

Peoples' Global Action



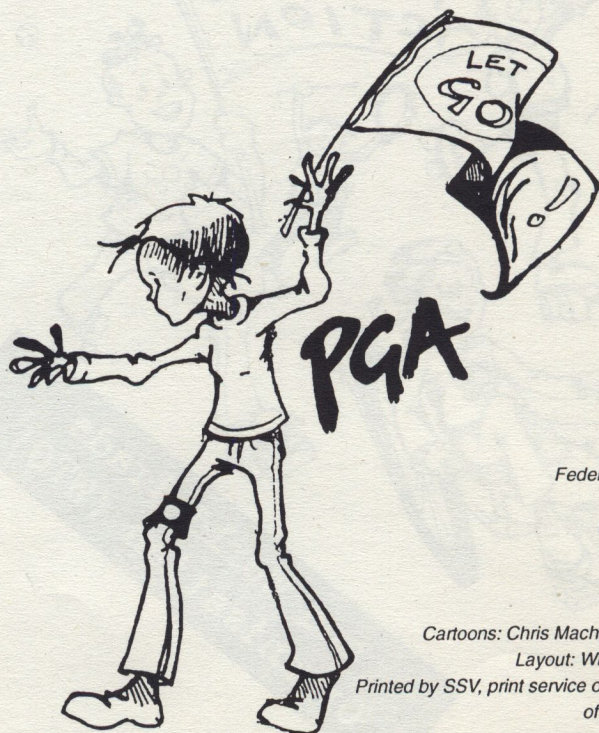
against "Free" Trade



and World Trade
Organisation (WTO)

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What is the PGA?

From the 23rd to the 25th of February, peoples' movements from all continents met in Geneva to launch a worldwide coordination of resistance against the global market, a new alliance of struggle and mutual support called the Peoples' Global Action against „Free“Trade and the World Trade Organisation. This new platform serves as a global instrument for communication and coordination for all those fighting against the destruction of humanity and the planet by the global market, building local alternatives and peoples' power.

The hallmarks of the alliance are:

1. A very clear rejection of the institutions that multinationals and speculators have built to take power away from people, like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other trade liberalisation agreements (like APEC, the EU, NAFTA, etc.)
2. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organisations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker
3. A call to non-violent civil disobedience and the construction of local alternatives by local people, as answers to the action of governments and corporations
4. An organisational philosophy based on decentralisation and autonomy

The PGA is an evolving coordination, and as such it will change with time. Thus what follows is not engraved in stone, it is just the idea of the PGA shared by the organisations working on it right now.

The PGA is an instrument for co-ordination, not an organisation. Its objectives are inspiring the greatest possible number of persons and organisations to act against „free“trade through non-violent civil disobedience and people-orientated constructive actions, offering an instrument for co-ordination and mutual support at global level for those fighting „free“trade and the WTO. The political analysis and call for action of the PGA are reflected in its manifesto, a living document that will be revised every two years.

The PGA has no membership, and it does not and will not have a juridical personality. No organisation or person represents the PGA, nor does the PGA represent any organisation or person. The PGA will only facilitate coordination and information flow with the help of conferences and information tools.

The conferences of the PGA will take place approximately every two years, about three months before the Ministerial Conferences of the WTO (the main meeting of the most influential institution in the world). The functions of these conferences will be updating the manifesto (if necessary), advancing in the process of co-ordination at global level against „free“trade, and co-ordinating decentralised actions parallel to the following WTO Ministerial Conference.

The PGA has several information tools, including a regular bulletin, a web page and other publications, which are to be done voluntarily by organisations and individuals supportive of the aims of the PGA. Their elaboration will take place in a decentralised and rotative manner.

The conferences of the PGA are convened by a committee conformed by organisations

and movements from all continents representing different sectors of society (plus the local organisers of the conference). This committee determines the programme of the conference, takes decisions about participation on the conference and use of resources, decides which publications can be printed under the name of the PGA, and checks the content of the information tools of the PGA. The committee cannot speak in the name of the PGA. Each PGA conference elects the Convenors' Committee of the next conference.

The PGA does not have any resources. The funds needed to pay the conferences and the information tools are raised in a decentralised way. All the funds raised for the conference are administered by the committee. The publications are self-financed.





Peoples' Global Action Manifesto

We cannot take communion from the altars of a dominant culture which confuses price with value and converts people and countries into merchandise.

- Eduardo Galeano

If you come only to help me, you can go back home. But if you consider my struggle as part of your struggle for survival, then maybe we can work together.

- Aboriginal woman

I

We live in a time in which capital, with the help of international agencies like the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and other institutions, is shaping national policies in order to strengthen its global control over political, economic and cultural life.

