls for national protectionism and national sovereignty and instead align ourselves with internationalism. Capitalism is globalized; the resistance of the working class must be as well.

We are for radical, class-confrontational, self-managed forms of struggle. We are not against reforms per se (some are indeed good and can go against the logic of the system), but we are against reformism. Rather than “engaging” (lobbying) the system in the name of “civil society,” we adopt an uncompromising strategy of revolutionary dual power: that is, a strategy

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democracy, making it an essential condition for participation in the Summit of the Americas process.”

On the streets, many visiting protesters fled Quebec in order to avoid further police reprisals, while those who remained immediately set to work organizing legal support and documenting instances of police brutality. In the end, a total of 463 people were arrested during the protests. Police were said to have used 4,709 canisters of tear gas and 822 plastic bullets. Injuries were numerous. Over 200 protesters (and 71 cops) were reportedly injured. Medics treated burns, broken bones, concussions, tear-gas inhalation, and plastic bullet wounds (one protestor was in critical condition, and is expected to never speak again, after being shot in the throat with a plastic bullet).

Despite politicians declaring victory, and radical activists now forced to deal with the aftermath of these protests, the accomplishments made in the streets of Quebec should not be underestimated. Beyond simply inconveniencing summit delegates, thousands of courageous people came together in a powerful statement against global capitalism, battling against the forces of repression in an effort to defiantly assert their vision for a better world. After Quebec, it is apparent that the growing wave of anti-capitalist resistance movements in North America doesn't appear to be subsiding anytime soon.

BEYOND FAIR TRADE: AGAINST CAPITALISM AND THE STATE!

Obviously disruptive actions, property destruction and street fighting are limited forms of strategy for anarchists (not to mention magnets for unchecked machismo!), and we need to look beyond them if we are to develop a serious revolutionary movement. With much of the post-Seattle debate around globalization dominated by self-appointed representatives of “civil society,” there is a very real danger of anarchist organiza-

the billowing clouds for cover and launch a number of Molotov cocktails in the direction of police.

By nightfall police managed to push people off the highway and into the lower city, however every advancement forward was stubbornly met by continuous street fighting. In a renewed series of pitched battles, local residents from the neighborhoods of St. Jean-Baptiste and Limoilou continued the fighting where black bloc militants left off. By nightfall, the major confrontations with the police were no longer confined to handful of “hot areas” around the security perimeter, but had spread all over the city. Rioting broke out on a few commercial streets in the lower part of the city, banks and multinationals had their windows smashed in, and large bonfires were set in a number of street intersections (over 60 individual fires were reported throughout the city during the night). Police did not regain control over the streets until well after 4am.

THE AFTERMATH

“If the truest measure of a democracy is how it handles dissent, this weekend’s police actions are revealing.”

— M. J. Milloy, reporter for the ‘Montreal Hour’

For three days, the streets of Quebec City were charged with mass dissent, and shadowed by repression and police violence. Although protesters were responsible for delays and the cancellation of a few trade meetings during the weekend, the Summit of the Americas ended on schedule, with delegates declaring a final victory with an accord to adopt the FTAA by 2005 (in reality, no real gains were made in reaching an agreement on an FTAA text). From behind a 2.5 mile security fence surrounded by thousands of heavily-armed riot police, Jean Chretien, apparently oblivious to irony, proclaimed: “The declaration we have just signed contains a clear, unequivocal commitment to

“Neither J18 nor the WTO protest in Seattle, or its counterpart, A16 in Washington DC, were unique one-off events... similar incidents can be expected to occur in various forms and with varying degrees of intensity, aiming at the same target (corporate power) for the foreseeable future... the activities are global in scope, international in locale, and have involved sites in Canada on several occasions.” — Canadian Secret Intelligence Service (CSIS)

QUEBEC CITY — From April 20–22, the streets of Quebec City were filled with the spirit of revolt as tens of thousands of people protested the third Summit of the Americas, determined to confront the proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), and seriously disrupt these plans for absolute capitalist domination of the two continents.

Despite the largest security operation in Canadian history, the best efforts of the Canadian authorities proved to be a complete failure in preventing demonstrations of “Seattle-like” proportions. For three days, defiant protesters destroyed large sections of the security fence perimeter, clashed with riot police, and were responsible for the delay and cancellation of a number of high-level trade meetings. By the Summit’s end, there were hundreds of arrests, with injuries to police officers and protesters alike. Damages were estimated in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, and security costs surpassed \$70 million.

