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Note that I am as well a Rainbow Keeper member myself, so I am not just trying to throw some mud on a rival organisation. And if these few details are solved, I have no problem of having Rainbow Keepers to continue as East-European coordinator, or conveyor, or whatever. But in the long run, I think for European PGA it would be good to have an East-European conveyor, or maybe a group of East European conveyors since it is unlikely that a single group could handle the task on their own.

This seems like a completely unrealistic thing right now, where some East European groups which have had a long involvement in the PGA even wonder have they enough resources to work as infopoints. But I think in few years it would be possible to have East European conveyors, if we approve it as a common goal now. For sure it would require also very active role of the support group (if it will still exist) and withdrawing conveyor, since organisation of the conference, and even that of the coordination meetings would be financially dependant from the West.

(Post scriptum: when making final edition to the text, it seems like PGA will have an East-European conveyor already 2003…)

Rainbow Keepers have most honest intentions, but they seem to have much other priorities. Besides few articles in somewhat little distributed paper, Tretiy Put, and organising a bus travel to founding conference and presence in Cochabamba, Finland and Leiden for example, I have not seen much attempts to organise on PGA frame in the xUSSR by them. Nothing came out from the idea to have East-European/CIS PGA conference organised in Votkinsk in August of 2001.

Unactivity would not be a problem in itself it could not at times hamper participation of the others. Example on this was the Cochabamba conference, support group passed East-European applications to Rainbow Keepers to approve, but Rainbow Keepers refused announcing that they do not know these groups and have no method to decide about their suitability. Support group had not such resources either, but it was even worse idea to pass applications to conference organisers. In the end, no-one did anything with the applications, and as far as I know Rainbow Keepers was the only group travelling to the Cochabamba from East Europe. Among thus refused applicants were two persons from Autonomous Action. Actually the fact they applied was outrageous since these people did not had approval of the whole organisation (which was then just a network) to their application and seemed just to think that Western activist are happy to waste $1000 anytime just to see some Russian faces (this actually at times seems to be the case). However if nothing is done with the current situation same thing is likely to be repeated in the future.

A Rainbow Keeper activist explained me that in Cochabamba it was decided that RK will not "monopolize contacts", that any other East European group should have equal access to information.

This is a good decision. I think another decision which should be made is that any East Europeans should be able to participate to European process in the equal terms, whatever happens to the East European process hosted by Rainbow Keepers.

The purpose of this article is to summarize my personal experiences from the European conference of the People's Global Action, which took place 31st of August-4th of September 2002 in Leiden of Holland. The experience was indeed confusing, and more than once I really find myself asking "what am I doing in this place?". However it was very useful to clarify to myself some things what are going on in the Western Europe — on situation and perspectives of the movement. My experiences were maybe not always encouraging, but maybe I understand certain things more clearly by now.

There are two kinds of people — others write too long articles, others too short or do not write at all. After finishing this one (or making to the middle), you won't have a doubt to which category the author goes. I decided first to write down everything, and then to make different referates to various journals. If you haven't seen these journals and are reading this article, you are propably too dependent on the internet.

Slipping from my principles

During last 5 years when I have been active in Finland and Russia, I have found myself countless times criticizing activist tourism, where people travel thousands of kilometres to some spectacles instead of trying to get the message spread in their own areas. I personally tried to stay away from these events, never travelling to West from the river Oder. Last spring I however decided to travel to European PGA conference, since I discovered that I am much in a need of some moral boost. Luckily I expected to get this moral boost just from seeing big bunch of political hippies, and not from the possible resolutions or practical coordination the conference could make.

Altough no Russian was interested to travel with me and I am not completely broken, I decided to hitchike onwards from Latvian

border to save money and to raise awareness in Russia that if you really want to participate to an international event, it is not really a question of money. I soon realized that my estimations about schedule were far too optimistic, but I had incredible luck on the road plenty of times and arrived to Leiden early in the morning of Friday the 30th, just a bit more than 5 days and some 2500 kilometres since I had left Moscow.

It took days to accomodate to the environment. It was not only the demonstration against the Corporate influence over the UN in Amsterdam of the Saturday, which was the most hippie action I have ever been in, but the Leiden in itself and Dutch cities in general. I mean, everything was just too nice and cute even in the Finnish scale, not to talk about the Russian! How can one seriously think about destroying the global capitalism in such a place? In another hand, my undocumented Polish friend from Berlin got harrassed by cops just for dumpster diving or walking on the street — if you disturb all this disgusting niceness, you are immediately pushed around! In such places one has feeling that you just have to break something. No wonder why so many voted the racist LPF party, the place would be ready to fascism if there only was some movement crushing of which would require that! How I hate those welfare states!