Capital has always been global. Its boundless drive for expansion and profit recognises no limits. From the slave trade of earlier centuries to the imperial colonisation of peoples, lands and cultures across the globe, capitalist accumulation has always fed on the blood and tears of the peoples of the world. This destruction and misery has been restrained only by grassroots resistance.

Today, capital is deploying a new strategy to assert its power and neutralise peoples' resistance. Its name is economic globalisation, and it consists in the dismantling of national limitations to trade and to the free movement of capital.

The effects of economic globalisation spread through the fabric of societies and communities of the world, integrating their peoples into a single gigantic system aimed at the extraction profit and the control of peoples and nature. Words like „globalisation“, „liberalisation“ and „deregulation“ just disguise the growing disparities in living conditions between elites and masses in both privileged and „peripheral“ countries.

The newest and perhaps the most important phenomenon in the globalisation process is the emergence of trade agreements as key instruments of accumulation and control. The WTO is by far the most important institution for evolving and implementing these trade agreements. It has become the vehicle of choice for transnational capital to enforce global economic governance. The Uruguay Round vastly expanded the scope of the multilateral trading system (i.e. the agreements under the aegis of the WTO) so that it no longer constitutes only trade in manufactured goods. The WTO agreements now also cover trade in agriculture, trade in services, intellectual property rights, and investment

measures. This expansion has very significant implications for economic and non-economic matters. For example, the General Agreement on Trade in Services will have far-reaching effects on cultures around the world. Similarly, the TRIPs (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) agreement and unilateral pressures, especially on biodiversity-rich countries, are forcing these countries to adopt new legislations establishing property rights over forms of life, with disastrous consequences for biodiversity and food security. The multilateral trading system, embodied in the WTO, has a tremendous impact on the shaping of national economic and social policies, and hence on the scope and nature of development options.

Trade agreements are also proliferating at the regional level. NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) is the prototype of a regional legally-binding agreement involving privileged and underprivileged countries, and its model is sought to be extended to South America. APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) is another model with both kinds of countries involved, and it is being increasingly used to force new agreements into the framework of the WTO. The Maastricht Treaty is of course the main example of a legally-binding agreement among privileged countries. Regional trade agreements among underprivileged countries, such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), SADC (Southern African Development Cooperation), SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Agreement) and MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), have also emerged. All these regional agreements consist of the transfer of decision-making power from the national level to regional institutions which are even more distant from people and less democratic than the nation-state.

As though this was not enough, a new treaty is being promoted by the privileged countries, the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) to widen the rights of foreign investors far beyond their current positions in most countries and to severely curtail the rights and powers of governments to regulate the entry, establishment and operations of foreign companies and investors. This is currently also the most important attempt to extend globalisation and „economic liberalisation“. MAI would abolish the power and the legitimate sovereign right of peoples to determine their own economic, social, and cultural policies.

All these institutions and agreements share the same goals: providing mobility for goods, services and capital, increasing transnational capital's control over peoples and nature, transferring power to distant and undemocratic institutions, foreclosing the possibility to develop community-based and self-reliant economies, and restricting peoples' freedom to construct societies based on human values.

Economic globalisation, power and the „race to the bottom“

Economic globalisation has given birth to new forms of accumulation and power. The accumulation takes place on a global scale, at increasing speed, controlled by transnational corporations and investors. While capital has gone global, redistribution policies remain the responsibility of national governments, which are unable, and most of the times unwilling, to act against the interests of transnational capital.

This asymmetry is provoking an accelerating redistribution of power at global level, strengthening what is usually referred to as „corporate power“. In this peculiar political system, global capital determines (with the help of „informal“ and extremely influential lobby groups, such as the World Economic Forum) the economic and social agenda on a world-wide scale. These corporate lobby groups give their instructions to governments in

the form of recommendations, and governments follow them, since the few that refuse to obey the „advice“ of corporate lobby groups find their currencies under attack by speculators and see the investors pulling out. The influence of corporate lobby groups has been strengthened by regional and multilateral agreements. With their help, neo-liberal policies are being imposed all over the world.

These neo-liberal policies are creating social tensions at global level similar to the ones witnessed at national level during the first stages of the industrialisation: while the number of billionaires grows, more and more people around the world find themselves in a system that offers them no place in production and no access to consumption. This desperation, combined with the free mobility of capital, provides transnational investors the best possible environment to pit workers and governments against each other. The result is a „race to the bottom“ in social and environmental conditions and the dismantling of redistribution policies (progressive taxation, social security systems, reduction of working time, etc). A vicious circle is created, wherein „effective demand“ concentrates increasingly in the hands of a transnational elite, while more and more people cannot meet their basic needs.