Beyond the dramatic images of tear gas and street battles, the Quebec protests mark an important evolution in the anti-globalization movement in terms of tactics, militancy, organization and a radical departure from liberal-reformist politics. Despite the increasing popularity of direct action, decentralization and directly democratic forms of decision-making with in the anti-globalization movement, the mobilization around the Summit of the Americas is the first time that these methods

of organization were used to reinforce explicitly revolutionary anti-capitalist politics on a mass scale. Additionally, the wide support for a 'diversity of tactics' managed to raise the level of confrontation and militancy during these protests, forcing the terms of struggle beyond the narrow confines of passive symbolic action and in the direction of revolutionary resistance.

Indeed, for anarchists these developments point towards exciting possibilities for the movement, and instill great hope for the future of revolutionary struggle here in North America.

WHAT'S THIS FTAA AGAIN?

At the center of these dramatic protests was the third Summit of the Americas, which brought together the heads of state of the Americas (with the exception of Cuba) and representatives of leading multinational corporations. Their aim? — To discuss the usual scare-mongering about state security, drugs and terrorism, sprinkled with empty rhetoric about democracy and human rights, and most importantly, to put the final touches on the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement.

The FTAA is the formal name given to the massive expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The FTAA's goal is to impose NAFTA's failed model of increased privatization and deregulation throughout the hemisphere, submitting health care, education, as well as environmental and labor standards to the dictatorship of the capitalist "free-market". With a population of 800 million, and a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of \$11 trillion, the FTAA would be the largest free-trade zone in the world.

The Quebec Summit was to be a significant step forward for the implementation of the FTAA, which is planned to go into effect no later than 2005. Unfortunately for the capitalists and ruling elites, negotiations did not go as smoothly as anticipated

and allow for tactical differences between activists erupt into physical confrontation, the black bloc had the humility to leave the area and de-escalate further conflict.

The major street battle of the day, indeed one of the major street battles of the weekend, began in the late afternoon when the black bloc regrouped in the St. Jean-Baptiste neighborhood and re-attacked the security checkpoint on Rue St. Jean. People with gas masks and shields were in the front, and dozens of people followed in organized lines marching forward. After a concerted effort to bring down sections of the checkpoint, police attacked and forced a brief retreat. As groups of riot police mobilized to push protesters out of the neighborhood and into the lower city, the black bloc held their ground and took an impressive offensive against the police lines. Behind shields and makeshift barricades, militants slowly advanced two blocks up a narrow street. This time, when people were attacked with tear gas and plastic bullets, they fought back with cobblestones, slingshots and nearly a dozen Molotov cocktails, forcing the lines of police in a brief retreat, and drawing loud cheers from the crowds in the street.

Street battles continued onto a highway onramp off of Cote d'Abraham, which had been occupied by protesters since early in the day and was now under a brutal assault from riot police. Despite hours of tear gas, water cannons and plastic bullets, thousands of people continued to rhythmically beat on the guard rails in a defiant drum session that could be heard from blocks away. Now as the police tried to dislodge them once and for all, the black bloc and dozens of Quebec youths came to their defense. Barricades went up, and the police were hit with a barrage of rocks, bottles, paint bombs, fireworks and Molotov cocktails for over three hours. When individual riot police would step out of the police lines to take aim and fire rubber bullets into the crowds, they were immediately attacked with slingshots and cobblestones and forced to retreat. When excessive tear gas was used, anarchists with gas masks would use

made bring down the reinforced check-point at the end of Rue St. Jean. By this time, however, police were alerted to the black bloc presence in the St. Jean-Baptiste neighborhood, and a strong show of force was used to clear the area of protesters. With helicopters overhead and the entire neighborhood now engulfed in tear gas, many people made their way up the hill to Rene-Levesque.

Most of the morning's actions had taken place on Rene-Levesque, where small groups of battle-weary protestors managed to resist police advancements to a temporary stalemate after sustaining hours of tear gas, concussion grenades and water cannons. In an effort to draw fire away from the front-lines on Rene-Levesque, the black bloc attempted to open up a new battle front against the security perimeter a few blocks to the east of the boulevard. Along a small side street off of Rene-Levesque, about 50–60 well-equipped militants were surprised to find the unguarded headquarters of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) directly in their path. Within minutes, every ground-level window was smashed to shards by a frenzy of projectiles, and a Molotov cocktail was lobbed through the damaged exterior (it was quickly extinguished by a group of pacifists).

