

The Broken Rifle

Newsletter of War Resisters' International



Change is in the air The power of nonviolence



It seems the year 2011 will end as it began – with huge social mobilisations all over the world and ongoing social protests. It is hard to take a break and to digest and reflect on everything that has happened this year. As we write, Tahrir Square is again full of protesters as in January and February, this time demanding not just the resignation of one man, but of the military dictatorship as a structure; the Occupy Movement is still going from strength to strength in many locations all over the world, and starting to think about its next steps, the student demonstrations continue in Chile and so many other social movement expressions continue to bring hope, showing that we have had enough of this economic and political system that benefits the very few and which does not represent the people. Many of these movements are still developing, and it is hard to evaluate them in terms of achievements of their end goals. We can only look at what impact they've had so far and look at how they have organised themselves. One thing is for sure, no one can deny that there is a huge energy for change, and not just to demand change, but to actually be it.

Analysis and Messaging

Across the different movements, there seems

to be a clear understanding of what is wrong, that it is a structural problem, it is about changing the whole system not changing the way resources are allocated or even just the names of the people in charge. In the case of Egypt, and as we see with the second phase of the protests, change was not only about getting rid of Mubarak. Of course, getting rid of the dictator was a huge step in the right direction – but the reality is answering the question: what kind of political system do Egyptians want for their country? The second wave of protests showed that it is one not controlled by a military dictatorship. In the case of the Chilean students it is about a completely different educational system which is linked to a different way of how wealth is divided, they struggle for a change in the tax system that allows students the necessary resources to guarantee free and quality education for all. The Occupy Movement has a clear understanding that the whole economic and political system is wrong, focusing on the economic growth that has benefited only the very rich and a political system corrupted and without direct representation.

What unites these movements is their deep

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Editorial

What an amazing year is coming to an end. First of all: well done to everyone who in one way or another has been involved in nonviolent protest this year! People connected with WRI have been playing their part in these social protests. As WRI has extensively reported, Maikel Nabil - an Egyptian conscientious objector and pacifist - was part of the movement which toppled Hosni Mubarak, Maikel was one of the first to say that getting rid of Mubarak was not enough but it was also necessary to get rid of the military junta. For this he was arrested and first sentenced to 3 years of in prison, a sentence later annulled only for him to be sentenced this week to two years in prison. WRI has not only worked supporting Maikel as well as connecting with other members of the Egyptian uprising, but also WRI denounced the export of arms from western countries to Egypt as to many other repressive regimes in the region.

The emergence of the 15M movement in the State of Spain, which started the whole Occupy movement wave, demanding a complete change in the system, brought hope to many. There was a special energy, that brought people together. Groups connected with WRI have been active in the indignad@s and Occupy movement, providing training in nonviolence, and also making the links between militarism and the destructive economic system.

If people were expecting these protest to suddenly change everything, they were wrong. Social change takes time, so don't feel dis-empowered if you sense that the movement is losing momentum. The power-holders cannot ignore this challenge to their agenda, and will use what methods they can to weaken the movement, even asserting that now they have listened to the people. No, now is the time to continue the work more than ever, trying to reach to new sectors of society that the movement still has to reach, to find other forms of nonviolent pressure and make change happen. That's why we are really looking forward to a lively protestful 2012.

Javier Gárate



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disillusionment with the existing political and economic systems. There might not – yet – be a clear analysis of the powers that be, and how all of this is related, but there is a deep seated mistrust in the ability of the system to solve the problems it created. There might not – yet – be a clear vision of an alternative society, but there is a search for alternatives, a real search and hunger for real democracy, and for practising this in the organising of the movement.

Making the links

For us as war resisters, as nonviolent movements, these are important perspectives. On the one hand, we believe that we need to practice the change we want to see in our own movements – this is why we use strategies like nonviolence and consensus decision making. For us it is also important to see the links between the different systems of oppression – the structural side of violence. That is why we say that you can't fight capitalism if you don't also fight militarism, and you can't look at militarism without looking at the role of the state and of patriarchy.

How many times can we go back to the famous farewell address of US president Dwight D Eisenhower? He said that "in the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together". A warning that in the US there was a power more powerful than the White House - the military industrial complex. If we look at the economic system and where the money goes, you can't ignore the amount that goes to the military. Only in the last year (2010) global military spending has risen to US 1.62 trillion USD. In the US this being 48% of the total Federal Budget, which amounts to 1,372 billion USD. In the state of Spain a very revealing figure shows how the per capita military spending is equivalent to paying one month of social benefits to somebody unemployed, and while social services are cut massively, this is not the case for military spending. According to SIPRI the arms trade is responsible for 40% of all corruption in global transactions. More importantly, when we look at the less than 1%, we find the banks and the war profiteers.



If we don't see the connection between the economic system and militarism, then we are missing a very big piece of the problem.

During the Arab spring we learned of how the same governments that were supporting the uprisings, had exported weapons to these regimes. In the case of Chile, when we talk about the need for funds for education, we should not forget that the Chilean military continues to receive 10% of the copper revenues, on top of what is allocated in the national budget.

In each example of social mobilisation you will easily find a connection to militarism, and while military budgets still increase, or are only moderately cut, the majority of budget cuts are in education, social welfare, etc. Doesn't, this in itself, say something?

