

A Look at Eastern Europe

From Rioting Farmers to Rabid Fascists

Here's a roundup of news from those countries that make up Eastern Europe. It's not comprehensive, but it is an insight into the range of activity going on. These regions have a rich history of direct action, from the Green Armies in Russia (radical ecological peasants who continued to resist the Bolshevik counter-revolution throughout the 1930s) to the uprisings that destabilised the Soviet control of Hungary in 1956 and later, in 1989, in the whole of Eastern Europe.

Nuclear Haven

Dodgy leaking nuclear reactors—yep it's true, they're all over Eastern Europe and more and more are being built. The programmes are facing resistance as well, though. There are campaigns against the construction of two new nuclear reactors in the Ukraine, against uranium mining in Karelia (a republic within the Russian federation), and against regular high level nuclear waste transports from Bulgaria to the Mayak reprocessing facility in Russia, where a tank full of radioactive waste exploded in 1957. Protest camps have been set up, for example near the Mohobze nuclear power plant in Slovakia and on the planned construction site of a Minotaur nuclear power plant in Northern Russia.

The beginning of March saw an anti-nuclear conference in Voronezh, Russia. It was organised by the local group 'Green Arrow' and the joint anti-nuclear campaign of Ecodefense! and the Socio-Ecological Union, a large umbrella organisation in Eurasia. International days of action against plutonium fuel were planned and an action carried out against the construction of a new nuclear heating plant in Voronezh, where a few people, including a journalist, were arrested. Email: ecodefense@glasnet.ru

Happy Polish Wolves

Wolves are now fully protected in Poland. Following an action in Krosno and a campaign by the 'Workshop for All Beings'-group for their protection, the government banned the hunting of wolves in all areas of Poland which had been legal in three Polish Voivodships. The campaign is still facing pressure from the hunting community, however. Now the 'Workshop for All Beings' are focusing more on protecting the habitats of wolves.

One of the larger campaigns at present is against the proposal that was submitted to have Zakopane, Poland host the 2006 Winter Olympic Games. If Zakopane is granted the Olympics, many of the events will be held in Tatra National Park, Poland's most unique and valuable national park and the only alpine ecosystem in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe. Large scale ecological and cultural destruction would be the inevitable result. The campaign is going well, with many letters and press releases cir-



culating, coverage in the press, television and radio, as well as growing international support.

Rioting Farmers in Poland

A proposed gas pipeline from the Yamal peninsula has aroused the anger of local farmers. A battle between 50 farmers and 30 police was reported as happening the beginning of May. One farmer attacked the cops with a tractor armed with some machinery, while the rest charged with scythes. The police, shooting with rubber bullets, injured the tractor driver.

A demonstration drew 10,000 farmers and, according to an email, apparently also some philosophy students who carried a banner demanding more state intervention on the empty beer bottles market.

A Russian Pyromaniac

Across the world the rich love their wilderness. After a hard week exploiting the poor and the planet, an exhausted toff needs the peace and quiet of a country retreat to relax in. Preferably a mansion a long way away from those who have to live with the fruit of their enterprise. Russian capitalists have the same tastes, calling their country retreats 'dachas'. Along comes Alexander Pushkin, a 21 year old from Yoroslavl, 100 miles north of Moscow. He's managed to burn down 25 dachas since 1997. This has made him a folk hero in Russia—a Robin Hood with a lighter.

Alexander slipped into the houses during the week when their owners were out wheeling and dealing, and, after clearing out the larder, he would burn the

OTHER ISLANDS

house down. In Russia they have less illusions about private enterprise; capitalism's reality is laid bare. So Alexander's activities have touched a nerve. He's been committed to an asylum and Yeltsin told the Russian people that 'some of the houses burnt belonged to people who weren't so wealthy'. Alexander knows what he's done. He told police, "My crime was a conscious revenge against the rich." His 'victims' include a banker, an oil company director and an ex-head of the local KGB.

