

Mass revolt in Slovenia

**The spark ignited revolt against the political-economic elite and the whole
capitalist system**

Federation for Anarchist Organizing

December 18, 2012

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Slovenia is being shaken by the first massive revolt in two decades and the first that is predominantly oriented against political establishment, austerity measures and is in some cities already gaining anti-capitalist character.

In less than three weeks there have been 35 protests in 18 cities, where more than 70.000 people participated altogether. Protests often turn into clashes with police that is violently breaking up the demonstrations. 284 people were arrested, some released, some not. Many people have been injured.

It all started in the middle of November with people protesting against the corrupt mayor of second largest city in Slovenia, Maribor (he already resigned). They came up with the sort of slogan "He is finished" (*Gotof je*) that has later been alternated to address more or less every politician in the country. Protests spread throughout the country in only few days. They are becoming more and more the channel for the people to express the anger over the general conditions of the society: of having no jobs, security, rights, future.

Protests are decentralized, anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical. People who never hit the streets before are participating in it. They are happening in villages and towns that never saw a single protest before. People are creating new alliances, becoming comrades in struggle and are determined to continue for as long as it takes. We do not know how long we will manage to stay on the streets. But one thing is for sure. People experienced the process of emancipation and gained voice that has been violently taken from them in the past. And this is something no one can take from them.

Below you can find the statement by the groups of Federation for anarchist organizing (FAO).

No discrimination, they are all finished!

Last few days have seen history crashing down on us in full force. Revolt in Maribor initiated what few had imagined was possible: people self-organized and pushed their local sheriff to the corner, then finally forced him to flee in disgrace. This was the spark that ignited a wider revolt against the political-economic elite and the whole capitalist system. We do not possess a crystal ball to tell what follows, but what we are certain of is that we can expect nothing from romanticizing and naiveté, yet a lot from organization and courage.

From below to the top and from periphery to the center

As protests spread throughout the country they grew into a wider revolt against the ruling elite and existing order. People of each region are creatively using their own local dialects to articulate the same message to the politicians: you are all finished. The decentralized character of the revolt is among the key aspects of events so far. The other is the fact that the whole process up until this point remains completely bottom-up in character; there are no leaders doing the organizing, just the people that are not being represented by anyone. In order to defend this solidarity among people and block the recuperation of the revolt from the hand of the political class, it is exactly this decentralization that we need to defend, promote and strengthen!

Police everywhere, justice nowhere

Police brutality on the protests should come as no surprise. What is surprising are all the illusions on police joining us. It is true that the police are not the primary target of this revolt and that the clash between police and protesters is not its final and only horizon. What people are targeting in this conflict is the capitalist and political class and the system as a whole. Yet it is also absolutely true that the police are not our allies and due to their role in the system can never and nowhere be allies of this revolt. Let us remind ourselves: police is a part of the repressive apparatus of state. Its structural function is to defend the existing order and interests of the ruling class. It does not matter how exploited the individuals in uniforms may be! While they follow orders from their superiors they remain policemen and policewomen. When they stop doing so, they can become a part of a revolt.

Nurturing any illusions that they are on our side is therefore naive to the extreme. Were their interventions on protests in these last few days really so unproblematic as some present it and really in the interest of the people on the streets? Have we already forgotten the brutal suppression of Maribor protests and the threats of Gorenak (minister of interior) that they will hunt down all the organizers of “illegal” protests?

We are also not surprised by all the moralization on “rioters” and “violence”, that has been spreading through social networks. Government and the media have thrown a bone at us and some have immediately fallen for it. But what are ten broken windows, a smashed door of the city hall and a street where paving stones were torn out in comparison to the structural violence of the state? Youth without future, unemployment, precarity, reduction of scholarships, reduction in number of meals in schools that are paid from public funds, decreasing number of carers in kindergartens, diminishing rights to health services, reductions in public funding for education and research, imposition of increasingly higher retirement age, lowering of wages and pensions, decreasing of work-free days, shortage of non-profit dwellings, youth forced to live in rented flats or with parents until old age, denial of rights to homosexuals, migrants, women and to people whose social background is not one of the major religions and ethnicity and more and more. And we haven't even touched on the corruption, nepotism, clientelism and criminality of the ruling elite. They force us to work more, yet the fruits of our labor are constantly being appropriated by the capitalist class. This exploitation is what is at the core of this system. Tell us now, who is committing violence over whom? How dare we condemn people whose future has been stolen? The youth is angry and has nothing to lose. Stop condemning them; together we have to re-focus on the real problems.