This doesn't mean that your message always has to include the role of militarism. We know that for a message to work you need to focus on what people can relate to most. In the case of the Occupy Movement they have chosen to focus on the role of banks, and rightly so, as they represent the symbol of the economic system, and they are good targets for campaigns, as most people have bank accounts, or have to pay a mortgage to a bank, to which they can relate. At the same time you cannot forget that these same banks are the ones investing and owning shares in the main arms producers. For example in the 2008 bank bailout, it was agreed to back \$306 billion of residential and commercial loans and securities on Citigroup's balance sheet, Citigroup being one of the biggest banking corporations in the world. The US Treasury also agreed to invest \$20 billion in Citigroup from the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) in exchange for

preferred stock with an 8% dividend to the Treasury. The day before the announced agreement the company's stock was trading at \$3.77 -- a price that represents a total loss of \$244 billion in value in just two years. This is the same bank that participated for a sum of € 145 million in a revolving credit of € 3 billion for EADS - one of the main arms producers in the world. Citigroup also had a strong participation in the occupation of Iraq, where it had an influential position with the Iraq Panel of experts who were supposed to come up with a solution for war torn country. The ten member panel -- aided by issue-specific sub-groups comprised of 44 experts from academia, government, and the private sector -- advised a "redeploy-ment" and "transition from a combat role to a support role" for U.S. military forces in Iraq... So choose your message carefully but don't miss out on your analysis.

There is one strand of movement theory which argues that movements need to have a very clear and narrow message to be successful. But these movements are about more than one issue, or cosmetic change. What they are searching for is radical change – a fundamental change of our political and economical systems. To achieve this, it is important to be aware of the links.

Bringing many movements together

Sometimes when a particular movement gains momentum, it can feel that everyone else tries to piggyback on it. It can appear on occasions that this is what the antimilitarist movement does, that we tend to follow what is on the top of the agenda and we struggle to set the issue of

militarism on its own right. This is a big challenge, and of course we should be using any opportunity we have to make the connections. When we talk about the role of militarism in Egypt, the economy, Chilean education, etc we are not trying to hijack the focus of the movement, we are showing how militarism is present and responsible for more injustices that most are aware of.

We believe that for movements to be successful it is necessary for many of them to unite and find some joint issues to work on together. We should all be able to come together and say the economic and political system is unjust and doesn't represent us. It can be the antimilitarist movement saying it, the unions, the environmental movement or any other. Although we start from a different focus we can come together and agree on a bigger issue that affects us all. This way we are much more likely to have an impact than each of us continuing doing our work in isolation. We also need to understand that for a movement to be effective, it needs to give space for different forms of participation. Referring to Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan, in your movement you need to have people playing different roles, Moyer categorised them in four main roles: rebel, reformer, citizens and change agent. The movement should allow space for all of them to join in.

Also the 'Movement Action Plan' tells us that movements take time to build momentum and reach their goals. This is currently a crucial aspect, when some of the Occupy Movement and Chilean Students seem to have lost some momentum, this doesn't mean that they are heading in the wrong direction. They have managed to put the issue on the agenda and gain quite some support. Now it is time to reach out to the other sectors of society and build more alliances to then come back stronger and to apply more pressure.

It is also important to review the tactics you follow, for example; for how long can you keep on doing the same actions? In the case of the Chilean students, how many more

demonstrations can you do? What alternatives there are to demonstrations? Or in the case of the Occupy Move-ment, is the plan to stay forever occupying the squares or what are the next steps. The Spanish indignadxs have already moved towards a more decentralised organising than focusing on square occupation. It is also important to work on the alternatives we want to have, as we very often are criticised for not having a clear alternative to the problem. So remember that change takes time, so don't get frustrated if you see things not changing immediately, it is important to keep the work going and build these alliances to create the bases for different movements to come together.

What do we antimilitarist bring in to the mix?

So what is the role of us as antimilitarists? We have already mentioned our contribution to the analysis, bringing in the issue of the connection between capitalism, militarism, the state and patriarchy. Equally important are our principles of nonviolence, where we want a movement that's inclusive, where everyone can join. We want a movement that in our day to day actions reflects the society we want to build. We want to be creative and also radical in our actions. As war resisters we have a long history of training in nonviolence, we have developed for years some skills that can be useful at this time. It is not surprising when we hear from our antimilitarist friends in the state of Spain that they have received many requests for nonviolence training from the indignadxs movement, mostly training on consensus decision making, but also other training areas. Apart from nonviolence training we also have a rich history of actually carrying out nonviolent direct actions, it is important for us to connect with other movements and pass on these skills and experiences, as well as for us to learn from what is happening today in the streets. These are important times for social movements and an opportunity for the antimilitarist movement to connect with others to build a stronger movement for social change.

Andreas Speck &
Javier Gárate



Countering the Militarisation of Youth

International Conference,
Darmstadt, Germany 8-10
June, 2012

"In Europe, and to some degree on a global level, there are presently two trends which both contribute to an increased militarisation of youth. The first is the end (or, more exactly, the suspension) of conscription in most European countries. The second is an increasing "normalisation of war" stemming from the 'war on terror and the use of military force as a means of politics. Both trends reinforce each other in strengthening the militarisation of youth from an early age- something we are committed to working against."