This process of world-wide accumulation and exclusion amounts to a global attack on elementary human rights, with very visible consequences: misery, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, deteriorating health conditions, landlessness, illiteracy, sharpened gender inequalities, explosive growth of the „informal“ sector and the underground economy (particularly production and trade of drugs), the destruction of community life, cuts in social services and labour rights, increasing violence at all levels of society, accelerating environmental destruction, growing racial, ethnic and religious intolerance, massive migration (for economic, political and environmental reasons), strengthened military control and repression, etc.

Exploitation, labour and livelihoods

The globalisation of capital has to a very significant extent dispossessed workers of their ability to confront or bargain with capital in a national context. Most of the conventional trade unions (particularly in the privileged countries) have accepted their defeat by the global economy and are voluntarily giving up the conquests won by the blood and tears of generations of workers. In compliance with the requirements of capital, they have traded solidarity for „international competitiveness“ and labour rights for „flexibility of the labour market“. Now they are actively advocating the introduction of a „social“ clause in the multilateral trading system, which would give privileged countries a tool for selective, one-sided and neo-colonial protectionism, with the effect of increasing poverty instead of attacking it at its root.

Right-wing groups in privileged countries often blame „social dumping“ from underprivileged countries for the rising unemployment and the worsening labour conditions. They say that southern peoples are hijacking northern capital with the help of cheap labour, weak or non-existent labour and environmental regulations and low taxes, and that southern exports are forcing northern producers out of the market. While there is a certain degree of relocation to underprivileged countries (concentrated in specific sectors like textiles and microelectronics), the teenage girls who sacrifice their health doing unpaid overtime in transnational sweatshops for miserable salaries can hardly be blamed for the social havoc created by free mobility of goods and capital. Moreover, most relocation happens between rich countries, with only a fraction of foreign investment

When all our values
have been cashed
and all our money
has been stashed

One day
we may find
there'll be
nothing
more....

... that we
could use
all that
money
for.



going to underprivileged countries (and even some investment flowing to the north from countries traditionally considered as „underdeveloped“). And the threat of relocation to another rich country (by far the most usual kind of relocation) is as effective in blackmailing workers as the threat to relocate to an underprivileged country. Finally, the main cause of unemployment in privileged countries is the introduction of „rationalisation“ technologies, over which underprivileged peoples certainly have no influence at all. In short, increasing exploitation is solely the responsibility of capitalists, not of peoples.

Many advocates of „development“ welcome the free movement capital from privileged to underprivileged countries as a positive contribution to the improvement of the living conditions of the poor, since foreign investment produces jobs and livelihoods. They forget that the positive social impact of foreign investment is limited by its very nature, since transnational corporations will only keep their money in underprivileged countries as long as the policies of these countries enable them to continue exploiting the misery and desperation of the population. The financial markets impose extreme punishments to the countries that dare to adopt any kind of policy that could eventually result in improved living standards, as exemplified by the abrupt end to the shy redistribution policies adopted in 1981 by Mitterrand in France. Also, the Mexican crisis of 1994 and the recent crises in East Asia, although presented by the media as the result of technical mismanagement, are good examples of the impact of a corporate economic rule which gains strength every day both in underprivileged and privileged countries, conditioning each and every aspect of their social and economic policies.

Those who believe in the beneficial social effects of „free“ market also forget that the impact of transnational capital is not limited to the creation of exploitative jobs. Most of the foreign direct investment (two thirds according to the United Nations) in both privileged and underprivileged countries consists of transnational corporations (TNCs) taking over national enterprises, which most typically results in the destruction of jobs. And TNCs never come alone with their money: they also bring foreign products into the country, sweeping great numbers of local firms and farms out of the market, or forcing them to produce under even more inhuman conditions. Finally, most of the foreign investment provokes the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, which results in the irretrievable dispossession of the livelihoods of diverse communities of indigenous peoples, farmers, ethnic groups etc.

We reject the idea that „free“ trade creates employment and increases welfare, and the assumption that it can contribute to the alleviation of poverty. But we also very clearly reject the right-wing alternative of a stronger national capitalism, as well as the fascist alternative of an authoritarian state to take over central control from corporations. Our struggles aim at taking back control of the means of production from the hands of both transnational and national capital, in order to create free, sustainable and community-controlled livelihoods, based on solidarity and peoples' needs and not on exploitation and greed.

Gender oppression

Globalisation and neo-liberal policies build on and increase existing inequalities, including gender inequality. The gendered system of power in the globalised economy, like most traditional systems, encourages the exploitation of women as workers, as maintainers of the family and as sexual objects.

