

Though the noise of breaking glass and concussion grenades were the sounds from Seattle most heavily regurgitated by the corporate media, there was a musical storm brewing in the thickest of tear gas which laughed in the face of the predictable police stand-offs. Wearing Russian-style fuzzy black hats and militaristic green and black uniforms, flanked by a flag corps and rifle twirlers, a radical marching band called the *Infernal Noise Brigade* (INB) roamed the liberated streets.

There have been marching bands like these at almost every global day of action since J18: the Committee for Full Enjoyment played at IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington in 2000, the INB turned up again in 2000 in Prague, as did Rhythms of Resistance, a samba band from London which incorporated 50 people playing homemade shakers into a huge festive block. New York's *Hungry March Band* frequently delights crowds with their dance music and flashy baton twirling; the *Front Musicale d'Intervention from France* played the *Zapatista* hymn during the *March for Indigenous Dignity* in Mexico in 2001; a marching band of internationals played with the *Black Bloc* in Genoa in 2001; and an anticapitalist marching band in São Paulo came to Porto Alegre for the *World Social Forum 2002* – playing a song they learned from a member of the INB!

These marching bands inspire joy, but also help move crowds, bringing reinforcements to high-intensity situations and renewing courage of those engaged in direct action. They also provide music – an essential component of carnival as it crosses barriers of nationality, ideology, and class; like carnival, it embodies self-organization and incites people into “dancing”, as US folk singer Casey Neil sings, “on the ruins of multinational corporations.” Making music is a way of throwing beauty back into the streets – streets in which people really begin to live again.

Infernal Noise: the soundtrack to insurrection

by Jennifer Whitney

“You know your own music when you hear it one day. You fall into line and dance until you pay the piper.” – Bryon Gysin

“We have to come up with a new marching pattern,” said Grey. Everyone else in the band groaned. Practice was almost over, or so we thought, we’d spent half the time marching around and stepping on each others’ heels and not working on improving our tiny repertoire of half-written songs that we were going to have to play in public in two month’s time. Besides that, it was freezing – the wind was blowing the rain horizontal, so it battered us under the shelter of a freeway overpass. Over the disgruntled murmuring, Grey continued, “There’s never going to be more than about 500 people around us, so we need to figure out a way to look big, and fill up all four lanes.”

Five hundred people? I stared at him in disbelief, realizing what different worlds we had been occupying lately. “Look, I know of more than 500 people who are organizing this action.” I replied. “There’s gonna be thousands of people out there, we’ll never have a chance to spread out like that, and we have plenty of other stuff to work on.” Everyone murmured in agreement, not because they shared my conviction or believed my slight exaggeration of how many organizers I knew, but because

they wanted to either play music or go home.

Cycling home, I was overcome with a sense of excitement, a sense of inevitability, of change. I knew that my band was going to make a huge difference in the action, and that the action would make an even more colossal difference in all of our lives. I marvelled at my own unwavering conviction that thousands of people were going to shut down the WTO meetings in Seattle, and at how rapidly my life had completely transformed in the previous month.

The whole year had been a blur. I learned that February, right before leaving for a long trip to Morocco, that the WTO was coming to Seattle. I didn't know much about the WTO, just enough to know that I would work on organizing protests of some sort when I got back. But then I spent almost six months living in the foothills of the Rif mountains, where there was no electricity or running water, in a tiny, remote village of musicians. I was tour-managing their occasional forays into Europe, and absorbing what I could of their legendary history and trance-inducing music. The global economy was as far from my thoughts as was possible.

Then one evening in August, an acquaintance of mine from Seattle turned up, by massive coincidence, in my village. Dan had come to Morocco from London, and he told me a story of an extraordinary tube ride he had one Friday afternoon in June. He was travelling in central London, when he heard an announcement about some sort of civil unrest causing the closure of the next few stations. He got off and retraced the path of the tube – and found himself, completely by accident, in the middle of the Carnival Against Capital on June 18.

I, of course, knew nothing about J18, having been in the village since March. I listened with awe and slight disbelief as he told me incredible stories of the carnival that disrupted the entire financial district, the samba band that was leading the crowd, the graffiti and the focused property damage targeting transnationals, the plumes of smoke he saw rising from the City as he left. I was completely starved for news of any sort, and hung on to every word. It felt a bit like he was a time traveller, or I was.

