



Nick Cooper / nickcooper.com

One of many walls of gas throughout the city. Québec City, Canada

## Global Day of Action

**April 20th 2001**

### A20 – FTAA, No Way! Québec City, Canada

*"What you don't understand is that when we negotiate economic agreements with these poorer countries, we are negotiating with people from the same class. That is, people*

*whose interests are like ours – on the side of capital."*  
– former State Department official at a meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations, *American Prospect*, 12 June 1999

People begin resisting the Sixth Summit of the Americas weeks before the leaders of the 34 countries of the Western Hemisphere (except Cuba) meet behind

fences in Québec City to lay the groundwork for the world's largest free trade zone, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Although the FTAA – if implemented – will affect 800 million people, from Alaska to Argentina, the draft documents remained secret for years. In March simultaneous actions demanded the release of the documents to the public. On 7 April in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a city recovering



Taunting the police. Québec

from two weeks of general strikes against the IMF, trade ministers of the Americas hold pre-FTAA meetings in the Sheraton Hotel and are greeted by 10,000 demonstrators who are fired on by plastic bullets and tear gas. At the end of the meeting the ministers announce to great fanfare that they will make public a rough copy of the agreement before the Québec summit on 20 April. A very partial text with little

substance is eventually released at the end of July. As protesters from across the Americas head to Québec City, which is preparing one the biggest security operations in Canada's history – including a ban on the wearing of all masks and scarves – the community of Las Abejas, in Chiapas, Mexico shows its support for the coming actions by ritually burning coffee crops to protest the starvation prices being



Getting on with the business of street occupation. Québec

forced on small growers. Many activists are turned back from Canada's borders – one because he has a black hat and is suspected of being a 'member' of the Black Bloc. Others use ingenious tactics to get through: ten US activists pretend they are an Ultimate Frisbee team with custom-made Team Blue Jay jerseys, a van full of Frisbees, and a printed out email invite to a fictitious



The labour union march splits and heads towards the fence. Québec

Meyer / Renaissance Floue



Local woman shows her injuries from plastic bullets during street assembly. Québec

Meyer / Renaissance Floue

Frisbee tournament.

The Mohawk Nation plans a solidarity action for the day before the summit, with support from the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, Anti-Racist Action, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and high school students, to open the border between Canada and the US which runs through Mohawk territory. Despite weeks of state

disinformation telling Mohawk communities that protesters will burn their homes and loot stores in a crazed rampage, the action takes place – but 500 police make sure that few activists actually make it across the border.

A20 dawns and the Carnival Against Capital begins. Before long the fence around the summit is breached. Tear gas fills the entire city and the following day's

march organized by unions and NGOs decides to head away from the fence to a distant park to listen to 22 speeches. But tens of thousands disobey stewards and head for the fence instead.

As tear gas rises in Québec, Brazilian police in São Paulo gas and beat anticapitalist demonstrators who carry huge shields of rubber tyres and a three-foot envelope containing a message to the Central Bank of



Night descends on the city but the tear gas continues to rise. Québec

Brazil: “FTAA – no fucking way”. In Uruguay, healthy food is shared with passers by outside a Montevideo McDonald’s and in Austin, Texas an ‘Anti-Corporate Crawl’ visits local transnational companies. All across the US – in Chicago, Boston, Eureka, Jackman, Miami, Seattle, Portland, Vermont, Atlanta, and San Francisco – people take to the streets. Hundreds block the Detroit/Windsor border tunnel; 700 block the Peace

Bridge at Blaine/Vancouver, where many dress up as dollar bills and ask the police to let them through because capital is allowed to freely cross borders. Meanwhile on the southern border, several thousand Mexican and US activists join for a festive celebration of transnational resistance whose backdrop is the 14 mile long fence separating San Diego and Tijuana. As the summit closes, an official press release suggests

that “despite protests” an “accord” has been signed. But the reality is that the talks failed – no agreement was reached on an FTAA text, which helps explain why the draft document wasn’t released. The accord merely expresses willingness to continue the FTAA process. Meanwhile a pan-American alliance of anti-FTAA movements are making ever-stronger links of resistance across borders.