Instead of the usual cheers that accompanied black bloc actions during most of the weekend, the assault on the CIBC managed to prompt a very negative response from onlookers. This was to be the first direct meeting between black bloc anarchists and ultra-dogmatic pacifists affiliated with Operation SalAMI. Needless to say, with members of SalAMI training for months in “de-escalation” tactics aimed at “neutralizing potential vandals” during the Summit of the Americas, the situation degenerated very rapidly into a series of minor altercations. Supposedly “non-violent” activists tried to physically attack the black bloc. People were shoved around, punches were thrown, and in one instance, an individual was maced after trying to defend himself. Rather than stoop to the low depths of SalAMI,

when over 60,000 uninvited guests gathered in Quebec to crash the party.

SECURITY OPERATIONS AND PRE-EMPTIVE ARRESTS

“The truly violent are those who prepare for the summit by accumulating tear gas, plastic bullets and pepper spray. Those who enact laws and measures that will put hundreds of thousands of poor in the street, those who let pharmaceutical corporations make billions on sickness, causing the death of millions of people, those who are copyrighting life and creating dependence and hunger. In a word, those who put their profits before our lives. These are the ones we should fear, not the anarchists.”

— Anarchists: You Only See Them When You Fear Them

“If you want peace, you must prepare for war.” — Serge Menard, Quebec's Minister for Public Security

In the months leading up to the Summit, the Canadian authorities, ever fearful of “another Seattle” transpiring in the streets, enacted a number of draconian measures to ensure the security of the delegates and intimidate any would-be protesters. This security operation was the largest and most expensive in Canadian history.

Millions were spent constructing a 10-foot high concrete wall topped with heavily reinforced chain-link fence, which spanned over 2.5 square miles around the Vieux-Quebec and the Haute-Ville, areas where the Summit was to take place. In addition to this “Wall of Shame,” authorities rented all vacant

residencies within the perimeter and reserved all hotel accommodations in the city to keep the protestors out. Well, that is not entirely accurate: hundreds of male and female inmates were transferred from a nearby Quebec City jail to other facilities in order to make room for protesters expected to be arrested during the summit. The transfer of prisoners alone cost Canadian taxpayers \$5 million.

Over 6,000 police from the RCMP, provisional Surete du Quebec, and local municipal forces were trained in crowd control and armed with the latest in anti-riot weaponry: armored mobile water cannons; thick body armor and heavy shields; 'Arwin 37' laser-targeting rifles for shooting "non-lethal" plastic bullets; C-7 assault rifles; .308-caliber sniper rifles; CS tear gas, pepper spray and assorted chemical irritants; concussion grenades and stun guns; attack dogs; and Griffon military helicopters used for aerial surveillance. Also, in preparation for a 'state of emergency' situation, 1,500 troops were stationed at the Citadelle, and an additional 3,000 were stationed outside of the city.

Beyond the massive policing operations in Quebec, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and other international security forces united their intelligence gathering operations to identify potential "violent groups" and "their leaders" long before the summit began. Customs and immigration officials were provided with information about activists who were arrested at mass actions in other parts of the world and believed to be headed for Quebec City.

In Montreal, the 'Germinal' affinity group was infiltrated months in advance by two members of a special squad of RCMP and SQ officers. As a result, members of the group were arrested en route to Quebec City carrying equipment such as smoke bombs, gas masks, shields, and some radical literature. It has recently come to light that the police agents who managed to infiltrate the group incited members to arm themselves with more serious equipment, including military-grade smoke

Of course, not everyone followed the march to its final (non)destination. About halfway through the march, a de-facto coalition of wobblies, Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), black bloc anarchists, and radical cheerleaders broke off and headed towards Rene-Levesque (where street battles between small groups of protesters and police took place all morning). Along the way, a couple of bank windows got smashed in, and at one point several anarchists ran down a side street and returned rolling a dumpster full of long wooden sticks and projectiles. In a scene reminiscent of troops going off to fight a popular war, battle-ready militants marched up the hill and through the St-Jean Baptiste neighborhood while hundreds of people lined the streets and hung out of windows to greet them with loud cheers of support.