The project, which includes an international meeting in Germany, and a post-conference publication, hopes to bringing together activists from all over the world.

The aim is to foster an ongoing regional and multi-regional network of cooperating anti-militarist organisations. The overarching objective of the conference is strengthening the work against the militarisation of youth in Europe (and beyond) by providing opportunities for people to exchange skills and experience of working in this field and to create/strengthen networks and relationships across the region.

The militarisation of youth takes many forms. The project aims to analyse the different ways youth are militarised, and will also look at strategies to resist the militarisation of youth.

More information:
<http://wri-irg.org/militarisationofyouth>



Chile's educational and social movement

Quality Education for everyone... Now!

The root of the problem

In order to understand the educational movement we've seen grow over these past few years – becoming most radical in the last six months – we must go back to the genesis of the problem: the strict cost/quality relation brought about by the privatization of Chilean education in the aftermath of the 1973 coup d'état. In short, this means that in today's Chile, the more you pay, the higher the standard of education you will receive. The violent and anti-democratic takeover that put this system in place, traded in an economic model that allowed for strong state intervention in educational accountability and investment, for one which minimized government decision-making and encouraged privatization of state universities and growth of private educational institutions.

Taking this path, State financing for public education dropped from 70% prior to the dictatorship, to an average of 17% in recent years (we refer here only to higher education). The vast majority of these costs were passed on to the students themselves, who now must pay their programme's full fees in accordance with the degree they are to obtain and to the demands of the market.

Once education became an economically profitable territory, private investment skyrocketed. Tens of new universities, institutes, technical education centres,

private and subsidized schools sprung up seemingly overnight. Such establishments, only admitted students if they could pay the appropriate fees, if they were able to take out sizeable student loans (either from the State or from private institutions), or – in the case of a handful – if a 'solidarity' scholarship was awarded.

The demands

Under these conditions, the gap between Chile's rich and poor can be traced back to the chances each had of receiving a good education. The chain of events is all but predictable: the child of a low-income family will not be able to attend a quality school – recall the cost/quality relation –, therefore he/she will attend either a mediocre or sub-standard establishment.

In order to get into a university, our young man or woman must take a 'selection' examination which – as it's name implies – determines which students are prepared to enter university.

Since the student at hand did not go to a high-quality school, preparation for this type of examination will most likely have been insufficient, barring him or her from traditional higher education. The booming educational market is, nevertheless, able to offer this student a chance to enter higher education through a private institution, even if this means shouldering a debt that will take a number of years to pay off.

Crucially, at this stage cost and quality cease to be correlated. In a great number of cases these private institutions end up insufficiently preparing professionals or technicians for the world of work, even when they have acquired a huge debt in the process. A new market law takes precedence here: increasing quantity leads to reduction in quality.

The core of the students' demands are aimed at tackling inequalities such as these. The goal, ultimately, is to set aside the laws of the market when it comes to education, so that family income is not a hindrance to quality education. Although all of this may sound overly idealised, the movement has been characterized by student's clarity in setting forth very concrete proposals: greater accountability for both public and private institutions, more public financing for higher education – ultimately leading to free, public education –, revitalizing traditional universities, and re-structuring the scholarship and financial assistance system.

Shaping interventions based on nonviolent action

The students are organised in two main divisions: the CONFECH (Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile) which brings together traditional universities' student federations, and the ACES (Asamblea Coordinadora de Estudiantes Secundarios), the coordinating body of





secondary school students. Although these are the most visible organisations – in charge of dialogue with the government –, the issues have brought about further organising at the local level. Such is the case of occupied schools, which have been watched closely by concerned communities. Although the schools have been occupied by their students, they've also been supported by communities including alumnae and family members.

As a result, the official media has seldom been able to capture and broadcast criticism from families of the young occupiers.

The student movement is not, therefore, the students' battle alone, but has drawn in other social actors. A broad front of protests has been set in motion and, along with it, an array of ways of expressing dissatisfaction with the current state of education. The most radical of these expressions was an extended hunger-strike declared by a group of secondary students, which ended with a number of them in public hospitals, facing critical undernourishment.

Alongside the more violent displays of social unrest, the marches, the regional and national strikes, there have also been a series of widely inclusive protests, appealing to the community at large. A key example has been the 'cacerolazos' (saucepan drumming sessions), which called families from the far north to the far south of the country to come out of their homes at a specified time with pots and

pans and make a racket. The goal here was to support the students and to repudiate the government's unwillingness to see eye to eye with them.

Prominent figures from the artistic and cultural scene have also joined the cause, showing their support by filming videos, or organising free musical and artistic performances for the general public.

Direct, non-violent actions have, nevertheless, been the protagonists of the student movement. Most of these have been individual, collective and small-group actions. The use of personal contacts and invitations through social networks, along-side individuals' motivation towards a common good – education as a right, not a privilege – has fuelled a number of actions that have become massive.

Examples of this are the large-scale marking of bank notes with slogans against a market-based educational system, or hundreds of people's 'symbolic suicide' which involved casting themselves to the ground en-mass in the streets of Santiago's city centre. A further example was the staging a huge 'pillow fight' across the city of Valparaíso, intended to ridicule excessive police violence during marches.