Militant Miners and Mill Workers in Russia

It's common that Russian coal miners and other industrial workers just don't get paid for months. They have to resort to strikes, occupations and hunger strikes to get their earnings. Recently, militant action has been on the increase. Managers have been taken hostage and miners from north of the Arctic circle travelled to Moscow to camp outside parliament, for example, until they got paid. A common tactic is the blockading of railway lines. Last May and again in July, protesting miners severed all transport links between eastern and western Russia by blockading the Trans-Siberian railway. Hundreds of other workers including teachers and nurses joined in. Pensioners brought food and drink to the

blockades. The authorities have been threatening to clear the various blockades, which are costing business dearly, by force. But they fear the popular backlash and it's remained mere threats. A state of emergency was declared when on the far eastern island of Sakhalin, miners stopped the delivery of coal to the power station causing daily blackouts, but the riot police sent there did not dare intervene.

The miners have managed to cast off the shackles of the official and also independent trade unions that wouldn't support their strike action, and continue fighting their exploitation independently.

On July 9 1999, 80 masked, uniformed gunmen accompanied by various officials tried to storm the Vyborg Pulp and Paper Mill in Sovietsky near the Russian-Finnish border. The mill had been under workers' control for the past 18 months. The workers used the mill's alarm system to mobilise local support to fight back. The ensuing battles were fierce and two workers were seriously injured.

The mill was bankrupted in 1996, a common fate for factories in Russia today, where companies are allowed to run to the ground, then be stripped of assets and auctioned at a low price. At that point, the workers seized control and began running the production themselves. The solidarity they received from other workers' organisations and the local communities sustained them. In the meantime, the mill was sold to a company called Alcem UK Ltd.

At the Yasnagorsk machine plant, the workers also took control of their factory, shared their profits and fed the town. The occupation has now resulted in nearly all the demands of the workers being met.

For more information, contact International Solidarity with Workers in Russia, Email :antek@aol.com

Bialowieza Forest

'Workshop for All Beings' have campaigned since 1994 for the protection of the primeval Bialowieza Forest. This area covers 1470 square kilometres on the Belarussian-Polish border, is home to bison and wolves and has seen mass timber exploitation. The aim is to secure national park status for the whole area. International support, e.g. demonstrations in front of Polish embassies and local actions and activities first resulted in a moratorium on the logging of old deciduous trees in 1995, then in a government move to double the size of the National Park (from 10% of the woodland to 20%). The campaign continues. Contact: Workshop for All Beings, PO Box 40, 43-304 Bielsko-Biala 4, Poland.



OTHER ISLANDS

Victorious Prague Squat

A disused building called 'Milada' was squatted by anarchists last May and opened as a social centre. The owner had actually granted the occupants permission, but was pressured by the police in a clamp-down after last year's global street party in Prague. So an eviction did come, with lots of police and private security, but the squatters had barricaded themselves onto the roof. They stayed for five days, while security surrounded Milada to prevent people going in. The occupants were supported by friends—some camping outside the building—who fought with the security to get food onto the roof. After a large demonstration, people finally managed to gain entrance to the squat, the police backed off and it seems as if Milada is here to stay.

Poacher-Battling in the National Park of Samarskaya Luka

"On July 22 1999, four activists from the radical environmental movement Rainbow Keepers and two Dutch journalists headed off for another action to take off the locks from the tubes of the poachers' dams on the territory of the national park. It was decided to go to Orekhovskaya dam, where we had already taken off the lock on July 17, but it was put back by poachers. We also planned to try to find out the location of a distant dam, which we wanted to tear down at our future actions. When we came to Orekhovskaya dam and started taking off the lock, we were stopped by the park ranger and his son, who ran up to the dam. Four people ended up being taken away by the police for, as they said, their identification, even though all but one of them had their documents on them. During the interrogation one of those arrested, Anatoliy Dorovskikh, was beaten by the policeman. A blow to the ear broke his tympanic membrane, and he had to have surgery to recover. Now Anatoliy is at one of the city hospitals. Three activists were set free after a report was drawn up, but Anatoliy was forced to remain at the station as the cops said he struggled with them when being arrested, though there are a lot of witnesses that he didn't. The police promised to keep him at the station all night and to take him to the court the next morning. Immediately, we informed the mass media about what had happened, and after numerous calls from journalists Anatoliy was freed. The case was dropped."