Down a small side street people went to work on the fence with bolt cutters and grappling hooks. In response, a bulldozer drove up to the fence, presumably in an effort to prevent the black bloc from rocking it back and forth and toppling it in the same fashion as Friday afternoon. However, before the bulldozer could press up against the fence, a wide hole was cut through the chain link and people smashed in the windshield with cobblestones and chased the driver from the machine (allowing him to escape without any physical confrontation). A handful of people surged through the opening and attacked a group of police stationed nearby, who were forced to retreat under falling cobblestones and slingshot fire. The short-lived advancement lasted about a hundred feet into the security zone, at which point groups of riot police countercharged with tear gas and plastic bullets. Eventually demonstrators fell back onto Rue St. Jean, but not before blocking their path of retreat with a burning dumpster to hold back police charges.

Next the fence was torn down with ropes and bolt cutters nearby at St. Matthew's Cemetery, others used crowbars to dislodge cobblestones from the sidewalk, and an attempt was

In addition to these stolen documents, other forms of sophisticated attacks plagued the Summit of the Americas: twenty-eight government and corporate websites came under cyber-siege by computer hackers. A group calling itself ‘The Electro-hippies’ explained that these specific websites were targeted because “they are involved with the operation of the FTAA conference, they are corporate sponsors of the FTAA conference, or they are involved in the extremely excessive security measures being arranged to restrict the ability of the public to access the conference.” Corporate targets included Cisco System, Alcan, Telus, and Bombardier, as well Sun Microsystems, Barrick Gold Corporation, CIBC and KPMG. Also targeted were the sites for the FTAA and the Inter-American Development Bank.

RESISTANCE SPREADS LIKE WILDFIRE

“We expected this. You can’t have a trade summit these days without teargas; it would be like having a cheeseburger without cheese.” — senior U.S. trade official

Saturday was the official protest day for the more mainstream organizations, principally the Canadian unions. A legal march of nearly 40,000 unionists, progressive organizations, and assorted activists made it’s way through the lower part of the city, far away from the FTAA meetings and security perimeter, and ended in an empty lot. There a short, and by most accounts uninspiring, rally took place and then most people were escorted to awaiting busses and transported back to their respective cities. One Canadian Auto Worker unionist was quoted as saying: “Why was the ‘legal protest’ conducted miles away from the security perimeter? Had I known I was marching towards a parking lot, I would have stayed home and done that at the fucking mall.”

devices and flash grenade simulators. Currently five members of the group face serious charges and if convicted, they face a possible ten-year sentence.

MOBILIZING AGAINST THE SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

“It didn’t start in Seattle, and it sure as hell won’t end in Quebec” — Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles (CLAC)

One of the most exciting aspects of the Quebec protests was the amount of organizing that was done by consciously anarchist and other anti-capitalist militants. Most of this activity was mobilized by the Montreal-based ‘Convergence of Anti-Capitalist Struggles’ (CLAC) and the Quebec City-based ‘Summit of the Americas Welcoming Committee’ (CASA), and reinforced by the work of radical anti-authoritarian groups such as the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), Anti-Racist Action (ARA), NYC Ya Basta!, and the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC).

Both CLAC and CASA formed in response to the planned Summit of the Americas meeting, and also as a means to reinforce existing local networks of resistance. Each group organized around principles of unity that were anti-capitalist, feminist, non-reformist, anti-authoritarian and supporting a diversity of tactics. Although mobilizing against the Summit of the Americas was an important focal point for both CLAC and CASA, they have a healthy criticism of “summit-hopping” (the phenomena of backpacking activists travelling from one big protest to the next — often crisscrossing the globe to do so). These mobilizing efforts were seen as just one contribution within a framework of long-term struggle occurring in both the North and South against capitalist globalization.

Outside of the organizing done by anarchists and radical anti-capitalists, a number of NGOs and unions came together within the OCP-2001 coalition, and also around the Réseau Québécois sur l'intégration Continentale (RQIC), which organized the 'People's Summit' (a "civil society" conference that ran parallel to the actual Summit of the Americas). Other groups included Operation SalAMI (who actually spent more energy trying to marginalize CLAC and CASA than doing any real organizing work on the ground), and student mobilizations from the University of Quebec at Montreal (UQAM), McGill and Concordia.

