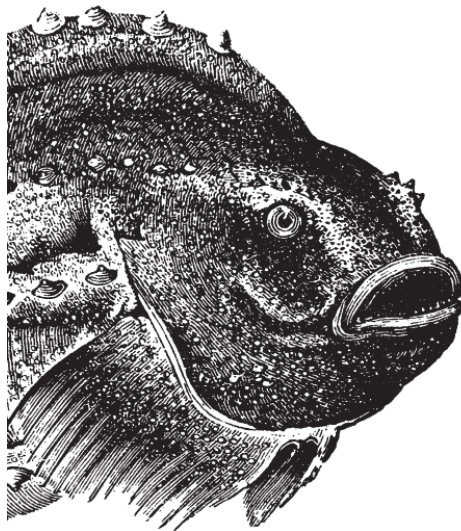


Where is the Festival?

Notes on Summits & Counter-Summits

WHERE IS THE FESTIVAL?

Notes on Summits & Counter-Summits



Elephant Editions

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Genoa is Everywhere

By now, it is a matter of fact. The world is on the verge of being transformed into a single enormous supermarket. From San Francisco to Calcutta, from Rio de Janeiro to Moscow, we will all get in line to consume the same identical products of unnatural, gaudy appearance. That which forms an authentic wealth to safeguard for many—autonomy and difference—could be swept away forever by the imposition of an economic policy and the consequent social system. When we are presented with a single possibility while every alternative is kept from us by force, we cannot speak of freedom of choice in the face of an offer, but only of coerced obedience. The continuing production of our days on earth (with all their pleasures, tastes and hues), when a single model of life to which we are to conform is imposed on it, is the totalitarian abyss that many see opening before them.

* * *

Briefly, *neoliberalism* is the name given to the particular economic policy that the Masters of the earth are applying. *Globalization* is the name given to the process of homogenizing unification that it entails. Over the past several months, hundreds of thousands of people have taken to the streets against neoliberalism and globalization. On the occasion of meetings between the political and economic leaders of the most powerful states (in Seattle, Davos, Washington D.C., Melbourne, Prague, Gothenburg,...), protest demonstrations have been organized that have claimed the attention of the entire mass media. The next occasion is to be in Genoa at the end of July, corresponding to the G8 summit. But if, two years ago, this protest movement could close its eyes to certain contradictions within it so as to avoid putting a brake on the initial momentum, it seems to us that reflection on its significance is becoming increasingly urgent and admits no delay.

Neoliberalism supports a kind of *capitalism without frontiers*. The most powerful multinationals (mostly US capital) thus succeed in imposing their interests even when these go against the “national good” of the little states. Intolerable, right? But what are the opponents of neoliberalism fighting against? Logically, the most extreme would have to answer “against capitalism”, while the less extreme would have to say, “against capitalism *without frontiers*”. The former, as enemies of a world based on profit — no matter who benefits from it or within what border the exploitation occurs — the latter as enemies of a world based on the profit (of the ruling class) of the richest countries at the expense of the profit (of the ruling class) of the power countries. But whoever merely protests against the limitless global expansion of capitalism, against its lack of respect for borders, in substance shows themselves to be in favour of a form of local capitalism, even if ideal controlled from the bottom. Therefore, within the movement *against neoliberalism and globalization* two spirits live together, which for linguistic convenience we have differentiated as the “more extreme” — who want the elimination of capitalism and declare themselves against all governments and their representatives from whom they have nothing to demand — and the “less extreme” — who support or at least end up accepting the necessity of capitalism with a human face, limited and regulated by a democratic government, and whose intention is to explain their reasons to the current rulers. Not a small difference. But then, how and why did they come to find a point of agreement? For convenience, above all. Alliances draw together to gain strength. But it would be foolish to believe that in an alliance the sides in play are all situated on the same level. There is always a stronger side and a weaker side. And naturally, it is the stronger side that dictates the conditions of an alliance, decrees its slogans, determines its movements, derives the greatest advantage from it and — if it is sufficiently able — causes the potential disadvantages to fall on the weaker side. The only thing left to the weaker side, if it wants to do anything, is to conform itself. So then, the alliance of the two spirits present in the movement is determined by the choice of a common enemy: neoliberalism. In the face of the great power of the opposing side, it is said, differences must be set aside for now: “First we stop globalization, then we will see what to do.” The condition posed would even be understandable if it were mutually respected. But how do things really stand? Do both the components of this Sacred Alliance stand to benefit from it equally? Are the existing differences expressed in the same manner and do they hold the same possibilities?