The list of protests goes on: an 1800-hour continuous run around 'la Moneda', Chile's presidential palace; a massive kiss-a-thon; multitudes of students performing choreographed dancing of such symbolic pieces as Michael

Jackson's 'Thriller' or the Chilean 1980's band Los Prisioneros' hymn 'El Baile de los que Sobran' (the dance of those that were left out); music students coming out onto the street to play their instruments; or even bands of students impersonating animated characters, such as Dragon Ball's 'Goku' who was seen fighting Market-Based Education to the death.

All of these direct actions have demonstrated that dissatisfaction can generate large-scale collective action, allowing us to leave our fear of state repression aside and take over public spaces as our own, as they should always be.

It is now six months since the protests began. We are seeing less and less of those first non-violent, creative, direct actions. No doubt, people are somewhat worn out from the energy expended in the first couple of months. After all, this seems to be the government's strategy: let everyone get so tired that the students' demands will be dropped. Yes, there is exhaustion, but the marches continue, as do the schools and universities' occupations. Even though we no longer see as many people out on the streets protesting, and the 'cacerolazos' have died down, people's minds are set: Quality education for everyone... now!

Dan Contreras
Translation: Benjamin Molineaux



International Solidarity and Occupy Wall Street

Since the brutal eviction of Occupy Wall Street's encampment at Liberty Plaza, questions about the future of the movement loom large. The Occupy Movement's rapid development was two months of near constant actions, arrests, and activity. What we built in those two months from Sept. 17th to Nov. 17th is now transitioning into long-term movement. One important way that plays out is creating coordination between all the different occupations. Because the Occupy Movement spans the globe (including Japan, Pakistan, South Korea, Brazil, Canada, etc) a strong sense of international solidarity is beginning to emerge. And it is these political and personal bonds that are laying the basis for a transformation of global solidarity and anti-war work.

Most of the participants of Occupy Wall Street and the Occupy Movement were deeply inspired by the Arab Spring. The military aid given to the Egyptian army by the US sheds light on US imperialism, particularly for the newly politicized. The deep support of the Egyptian movement makes US military aid all the more engaging. And real lines of solidarity are being built between OWS and Egypt by way of personal connections, letters of support, and coordinated action between Occupy Wall Street and Egyptian activists in the US. The Occupy movement has faced its fair share of tear gas, so targeting the US-based company, Combined Systems Inc, whose teargas is being used on Egyptian protesters, has a strong connection.

The process of connecting international popular movements has achieved much in the last couple of months. Beginning to develop are avenues for global movement discussion, from internet based modes (takehesquare.net and occupytogether.org) to face-to-face global meetings. Early in November 2011 a People's Forum was held in Nice, France.

Described as a counter-summit to the G-20 in Cannes at the same time, those involved in popular struggle from all over the world were in attendance. People from Spain, Senegal, Greece, Tunisia, Egypt, Israel, Brussels, England, Italy, Portugal, Canada, Germany, and the US came to coordinate, protest, share, learn, and ultimately build a global movement for social change. A couple of Occupy Wall Street organizers, including myself, had the fortune of attending.

The highlight of the conference was two global general assemblies translated into French, Spanish, English, and Arabic. Each country gave brief updates on where the movement was in our respective countries. Despite local differences, a remarkable unity emerged at the global general assembly. We are all struggling for very similar objectives. What were the social problems that various movements were addressing? Sovereign debt, precarious work, unaffordable housing, privatization, austerity, war, unemployment, lack of real democracy, increasing education cost, and the harmful effect of banks on the lives of many. Sound familiar? The striking degree of common social problems across much of the world shows the problems we face are not a

matter of a few cronies or bad politicians, but are systemic problems. This allows for a strong international movement; a global oppositional movement to break the logic of capital. The fault lines in global capitalism are surfacing.

The wide-spread failure of social and economic institutions to provide for people creates the ripe conditions for alternative institutions. Movements are increasingly focusing on building alternative institutions whose guiding values are based on equality, solidarity, and participation. The alternatives to capitalism are emerging from the movement, and global coordination means among other things, learning lessons from past and present experiences. These lessons guide both how we oppose current injustice and also how we build alternative institutions to change the conditions and quality of our lives. Mechanisms for international discussion help think collectively and globally on how to struggle and how to build. No longer are global revolution and alternatives to capitalism hallowed words, but a sense of collective power and resolve is being felt. The 1% have their summits, and so too are the 99%.

In just a couple of days, and in spite of language barriers, many important problems were addressed at the People's Forum and useful tactics were shared. In our discussion with Indignados from Spain, we talked about their practice of taking a building to use the top half of floors for people who need homes and the



bottom half for movement infrastructure. This model meets both the needs of the people and builds the infrastructure of the movement. We also learned the specifics of organizing long-distant marches from their experience before Oct. 15th marching from Spain to Brussels. Egyptians who participated in Tahrir Square gave us advice on maintaining safety and security in an open square, a reoccurring problem for open encampments. We spoke with people from Occupy London about process issues in general assemblies and the role that collective consensus and working group autonomy plays in the decisions of the movement. The role that unions, established organizations, and NGOs play is a reoccurring issue that was address here as well. And lastly, we spoke at length with Sorbonne students who were worried about starting an occupation in Paris in a week or so. I shared my initial anxiety before the start of Occupy Wall Street. In the discussion, their initial anxiety gave way to excitement at the possibility.