Bum rush the show

I was in the Finnish group which organised the first PGA conveyor's meeting in Finland in the summer of 1998 (to be honest I did not really lift a finger for that since I had other projects then), and I have been following the developments of the network ever since. Conveyor's meeting eventually lead to few burn-outs and destruction of our group, but I am not really bitter for that since it was anyway best thing our group ever got done. But what disappointed me was the analysis I then made about the conveyor's group. To

without sinking into bureaucracy or to endless discussions about formalisms, being in this edge is a sort of an ideal compromise to me. In the West, there would not be a chance for such a balancing. If East-Europeans do not start to understand West-European society and movements, they do not even find any normal people to cooperate with, for example dozens of people in Russia live in faith that ATTAC in the West are good people and efforts should be taken in order to network with them… what a waste! In similar way, most of people in Russia think that the commonly agreed main goal of any big international mobilization is to have as big riot as possible.

If there is something from which West-Europeans should get rid of, that is the attitude that everything should be on a walking distance! If you think that places like Warsaw or Prague are far away… fuck you! They are not! People from Siberia spend days hitchiking on highways or bumming in short-distance trains to get to our summer conferences at the Black Sea, and you may not spend few short hours in a comfortable Western train which is a direct connection!

Propably East-European involvement would also require that some people which have a long-term involvement in the PGA should take the issue to their hearts. Eastern expansion was for sure a condition for the Noborder network to have any perspective at all (since soon Central Europe won't have any ground borders), but it would not have happended without lots of sacrifices and work by a very few Western individuals.

Playahatin'

There is also one very practical issue which is currently a barrier in the East European involvement. That is the current East European coordinator, Rainbow Keepers. I am sure that the few people who have some vision about developing PGA in East Europe among

support campaign to Chechen refugees popped up. It did not really worked out, but was worth of trying anyway. When we again began questioning our participation to the Noborder in the spring of 2002, Southern groups of Autonomous Action began to organise anti-deportation campaigns in the Kuban region of the Black Sea rim.

So when Western groups begin new campaigns, they should have a thought if there could be an East- European dimension in them. The same way, East-European groups should have a thought if their campaigns could have some West European dimension, and more importantly, be concrete and realisitic with their expectations, and even more importantly, to expect something else except just money. People shouldn't be too realistic — every anti-repression issue, every ecological protest has at least some potential to become international, you should at least have a try.

East Europeans should strive to understand

West-European movements in a more deeper than just a superficial way. At first sight anything in West Europe seems just awesome, but after another look it is easy to find plenty of problems. My strongest discovery after Leiden was that I am actually hell of a lucky to live and organise in Moscow — our autonomy of action is in a completely different level than in the West. In the West, whatever you say or do is annoying someone else in the "left". In Russia there are people criticizing and hating you as well, but they are something like 10 persons in some closed e-mail list. But in the West, there will always be hundreds or thousands of people putting you as a reformist, an extremist, an authoritarian, a disorganized, a liberal, a dogmatic, a sexist or a sectarian feminist nutcracker or whatever on every step you take. Here we can just do whatever we want and organise the way we want. Actually in federative level Autonomous Action is just about as organised as is possible

me it then seemed like a discussion group of super-activists, a sort of activist equivalent of the WEF. Reading old PGA materials now, it is clear to me that the process of choosing the conveyors was indeed transparent, but I do not think representatives of the conveyors themselves had much of any mandate to discussions and endorsements they made from the organisations they were represening. Not that decisions about action days or informal discussions about NGO's were that crucial decisions about future of our all, but networks which are based on personal ties only claiming to represent mass movements are just in clear contradiction with my personal ideas. But biggest disappointment of all was that it seemed to me that nothing else is really possible — PGA unites such a multitude of different movements with different structures from different organisational traditions, that any attempts to make more democratic and rigit mechanism would lead to immediate collapse of the project. In the world of today, any attempt to more coherent international organisation seems to be doomed to 100 times smaller scale.

However there has been some development in the network during 4 years, most importantly introduction of the continental dimension. In Europe there is much more coherence between the movements, people and groups involved in the European PGA are from much more similar traditions (such as anarchist, autonomist, anti-imperialist or radical NGO) than in the global scale. Lately a number of people (such as French Sans Titre collective and Eurodusnie) have raised the criticisms about problems I had seen, and in the European level there maybe would be ways to find at least partial solutions.

Hooked to organisation

We must point out that we have really a big cultural barrier here, during last 3 years author of this text has soaken deep

into tradition of the "organisational anarchism", which has same roots as the "anti-authoritarian networking" which is somewhat hegemonic paradigm in the European PGA, but has developed very different answers to problems of representation and decision-making. Where many comments in the European PGA discourse raise criticism of representation as such, my current organisation Autonomous Action relies on delegates with imperative mandates and immediate recallability. Our view of democracy also does not demand consensus decisionmaking. Lack of the "organisational anarchism" is that it does not put that much stress to good process than "networking/consensus/affinity group" approach of "anti-authoritarian networking", where by simplifying a little one may say that latter tradition is ready to sacrifice results for sake of a good process.