What then is the declared enemy of the anti-globalization movement, capitalism as such or neoliberalism? And when we are present there at the summits of the superpowers convinced that we are “putting pressure” on the Masters of the Earth to which side’s needs is it responding? At the various anti-globalization demonstrations, violent clashes

with the forces of order have occurred. This is what has forced the mass media to pay more attention to the disputes. Here is the usefulness of the alliance — some of the more extreme will say. In the final analysis, if it hadn't been for the thousands of other, less extreme, demonstrators whose mere presence served to hinder the manoeuvres of the police, these clashes wouldn't had such a favourable outcome for the demonstrators. But the less extreme are also satisfied that there have been clashes. In the final analysis, if the "extremist menace" that needed to be averted had not been there on display, the Masters of the Earth would have had no reason to listen to them. As for those demonstrators who use clashes with the police in order to gain recognition from the earth's Masters as go-betweens, it is clear that though they speak out of both sides of their mouth ("we are not violent, but we clash with the police", "we give advice to government officials and sit on municipal councils but we are antagonists"), they belong by right and by deed to the less extreme objectors to neoliberalism since their objectives are the same and they only distinguish themselves from the latter through the means they use to pursue these objectives. Now battling the police is not the primary objective of the more extreme, while being heard by the earth's Masters is the primary objective of the less extreme. Paradoxically, who has the most reason to exult in the disorders that have happened up to now? In other words, to whom is this strange anti-neoliberalist coalition benefiting the most, the more extreme like the Black Bloc or the less extreme like the *Monde Diplomatique*?

Let's digress for a moment. It is not at all strange that the mass media has rebaptised the movement with the name "the people of Seattle". It is as difficult to find a gram of intelligence in the head of a journalist as to find water in the desert. But we don't understand why this idiotic description is repeated by a large part of the movement itself. It is useless, the American dream even enchants its would-be opponents, those who on the one hand announce their refusal to live "like Americans" and on the other hand accept protesting "like Americans". So if the friends of neoliberalism look to Washington, D.C., its enemies look to Seattle. It matters little, after all it's only a matter of miles, as long as all eyes are turned to the USA. In spite of the much praised Autonomy.

Autonomy would like every one to be more or less free to choose what, when, how, where and with whom to act. The "people of Seattle", on the other hand, like all People, is afflicted with a political defect. Within it are aspiring mayors, aldermen, councillors, even up to parliamentary whip. Of course, we are referring to those who intend to be elected as legitimate representatives of the "people of Seattle" in order to be invited by the earth's Masters to sit with them at the next negotiating table, after having sat at the police chief's table. But this is all more than understandable. Less understandable is that the others adapt themselves to this ignoble game and allow themselves to be treated as citizens who are requested not to disturb the public peace. For months we have witnessed a painful spectacle. The Masters of the earth meet in the most varied corners of the world to formalize decisions made elsewhere. Their opponents follow them like puppies in search of attention: they stand on two paws, bark, growl, at times even nip at the edge of the pants of those who rule them.