Women are responsible for creating, educating, feeding, clothing and disciplining young people to prepare them to become part of the global labour force. They are used as cheap and docile labour for the most exploitative forms of employment, as exemplified in the maquilas of the textile and microelectronics industry. Forced out of their homelands by the poverty caused by globalisation, many women seek employment in foreign countries, often as illegal immigrants, subjected to terrifying working conditions and insecurity. The world-wide trade in women's bodies has become a major element of world commerce and includes children as young as 10. They are used by the global economy through diverse forms of exploitation and commodification.

Women are expected to be actors only in their households. Although this has never been the case, this expectation has been used to deny women a role in public affairs. The economic system also makes use of these gender roles to identify women as the cause of many social and environmental problems. Hence, women having too many babies (rather than the rich consuming too many resources) is seen as the cause of the global environmental crisis. Similarly, the fact that women get low wages, since their remuneration are supposed to be only supplementary income for the household, is used to blame them for the unemployment of men and the reduction in their wage levels. As a result, women are used as scapegoats, declared guilty for creating the same misery that is oppressing them, instead of pointing at the global capital as responsible for social and environmental havoc. This ideological stigmatisation adds to the physical violence suffered on a daily basis by women all over the planet.

SIMPLIFIED POLITICAL INFO



Patriarchy and the gender system rest firmly on the idea of the naturalness and exclusivity of heterosexuality. Most of the social systems and structures violently reject any other form of sexual expression or activity, and this limitation of freedom is used in order to perpetuate patriarchal gender roles. Globalisation, although indirectly contributing to the struggles for women's and sexual liberation by introducing them in very oppressive societies, also strengthens the patriarchy at the root of violence against women and against gays, lesbians and bisexuals.

The elimination of patriarchy and the end of all forms of gender discrimination requires an open commitment against the global market. Similarly, it is vital that those struggling against global capital understand and confront the exploitation and marginalisation of women and participate in the struggle against homophobia. We need to develop new cultures that represent real alternatives to these old and new forms of oppression.

The indigenous peoples' fight for survival

Indigenous peoples and nationalities have a long history of resistance against the destruction provoked by capitalism. Today, they are confronted with the neo-liberal globalisation project as an instrument of transnational and financial capital for neo-colonisation and extermination. These new actors of the globalisation process are violently invading the last refuges of indigenous peoples, violating their territories, habitats and resources, destroying their ways of life, and often perpetrating their genocide. The nation states are permitting and actively encouraging these violations in spite of their commitment to respect indigenous peoples' rights, reflected in diverse declarations, agreements and conventions.

Corporations are stealing ancient knowledge and patenting it for their own gain and profit. This means that indigenous people and the rest of humanity will have to pay for access to the knowledge that will have thus been commodified. Furthermore, the indigenous peoples themselves are being patented by pharmaceutical corporations and the US administration, under the auspices of the Human Genome Diversity Programme. We oppose the patenting of all life forms and the corporate monopolistic control of seed, medicines and traditional knowledge systems and human genomes.

The fights of indigenous peoples to defend their lands (including the subsoil) and their forms of living, are leading to a growing repression against them and to the militarisation of their territories, forcing them to sacrifice their lives or their liberty. This struggle will continue until the right of indigenous peoples to territorial autonomy is fully respected throughout the world.

Oppressed ethnic groups

The black communities of African origin in the Americas suffered for centuries a violent and inhuman exploitation, as well as physical annihilation. Their labour force was used as a fundamental tool for accumulation of capital, both in America and Europe. Faced with this oppression, the Afro-Americans have created community-based processes of organisation and cultural resistance. Currently the black communities are suffering the effects of „development“ megaprojects in their territories and the invasion of their lands by big landowners, which lead to massive displacement, misery and cultural alienation, and many times to repression and death.

A similar situation is being suffered by other peoples, like Gypsies, Kurds, Saharouis, etc. All these peoples are forced to struggle for their right to live in dignity by nation-states that repress their identity and autonomy, and impose on them a forced



incorporation into a homogeneous society. Many of these groups are viewed as a threat by the dominant powers, since they are reclaiming and practising their right to cultural diversity and autonomy.

Onslaught on nature and agriculture

Land, water, forest, wildlife, aquatic life and mineral resources are not commodities, but our life support. For decades the powers that have emerged from money and market have swelled their profits and tightened their control of politics and economics by usurping these resources, at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of vast majorities around the world. For decades the World Bank and the IMF, and now the WTO, in alliance with national governments and corporate powers, have facilitated manoeuvrings to appropriate the environment. The result is environmental devastation, tragic and unmanageable social displacement, and the wiping out of cultural and biological diversity, much of it irretrievably lost without compensation to those reliant on it.

The disparities provoked within and between countries by national and global capital have widened and deepened as the rich spirit away the natural resources from communities and farmers, farm labourers, fishworkers, tribal and indigenous populations, women, the socially disadvantaged - beating down into the earth the already downtrodden. The centralised management of natural resources imposed by trade and investment agreements does not leave space for intergenerational and intragenerational sustainability. It only serves the agenda of the powers that have designed and ratified those agreements: to accumulate wealth and power.