In many Western countries less than 5% of the anarchists (not that most in PGA define themselves as such) are part in any formal organisation, in East-Europe this share is bigger but propably nowhere much more than 25%. It is an open question if organisational anarchism may organise mass movements these days, since it has not really succeeded in that since 1936. But PGA is around and unites millions (and tens of thousands in Europe), so plenty of organisational anarchists find themselves in the PGA conferences (including leading moderate syndicalist unions, Swedish SAC and Spanish CGT).

However, since my understanding of democracy differs so much from the European PGA paradigm, in every discussion I am in another leg out-situation. However since many people had made similar criticisms as I have, I was more inside than for example the syndicalists who were carefully following process discussions but never said a word, obviously feeling themselves as sole observers.

Lenghty punchline starts here

Ok, having read some 7000 words of cynical or tragicomedical remarks, reader maybe wants to know if I have something positive to say about the European PGA conference, or at least some concrete proposals which I called all the time. Well, although I certainly love all you people who were there, boosting your moral is not that much my style. To me pain and understanding have always been two somewhat synonymous expressions.

First good step would be that everyone just spent a while to think what do they want from the network, after having done a reality check. It is obvious that European PGA is unlikely rushing as one to any new initiative, it is for example not necessary a sign of racism if network does not run immediately to support issue such as the movement against the war in Congo, in contrary to opinion of one African participator. In another hand, although European PGA has its own priorizing dynamics, and these dymanics are to a large extent independent from any collective decision, priorities are still not necessary a monolith course which is unchangeable, I think that by patient discussion it is possible to influence not only formal priorization by the network (which is a little in itself) but also to priorities of the individuals who are participating to it.

We need some more dimensions here

Take concrete issue, such as the East-European involvement. At first West-Europeans should realize, that most issues which work out in the West do not work in the East. Even many issues, which you could imagine should work in the East, will not work. Still there are and will be some ideas which could be worth of trying. For example Autonomous Action of Moscow got first hooked to European Noborder-network just in connection with the organisation of the Polish bordercamps, but in few years an idea of organising

Working group
Hallmark
Democratic
Structure
«Translation sign "L"»
We should not go to the details
Technical detail
Network
Keep your comments short, please
Keep to the point
Internet
Reflect
Proposal
Webpage
So we leave it for later
Please
Initiative
Transparent
Diversity
Spirit

Note that words did not have to be mentioned in the exact form — for example we crossed "anarchism" when "anarchist" was mentioned. However combined expressions had to explicitly include all parts, although "radical" and "change" were mentioned many times, sometimes even in the same phrase, we could not cross "radical change" since they were not mentioned combined. It was also not allowed to cross expressions when they were just read aloud from written documents submitted to the plenary.

We played the first biNGO to afternoon as well, but since the results were not good we decided to make a separate process biNGO, which we played only one hour — with tremendous results! One may make some conclusions about the spirit in the plenary from the fact that "please" was not said at once during this period…

So fresh, so clean

As I said I had no any expectations beforehand, but this changed soon on the place. Everything (food, nightplaces, venues) was stunningly well organised, organised even published a daily conference paper with informations about all the sessions of the day before! Even more important, the wish to deal with the structural problems on the European level was very evident, both conveyors, MRG Catalonia and Eurodusnie, had done propositions to deal with some of the problems, such as increasing transparency to the process how conveyors are working and what are their responsabilities. I was expecially happy to see that Eurodusnie had published Jo Freeman's "tyranny of structurelesness" in the conference reader, this text is very important theoretical reference of our movement and we (Autonomous Action) have distributed its Russian translation in the former Soviet Union.

So suddenly I was much more motivated with the process part of the conference, expecially when I realized that none of the more practical working groups were about themes which have any relevancy in the former Soviet Union. The fact that "civil society" does not exist in xUSSR sets a very rigid frame to what you may even think to try. For example, although Russia is not contributing less to the global debt problem than Western countries, in Russia you may forget about organising around some demands towards decisionmakers which do not raise direct possibilities of people to influence their own lifes by direct action. Same thing with any Third World issue whatsoever, the segment of the society which would pressure policymakers towards something just does not exist. Chechen war was another thing since the own nationals were slained there in thousands in the both sides, and there were real chances of mutinies for example, but we finished organising against even that when anti-war movement took course to agony two years ago (in December 2002 we however resurrected our campaign). Our solidarity demonstration as part of the S26 of

year 2000 around IMF and World Bank issues is unlikely to be repeated, it is not really the problem in Russia that people do not know that they are robbed, they know it very well — it is not the information what is needed but effective and credibile forms of resistance. Discussions about Rio+10 or Carbon Trade could be as well in another planet for us.