This was all part of two weeks of actions based around a protest camp against the problem of poachers' dams in the territory of the national park.



Spooky-eyed Hitler worshipper, president Lukashenko of Belarus.

Belarus

This small state with the capital city Minsk is run by an autocratic government headed by President Lukashenko. He speaks openly of Hitler as his role model and repression of resistance in Belarus is harsh. Meetings, gigs and gatherings are forced underground. Nevertheless, there has been anti-nuclear campaigning. Belarussian ex-nuclear scientists have been linking up with grassroots activists, and the summer of 1998 saw a sustained campaign to raise awareness about the planned construction of new nuclear power plants and the contamination already in Belarussian soil—Minsk is only 200km away from Chernobyl.

Critical Mass in Gdansk

The 21st of March is the first day of spring, on which the tradition is upheld in Poland of burning a 'marzanna', a puppet symbolizing winter. A Critical Mass gathered and rode through one of Gdansk's main streets demanding bicycle lanes there. The 250-300 cyclists went to the sea where they burned their 'marzanna'—cellar doors, under the slogan 'Liberate your bikes from the cellars and garages!' Similar actions took place on the same day in Poznan and Warsaw.

Letter from Romania

"You asked me to tell you what is happening here. Well, I work for a consulting firm that provides services to multinationals and I can assure you they are seriously trashing this place. There is a huge roads programme underway, funded by the EU. Mind you, the Communist governments totally fucked up most of the environment already and people's living conditions leave plenty to be desired. We have Copsa

OTHER ISLANDS

Mica, designated the most polluted town in Europe. The big tobacco companies are huge here, with factories and the lot. Needless to say that the big agro-chem corporations are heavily pushing their wares resulting in contamination of the groundwater, which used to be just a localised problem. There is zero waste management in Romania, in Bucharest, most rubbish is just tipped by the roadside—nice! We have just had elections for Mayor of Bucharest and due to all candidates being incompetent and corrupted, the electorate simply didn't bother to vote, there was a 34% turnout. There's lots to be done."

South Russian Road Building

The Socio-Ecological Union of the Northwest Caucasus have initiated a campaign to protect the Caucasian biosphere Zapovednik. The road 'Lagonaky and Dagomys' planned by the Adugeya Republic authorities and the Russian Federation Road Service will go through its territory, which will irreparably damage a unique nature system. The campaign is supported by locals, and actions were taken in March 1999 as part of a European Transport Action Day held by ASEED. Other actions and demonstrations have followed.

Punks For Street Drinking

The anarcho-punk squat centre 'Rozbrat' in Poznan held a banquet in the town centre in April. This consisted of elegant tables set up with lots of alcohol as a demonstration against the ban on street drinking. To quote a source "They had a big time until the police smashed it." This resulted in the squat being raided as well. Contact: PO Box 5, 60-066 Poznan, Poland

Support Michal Patera

Last November, a club in Prague was attacked by fascists. This was the second attack in six months on Michal Patera, who defended himself and shot a nazi leader with his legally held pistol. None of the fascists were charged, but Michal was arrested later. It's worth noting that in the Czech Republic, more than a third of the police force are amongst the estimated 30,000 organised fascists in the country.

Much needed national and international support was rallied and recently, Michal has been released on bail. He is still facing up to 15 years in prison, though. Money is needed to help pay his solicitor, and a few quid can make quite a difference in Czech. Send donations to Solidarity Federation, PO Box 1681, London N8 7LE. Write to Michal c/o FSA-IWA, Box 5, 15006, Praha 56, Czech Republic.

Harassment in the Ukraine

Last year, Kiev was to host a European Bank summit for regional development, and intended to 'clean up the city' for the visiting dignitaries. Ex-KGB men in their new guise as the Ukrainian Secret Services began harassing and intimidating the anarchist group 'Tigra Negra' and the radical ecological group 'Rainbow Keepers'. These two groups announced a demonstration for March 5 1998, but were then burgled, raided, had equipment confiscated as well as being threatened with expulsion from university, work etc. Random arrests and searches followed, too.

