

Anarchy in Trieste

Anarchists from East & West meet in Italy

Bob McGlynn

The Italian group Germinal sponsored the first-ever large scale planning meeting of anarchists from the East and West in Trieste, Italy from April 14 through 17. Although they did not intend to have a huge gathering, 332 people registered from 23 countries. Among the groups represented from Eastern Europe were the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists (USSR), the Czechoslovakian Anarchist Union, Autonomia (Hungary), Autonomija and A! (Yugoslavia) and Black Aliens and the Polish Anarchist Federation (Poland).

There was no severe harassment from the authorities, but there were many border detentions and identification checks by the cops on the street. One detained Yugoslav was told to get a haircut!

Germinal did a good job of organizing the gathering, securing halls for meetings, supplying food and lodging, providing translations via earphones, etc.

On Friday night preceding the conference, activists from the formerly East bloc countries held a special meeting with Germinal. The Easterners were concerned that not enough time had been set aside for practical organization and networking cooperation. It was agreed that the Monday morning assembly would concentrate on that.

All of Saturday was devoted to a general assembly where the various delegates gave speeches and reports on the situation in their countries, their political views, and their organizing activities and other efforts. A wide range of subjects was covered; they included the history and perspectives of neither east nor west type activity (much applause for that!), squatting, racism, and anti-nuclear struggles.

Glasnost, A Power Game

A consensus emerged in the assembly that in this new period of Capitalist/Communist collusion it's more vital than ever for opposition movements in the east and the west to cooperate and engage in joint work with one another; we share the same enemies. The Communists have not yet disappeared; elites remain. Alternative visions are still on the defensive. Glasnost is a power-game adaptation to new political/economic conditions.

Saturday's meeting also had plenty of literature tables and exhibits of photos and leaflets from a bunch of countries like Poland, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

On Sunday three commissions (workshops) were scheduled to discuss a number of topics: the ideological crisis of Marxism, the development of the opposition movements in the East, and the opening of new common perspectives due to German reunification and the future of Europe after 1992. Missing was a workshop to concretely plan joint activism and cooperation between anarchists east and west, so a group of us put our heads together and announced a networking meeting at the Germinal office on Sunday afternoon.

I don't know what happened at the workshops. A couple times during the networking meeting someone would pop in to say that easterners were lacking at the three workshops and couldn't an easterner please attend one? Clearly our workshop was packed with East Europeans who wanted to get down to nitty-gritty business.

Plenty of practical ideas and proposals were tossed around by the 40 to 50 people who attended, including a computer network, an activist bulletin (similar to *On Gogol Boulevard*), international camping, support for miners' strikes in the USSR, a solidarity statement for the April 23 Earth Day protest on Wall Street, prisoner support, a simultaneous day of action, an emergency response network/phone tree, and the coordination of sending money, books, printing supplies, computers and other items to the East. (Many easterners need info on the basics of feminism, anarchist history and theory; they're starving for info on everything.) Hungarians wanted help with squatting. Solidarity actions and statements were asked for a May 19 protest in Canada against NATO military training flights over Innu (Native Americans) land and the construction of a NATO base in Canada.

Trying to organize a world revolution in a few hours certainly got hectic, but a number of concrete things were decided.

During the general assembly on Monday, practical planning among anarchists east and west was discussed. The walls of the auditorium were covered with sheets of paper for people to write down their proposals, appeals, and so on. Reports on the networking meetings were given. The solidarity statement for the Wall Street action was read as well as the Black Banner Brigade's statement supporting an action against the International Monetary Fund meeting in Austin, Texas on July 9 through 11. Both Statements were unanimously agreed to by the assembly.

It was agreed that Arianne and others of the NY group would coordinate a newsletter. People should send her photo-ready copy sheets which she will xerox, staple and mail out to the network contact list. It will be assembled monthly, or every other month. Those in the west would be required to subscribe at \$10/year with easterners getting a freebie. We'd call it or subtitle it "The Intercontinental Neither East Nor West Newsletter." It would stress short, concise items calling for activist cooperation on projects, reports on the activities/histories of various groups, and so on. For now, the newsletter would be an internal bulletin board for the network. There would be no editorial control; what comes in goes out. Nice and easy. huh? Shucks.

Strong Camaraderie

The generous souls from Poland's Anarchist Federation pledged to fund-raise for the bulletin by sending anarchist T-shirts and patches to be sold at Sabotage Books in New York.

On Monday night a special women's meeting was held, as well as some impromptu gay networking.

Tuesday morning saw a public display of anarchist posters, publications and photos in a local plaza. Tuesday afternoon the East Europeans held a special meeting for themselves (which was open to westerners).

On Wednesday, as the gathering ended Germinal members and others feverishly worked on assembling packets of submitted material to send out to conference participants.

The gathering was amazing and very successful. There was plenty of fun and partying. Despite the usual differences of opinion and various frictions, we all got along quite well and loved each other. Camaraderie was quite strong.

The major drawback of the conference, something which seems to plague the anarchist movement everywhere, was the lack of Third World or Fourth World participation. North Americans informed the conference of a gathering planned by Mexican anarchists for 1991 in Mexico City.

One difference between this gathering and the recent ones in North America was that there was much more of an age mixture in Trieste, something that made it more interesting.

One last comic note: Inevitably when you use the term "anarchy" most people think of "mindless chaos." An example often brought up is "what would happen if there were no traffic lights?" Some of us noticed that there were very few traffic lights in Trieste. Guess what? Nothing happened!

See you at the next one.

For the anarchist networking bulletin: Intercontinental Neither East nor West Newsletter, PO Box 1737, New York, N.Y. 10009, USA (\$10 cash).

For the anarchist computer network: Tjebbe Van Tijen, Nieuwe Amstelstr. 70, 1011 PM* Amsterdam, Holland.

For the Europe/North American communications improvement network: Ralf Landmesser, Rathenower, Str. 23, D1000 Berlin 21, Germany.

The most recent *On Gogol Boulevard* contains more information from Trieste—Eastern documents, etc., a long contact list, an analysis of what the changes in the east mean, plus an intriguing article. “Was the CIA Behind the East European Purge Trials?” It’s available for \$1. from Bob McGlynn, 528 5th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11215.

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