Unsustainable and capital-intensive technologies have played a major role in corporations' onslaught on nature and agriculture. Green revolution technologies have caused social and environmental havoc wherever they have been applied, creating destitution and hunger instead of eliminating them. Today, modern biotechnology is emerging, together with patents on life, as one of the most powerful and dangerous weapons of corporations to take over the control of the food systems all over the world. Genetic engineering and patents on life must be resisted, since their potential social and environmental impact is the greatest in the history of humanity.

Waging struggles against the global capitalist paradigm, the underprivileged work towards the regeneration of their natural heritage and the rebuilding of integrated, egalitarian communities. Our vision is of a decentralised economy and polity based on communities' rights to natural resources and to plan their own development, with equality and self-reliance as the basic values. In place of the distorted priorities imposed through global designs in sectors such as transport, infrastructure and energy, and energy-intensive technology, they assert their right to life in the fulfilment of the basic needs of everyone, excluding the greed of the consumerist minority. Respecting traditional knowledge and cultures consonant with the values of equality, justice, and sustainability, we are committed to evolving creative ways to use and fairly distribute our natural resources.

Culture

Another important aspect of globalisation, as orchestrated by WTO and other international agencies, is the commercialisation and commodification of culture, the appropriation of diversity in order to co-opt it and integrate it into the process of capitalist accumulation. This process of homogenisation by the media not only contributes to the

breakdown of the cultural and social networks in local communities, but also destroys the essence and meaning of culture.

Cultural diversity not only has an immeasurable value of its own, as reflections of human creativity and potential; it also constitutes a fundamental tool for resistance and self-reliance. Hence, cultural homogenisation has been one of the most important tools for central control since colonialism. In the past the elimination of cultural diversity was mainly accomplished by the Church and by the imposition of colonial languages. Today mass media and corporate consumerist culture are the main agents of commodification and homogenisation of cultural diversity. The result of this process is not only a major loss of humanity's heritage: it also creates an alarming dependence on the capitalist culture of mass consumption, a dependence that is much deeper in nature and much harder to eliminate than economic or political dependence.

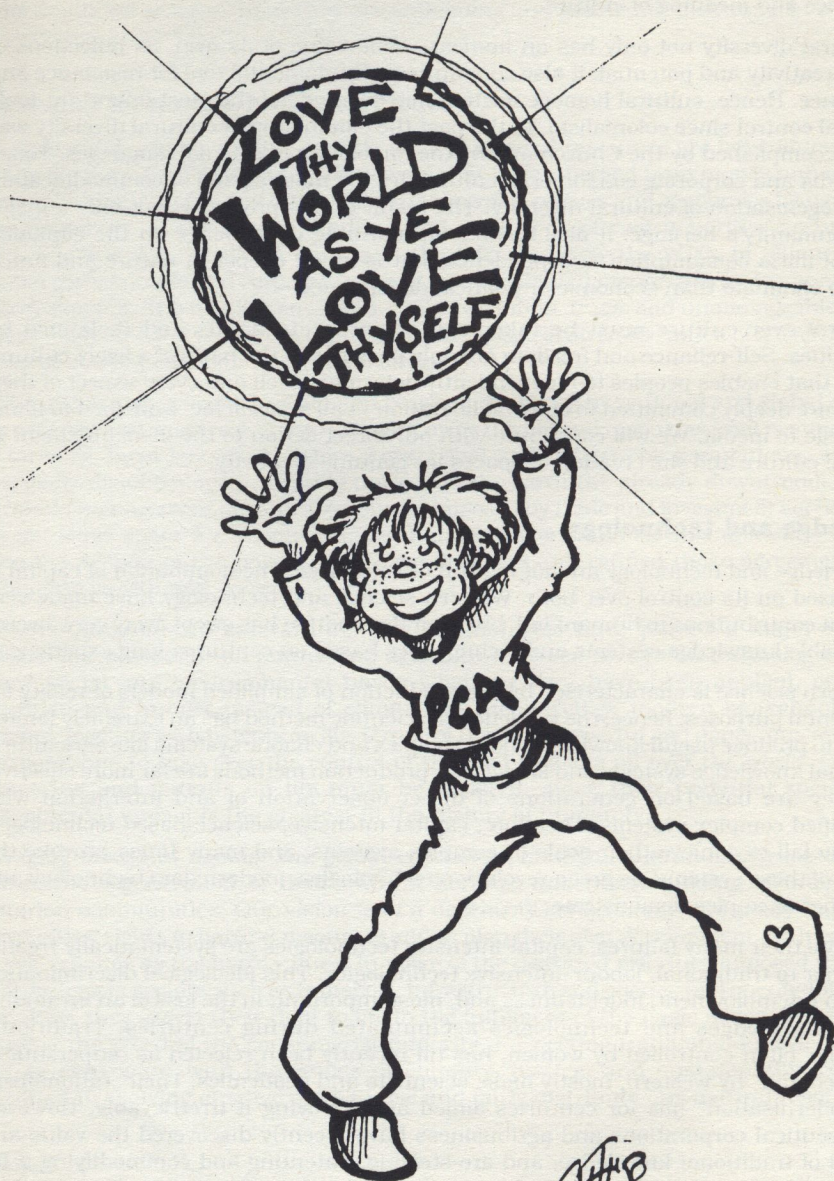
Control over culture must be taken out of corporate hands and reclaimed by communities. Self-reliance and freedom are only possible on the basis of a lively cultural diversity that enables peoples to independently determine each and every aspect of their lives. We are deeply committed to cultural liberation in all areas of life, from food to films, from music to media. We will contribute with our direct action to the dismantlement of corporate culture and the creation of spaces for genuine creativity.