Dan and I began speculating about the actions being planned against the WTO meetings, which would take place

begins in the village of Maladagudda, India, with the destruction of the first test site of Monsanto's genetically modified cotton. Mr. Basanna Hunsale, owner of the field where an illegal genetic experiment is being conducted without his knowledge, local peasants, and members of the KRRS, together uproot the genetically modified plants. Afterwards, all the plants in the field are set on fire. "We send today a very clear

message to all those who have invested in Monsanto in India and abroad: take your money out now, before we reduce it to ashes," declares the KRRS.

>> **December** >> Responding to a call by Mon refugee Buddhist monks, Thai activists begin a three month occupation of the proposed route for the Yadana gas pipeline, which, after slicing through Burma's rainforest, is heading for neighbouring Thailand. Oil company's

Unocal and Total contracted the Burmese portion of the pipeline with the Burmese military junta, which instituted a scorched-earth campaign along the pipeline route, relocating and destroying entire villages. For three months, construction is stopped, but eventually police move in with construction crews and disperse the crowd with water cannons, arresting 50.

>> **December 7** >> A unusual coalition of locked-out

in our city a few months later. Little did we know, but that action would find us together in a marching band, playing rhythms originating from this tiny, off-the-map village in Morocco, rhythms which are close to 1,000 years old, and which are in danger of being lost forever.

When I finally returned to Seattle, I was staying at Grey's house when a friend of his came over with slick anti-WTO agit-prop and a collection of beautiful images of past actions. He told me about the Direct Action Network (DAN), a grassroots coalition of groups and individuals, formed that summer in order to organize a complete shut down of the WTO ministerial. I went to the next meeting. Before I knew it, I was organizing first aid trainings and street medic support for the actions, setting up a clinic for the convergence centre, and working on various other aspects of the action. And then I got a phone call asking me to show up at a meeting to talk about starting a band.

“The Infernal Noise Brigade is a marching drum orchestra and street performance crew activated by massive political and cultural uprisings. We are a tactical mobile rhythmic unit consisting of a majorette, medics, tactical advisors, rifle-twirling contingent, flag corps, and percussionists.”

The INB first came together several months before the WTO actions. Some of us had been inspired by hearing of the Barking Bateria, the samba band Dan saw during the J18 actions in London, many of us had worked together before in a political band/performance collective, and all of us

wanted something meaningful and fun to do during the actions. Our intent was multi-fold; we wanted to provide entertainment, energy, and support for the hundreds of people who would be locked down in blockades all day; we wanted to be a useful tool that tactical organizers could utilize to move a large crowd to strategic locations to reinforce blockades; we wanted to prevent endless speechifying and break up the sometimes-tiresome chants so people could dance and have a good time rather than just shouting all day long; and we wanted to confuse the police – staving off arrests or police attack if at all possible.

Moving a crowd is a logistical nightmare. No-one listens to anyone with a megaphone anymore, and relying on one person to shout orders to a crowd is risky and disempowering to those being shouted at. So we figured that if we developed good systems of communication, made it clear to organizers what we were there for and how they could interface with us (in other words, don't talk to the musicians while we're playing!) we would be able to dramatically affect the overall strategy of the day.

So we began practice, and I began talking up the band to the other organizers within DAN to ensure that they'd know how to work with us when the time came. We had several meetings to discuss our goals, and how we might best achieve them, talked about the WTO, and tried to live up to the outrageous mission statement Grey crafted, which read: *“Strike fear and incomprehension in the minds of the powerful. Disrupt the dominant trance. Be calculatedly unpredictable and undermine the spectacle by introducing music of a disorienting or*

ecstatic nature into the sterile political discourse. Disrupt the stale dichotomy of leftist protest and police cliché. Facilitate the self-actualization of the mob. Be the dope propaganda.”