Global Season of Struggle — connecting movements for emancipation

So besides the East European working group in afternoon of the Monday the 2nd of September, I ended up to Strategy and Process debates. Since in Saturday evening I heard that there was an urgent lack of the note takers, I listed to taking notes from two strategy debates of the Sunday. This was a mistake for sure, since there was 8 PM deadline for the notes to be published in the paper of next day — by that time I had not even notes of the first debate finished! I was for sure somewhat disappointed about this, expecially when I saw next morning that small size of the paper (one A3) allowed only very superficial look to debates which had taken place, and for half of the discussions there was no place in the first place. There was a sort of misunderstanding about the function of the paper — editors had journalistic approach, and materials were treated as news — where people writing the notes for sure wanted to give people who had not been able to participate to concrete discussions as complete picture as possible about what had taken place. Luckily these two approaches were converging later on, expecially when size of the conference paper grew bigger… and anyway internet compensated partly limitations of the paper version.

There were 6 themes for the strategy debates — "How do we look back on the international mobilisations and days of action, and how will we move forward?", "What concrete alternatives can we create?", "How do we relate to more vertical organisations and

Movimento Sem Terra
North-South Cooperation
Alternative
Zapatistas
Proposal
Autonomous
Continuation
Local involvement
Radical change
Creative forms of resistance
Reformism
Grassroot organization
Network
Argentina
Democratic
Social struggle
Decentrali-zed
Disobedien-ce
Horizontal
Prisoner support
Coordination
Forum
Migration
European Social Consulta
Anarchism
Process debate
E-mail list
Organisation
Issue
We don't have that much time so…
Hierarchical

hopes of tens of millions of people, it networks millions of people in the world and tens of thousands in Europe, and is the most credible international initiative since founding of I-do-not-know-which workers international, still in the European level there are just a handful of people who have a slightest vision how the process of PGA should develop. Just a handful of people who are ready to sacrifice few days to difficult discussions about the theme. Such a small group of people, that they must get legitimization to their decisions by the painful plenary process — otherwise they will feel like a small activist group, and propably will soon to collapse into being such. Although vast majority of the participators of the conference and plenary are not really committed to the process and their presence is mostly symbolical support, their presence is still the lifeline for the maintenance of the myth of the PGA.

biNGO time!

Whatever, during the plenary I managed not to stress too much, instead I was observing the social dynamics in a rather relaxed mood. A great help for this one were my biNGO grids, where I crossed keywords every time when someone mentioned them. Unfortunately I was not succesfull this time, and in general only one French comrade got a biNGO although the rules of the game had been published in the general conference newspaper of the same morning. Here are my grids, crossed blocks are noted with green colour. Strategy biNGO was a common effort of two Finnish and one Swedish comrade, in process biNGO Finnish were supported by Danish.

Strategy debate:

with the wider society", "How do we react to repression", "Which new forms of resistance are emerging" and "How do we organise in a direct democratic way and build up counter power". All debates took place both in the morning and in afternoon, where the idea was that everyone could then participate to two different debates on different times. I was taking notes about 6th theme in the afternoon, and 4th theme in the morning.

The biggest problem to me as a note taker was not the unrealistic deadline or extracting demand, but the fact that it was almost impossible to grasp some content from the discussions in the first place. The themes were just way too abstract to get something out, in context where there could be dozens of people in the room and most saw each other the very first time. Sixth group I choosed as a laboratory experiment, since I found the theme most widest and thus most impossible to have results in 3 hours. To discussion about repression in afternoon I went because it was the most concrete, but still people (there were only 5 of us) expressed their concerns about anything from bloodtests in England via banning the demonstrations in Strasbourg to Pim Fortyin's murder, RAF and repressions in Moscow. What is the point in discussion repression without any focus on what could we do about it? And as always, discussing concrete proposals is impossible if they are not printed to paper and distributed says in prior to beginning of the discussion. Not that I am criticizing, since I noted that during all the strategy debates there were number of people who

- Were very interested about any comments others said
- Had an unshakeable opinion that process is converging towards some results
- Had an overall opinion that everything had been extremely fruitful and interesting

I can do nothing but remember those people with an enormous respect. I can also only respect the note takers who were able to

extract contents of the groups to 200 words, and giving picture that there had been a clear process which had converged to some common solution about the problem in question. I tried that, but I realized that it would be horrible violence against contents of the discussion since I should imagine the overall storyline which I just could not see. Those people must just have born a laptop in their hands.