Even more dangerous are various calls for self-repression and cooperation with the police. Are we not already faced with unacceptable levels of surveillance, CCTV usage and repression? Are these people proposing that we help the police in the search for “rioters”, give the latter over to the police and thus exclude a lot of young people from the revolt to which they have significantly contributed? To cooperate with the police amounts to shooting ourselves in the foot and to condemn the young that express their positions in a more direct way is to be instrumental in blocking the further realization of the potential of this revolt.

Today it is an act of smashing the window that is defined as violence by the authorities. Yet it has to be clear that the same tag can soon be applied to all forms of protests that will not be approved or permitted by the same authorities, that will not be passive enough and will there-

fore not be completely benign. Let it be made clear then that in the eyes of the system that is humiliating us, robbing us and suppressing us year after year we are all rioters.

Once again we state our full solidarity with all detained, demand their immediate release, and call for the end of their judicial and media prosecution and nullification of all the financial and other sanctions that were issued to people due to their participation in the protests.

Power to the people, not to political parties

After the initial spontaneous bustle of the revolt, when creativity of the masses was thoroughly manifested, a new space for strategic reflections opened up as well. If we want the revolt to develop into social movement with concrete demands, aims and visions, we must find ways to articulate those same demands, that are already present within the revolt, and come up with the organizational form that can make this process possible. Without that the revolt will quickly die out and things will remain the same.

Concerning the demands we must proceed step by step and begin with embracing those that have already been articulated within the revolt. For sure we must preserve welfare structures such as public health and education system. We must also preserve existing workers rights. Having stated that we have to also clearly say that we are not struggling for the preservation of the old system. While we do not allow the rights that were gained in the past struggles to be taken from us, we must maintain a core strategic perspective as well. As long as capital and the state exist, patterns of exploitation and oppression will remain in public education, health and social welfare system as well. This is why we must also self-organize within these structures, not merely negotiate for crumbs. Rights are never granted, they have to be fought for!

A segment of the corrupt political elite will perhaps realize that they are in fact all finished and will leave the political arena. But soon enough they will be replaced by new politicians that will again, without us providing them with any legitimacy whatsoever, make decisions in our name. Their interest are not ours, and they are showing us that every day by numerous examples of nepotism, corruption and through passing various reform and anti-crisis laws that are pushing us even further to the margins of society and beyond.

This is why all of them must go, from the first to the last. It would be sheer naiveté to believe that there are pure, uncorrupted people somewhere, that have only our best interest in their hearts and that they would lead us from the crisis, we only need to find them and vote for them in the elections. It is the political and economic system with its inherent authoritarianism and hierarchical character that makes it impossible for us to live in a non-alienated way and according to our desires and needs. As long as there is capitalism, where the minority rules over the majority and pushes us to the economic and social margins, our lives will be empty. If we do not resist and fight for alternatives, there will always be someone that will rule over us; patriarchs in our households, deans and student officials at our faculties, bosses at our jobs and politicians in the government. False democracy that they are offering us in form of elections is not the only possible form of organizing our social lives.

Let's organize where we live, work and study

If we want the revolt and its demands to produce actual social power, we must self-organize. When we talk about the organization of the revolt we necessarily think about forms that are different from socio-political ways of organizing that we are used to. We must organize from below, without hierarchies and leaders; everywhere, where we are exploited and oppressed: in our neighborhoods, in our work places, in our educational institutions. Farmers should link into cooperatives; cooperatives should connect with the urban environment. Self-organization should be spontaneous and creative; it should develop free relations and establish structures that will enable full emancipation of individuals. It should follow the principles of direct democracy, mutual solidarity, non-authoritarianism and anti-fascism.

For initial method of such organizing we suggest the institution of direct-democratic assembly that has been a practice of insurrectionary movements all over the globe in last couple of years. We can organize locally into small groups and together shape the future by recognizing our needs and by that the needs of our towns and villages. Together we can form proposals and discover our potentials, that will also enable us to realize that we are capable of realizing more or less all of the former by ourselves. This is how we will build sister- and brotherhood and unity, where there is plenty for everyone, but nothing for those that would like to rule over us.

For the next step we suggest mutual coordination of these groups and to establish new forms of organizing of this dispersed, developing revolt. We suggest that, based on our common principles, we unite into a front of groups, organizations and individuals. This front should be ideologically open, inclusive and based on common demands. It should be organized horizontally, without central bodies and officials; and based on the autonomy of individuals and direct democratic decision making process.

We call upon all groups, organizations and individuals that find this idea suitable, to organize in our local communities into open assemblies, that can later connect with each other. Let's take our lives back together!

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