There are points in the struggle where pure solidarity gives way to mutual aid; where circuits of inspiration push the horizon of what is possible. Occupy Wall Street occurred in part because of the wave of inspiring social struggles from Tunisia, Egypt, Spain and elsewhere. And we are profoundly humbled and glad to help push the wave of inspiration back to the very same places that gave us hope. The People's Summit in Nice shows that there is a global movement, that each city, nation, or region is not alone, but that we are all together, struggling for a better world. This work of international solidarity building is continuing. International solidarity working groups are emerging in encampments and movements around the US and the world. We are working towards building a global general assembly in Tunisia in late March of 2012. If the economic crisis is global, then so is the resistance. And we will continue to coordinate, communicate, learn, and act as one. The movement is growing. It is becoming more coordinated. The resistance is global, and an international revolution is appearing in the horizon!

Isham Christie



Job opening



Right to Refuse to Kill Programme Worker

War Resisters' International is looking for a Right to Refuse to Kill programme worker (full-time)

The RRTK worker will share the responsibility for organising work from WRI's international office and have specific responsibility for running WRI's international work on conscientious objection and military recruitment. A commitment to pacifism, good computer skills, and language skills are desirable.

**Salary: £23,296.68 per annum.
Deadline for applications: 1 April 2012
Start date: 1 September 2012**

**Information and application form online at
<http://wri-irg.org/programmes/rtrk-worker-pack>**



The 15M movement and nonviolence

I imagine that the majority of those of us who participated in the demonstration which took place last Sunday on May 15th, believed that we were going to repeat the familiar experience of taking to the streets for a just cause, only to then go back home with the feeling of having participated in something necessary but in some way sterile.

But this time it was different. Despite it being little more than a "self-arranged meeting", managed weeks before at the social networks level, by a widespread coordination of people calling it "Real Democracy Now" and despite it being totally separate from the trade unions, or the usual organizations and movements and despite being entirely silenced by the corporate media channels, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in fifty Spanish cities a week before the autonomous regional and municipal elections, in order to protest against the control of money over people and to reject a political system which is unreservedly subjugated to the dictates of the economic elites and the global financial companies.

Furthermore, in terms of our feelings, many of us felt, on the one hand, the presence of a vast majority of unknown faces and the absence of flags and political organisations' acronyms and, on the other hand, an entirely unprecedented energy and creativity seen on the political protest scene in recent decades. There was a sense of "breaking point" with the traditional scenario of a protest and there was so much energy in this act that it needed to channel itself and change into something which went beyond the original scenario. This is how civil disobedience came about in the form of occupations of the squares, firstly in la Puerta del Sol, in Madrid, and in the following evenings in practically all of the Spanish cities. These camp outs in squares were held until after the local elections, despite the explicit bans made by the electoral bodies, up until the beginning of July.

Despite the unexpected eruption which escaped the radars of the main Spanish political actors, the "15M Movement" as it came to be known (or that of the "indignados", as they were trivially labelled by the media), there is a red thread which links the movement to other social events in recent years. On an international scale and, most recently, many people from 15M drew inspiration from social revolts of the "Arab Spring" and from the Icelandic protests against the adjustment policies which their political elite were preparing. Further back in time, they also are linked to the emergence of a movement against

economic globalisation and its use of the internet in order to coordinate and act on an international scale. At a domestic level, the 15M is linked to the legitimisation of civil disobedience carried out by social movements, such as the refusal to carry out military service or that of occupations and, on the other hand, with the different protest acts which appropriated the internet, social networks and new technologies, in order to mobilize. For example, the use of SMS on the eve of the 2004 general elections led to tens of thousands of people congregating outside the headquarters of the Partido Popular, so as to end Aznar's government's untruthful version of the Madrid attacks, stating that ETA was behind the attacks. There was also the "V" movement for housing (Vivienda) of 2007, the student protest movement against the "Bologna Plan" of integration of Higher Education in European Space, or the electronic civil disobedience acts carried out by the "anonymous" internet groups against the so called "Sinde Law" which was supposed to close webpages which exchange archives, thus stifling the free culture of the internet (this was a local scale imitation of the actions carried out against Paypal and Visa for the economic strangulation of Wikileaks). The uprising/ emergence of 15M has marked the climax of ever increasing and widespread social malaise, especially due to the increasingly evident indifference of political elites in relation to the will of the majority and their subjugation to financial policies and the interests of the military superpowers ("Sinde law", Spanish participation in the Libyan war, structural adjustment policies and cuts etc).

The majority of the analysis is in agreement on the fact that the 15M has become a political actor at the same level of parties and trade unions, and its appearance on the scene has put an end to a stage of decades of subjugation of the people and has opened the way for a new cycle of social protest and a change in paradigm, regarding the role of society when faced with the harsh attacks carried out against the hard fought social and political rights.

But the importance of the 15M reached beyond this point. The movement has shown, from the very start, great originality in relation to the traditional political organisations and even the previous social movements.