Process as a goal in itself

In the morning of Monday the 2nd there were still no any really relevant one case issue workshops from xUSSR perspective, and I decided to join the PGA process discussion. Here my activist culture went to a full crash course with the one around there, the consensus process here became a painful experience at least. Most of the morning session went to discussion about what issues we should discuss and in which order. In the end not any real decision was made, discussion just followed it's own logic. Later I hear that the afternoon session had been less painful and had managed to proceed with the agenda.

In the end, conference ended up to make decisions about 5 issues concerning the process of the European PGA network. First was about infopoints, how information about PGA is distributed on the local level. Second one was about Global contacts, how European PGA takes care about global communications and maintains the global contacts list. Third one was about support group, group of people who together with conveyors help with the practical work. Fourth one was how convenors are chosen and what their tasks are, and fifth one was about communication tools.

Eurodusnie had made ready-written propositions only about issues of communication tools and conveyorship. MRG Catalonia had had propositions on decentralization (this developed into infopoint structure) and support group, but in their original form

point of a structure like European PGA to have some strategy paper, which everyone have formally agreed? I would be surprised if any of the groups who were in the conference would sit dow in their local, translate the strategy document to their own language and make a decision how to apply it to each of their projects. The abstractness of the paper was not result of the confusion among those who came to conference, it was result of the structure of the European PGA itself.

100 plenaries and runnin'

From which we may move to the point of having the plenary in the first place. Lately I have come to conclusion that the main problem is in having any kind of formal decision — this formal decision can be reached in a more (such as parlamentary, authoritarian) or less evil (such as imperatively mandated delegates, direct democracy, plenary or consensus) ways, but it is evil anyway. Any need to have a formal, written down decision is a sign that people are not capable to reach an agreement in a normal face-to-face discussion, a decision which is expected to be accepted and followed in the future as well. Making any formal, written down decision is always a pain, against natural group dynamics of the human beings.

I have no doubt that such a pain is often needed — but the fact that the pain is there shows that we are moving on dangerous ground here. And more there is pain, more you may question the sense of all that. And plenary, if anything, is a very painful thing. Its existence indicates that people who are really committed to the PGA process have desperate need to legitimaze the steps they are taking, by forcing everyone to one big room for hours in a desperate attempt to reach a consensus decision. Almost all people really interested about the process were in the process discussion, which was some 4 or 5 times smaller than the final plenary, and respectively 4 or 5 times less painful. But although PGA crystallizes

saying anything. When the allocated time was finished, half of the themes were not even discussed yet. As far as I know, there had not been any priority discussion about the themes, althought it had been proposed several times. This was maybe not such a bad thing after all, since such a thing would have wasted hours. Finally some people ended up discussing proposition to plenary until 3 AM. I guess everyone understands that this approach is not very democratic or transparent since most people are just too tired to participate, expecially if they want to be awake during the plentary itself.

In the end I think the mistake was not really lack of the priority discussion, but the fact that there was not enough time in the first place, and too few well-prepared proposals. The issues of the support group and infopoints are really big and controversial ones, and one and half days to prepare them were certainly not enough. I do not really understand what was the point in sacrificing the morning session to strategy debates. Is goal of the European PGA to make some strategy document which everyone will find useful and necessary to their activity, and to which they will be committed to? I doubt. At worst, the results will be just abstract words impossible to apply in any concrete project, at best still just some commentaries and recommendations. European PGA is quite far from being able to draft a sort of a party action program, if such a thing is needed. I do not think that increasing coherence is bad thing, certainly there are things I hope all people involved in the European PGAdo and concentrate into. But due to extremely loose structure, no any strategy debate may reach such results, it is always the groups setting their agendas separately from each other. That is the level where I hope the development to take place, not in the level of the declarations.

So the morning of the plenary once again mostly ended up just to present the results of the strategy debates. I think it would have been enough to have these debates just once, and a note-taker to extract some 200 words from each to common report. What is the

propositions were somewhat loosely defined and pleased few people. Issues of both infopoints and support group were controversial for many people around, and the conference was in the end somewhat unable to make about any decisions on the latter. Taking in the account that guidelines for infopoint- and support group working had to be drafted from zero, it was actually surprising that conference was able to make even that much decisions.

Consensing for fun

The pain of the consensus was that I had to strive to keep my mouth shut in order not to sabotage the process. Everytime I opened it (usually that was for some fundamental criticism), I received suffering looks pleaing for mercy. For sure no-one was rude and asked me to shut up, but it was clear that most of my comments (and many comments of other people as well) caused plenty of suffering. When you make majority decisions, you can raise objection on about every detail, since most of the details are not very interesting to most of the people and thus you may just vote, and everything is over in the five minutes. In consensus process in large groups, if you start to whine about details everyone will just get crazy.