We tried to keep this ‘mission’ in mind as we practiced, trying to learn to march in step, as summer slipped into fall, and as the cops repeatedly ran us out of public parks. We still needed uniforms, we had no idea how we were going to communicate with each other while playing, and we couldn’t come up with anyone who might work as a drum major – someone fearless, performative, fun to work with, good under pressure, who would like our weird niche of an aesthetic (post-industrial, quirky-but-militant), had a strong sense of rhythm, and could devote countless hours over the next two months to practice and meetings. We’d been stuck with the same three songs for at least a month, and we had yet to figure out a name.

We were playing in a park on one of the last sunny days of the year when our fire-spinning acrobat friend Josephina came skipping over on her lunch break. She came right into the centre of the circle we’d formed and leapt into the air,

diving, and rolling into a double somersault. She jumped back up, spun around, threw us a wink, and started dancing. I looked at Grey and he looked at me, the same thought running through our minds. I formed the words “drum major” with my lips, and he raised his eyebrows in agreement. Perfect.

Then the rain came, and we moved practice to a run-down industrial part of Seattle. The cops never looked for us there, and as the driving wind blew the rain into our shelter, we reassured each other that it would be good practice for playing all day in the inevitable rain of late November.

Meanwhile, Seattle was slowly becoming an occupied city, as people poured into town to help in the final days of preparing for the actions. Cycling between my house, my work, and my meetings, I made eye contact with innumerable strangers who gave me conspiratorial smiles and winks. Armies of culture jammers armed with spray paint and stencils, or wheatpaste and posters, began their night-time transformation of the city, one neighbourhood at a time. Banners, puppets, and flags were being stockpiled, taken out for test runs in a series of

steelworkers, members of the International Workers of the World, the International Longshore and Warehouse Workers’ Union, and Earth First! successfully blockaded a ship in Tacoma, Washington, US. The ship belongs to MAXXAM Corporation, whose subsidiaries, Kaiser Aluminum and Pacific Lumber, are responsible for locking out 3,000 steelworkers and logging old growth forests, respectively. Some people picket the port, others

lock onto a conveyor belt, and a flotilla of small boats blocks the waterway. Most dramatically, braving 75 mph winds, activists hang suspended over the water with a banner, blockading the entry to the dock. Members of the ILWU refuse to cross the picket and when the ship does dock, it remains unloaded for several days as the port’s conveyor belt has been mysteriously damaged to the tune of \$50,000. “[CEO] Hurwitz Cuts Jobs Like He

Cuts Trees,” reads the banner above the climber’s bodies. >> **December 9** >> School is definitely out for the kids of Greece: pens and note books are exchanged for petrol bombs and face masks as a wave of mass demonstrations hits 44 cities and 10,000 schools are occupied. Pupils and teachers join forces to oppose legislation which links education directly to fluctuations of the economy with a torrent of actions resulting in imprisonments and a

neighbourhood processions. Designed as outreach tools and serving as morale boosters, the parades grew larger and more colourful each time.

Some folks sussed out vacant buildings, searching for the perfect one to crack open as a mass public squat, an action to bring attention to the housing crisis, brought on by the high-tech industry. DAN meetings grew larger, longer, louder, and more urgent. I finally broke down and got my first cell phone, promising myself I'd only have it for the month of November (yeah, right). Impromptu trainings and practice runs were held across town; I came home from work to find sheepish friends dismantling a tripod they'd erected in my backyard, unbeknownst to my housemates or neighbours.

My life took on a very narrow focus, as I cycled the triangular pattern between my home and workplace, DAN meetings near the university, and band practice on the waterfront. Nothing outside of that triangle mattered anymore. I was operating on the complete conviction that we were going to succeed in shutting down the WTO. I also was convinced, after watching video from the 1997 APEC summit in Vancouver, Canada, that the police were going to violently attack us, and so I began doing research about pepper spray and tear gas, trying to figure out what we might do to protect ourselves against it. I spoke with veterans, military dissidents, activists who'd been pepper sprayed, doctors, and chemistry students, reading the scant amounts of documentation about so-called non-lethal weapons, and desperately theorizing and speculating about what might neutralize the painful chemicals. This earned

“For the World Bank and the WTO, our forests are a marketable commodity. But for us, the forests are a home, our source of livelihood, the dwelling of our gods, the burial ground of our ancestors, the inspiration of our culture. We do not need you to save our forests. We will not let you sell our forests. So go back from our forests and our country.” – letter by Indian

adivasi (tribals) handed over as they invaded World Bank offices in New Delhi and plastered its walls with cow dung, 9 November 1999

me the scorn of a few organizers, who called me alarmist and fear-mongering; a few were opposed to me talking about these chemical weapons during first aid trainings. Due in part to my minor obsession, and also to what was to become our customary blend of pragmatism and fashion sense, the marching band decided to play it safe and wear respirators with goggles as protection.