Firstly, the most obvious point is its strong diversity and multiplicity of voices, its contradictory nature. It couldn't be any other way, given that it faithfully reflects

the society in which it is strongly rooted. 15M has known how to use this multiplicity as one of its strengths, making it a source of great creative capacity and collective intelligence. This is partly in thanks to the fact that it addressed concrete problems and we didn't get lost in debates or purely abstract ideological concepts.

Furthermore, the 15M movement has been a clear example of the potential of social self-organisation. The refusal to create links with any political party, trade union or other type of organisation, has not only formally been the case. Even when members of these organisations became part of 15M from the beginning, there was a rejection within the movement of traditional political "labels", which was at the heart of its foundations. Even if anarchists, communists, people belonging to trade unions or political parties, NGO members, feminists, environmentalists or people who were simply fed up with the way politics works, the movement still managed to create a new identity as "members of the 15M".

Alongside this, the 15M has shown some characteristics which are influenced by anarchy, such as organisationally horizontal structure, inclusivity, the refusal to recognise charismatic leaders or to let oneself be represented by visible faces or famous characters. Working with the assembly structure which the movement has proudly shown as part of its identity has been seen in the camps, many times with more will rather than skill, due to the lack of appropriate instruments available in the innumerable assemblies, meetings and working committees which took place for months. This blossoming of spaces of horizontal participation and direct democracy have been perhaps one of the most far reaching contributions, because they were practical spaces of socialisation and political training for many people who were, for the first time, getting into contact with a collective, as they had not trusted the pre-existing movements' and organisations' proposals up until this point.

Undoubtedly, one of the most fascinating and original features of the 15M movement is its ever changing character, the speed with which it changes, rendering obsolete the very structures which they have just created. The calling of "Real Democracy Now" in May, gave way to an "Occupy the Square" movement whereby occupation of public spaces in the form of camp outs took place, which tried to equip itself with general and central assemblies, thematic committees, which, within the space of a couple of weeks, then gave



rise to decentralised assemblies, especially in the neighbourhoods of large cities and in villages. Currently, as well as having passed onto being a testimony to the global movement, from the global meeting on October 15th, and after having influenced the vast "Occupy" movement in the US, 15M seems to have now dedicated its efforts in concrete struggles such as the Network of the "Platform for those affected by Mortgages", which, through direct non-violent action, attempts to avoid people who are so indebted that they are unable to pay the mortgage on their houses, that they do not get evicted from their houses by the police. They are also involved in mobilisations against privatisation and cuts in education and health. Although there are many places where the movement seems to have entered a stage of lethargy, in several cities, such as Barcelona or Cadiz, occupation of abandoned buildings are taking place in order to re-house families who have been evicted from their houses by the banks.

All these changes of the movement are about dual nature. Not only is the 15M a crystallisation of the "real" world, which began to take shape through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, but it is this "virtual" face which has been the space for actions and consensus based training on organisation and action. The 15M is another example of how it is possible to colonize, re-appropriate and politicise instruments originally conceived for corporate means. It was about meeting, creating "clusters" and entering into dialogue, in a horizontal manner. This capacity to "retreat" to the social networks and build on from there, is one of its major strengths, as they have used it in order to destroy the criminalization campaigns launched by the corporate media and the political powers who have suffered, when they saw that their attempts at

"domestication" and trivialisation were not yielding any results. For example, there was a campaign launched due to the massive nonviolent blocking of the entrances to the Catalan Parliament, where big cuts were to be made to the Catalan health budget. The criminalization campaign wanted to portray this as a totalitarian attack against the institutions and, in response, the movement circulated images of the police involved in the crowds where there was a clash with the anti-riot agents. The results of these criminalization campaigns were few and far between, given the increase in popular support for the movement, as a result of this particular action. The 15 M movement is in this regard a "movement mark 2". It is better adapted to the internet society in which we live, in comparison with the experiences of our previous struggles. And undoubtedly, this particular facet is one of the reasons why the movement has elicited such a deep misunderstanding and mistrust amongst some sectors of the traditional left and social movements, which, in relation to the movement, sway between arrogance, paternalism and condescension. In some cases this has even led to them coming up with conspiracy theories on the origins of the 15M.

Finally, one must also talk about one of the most important characteristics which of the 15M's identity, which is of particular interest to antimilitarists, pacifists and war resisters in general. It is the unconditional and explicit application of nonviolence, on the one hand and the almost obvious acceptance of civil disobedience as a legitimate and viable tool, on the other. The nonviolence of the 15M has been unquestioningly accepted as part of the movement's identity from the very start. Although this lack of debate may have had the disadvantage that the type of non-violence used by the 15M is almost always

simply "non-aggression" or even based on not creating "tense" situations on the streets. This natural acceptance has meant that the pre-dominance of nonviolence is quite superficial and has been trivialised. There is no other way of explaining why the movement hasn't radically criticised the violence based institutions, for example, the police or the army. On these issues, the 15M has only reached mass consensus on the repudiation of the immense volume of military spending and arms trade-and they use it more as a way of comparing this volume with the decimated social budgets, rather than criticising the fact that this spending is supporting violence or criticising military intervention of the army, for example in the case of the Libya war. There have been very few texts which take into consideration the "deep" aspects of the action and nonviolent organisation, such as the consistency between means and ends, the distinction between the personal and the social role, legality and legitimacy, repression used in order to undermine the legitimacy of the repressor, creating alternative institutions or criticism of institutions of violence and structural violence as the main form which generates more violence. However, one must recognise that all these dimensions, except perhaps the last point, have almost always been implicitly present in the actions and the organisation of the movement. We must also highlight the solidity of nonviolence of the 15M which, even in the highest points of police repression, for example in the harsh actions of the anti-riot police of the Catalan police force on May 27th in the Catalunya Square of Barcelona, who were trying to clear out the camps. These events have tainted the image of the Catalan government and their police because the images of "pure" police violence carried out against pacifist demonstrators sitting on the ground, have been etched into everyone's minds.