One example was the issue of decisionmaking in the final plenary. Eurodusnie had proposed that decisions could be made with 3/4 majority if consensus may not be reached, where MRG Catalonia was strictly demanding consensus. This was a clear conflict, and to me it seemed that solving it should be of first priority since plenary itself could hardly make a draft decision about this one. So I proposed the topic to be the first to be discussed. Some people agreed, others not, and somewhat the idea just got buried without any explicit decision having been made about it. Of course I could have insisted when facilitator made propositions about next issues to be discussed, but that would hardly have been constructive. I heard that in the beginning of the afternoon session another per-

son had made the same proposition, but it sinked as well without any special rejection. Finally no any session managed to really priorize issues, which ended up to situation that process discussion was finished 3 AM in the morning of the plenary day. And if some draft decision about plenary decisionmaking was made, it was not announced anywhere (so I supposed it was not made). So plenary ended up to work in a consensus. Quite logical — if there is not consensus about something else than consensus, decisions will be made in consensus. Consensus for sure made the final plenary very slow, and in a sense these flaws which were present in the process from the very beginning lead to situation where final plenary was unable to make decisions about a number of points.

If I ruled the decisionmaking procedure (imagine that)

I am not against consensus decisionmaking, but the conditions for it to work out are that group should be small enough (less than 30 persons), homogenous in their opinions and discussion culture and there should be almost unlimited time frame. None of these conditions were fulfilled in the European PGA conference. Due to this, even many hard boiled activists get very frustrated and stressed. For sure consensus decisions might be made in an unrelaxed atmosphere as well, but there is no more any guarantee that these are real consensus decisions, not arbitrary and watered down compromises which people agree only in order to get back home some day. In this kind of conditions consensus decisions become sort of a game, where each participator has to weight very carefully are their disagreements with some points principial enough to have them said out, since this will always increase frustration of others and endanger the discussion about even more important topics, since time frame is limited and it is not possible to make decision about all of the points.

of macho women dominating the discussions, as well as silent and timid men — persons discussion gender may differ from the biological one. But usually it is women who are silent, and this method helps to integrate everyone who is afraid to talk aloud in public to discussion.

However the French guy had another interest in this discussion, and he ended up writing a very beautiful declaration on his own which consisted about one third of the final conclusions of the strategy debates. For sure there was not a single phrase in this text with which I would not agree with, but it also had not anything I had not read dozens of times before, it sort of fulfilled my bad expectations.

In general I think gender issue was not that rudely sidelined in the conference. Although many debates were dominated by men, and the women who participated were from the minority with a good self-esteem, still in all of the issues (except gender issue) there was a much better presence of women than in any issues our federation has lately been working on in Russia. I do not think this is just an accident, the European PGA paradigm of consensus and concentration to good process (such as facilitation) instead of results really gives better abilities for women (in the sense of gender, that means I include silent men here) to participate. Of course applying this approach which is succesfull in small, homogenous groups is not always doing so well in the big events such as the European PGA conference, but still the difference is clear. In Russia we should really think what to do improve our process, and what in the European PGA paradigm would be applicable for us — miserable share of women among our militants is a proof that we may not continue as we have done before.

36 process discussion points of danger

In afternoon I joined the discussion about conclusions of the of the PGA process. At once I was able to sit the whole time without

ently no debate had been dealing with the issue. So it was decided that this time gender issue will have another try in the form of a separate group. I decided to opt for this one, since it was most interesting in a sense of laboratory experiment — gender issue is propably the worst among all of those "all talk no do" topics (beating even "East European participation" and "local involvement"), and I was very curious to know if something else could be reached this time. It was a source of amusement for everyone to notice, that our debate consisted of two guys — me and a French one. Later a Dutch guy working in PGA radio joined us.

Et si des keums en écoutant ce skeud pensent que j'ai tort

The French guy was taking notes, and he had also very strong vision what we should state about the topic. I concentrated just to raise my bad experiences about lack of real content on various gender debates and I called for concrete proposals. I told about only new concrete proposal I had heard in many years, that is the triple stack system. Stack is the facilitation technique where instead of chairman giving one person a right to speak at time, one person is just writing down names in the order where people ask their turn, and everyone is given turn in their times. There is a variant of this, when direct points and general points are separated — people who want to make direct comments to one speaker are given priority, so they "are in another, priorized stack". But few weeks before I heard from an American anarchist communist comrade another variant used in their federation — that in which people who have been unactive in the discussion before are giving priority to others, which puts them to "third stack", which is given a priority over the two others (actually technical points are given a priority over all of these, so it is not "triple stack" but "quadruple stack"). This is certainly a gender issue and not a sex issue, since there are plenty

Time to drop some heads? Not quite. I could not really grasp the logics how some propositions got accepted and some just dropped without any discussion. However the process discussion followed all the time a certain logic. One reason for this might be homogenity of opinions among dominating activists — which is maybe not due to clique but due to a long experience on PGA work which has lead to different people supporting similar kind of solutions to existing problems. Many people seemed to have a really clear vision what could work in practice and what not, and on which themes a consensus might be reached and on which themes not. Facilitators were extremely skilled as well. For example other people than me just implicitly understood, that as no other proposition than consensus would be accepted for the final plenary, waisting hours to discuss about that be a waste of time. Most of the decisions made were really small steps, but in a sense important steps for the development of the network.