The Rainbow Keepers have been active for years, liberating animals and occupying offices amongst other activities. See page XXX for the contact address.

Polish Anti-Road Protests



Joining NATO and the EU has forced Poland into adopting other EU countries' destructive road building practices. The construction of the A4 and other motorways, part of the Trans European Network (TEN), has faced much opposition. The A4 motorway will cut through the nature reserves of the landscape park Mount St. Anna. Demonstrations and letters of protest to the ministries remained unanswered, so protest camps were established in April 1998. On another occasion, houses were squatted along the route near Poznan. It kicked off at the eviction (see picture), with squatters battling the private security drafted in by the German contractors, and the houses being demolished while squatters were still on the roofs. For further information contact: Ziemia Przede Wszystkim (Earth First!—Wielkopolska), Skr. Pocz. 63, 60-966 Poznan 31, Poland, E-mail: poznan@fz.most.org.pl or 'Workshop For All Beings'



Mayday in Prague

Rumour was that fascists were planning to attack anarchists and other antifascists in Prague on the 1st of May this year. On the day, the fascists managed to hold a legal demonstration, gathering at the 'Strelecky Island' in the town centre, the traditional anarchists' meeting point on Mayday. Banners proclaimed 'Smash the Reds' as their motto and skin-heads shouted "Bohemia for the Czechs". The demo was to start at 11am, but was delayed by a blockade of anarchists, which was charged by the police. The fascists marched under police protection, while 21 anarchists were arrested and the rest were tear gassed and charged by horses. Molotov cocktails and bottles were thrown at the police, and two police cars were damaged. Contact: Zeme Predevsim (EF!), PO Box 237, 160 41 Praha 6, Czech Republic

WOLF Forest Protection Movement

This network of independent groups was founded in 1993 in Slovakia. They are primarily concerned with the protection of the much abused and exploited forests in the country. They have saved the forests of Oblík Hill in the Slanske Muntains with direct action and have planted thousands of native species of trees and shrubs in degraded forests.

In 1997, they began monitoring forestry practices in the Protected Landscape Area Polana, a biosphere reserve, where 234 clearcuts were planned or already in progress. Treesits and site blockades followed in June last year, preventing logging. These occupations were met with police harassment including aerial infra-red monitoring. A demonstration was held in front of the Ministry for Land Management, meetings were held with the Ministry and other blockades and actions took place, including the barricading of the forest roads to prevent journalists coming too close to the camp. Emails were sent from around the world mounting the pressure on the Ministry and press coverage was huge. The occupation ended in late July, but the activists continued monitoring the area. They discovered that logging had been moved to a different site, so the Polana Biosphere Reserve is saved at present.

Slovakian wildlife is also threatened by Slovakia's candidacy for the Winter Olympics in 2006 which would result in the construction of sports facilities and increased tourism. Actions have aimed to disrupt the planned clearcut logging in two Slovakian national parks. An action targeted the opening of the World Winter Universiade in the High Tatras National Park (see picture).

Another project which is also running well is the creation of a private forest reserve in Slovakia. WOLF are trying to raise the money to buy 21 hectares of natural beech-fir forest in the Cergov mountains before it is cut. A donation of £20 will buy you a tree! Donations are still needed. For further information contact: WOLF, 082 13 Tulcik 27, Slovakia, Email: wolf@vadium.sk

The Only Good Fascist is a Dead One

We received the following email from Poland: "New Year's Update: We went in a small group to a place where about 30 nazis and football fans have their feast. There was a heavy fight—there were chains, bricks, fists, sticks and bats in use. Our casualties: one heavy wounded in hospital, two others heavily beaten, 5 lightly wounded. Their casualties: for sure bigger, direct hits with bricks in head, some in hospital—one pulled in my house, death! Massacre, that's all."

If you've got access to email, you can subscribe to the Alternative Eastern European Mailing list by sending a message to alter-ee@lyris.most.org.pl