As regards civil disobedience, the movement has showed an acceptance of this type of police action, very often only in terms of the timid and overly cautious declarations made. A large part of the movement has shown great reticence, from the start, to go into more detail on this issue, alleging that this could erode the social base and the sympathy shown by a large part of society. It is quite a surprising argument, taking into consideration that civil disobedience has been the very tool used by the 15M when, when they "occupied/took over" the squares, thus re-appropriating and politicising public spaces and staying there for months, despite increasing threats.

Due to all these points in common, people from antimilitarist and pacifist networks of the Spanish State, such as the Alternativa Antimilitarista-MOC, have joined the networks of the 15M movement and have

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Turkey: European Court of Human Rights reaffirms right to conscientious objection

Recently, the issue of conscientious objection in Turkey has seen some ups and downs. Early in November, Turkish Justice Minister Sadullah Ergin announced that the right to conscientious objection "will be assessed, discussed and brought to parliament if deemed applicable", which was broadly interpreted as a sign that Turkey is preparing to recognise the right to conscientious objection. However, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced at a group meeting of the governing AK Party parliamentary group on 22 November that the issue has been shelved from the government's agenda.

Ironically, this announcement came on the same day on which a Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights reaffirmed the right to conscientious objection in its judgement in the case of Erçep v. Turkey (application no. 43965/04), ruling that Turkey had violated the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. The case concerned a Jehovah's Witness from Turkey, who had been repeatedly imprisoned for his refusal to perform military service following approximately 15 call-ups.

Following up from the Grand Chamber judgement in the case of Bayatyan v Armenia, in which the European Court of Human Rights reviewed its previous case law on conscientious objection and "considered that opposition to military service, where it was motivated by a serious and insurmountable conflict between the obligation to serve in the army and a person's conscience, constituted a conviction or belief of sufficient importance to attract the guarantees of Article 9."

It therefore did not come as a surprise that the new chamber judgement reaffirmed that conscientious objection is indeed protected under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of thought, conscience and religion). According to the Court's press release, the "no alternative civilian service existed. Conscientious objectors had no option but to refuse to enrol in the army if they wished to remain true to their convictions. In so doing, they laid themselves open to a sort of "civil death" because of the numerous sets of criminal proceedings which the authorities invariably brought against them; they

could face prosecution for the rest of their lives. The Court considered that that situation was not compatible with law enforcement in a democratic society."

"The Court took the view that the numerous convictions imposed on Mr Erçep because of his beliefs, in a situation where no form of civilian service offering a fair alternative existed in Turkey, amounted to a violation of Article 9."

Besides the judgement on the violation of Article 9, the Court also found for a violation of Article 6 (right to a fair trial). "Mr Erçep complained of the fact that, as a civilian, he had had to appear before a court made up exclusively of military officers. The Court observed that, despite being accused of an offence under the Military Criminal Code, the applicant was, for criminal-law purposes, not a member of the armed forces but a civilian. Furthermore, it was clear from a judgment of the Jurisdiction Disputes Court dated 13 October 2008 that, in Turkish criminal law, a person was considered to be a member of the armed forces only from the time he or she reported for duty with a regiment."

Continued from page 9

contributed their experience, both in terms of the functioning of the assembly and in affinity groups, as well as in the practice of civil disobedience. The participative workshops have been the main way of disseminating this practical knowledge and in recent months, within the 15M context, dozens of workshops of direct non-violent action and civil disobedience have been given. The number of participants has surpassed prior expectations. The objective of these workshops is to bajar el listón/lower the bar? Lower our expectations/ standards? so that the groups of the 15M have civil disobedience and direct nonviolent actions in their toolbox. In these workshops, not only do we present these forms of collective, organised political action as effective, legitimate or ethically grounded tools. We also give this issue more depth as we also show how to organise and how we organise an action or civil disobedience campaign so that the participants come out of this workshop stronger, both as individuals and as a group.

This division of opinion of the movement, in relation to the methods used in the struggle, is one of the challenges which we face in the coming months. Or one follows the conventional and even electoral actions, or one radicalises the actions within nonviolence and decisively opt to raise the tone of the conflict through civil disobedience. Currently, it appears that both paths are co-existing, with a large part of the movement who are demanding that there be a reform to the electoral law which would make it more equal, and another part is occupying abandoned buildings in order to house evicted families. The new

scene, with the absolute majority of the PP in the recent general elections and their predictable policies which attack social rights and increase militarisation, will probably tip the balance in favour of civil disobedience.