Knowledge and technology

Knowledge and technology are not neutral or value-free. The domination of capital is partly based on its control over both. Western science and technology have made very important contributions to humankind, but their domination has swept away very diverse and valuable knowledge systems and technologies based on centuries-long experience.

Western science is characterised by the production of simplified models of reality for experimental purposes; hence, the reductionist scientific method has an extremely limited capacity to produce useful knowledge about complex and chaotic systems like agriculture. Traditional knowledge systems and knowledge-production methods are far more effective, since they are based on generations of direct observation of and interaction with unsimplified complex systems. Therefore, capital-intensive, science-based technologies invariably fail to achieve their goals in complex systems, and many times provoke the disarray of these systems, as green revolution technologies, modern dam technology and many other examples demonstrate.

Despite their many failures, capital-intensive technologies are systematically treated as superior to traditional, labour-intensive technologies. This ideological discrimination results in unemployment, indebtedness and, most important, in the loss of an invaluable body of knowledges and technologies accumulated during centuries. Traditional knowledge, often controlled by women, has till recently been rejected as „superstition“ and „witchcraft“ by western, mostly male, scientists and academics. Their „rationalism“ and „modernisation“ has for centuries aimed at destroying it irretrievably. However, pharmaceutical corporations and agribusiness have recently discovered the value and potential of traditional knowledge, and are stealing, patenting and commodifying it for their own gain and profit. Capital-intensive technology is designed, promoted, commercialised and imposed to serve the process of capitalist globalisation. Since the use of technologies has a very important influence on social and individual life, peoples should have a free choice of, access to and control over technologies. Only those technologies which can be managed, operated and controlled by local peoples should be



Chris
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considered valid. Also, control of the way technology is designed and produced, its scopes and finalities, should be inspired by human principles of solidarity, mutual co-operation and common sense. Today, the principles underlying production of technology are exactly the opposite: profit, competition, and the deliberate production of obsolescence. Empowerment passes through people's control over the use and production of technology.

Education and youth

The content of the present education system is more and more conditioned by the demands of production as dictated by corporations. The interests and requirements of economic globalisation are leading to a growing commodification of education. The diminishing public budgets in education are encouraging the development of private schools and universities, while the labour conditions of people working in the public education sector are being eroded by austerity and Structural Adjustment Programs. Increasingly, learning is becoming a process that intensifies inequalities in societies. Even the public education system, and most of all the university, is becoming inaccessible for wide sectors of societies. The learning of humanities (history, philosophy, etc.) and the development of critical thinking is being discouraged in favour of an education subservient to the interests of the globalisation process, where competitive values are predominant. Students increasingly spend more time in learning how to compete with each other, rather than enhancing personal growth and building critical skills and the potential to transform society.

Education as a tool for social change requires confrontational academics and critical educators for all educational systems. Community-based education can provoke learning processes within social movements. The right to information is essential for the work of social movements. Limited and unequal access to language skills, especially for women, hinders participation in political activity with other peoples. Building these tools is a way to reinforce and rebuild human values. Yet formal education is increasingly being commercialised as a vehicle for the market place. This is done by corporate investment in research and by the promotion of knowledge geared toward skills needed for the market. The domination of mass media should be dissolved and the right to reproduce our own knowledges and cultures must be supported.

However, for many children throughout the world, the commodification of education is not an issue, since they are themselves being commodified as sexual objects and exploited labour, and suffering inhuman levels of violence. Economic globalisation is at the root of the daily nightmare of increasing numbers of exploited children. Their fate is the most horrible consequence of the misery generated by the global market.

