

The Faultline Of Istanbul

Insurrection Notes From Taksim

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2013

[ed. — The occupation of Taksim Square and Gezi Park in İstanbul began on May 28th to resist the government's plans to build a shopping centre and destroy the green area. Clashes begun on May 31st, and escalated from demonstrations to full-blown rioting across 67 cities all over Turkey. An unprecedented amount of people flooded to the streets regardless of the barrage of tear gas, bullets (both plastic and live), water cannons and more, as the uprising generalised itself past the specific ecological concern. Besides the destruction of the construction equipment, it was the police who saw the largest amount of anger directed at them. Here's a text from local anarchists about the context and events of the revolt. As we prepare to print, Berkin Elvan died on March 11th, having turned 15 while in a coma after being shot in the head by a tear-gas canister in June, becoming the most recent dead from the uprising. The next day, after the funeral, banks were attacked and a ruling party election office was trashed and burned. Nothing is over...]

Actually it was NOT totally unpredictable, but we somehow couldn't see it was coming. What have people of Turkey been doing until this revolt? Students have beaten up the teachers who gave them grades lower than they deserved. People stabbed doctors who neglected their loved ones. They shot sergeants to run away, and deserted obligatory military service. They crashed police stations and beat up abusive police officers. After courts gave their verdict, people gave a taste of their own verdict at the hallways of courts. Women brought their own justice to their violators. They committed suicides under the pressure of big exams, credit card debts...

Insurrection of individuals and revolutionary groups finally touched each other and got connected in Gezi Park Resistance (as of May 29 to date *[ed. — article posted mid-June]*). So, we wanted to share some of our observations from behind the barricades with you:

- Roads were blocked, trunks and back seats are checked to see if they secretly sneak gas bombs to police. Because police used ambulances to sneak bombs, people carefully searched them; people stoned fire trucks because they were observed to be carrying water for the water cannons that put out fire barricades.
- ID checks for those who were suspected to be undercover police.
- CCTVs and cameras were dismantled and damaged.

- More than 40 outstanding barricades were set. Pavement stones, billboards, traffic signs, trash cans, whatever is in hand and lying around, were used.
- Banks, ATMs, billboards and bus stop advertisements were destroyed.
- Police containers and police cars were set on fire, OR used for the benefit of public.
- Construction machines and buses were overturned, damaged and set on fire.
- Food and necessary supplies were shoplifted from corporate supermarkets around the neighborhood.
- Media vehicles (CNN van) were overturned and destroyed.
- A bulldozer was captured to counter-attack riot control vehicles, and water cannons were pushed out of the streets.
- Young kids who were abused and humiliated by cops every day set the record straight by stoning and cursing them in their face. They wrestled back their integrity.
- Trucks and bulldozers were captured and used to build barricades.
- Unorganized and largely apolitical youth got acquainted, discussed and mutually learned tactics and strategies with more radical and organized groups.
- Thousands of young people got firsthand experience in clashing with police forces.
- A large solidarity network was spontaneously organized for food, drinks, solution for tear gas and cigarettes.
- Drink and food points were set up to disperse free stuff to whomever in need.
- People started to frantically share everything, their chocolate bars, cigarettes, their home-made food, food they were given by others.
- Trash and litter were collectively collected, even the cigarette butts.
- Everybody was helping everybody with anti-acid solutions against tear gas on the barricades.
- People opened their houses' doors, as well as small cafes and shops, for perfectly random protestors, who were cornered by police forces.
- Housewives and other people in the neighborhoods joined the protests with making noise with pans, etc.
- Food and anti-acid solution kits were placed in a lot of spots.
- First-aid points were set up.
- Doctors ran from barricade to barricade during heavy clashes.

- Street vendors happily proliferate in the absence of police, who normally chase them and confiscate their stuff.
- Sex workers, including transsexuals, could work, stroll around, and mingled with others freely without being abused.
- A vacant area under closure had been liberated for the public and turned into a small park.
- Some other vacant houses, which were under mortgage closures, were occupied and put into use.
- A small urban garden was created.
- A free library was set up.
- People read bulletins and pamphlets like they never did before. They thought things they never thought before.
- People claimed back and made the streets their own again with graffiti, stencils and various different flags and colors instead of billboards and commercials.
- Instead of going to work or back home with public transportation or cabs, people marched slowly under clouds of tear gas chanting slogans and curses. They weren't scared anymore,

they kept on marching.

- People determined their own agenda, not parties, powers or leaders.
- Not a single woman was abused. They freely marched, strolled around and stayed in the park.
- People spent their time together instead of killing it in front of TVs or computer screens.
- Masses were disillusioned and openly started to criticize mass media.
- Kurds freely waved their guerrilla flags (PKK [*Kurdish Workers Party*]), showcased portraits of their guerrilla leader under arrest (Apo) and enjoyed themselves with their traditional collective folk dances. Nationalists willy nilly had to get used to it. Even some of them couldn't resist and joined the dances.
- Middle-class activists, with their pristine bourgeois hygiene standards, ate the same food, shit in the same portable johns and went long periods without showers together with the homeless people and street animals.

People realized life without cops is JOY, indeed.

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