A20 DAY OF ACTION

"This type of behavior that we have witnessed here this afternoon was carried out by a small group of extremists is contrary to all democratic principles that are so dear to us." — Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien

In the days leading up to the Summit of the Americas, hundreds of activists participated in the spokescouncils organized by CLAC and CASA. Each spokescouncil was directly democratic and multi-lingual, with an emphasis on equal gender and racial representation. Hours were spent discussing the strategy and logistics of the protests, with most speakers representing larger affinity groups planning for direct action.

Since most delegates were already inside of the security perimeter, the possibility of shutting down the summit through a successful blockade (ala Seattle) was out of the question. An alternative strategy was set into motion where disruptive actions would be utilized around the security perimeter and throughout the city, thereby making the consequences of the summit proceedings as disorderly and unpleasant as possible for all those involved (ala Prague). This strategy was left

ter and the neighboring hotels, officials and dignitaries were under siege, unable to move from one building to another. The buildings were locked up so tightly that police shut down the ventilation system to prevent the air from being contaminated and wouldn't even let reporters who had left the building return for fear they had been exposed to pepper spray or tear gas."

STOLEN SECURITY PLANS AND SUMMIT CYBER-ATTACKS

At some point during the day a group of protestors managed to break into a police van and appropriate a number of shields, vests, and a police radio. Also taken were several highly sensitive documents, including police intelligence reports, security plans for the summit, an itinerary of meeting times and locations, and various strategies for crowd control during the week-end. These liberated texts were made public through an anonymous posting to the Independent Media Center. The following day FBI agents visited the main offices of the Independent Media Center, located in Seattle, where they seized computer-log records and issued a gag-order against the alternative media group.

According to the mainstream media, one federal criminal justice source said the speed with which the stolen documents appeared on the Internet speaks to the sophistication of the anti-globalization movement. "The fact that you have something of this magnitude out there on the Web, it really shows these groups are strong, resourceful and resilient." The breach of security came as a great embarrassment for the Canadian government, which had recently lost a highly sensitive, anti-terrorism document when it was stolen from a government official's car while he was at a hockey game.

At about this time two armored water cannons made their entrance from the rear, attempting to corral the retreating protesters. Rather than fleeing down small side streets to avoid being boxed in, protestors charged the water cannons, climbed on them, slashed the hoses, smashed windows and jammed the cannons with hockey sticks. Both water cannons beat a clumsy retreat, hitting a few parked cars before leaving the area. From that point on, the water cannons were safely escorted by riot police behind the perimeter.

It was during these first two hours of battle on Rene Levesque that undercover police kidnapped Jaggi Singh, one of the most visible and effective spokepeople from CLAC. A group of undercovers (most likely CSIS) assaulted Jaggi in the 'green zone' area of St. Jean-Baptiste, and forced him into an awaiting van. One young woman who tried to stop the attack was shoved to the ground. When other would-be rescuers intervened, the assailants drew truncheons from under their coats, announced they were police agents. Jaggi was eventually charged with "inciting riot" and "possession of a deadly weapon" (the theatrical catapult used to launch teddy bears), and after 17 days in jail was released on \$3,000 bail.

Towards late afternoon, police managed to push the crowds of demonstrators into the St-Jean Baptiste neighborhood with a liberal use of tear gas and rubber bullets, indiscriminately attacking participants from one of the peaceful 'green zone' street festival in the process. This touched off further clashes as residents joined protester militants and fought with police late into the night. It was reported that two banks were fire-bombed before police finally regained control of the streets at about 2:30am.

The day's actions were responsible for delaying the opening ceremonies of the summit for over an hour, and forcing the cancellation of high-level trade meetings between the United States and various Caribbean and Latin American nations. According to the mainstream media: "Inside the convention cen-

provocatively vague and open to interpretation by the various tactically diverse groupings.

On April 20, over 10,000 people gathered at Université Laval for the planned 'Carnival Against Capitalism' through the city. Different zones of resistance activity were planned. The green zone would be a festive march, and later street party, with no risk of arrest. The yellow zone was for those who wanted to go to the wall around Vieux Quebec (the old city), and participate in non-violent civil disobedience. The red zone was designated for those looking to initiate maximum disruption. Also, some of the yellow zone, "hard yellow" affinity groups, planned support the actions of the red zone if a successful breach of the security perimeter was to take place.