“Because humans have too long bleated slogans and carried signs, the aesthetic of the INB is entirely post-textual; we provide tactical psychological support through a ‘propaganda of sound’. The street

is the venue for action and symbology, the domain of emotion and intuition; ideology is homework.”

According to Hakim Bey, military marching bands were invented by the wine-drinking Bektashi Sufi Order, who made up the Ottoman Empire's Imperial Guard. In an essay entitled 'Utopian Blues', he writes, "Judging by European accounts of [these] bands, which always speak of the sheer terror they induced, these musicians discovered a kind of psychological warfare which certainly bestowed prestige on this very ambiguous group, made up of slaves of the Sultan."

As the weeks slid into months, and we prepared to commit our own style of psychological warfare, band practice started to really come together and we slowly developed more songs. Our rhythms mostly came from members who have studied or travelled in countries not yet steamrolled by the scourge of western popular music. These rhythms are processed into an amalgam of styles, which leads us to mix unexpected elements – for example, a traditional Rajasthani folk rhythm is modified and transposed to snare drums, with a galloping North African Gnaoua line clattering across the top.

It was imperative to us that we not degenerate into meandering 'jam sessions' or let drum circles form up around us – such music is shackled to the lowest common denominator. We wanted not only to provide a soundtrack to the insurrection and tactical support to the organizing strategy, but also to play really tight, well crafted songs. Accusations of elitism have not been uncommon; we maintain that the left is full of mediocrity and we are interested in transcending that. Tight organization plus a high level of skill is the only thing that can constitute a real threat to the powers that be, and like those who invented marching bands, we wanted our music to be threatening.

Meanwhile, we spent hours discussing uniforms (the beginning of an eternal obsession) and trying to come up with a name for the band. After one particularly long and absurd brainstorming session, a small group of us set off for a bar, determined not to leave until we had a name. The brainstorm had yielded a single mandate – our name had to be a three letter acronym, and after a few hours of drinking, we christened ourselves the Infernal Noise Brigade.

Then it came time to add new elements to our mix: a

hunger strike. The occupations last for several months, despite massive repression.

■ 1999 ■

>> **January** >> The twelve year campaign to save Headwaters Forest reaches an important milestone when two ancient groves are transferred into public ownership and five other groves are protected under a 50 year cutting ban. Earth Firsters continue their campaign

against the MAXXAM corporation, and strengthen their defence of still-unprotected forest in the area.

>> **January** >> Years of campaigning pay off for the semi-nomadic Penan tribe of Sarawak, Malaysia. After a decade of vigorous repression against anti-logging activities, with hundreds of Penan people receiving long jail sentences, the police inform the communities that the Lajung Lumber company has been ordered to

leave the area and compensate the Penan for violating its agreement not to log without their permission.

>> **January** >> Students in Benin City, Nigeria, begin an indefinite strike to protest against conditions at the school. Student stipends, which are paid out sporadically, "have been the same for 21 years," says student council president Alphonse Late Lawson-Helu. "It's really a pittance. The cost of living has gone up



Bette Lee

The Infernal Noise Brigade on May Day. Portland, Oregon, US

team of coordinated rifle twirlers, a flag corps, medics, and scouts. They quickly became indispensable, as not only did they provide a strong visual component, they also acted as eyes and ears for the entire crew, and formed a protective barrier around the musicians in tight crowd situations, enabling us to continue playing without smacking anyone in the face with our drumsticks.

By then we were marching in step most of the time, and working on some formations – things we could do to add more visual interest when the march came to a standstill, or when we wanted to block an intersection, or just wanted to show off. We developed whistle commands and hand signals so the major could indicate for us to go into different formations, stop marching, stop playing, and the like. One night a friend of ours came to practice and gave us a quick-and-dirty workshop on Brazilian samba music, teaching us our first song that anyone could really dance to, and beginning our incessant struggle to learn to play samba right.