Militarisation

Globalisation is aggravating complex and growing crises that give rise to widespread tensions and conflicts. The need to deal with this increasing disorder is intensifying militarisation and repression (more police, arrests, jails, prisoners) in our societies. Military institutions, such as U.S.-dominated NATO, organising the other powers of the North, are among the main instruments upholding this unequal world order. Mandatory conscription in many countries indoctrinates young people in order to legitimate militarism. Similarly, the mass media and corporate culture glorify the military and exalt the use of violence. There is also, behind facades of democratic structures, an increasing militarisation of the nation-state, which in many countries makes use of faceless

paramilitary groups to enforce the interests of capital.

At the same time, the military-industrial complex, one of the main pillars of the global economic system, is increasingly controlled by huge private corporations. The WTO formally leaves defence matters to states, but the military sector is also affected by the drive for private profit.

We call for the dismantling of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. The World Court of The Hague has recently declared that nuclear weapons violate international law and has called all the nuclear-weapons countries to agree to dismantle them. This means that the strategy of NATO, based on the possible use of nuclear weapons, amounts to a crime against humanity.

Migration and discrimination

The neo-liberal regime provides freedom for the movement of capital, while denying freedom of movement to human beings. Legal barriers to migration are being constantly reinforced at the same time that massive destruction of livelihoods and concentration of wealth in privileged countries uproot millions of people, forcing them to seek work far from their homes. Migrants are thus in more and more precarious and often illegal situations, even easier targets for their exploiters. They are then made scapegoats, against whom right wing politicians encourage the local population to vent their frustrations. Solidarity with migrants is more important than ever. There are no illegal humans, only inhuman laws.

Racism, xenophobia, the caste system and religious bigotry are used to divide us and must be resisted on all fronts. We celebrate our diversity of cultures and communities, and place none above the other.

* * *

The WTO, the IMF, the World Bank, and other institutions that promote globalisation and liberalisation want us to believe in the beneficial effects of global competition. Their agreements and policies constitute direct violations of basic human rights (including civil, political, economic, social, labour and cultural rights) which are codified in international law and many national constitutions, and ingrained in people's understandings of human dignity. We have had enough of their inhuman policies. We reject the principle of competitiveness as solution for peoples' problems. It only leads to the destruction of small producers and local economies. Neo-liberalism is the real enemy of economic freedom.

II

Capitalism has slipped the fragile leash won through centuries of struggles in national contexts. It is keeping alive the nation-state only for the purposes of peoples' control and repression, while creating a new transnational regulatory system to facilitate its global operation. We cannot confront transnational capitalism with the traditional tools used in the national context. In this new, globalised world we need to invent new forms of struggle and solidarity, new objectives and strategies in our political work. We have to join forces to create diverse spaces of co-operation, equality, dignity, justice and freedom at a human

scale, while attacking national and transnational capital, and the agreements and institutions that it creates to assert its power.

There are many diverse ways of resistance against capitalist globalisation and its consequences. At an individual level, we need to transform our daily lives, freeing ourselves from market laws and the pursuit of private profit. At the collective level, we need to develop a diversity of forms of organisation at different levels, acknowledging that there is not a single way of solving the problems we are facing. Such organisations have to be independent of governmental structures and economic powers, and based on direct democracy. These new forms of autonomous organisation should emerge from and be rooted in local communities, while at the same time practising international solidarity, building bridges to connect different social sectors, peoples and organisations that are already fighting globalisation across the world.

These tools for co-ordination and empowerment provide spaces for putting into practice a diversity of local, small-scale strategies developed by peoples all over the world in the last decades, with the aim of delinking their communities, neighbourhoods or small collectives from the global market. Direct links between producers and consumers in both rural and urban areas, local currencies, interest-free credit schemes and similar instruments are the building blocks for the creation of local, sustainable, and self-reliant economies based on co-operation and solidarity rather than competition and profit. While the global financial casino heads at increasing speed towards social and environmental disintegration and economic breakdown, we the peoples will reconstruct sustainable livelihoods. Our means and inspiration will emanate from peoples' knowledge and technology, squatted houses and fields, a strong and lively cultural diversity and a very clear determination to actively disobey and disrespect all the treaties and institutions at the root of misery.

In the context of governments all over the world acting as the creatures and tools of capitalist powers and implementing neo-liberal policies without debate among their own peoples or their elected representatives, the only alternative left for the people is to destroy these trade agreements and restore for themselves a life with direct democracy, free from coercion, domination and exploitation. Direct democratic action, which carries with it the essence of non-violent civil disobedience to the unjust system, is hence the only possible way to stop the mischief of corporate state power. It also has the essential element of immediacy. However we do not pass a judgement on the use of other forms of action under certain circumstances.