Working group of the rising sun

The East European working group in the Monday afternoon was a source of controversial feelings not only for me. We had met in the Saturday evening with a small group of people from Russia, Czech Republic and Poland, as well as the Swedish person who had initiated this working group for the conference. Our purpose was not to take control of the agenda, but to make some propositions for the general discussion. We decided to pick up three points — EU expansion and campaigns related to that, European Social Consulta impact and participation in the Eastern Europe and at last how western groups willing to help East European groups could do that in a constructive and useful way. We did not picked up the issue of NATO protests coming up in Prague, since that was a topic of a separate presentation. These points were agreed (or more correctly, no-one disagreed) in the big working group, although the

discussion to come was propably something different from what we had expected.

People who had initiated the point in program had one ambitious idea above others — making European PGA a genuinely European organisation, where East-European groups are as much present as those of the West. But as the usual rule goes, if you have not written concrete prosposals prepared, you may just forget about it. Even worse if you have your goal but expect others to make the concrete proposals to reach it.

After lenghty presentations of the groups present, we decided to start with the theme of the EU expansion. Some people noted that they would like to talk about expansion of the capital in general. It was very clear to me that this kind of debate would transfer discussion to a moarning in a choir about evils of the capital. People did not seem to figure out, that for example Czech comrades were planning a very concrete campaign on the EU expansion, and wished to have that discussed on a very concrete level. But only me and Czech comrades were supporting splitting of the group to have more practical issues to be discussed separately, so the group went for the moarning.

Easternplayalisticadillacmuzic

At this point it became clear that people had come to the discussion with very different kinds of ideas what it should be, and most came without any idea whatsoever. Almost all people from the West came to hear a lecture about East Europe, without any opinions or wishes to do something. Many people from the East came to talk about their concerns about any theme whatsoever, without any attempt to make some concrete proposals (not that they could have been worked out collectively in any case). Some people were NGOists, they were very nice people but I am afraid there would be no any basis for common projects for them since I have no any

at second, this concern should be integrated to network far more deeper way than just the level of declarations. European PGA network structure is lightyears from having a chance to make strategy documents binding all participators. It is the minds of the people we have to change, not papers, and to me the most crucial question with the PGA is if there any chances for that in the first place?

After typing the notes another night in a row until midnight, I for sure was quite tired, and much more confused than any time before wondering what I am doing in this place. So Tuesday morning I spent few hours just hanging around and refocusing. When my mind was cleared from all intentions and I was 100% I was not nervous anymore, I find myself floating to discussion about conclusions on the strategy debates. My intention was not to participate but just to observe the process.

Here we go again

Quite long time was sacrificed to presenting the strategy debates which had taken place some two days before. This was somewhat boring, mostly just reading and referring from the conference newspaper. For some reason I said something about the groups to which I had participated, which seem to make people even more bored since I had not a much of idea about what our discussions had been about and for why they had taken place.

Some people showed incredible capacity of creative thought, and managed to extract some common nominators from all the strategy debates. Or maybe they had just been thinking about the issues they rised on their own, and thus they saw everything linked to these issues. Anyway, these nominators were “Intervention to real social dynamics”, “From welfare state to control state” and “Private property & reappropriation”. Then we faced a problem — all strategy debates should have included the aspect of gender, in order that not to have been marginalized to its own debate, but appar-

are not functioning, doing international work is a waste of time. For example Alter-EE list has been networking East European anti-authoritarian activists for 6 years already and has a very wide base of subscribers, but it has seldom been able to create common projects since there is just not that much base for such a thing. Really networking and common projects sort of born out spontaneously, when time is ripe for them. For example I proposed 4 years ago in East European anarchist conference in Prague to set up such a East European news courier as the Abolishing the Borders from Below is now, but the time was just not ripe then — now it is, and ABB appeared completely independently from the networks in which I have been raising the discussion. In some sense attempts to have some success with Russian participation to international movement is sort of hitting ones head to brickwall, as long as the social conditions for that just are not there. Or more exactly, you maybe would get some results but better not to expect too much, and better to very carefully work out some model how those possible results could be reached since there are many traps on the way, and good intentions alone are not much of any help.