I began suffering from sleep deprivation and overstimulation. My worlds were becoming crossed, and I was finding myself tapping out our songs during meetings,

and scribbling out tactical ideas and first aid supply needs during band practice. No one really seemed to notice, as everyone else was as overloaded as me.

And then I quit my job, just as the convergence centre opened in an old hip-hop club called Studio 420, about ten blocks from my house. My little triangle of a life became a singular straight line, much narrower and more focused, as I went from home to 420 to practice and back to 420, and home again, with meetings everywhere I turned and a cell phone that wouldn't stop ringing. But although my life became much more hectic with the opening of the convergence centre and the health clinic, which was now providing free care to hundreds of people a day, it also became very simple, very clear. The actions had acquired a momentum of their own, (this probably happened long before I even noticed), and there were now so many people working night and day that I was no longer essential to making things happen. My work was useful and helpful, yes, and I was looked at sternly if I missed a meeting, absolutely, but the thing had grown to proportions so much bigger than me, bigger than most of us had imagined was

tremendously, and the university now houses 16,000 students, but was built for 6,000."

>> **January 3** >> People without legal papers from Congo, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Algeria, Tunisia and elsewhere occupy a church in Ghent, Belgium, reclaiming their autonomy, declaring their solidarity with the thousands of people without papers occupying churches all across the country, and demanding papers for all.

>> **January 4** >> To celebrate Ogoni Day, and in solidarity with Nigerian activists, UK activists occupy the offices of Shell's directors, declaring their intent to send a message to Shell and other corporations that 1999 will be a year of increased globalization of protest. Live footage of the protest is relayed directly from Shell's own offices to an activist website.

>> **January 29** >> Thai Greens protest in front of

Leonardo DiCaprio's hotel. His new film, *The Beach* is destroying Maya Bay, in a protected National Park. The bay's beach has been planted with 100 non-native coconut trees to give more of a 'tropical' feel!
>> **February** >> Students continue an indefinite strike at the University of Benin, Togo, to protest conditions at their school. Student stipends, which are only paid out sporadically, "have been the same for 21 years," said

possible, and I was humbled by the vast amount of dedication and conviction in the many strangers who came to my city and quickly became allies. It was an important lesson, and one I've relearned and refined over the years since. I learned how to be useful and hard-working, and yet not to presume myself to be irreplaceable or even essential, because I'm not, none of us are. To act otherwise is to set ourselves up for isolation and targeting by repressive authorities, not to mention denying the capacity of others to adapt to new circumstances, learn new skills, and develop qualities of leadership, including humility.

"We attempt, through our aesthetics and our fierce commitment to the politics of joy and desire, to create a space of carnival, where all rules are broken and anything is possible. We seek to dissolve all barriers between art and politics, participants and spectators, dream and action."

The morning of N30 dawned grey and drizzly, and the INB was late to the march. However, the crowd was so huge that by the time we got there and scrambled into formation, the tail end of the march had yet to leave. I took a deep breath, waiting to fall into line and march towards downtown. We set off. Left, right, left, cursing the light drizzling rain, stomachs knotted up in anticipation of who-knew-what. As we descended the hill and caught our first full view of downtown, I realized something that I had suspected for some time, and was now absolutely sure of – we were making history.

Our first act of mischief was to invade a Starbucks where

"Well they certainly lived up to their name. I don't know if these people have any kind of message other than making noise, but when they have 50,000 of their closest friends downtown with them – well, that's a lot of noise."

– Seattle's KIRO television station, 30 November 1999

people were having their routine morning coffee before work. Marching in, we formed a circle and played for a few minutes to general consternation and astonishment before clattering back out onto the streets again. It was one of my favourite moments of the day, because it was like we were announcing, "Hey, normal life ends here folks, there is a marching band in your Starbucks, you're not going to work today!"

Shortly after, we came to an intersection quite close to one of the entrances to the convention centre, where the WTO's opening ceremonies were to take place. My adrenaline was starting to wear off. I'd almost grown accustomed to the fact that we had completely taken over the city centre, that in every direction I looked were crowds of people dressed as butterflies, waving flags, hoisting the signs of their unions – it's a big myth that all the unions were boycotting our actions in favour of their big rally in a stadium a few miles north. There was a large contingent of Steelworkers and Longshore workers leading one of the marches at 7.00 am,

and they were there when we first got gassed.