The need has become urgent for concerted action to dismantle the illegitimate world governing system which combines transnational capital, nation-states, international financial institutions and trade agreements. Only a global alliance of peoples' movements, respecting autonomy and facilitating action-oriented resistance, can defeat this emerging globalised monster. If impoverishment of populations is the agenda of neo-liberalism, direct empowerment of the peoples through constructive direct action and civil disobedience will be the programme of the Peoples' Global Action against „Free“ Trade and the WTO.

We assert our will to struggle as peoples against all forms of oppression. But we do not only fight the wrongs imposed on us. We are also committed to building a new world. We are together as human beings and communities, our unity deeply rooted in diversity. Together we shape a vision of a just world and begin to build that true prosperity which comes from human empowerment, natural bounty, diversity, dignity and freedom.

Geneva, February-March 1998

Worldwide protest against the WTO

(excerpts from the third press release by PGA on May 20th, 1998)

Nearly a million of people from all social sectors (farmers, indigenous peoples, workers, women, ethnical groups, unemployed and many other groups) are expressing since the 1st of May our rejection to the WTO, the multilateral trade system, and neoliberal policies - participating in the first international days of action of Peoples' Global Action (PGA) against „Free“ Trade and the WTO.

Selection of actions during the G8 Summit in Birmingham (16th/17th May) and during the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Geneva (18th-20th May):

On Saturday, at the same time as the beginning of the G8 Summit, over hundred thousand people throughout the world protested against the WTO and their neoliberal policies:

Global Street Parties against the WTO were celebrated in 35 cities all over the world, manifesting a spirit of resistance, among them Ankara, Athens, Berkeley, Berlin, Bogota, Bratislava, Brisbane, Derry, Dublin, Gothenburg, Hamburg, Iruena, Istanbul, Ljubljana, Luxembourg, Lyon, Madrid, Melbourne, Nantes, New York, Prague, Olympia, San Francisco, Seattle, Stockholm, Sydney, Tel Aviv, Toronto, Turin, Turku, Utrecht, Vancouver, York and Zurich.

In Brazil, a march of 40 000 landless and homeless people reached the capital Brasilia, 10 000 unemployed joined them on Monday. They are protesting against their governments willing execution of the neoliberal economic policy demands of the international institutions. Brazil exports food even though 40 million people are suffering hunger in Brazil. On Wednesday, the final day of the WTO conference, a demonstration through the government district of Brasilia is planned.

In India, 23 regional conferences against the WTO are occurring today. In Hyderabad, WTO symbols are being burned in several public places. On Saturday, there were more than 100 actions against the WTO and on May 1st, hundreds of thousands of peasants and workers urged the Indian government to withdraw from the WTO in a massive national rally.

In Canada, a protest against the planned Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) is scheduled for today. There will be further demonstrations and direct actions in different Canadian cities on Wednesday. The OECD meeting starting this weekend in Montreal shall be blocked throughout its duration.

On „Peoples“ Trade Day today, actions are being carried out in the United States and in Geneva against different symbolic centers of global capitalism.

Meanwhile, an incredible wave of repression is hitting Geneva: throughout the town, people are being stopped by the police at random, arrested and jailed for hours without any given reason - without judicial basis. Foreign persons which „do not carry enough money on them“ (about 500 SFrs.) are registered for police records and then deported with a prohibition of re-entry.

Many people got heavily injured by the police on Saturday evening, although they behaved passively. At least one young man from Geneva still is in intensive care due to inner bleeding. The bicycle caravan „Money or Life“ organized by WiWa Wendland in

Germany was already stopped before reaching Geneva, all foreign participants were arrested, deported and are not allowed to re-enter Switzerland for two years. 40 Italians were arrested on their arrival at the train station in Geneva and also deported.

On Sunday afternoon, the caravan traveled to the French border to return the wagons, tractors and further equipment back to the German participants banned from Switzerland who were waiting at the other side of the border. On their way back to Geneva, ten people were arrested, among them two journalists from Switzerland and from Berlin. These were also registered for police records and had to spend hours in a freezing cold civil service building wearing summer clothes. After this custody they were given a paper written in French accusing them of having participated in all actions and demonstrations and were urged to sign it.

We condemn these arbitrary acts of the Genevan police and justice. These arrests are clearly illegal. We especially protest against the detention of journalists.

In a press briefing that took place today at United Nations the representatives of PGA declared: „The struggle that takes place in these days will continue until the disappearance of the WTO and all other institutions and agreements that cause misery and death. It is part of a process of convergence of millions of people fighting all over the planet for a just society in harmony with the environment. The movements that participate in this process want to send a clear message to the WTO: we will not allow economic globalisation to destroy our environment, our culture, our future, our lives. Consequently, we reject the treaties of the WTO and we will not allow their implementation.“



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