The march down Boulevard Rene Levesque and towards the security perimeter was tense with anticipation, and not without incident. Along the route, a small group of masked protesters broke away from the march and set to work on a Saint-Foy police cruiser, slashing it's tires and spraypainting the hood. As the occupant of the car attempted to make an arrest, a crude yet effective unarrest took place someone allegedly hit the cop in the face and the group managed to escape. At this point the cop pulled out his gun, and tried to pursue the masked protesters. Thankfully the situation was de-escalated by a resident who persuaded the cop to put away his gun and leave the scene.

A few blocks from the security perimeter, an announcement went over the sound system: "Turn to the left to go to the green zone if you would like to participate in a safe, non-confrontational carnival against capitalism. For those of you who wish to continue the fight, the fence is straight ahead!" Thousands continued on towards the fence, touching off the first of the weekend's protracted street battles.

REVOLUTIONARY ANTI-CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

“You can’t reform capitalism and inhumanity. Just kick it till it breaks.” — Angry Brigade, 1971

The core of the red zone was made up of militants aligned with the Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Offensive (RACO). A statement released weeks in advance by the ‘Autonomous Organizing Collective of Anti-Authoritarians from the Midwest, Northeast, Montreal, and Quebec’ called on anarchists to mobilize for the Summit of the Americas and prepare for physical confrontation in order to “show the ruling elites of the Americas that we are ready to resist their attacks and fight back”.

Hundreds took up the call, amassing one of the most well-equipped and broadly supported (not to mention, the most gender-diverse) black bloc mobilizations in recent activist history. Unlike much of the yellow zone, which seemed fairly indecisive about strategy and tactics for the weekend, the red zone was very well organized and determined to disrupt the summit by any means necessary. Many people came prepared with padded body armor, helmets, batons and shields (to counter police attacks); gas masks, vinegar-soaked masks and heavy gloves (to defend against tear gas); ropes, grappling hooks and bolt-cutters (to tear down sections of the security fence); and slingshots, hockey pucks, rocks, paint bombs and Molotov cocktails (to take offensive actions when necessary).

After breaking off from the green zone, the red and yellow groups continued on towards the security perimeter, led by banners which read: “Revolutionary Anti-Capitalist Offensive” and “Capitalism Cannot Be Reformed”. Along the route, a handful of anarchists bombarded a Shell gas station with stones and hockey pucks, breaking almost every window. Spray-painted on the exterior was “Vive Saro-Wiwa” in reference to social activist Ken Saro-Wiwa who was hung in Nigeria for organiz-

ing against Shell’s activities in that country. In what was to set the tone for the entire weekend, this action was embraced with approving cheers of “Vive le Black Bloc!” As the march continued on, another group broke off from the march and, in a widely televised attack, smashed up two media vans from the Global News Corporation.

Upon reaching the security perimeter, red zone affinity groups gathered behind long sheets of plastic to protect against pepper spray, and approached the fence, with those who brought shields and gas masks in the front. The authorities had claimed that the steel fence would stop a car driving 100-miles an hour, but in a few minute’s time, ropes and grappling hooks were attached to the top of the fence and a section as wide as the entire boulevard was brought crashing down.

Before riot police could mobilize to push back the surging crowd, they were forced on the defensive by a relentless barrage of hockey pucks, cobblestones, paint bombs and the odd Molotov cocktail thrown their way. Sections of fence and police barriers were also used as battering rams, touching off hand-to-hand combat between riot police and groups of black bloc anarchists. Behind the front lines of street fighting, the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology, dressed in medieval attire, pulled up a home-made catapult and launched stuffed animals at the lines of police. Eventually, as reinforcements arrived on the scene, the police managed to gain the upper hand and the first volleys of tear gas were sent into the crowds.

As tear gas canisters rained down on demonstrators, there was a brief period of panic and retreat. Unfortunately for the police, much of the ‘red zone’ came prepared for such actions, and returned tear gas canisters back in their direction as rapidly as they were being launched at the crowds of protesters. After about an hour of pitched battle, columns of riot police pushed forward and protesters began to retreat, attacking several corporate media vehicles and a police car along the way.