The whole band seemed a little scattered. We were completely exhilarated, and we weren't prepared for all the cameras, getting in our way, vying for shots of us. I think we were all somewhat in shock about two things – one, that we'd actually managed to pull off this marching band thing, and two, that there was a crowd of 10,000 people we could play for.

We got to the bottom of the hill, marched around a bit, and then took a little break, ate some snacks, said some brilliant things to each other like, "Isn't this cool? Wow, I can't believe it," and the like. Then we started playing a West African rhythm. It wasn't something that we'd actually written and rehearsed, but several of us knew the basic rhythm and it was easy enough for the others to pick up. As we played, the light misty rain stopped, and blue started to take over the sky. Robert pulled out his camera, went and stood in front of the police line, and snapped a photo of himself before climbing on top of a dumpster in the middle of the intersection to check out the crowd. Then, without warning, they started to gas us. Chaos broke loose. Our song trainwrecked to a halt. A tear gas canister hit

Robert in the head; another one caught him in the back as he jumped down. We scrambled to find our goggles and respirators – we were prepared for them to gas us, but hadn't expected it at 9.00 am!

Someone started up another song, and those who were able to play dropped into it while we retreated, but Shazz and Dan were walking the wrong way, towards the cops. Disoriented and blinded, they moved into the thick cloud of gas that was now filling the once-blue sky. I grabbed them and we headed out of there; I was breathing slowly, deeply, through my fleece scarf, and walking with my eyes closed, blind leading the blind. I got us around the corner and we caught up to the rest of the band, who seemed giddy, delirious, confused. Everyone around us was shouting and screaming, frightened, angry. It's hard to remember what we did, what I thought, what happened next. I know that several of us were laughing, excited, ready to gear up and jump back into the fray. Someone pointed out that the rhythm we'd been playing before the gas started was a warrior's rhythm, traditionally played while two adversaries fought each other, a ritualized system of settling

student council president Alphonse Late Lawson-Helu. "It's really a pittance. The cost of living has gone up tremendously, the university now houses 16,000 students, but was built for only 6,000."

>> February 5 >> Twenty-seven students in Washington DC, US occupy the office of Georgetown University's President, demanding that the administration adopt anti-sweatshop policies.

>> February 6-9 >> At Nairobi University, Kenya, students and others struggle to defend the Karura Forest against development. Riot police attack, and for three days pitched battles fill the streets. Three MPs are arrested and charged with inciting violence, while Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt movement (having been beaten in January when she tried to plant saplings in the forest) barricades herself in her own home to

avoid being arrested as well.

>> February 13 >> In Libreville, Gabon, police use force to disperse demonstrations by high school and university students who have been on strike since November 1998, carrying out road blockades to protest shortages of school buses and other facilities.

>> February 22 >> Fifty thousand farmers descend on Brussels to protest at the EU Agricultural Policy. Tear gas

disputes. Here we were, 7,000 miles from West Africa, inadvertently inciting a battle. We laughed manically while adjusting our respirators and getting back into formation. It was the first time that any of us had been tear gassed. And it was the last time we ever ran from it.

“The INB provides subliminal disruption of time, using drums to divide it into disorienting rhythmic patterns which are disturbing to the linear sequence. Songs in different tongues further infect the monoculture. In the path to constructing a better reality, and in deconstructing a system based in the misery of alienation, we choose noise as our tool.”

We took a break in the central park, Westlake Center, after trying to meet up with some people who'd planned a Reclaim the Streets action, which seemed a little underambitious at that point, as we'd already successfully reclaimed the entire city centre. So we split up to find food and toilets in the nearby mall and transnational chain stores surrounding us. It was like we were an invading army – we had grown so quickly accustomed to our total occupation of the city that we didn't expect no for an answer. We were in control. We were experiencing a complete shift in the balance of power for the first time in our lives, and it felt amazing. We were manic, ecstatic, every cell vibrating, electric, experiencing freedom in a way we'd only ever dreamt of. History was ours to shape with our own hands.