Another challenge is the transmitting of experiences of previous struggles to the 15M movement. To disregard the wealth of these experiences is a luxury which no movement can afford. Up until now, the 15M has been suffering a sort of "Adamism", caused by the presence of many people who have joined a movement based on political action for the first time and they therefore lack reference points of movements of great change. Therefore, it seems that the 15M has invented or has to invent everything, ignoring the legacy of organisational experience and past actions of grass-roots based social movements. This is partly due to the very social movements which have reacted, in some cases, with a lack of understanding of the 15M, focusing only on their supposed naivety and lack of discourse, as if this were an organisation or movement which was ready to go, fixed and stable, when the situation shows quite the contrary; it is a constantly evolving process, a "melting pot" and an attempt at a democracy which deserves this very name.

Carlos Barranco
Translation: Francesca Denley

"The Court considered it understandable that the applicant, a civilian standing trial before a court composed exclusively of military officers, charged with offences relating to military service, should have been apprehensive about appearing before judges belonging to the army, which could be identified with a party to the proceedings. In such circumstances, a civilian could legitimately fear that the military court might allow itself to be unduly influenced by partial considerations."

"Acknowledging that the applicant's doubts about the independence and impartiality of that court could be regarded as objectively justified, the Court held that there had been a violation of Article 6 § 1 in that regard."

This is very significant, as it basically states that conscientious objectors who refuse to be enlisted into the military should not stand trial before a military court.

Only a few days after the judgement of the European Court, another conscientious objector, Muhammed Serdar Delice, was arrested. However, conscientious objector, Inan Suver was prematurely released on 9 December, following an application of his lawyer. His lawyer requested his release, arguing that the government had announced to prepare a law to legalise conscientious objection, and also on health grounds. The military court followed the first part of this argument. How can this be interpreted, following Erdogan's announcement from 22 November that conscientious objection has

been shelved from the government's agenda?

Then, on 6 December, conscientious objector Halil Savda was arrested when trying to leave Turkey to travel to France, on invitation of Amnesty International France. Unknown to him, there was an open arrest warrant, to question him in relation to yet another charge of article 318 - "alienating the people from the military". Luckily, Halil Savda was released after questioning, and was able to travel to France.

Andreas Speck

NATO - Game Over



**International Direct Action Camp
NATO HQ Brussels
30 March - 2 April 2012**

NATO, the world's biggest war machine, has evolved from a defensive to an aggressive alliance.

NATO adds fuel to the fire. Under the pretext of 'Responsibility to Protect', NATO attacked Libya to force a profitable regime change. This intervention escalated the conflict and caused thousands of casualties. The arms industry applauds. NATO's intervention in Afghanistan leaves the country in tatters and on the brink of a civil war, thousands have been killed. After a long-drawn-out war, the alliance reduces troop levels but plans for continued military presence, although military leaders admit that they have reached no tangible results so far.

Why an action day on 1 April 2012?

From 20 till 21 May 2012, the next NATO Summit will be held in Chicago. High on the agenda will be NATO's role as an instrument for military interventions all over the world, and the outcome of the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review (DDPR) currently being conducted within the alliance, defining the role of NATO's nuclear weapons.

A unified European action is needed well in advance, with a clear message to our European governments:

Therefore, Vredesactie and Action pour la Paix will organise a non-violent direct action day on 1 April at the NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Please let us know if you are coming by filling the form, to help us prepare a well organised international meeting.

For more information go to: <http://warstartshere.eu/action/natogameover2012>

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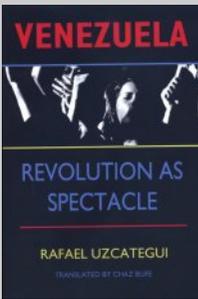
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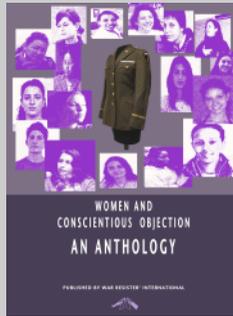
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Venezuela: Revolution as Spectacle analyses the Chávez regime from an antiauthoritarian Venezuelan perspective. It debunks claims made by Venezuelan and U.S. rightists that the Chávez government is dictatorial, as well as claims made by leftists that the Chávez

government is revolutionary. Instead the book argues that the Chávez regime is one of a long line of Latin American populist regimes that - "revolutionary" rhetoric aside - ultimately have been subservient to the United States as well as to multinational corporations. The book concludes by explaining how Venezuela's autonomous social, labour, and environmental movements have been systematically disempowered by the Chávez regime, but that despite this they remain the basis of a truly democratic, revolutionary alternative.

Rafael Uzcátegui
See Sharp Press, 2011
ISBN: 978-1-884365-77-5
Publication date: January 2011
Orders: £11.00 + postage



Conscientious objectors are generally seen as male — as are soldiers. This book breaks with this assumption. Women conscientiously object to military service and militarism. Not only in countries which conscript women — such as Eritrea and Israel — but also in coun-

tries without conscription of women. In doing so, they redefine antimilitarism from a feminist perspective, opposing not only militarism, but also a form of antimilitarism that creates the male conscientious objector as the 'hero' of antimilitarist struggle.

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