We are just note-taking for fun

Once again, I was ready with the notes around midnight, which meant that our working group was mentioned with 30 words in the conference newspaper. This was a disappointement to a Swedish comrade who had initiated the working group, but I commented that just having some written words about East Europe could do a little to change the problems we have. Same goes with his proposition to have something about East Europe to have mentioned in the final strategy document — some nice words like "we must work hard to increase East European involvement" would change the real situation very little since the same phraseology is present anywhere anyway. At first, there should be concrete proposals, and

faith to NGO way of activity in the Eastern Europe. So in the end I just ended up listening the flow of words and trying to write notes.

I do not think the presentations in conferences are a good idea, if people want to just learn something the written articles are for that. However, for many people from East it was pleasant just to sit and tell about their projects, and to listen about projects of the others. This obviously because for many people adopting oral information is more easier that adopting written one, and because many people are unable to use full opportunities of the internet, where information about any groups and projects is available but hard to reach.

During the break, more than 10 Western Europeans left the room, without having said any word. Propably most were there for presentations anyway, but maybe some were silenced because for some reason the discussion adopted a sort of "East talks, West listens" mode. I do not see much of a point in this, maybe it is some remniscent of some "Western guilt" discourse which is quite present in all documents of the movement who address the issue of raising the Eastern and Southern participation. However as far as the East goes, this is quite pointless approach since role of Westerners here is not that of sole cheerleaders, since in East there are no similar living tradition of peoples movements than in the South and thus the ideas and modes of organisations come from the West. Some groups in the East for sure try to operate on the tradition of the movements which toppled the iron curtain, but to a large extent it is the Western movements which generate movements in the East, and thus Western and Eastern groups should have completely equal roles in this discussion.

I am quite happy that the European Social Consulta was not adressed a lot, I had only supported its inclusion to draft agenda since some comrades in the Czech republic seemed to have a some sort of vision about its relevance in the East. To me, all consulta documents seem to be some of the most horrible collections of vague and abstract rhetorics I have ever seen. I do not claim that

there is no any concrete content in the projet, they just succeeded very well in making it unvisible. At first sight, it seems like either there is a hidden agenda in it, or organisers do not have much of any idea and just hope that gathering masses of people to one common mess would be a good goal in itself. So I decided to stay far from any conference events with any relation to consulta, and watch from the distance what is about to come from the process until stepping into it.

Actually there had been one concrete proposal to increase East European participation in the preparation of the conference — proposition of the MRG Catalonia to create regional PGA's to various areas of the Europe, one being the East Europe. This would have been a disaster for East Europe, if passed. No group in East Europe which currently has any commitment whatsoever to PGA has a capacity to do such an organising on their own. This would have effectively meant throwing responsability of East European organising to East Europeans, and that Western groups focus only to their own area — as it unfortunately has usually been at least until now.

There is nothing like a good guilt-tripping

As for the last common topic, "how western groups willing to help East European groups could do it in a constructive and useful way" goes, it was my idea. When I started with it we had some 20 minutes left, so I just said what I think without much of hope that some larger discussion would take place. The point behind the topic was that there seems to be much goodwill in the West about how to get East Europeans involved, but not much of any practical ideas. For example I have not read a single strategy paper during the last years not wooing about low level of East European participation, and concerns how to have some more of it. In another hand, when

there are some very concrete proposals by Eastern groups about cooperation, often nothing comes out from them.

When I was talking how conference and summit travelling of the few without sharing the experience with the others creates activist elites, a comrade from the Rainbow Keepers was a little bit insulted since she had organised this kind of projects in the Russia in the past, and had a contradictory experience. She felt that in general the interest in Russia to international events is miserably low, and it is a huge pain to have some people travelling even when it is possible to do it for free.

In the end, I sort of agree with her that the issue is much more complicated that just "activist elite vs. the rest". But it is not the stupid and ignorant mass of activists either — there are just deep structural and social reasons which prevent PGA and other international initiatives, such as summit spectacles, to create synergy with the Russian movements. At first, the Russian society is currently in a very different state that those of the West or of the South. Where in many Southern countries structural adjustement has pushed huge masses of people back against the wall, where chance is to resist or to die, and in many Western countries traditional left is facing the same choice, in Russia where Yeltsinite democracy is going to its agonizing death the fragile civil society born during the Perestroika time is gone as well. The nation is ready to totalitarism, only reason why it is not created is that really fascism is only necessary for capital where there is an opposition which has to be crushed, and in Russia there isn't. For masses of people hooked to their tv screens, events like Prague, Seattle or Gothenburg would as well take place in another planet. Those Russians who travel to these events get some moral boost, but do not have much of an attempt to organise around same kind of issues on the local level since there is hardly any perspective.

Really networking always goes from bottom to up — you must have a well functioning group in your city until you may reach out to local and national level, and unless the regional networks