Regrouping in the park, we formed up, launched into a

song, and set off down Fourth Avenue, where we suddenly became the main event. Thunderous applause greeted us, as if we were heroes, and the glaring lights and made-up faces of the mainstream media pressed against us. It was as if we'd stepped into a void, the vacuum which occurs when a performance is running late; perhaps people were waiting (in vain) for the approach of the labour march. Whatever its cause, it jolted us back into the moment and we confidently marched off looking for adventure, feeling like we'd done something truly great. That was part of the magic of Seattle – as one activist put it, everyone who was there came away feeling like they did it.

We marched on, back towards where we'd been gassed, hung a left, and then found ourselves marching parallel to a police line. We went to check it out, and saw a vast expanse of empty pavement stretching away behind the cops and ending at the heels of another police line, two blocks away. In that vast 'demilitarized zone' lay the hotels where US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and US trade negotiator Charlene Barshefsky were trapped, making frantic, furious phone calls. Just beyond it, where the streets came to life again, was a huge crowd gathered around a burning dumpster. We decided to retrace our steps and head over there; drawn like moths to the flickering flames.

There was a crowd of folks circled up from the Black Bloc, strangely dusted in what looked like ash, or spray from a fire extinguisher. A few people prayed, another few were dancing, most were gazing at the flames, mesmerized. Just beyond the flames stood the riot cops, their monolithic

black-clad presence stretching from sidewalk to sidewalk, their visors glinting with reflected light, their image wavering, shimmering behind the waves of heat emanating from the dumpster.

The entire day looked a bit like that, shimmering, not quite real. My memories of it are elusive, more of feelings than of events. A burning dumpster, my first taste of tear gas – these are incidental when held up next to the feeling of power and entitlement shared by everyone in those streets, the feeling that the world belonged to us and that we would not so easily give it back to those who would destroy it to please their shareholders and loan officers.

“Out of the chaos the future emerges in harmony and beauty.”

– Emma Goldman

The rest of N30 is history, the future emerged from the chaos, and the world breathed a collective sigh of relief – finally people in the US were waking up to the economic and political reality for the vast majority of the planet. The global movement gained more momentum than it knew what to do with, the WTO hung its head in shame and swore never

is fired and water cannons hose down the farmers. A large part of the city is enclosed behind razor wire barricades. The state closes roads and schools and forbids residents from hanging the EU flag from their windows. Farmer Joseph McNeely from County Donegal said: “I don’t know what we’ll do if this agriculture reform goes through. It will depopulate our part of Ireland still further. I am the fourth generation of my

family to farm our land but I am doubtful if we can carry on.”

>> **March** >> Five thousand civilian Zapatistas conduct a week-long programme of popular education throughout the country, in preparation for a popular referendum, or *consulta*, on indigenous rights and culture. Over three million Mexicans vote at thousands of polling stations, agreeing that the San Andrés Accords

to meet in a democracy again, and the Infernal Noise Brigade continues playing, trying to write one decent samba rhythm, still having ridiculously long meetings about new uniforms, sending emissaries to far-flung gatherings of musicians, revolutionaries, and those who form bridges between, always trying to jump-start the advent of a better world.

“During times of revolt there is a brilliant flash of direct truth, connecting internal desire with external reality and smashing the barriers between the two. In that instance, that dangerous moment of ultimate presence and clarity, we become alchemists, forging the future from the energy of spontaneous passionate imagining, and fuelling it with infernal noise.”

Jennifer Whitney is one of the co-editors of this book

Note: Bold quotes are from INB agit-prop: www.infernalnoise.org

Resources:

- » **Great information on instruments and making your own gear from Rhythms of Resistance in London:** www.rhythmsofresistance.co.uk
- » **Moroccan musicians, the Master Musicians of Jajouka:** www.jajouka.com

should be implemented.

>> **March 10** >> The Ecotopia Cell of the Biotic Baking Brigade (BBB) delivers just desserts in the form of three blueberry tofu cream pies to the head of Chevron CEO Kenneth T. Derr, just before he delivers a speech to school kids in San Francisco, US. Special Agent Blueberry says: “From the forests of Colombia to the platforms of Nigeria down to the waters and workers of our own Bay,