Now it is quite clear. Though there is nothing to say to the true citizens of "the people of Seattle, we would like to address some observations to the others — to those without fatherland, to the deserter from all citizenship. At Gothenburg, the police fired, wounding a demonstrator who was throwing a rock. The Italian government has already made it known that it is interested in listening to the less violent opponents, provided that the more stubborn are left out of the dialogue. This can only mean one thing: having achieved their first goal — the much sought after institutional recognition — the less extreme opponents will quickly cease to be interested in continuing to march along side the more extreme who were useful up to now, having at first contributed to keeping the tension that created such excellent publicity high, but who will only be an encumbrance to them from now on. As soon as they are admitted into the presence of the earth's Masters, what use will it be to them to continue using certain means? And at that point, what will happen? Those who have participated in this movement stirred by a hatred for capitalism have fought against its guard dogs, smashing shop windows and destroying machines, determined to destroy this world from top to bottom. But who chose the place and time from which to launch this attack? The earth's Masters chose it. They chose the battlefield; they chose the method of conflict. Up to now, most of the opposition has behaved as the police expected. Now this game is coming to an end. The police are quick and even given permission to shoot in the back. As petty politicians, the leaders in overalls, whether white or red, have every interest in centralizing the movement of opposition to neoliberalism. As subversives, we have interest in expanding rather than "globalizing" the movement of struggle against capitalism. The police are waiting for us in Genoa at the end of July in order to beat us, photograph us, film us, arrest us and maybe shoot us. And instead we could be anywhere at any time. The shop-shutters of McDonald's and the banks of Genoa will be armoured during the days of the summit. The multinationals, the supermarkets and the banks of the rest of the world will be at our disposal at any time. And this would only be the beginning since as soon as we leave off following the due dates that others set for us, we will finally be able to choose when, where, how and who to strike.

If we decide for ourselves, we will be unpredictable. We will lose allies, but we will find comrades along the way.

— *a few nobodies neither want to represent or be represented by anyone*

Vultures

In the end, we still fall, a bit stupidly every time.

And yet we know them well, these annoying vultures. By now, we should no longer nurture even the least bit of hope in finding courage, dignity, coherence, the capacity to put themselves on the line in their words or actions. In short, they are not comrades; our dreams are much too distant from their aims. But even less are they worthy adversaries, people who have clearly chosen which side to take, without dreary games with which to try to win over anyone who is still capable of feeling emotion, of getting angry, of looking without so many ideological filters at the horrendous and omnivorous reality that surrounds us all. When such an individual finds the force of the desire to do something in her/himself, in the search for comrades, perhaps s/he runs into them, into the Tute Bianche, into the social centres of the Northeast [of Italy — translator], into the Ya Basta association, into Leoncavallo, into any other of the myriads of protean monograms with which these people try to disguise themselves and to ensnare agreement.

But not us, we, who no matter what, still love to describe ourselves as anarchists — and tremble when journalists take the liberty of making distinctions in this as well, debating over who really is who is not one — we don't consider ourselves so naïve, and we look with detachment at the “people of Seattle”, which gets so much exposure that it seems to us to be the mechanism of a struggle and a method (that still has interested and even roused enthusiasm in us) that offers the flank so widely to instrumental manipulation, to repressive attack, but especially to media banalisation and the most dreary spectacularisation, and therefore to its substantial surrender to the inoffensive game of parties. We have chosen not to be part of that “people”, the journalistic christening of which merely nauseates us; we refuse to make ourselves fit into the mould of any group or sub-group, even running the risk — and not just because of this choice, for goodness sake — of enclosing ourselves in a fortress, the ideologically pure connotations of which might be capable of preserving us not only from sullyng our hands and consciences too much, but also from our own frustrations. We declared ourselves to be outside under the pretext of being inside of something else, much more meaningful and important, something of our own. Unfortunately, this is not always so. However, we declared ourselves outside of that context on the assumption, which we continue to hold well grounded, that it was much too narrow there. This assumption is strengthened by some experiences that have involved us directly, that disappointed us.

And yet here we are, surprised once again. For two very different reasons, which have aroused very different reactions in us, though both still surprise us.

First of all, the comrades in Genoa, their vitality, their capacities, even their numbers. To be clear, and in consideration of the fact that we also know of these events primarily through the journalistic filter, we are referring to the so-called black bloc. We are amazed, at bottom, that comrades could find such ample space for action in a context that we knew was dominated by the double control exercised on the territory, by the police on the one hand and by the forces of organized opposition on the other, both our enemies (and in the case of the “anti-globalizers”, we refer to those “responsible”, to the promoters, the various “general headquarters”, the functions of order, certainly not to the individual demonstrators, among whom we believe there were many, dressed in their preferred colour whatever that may have been, who did not necessarily consider themselves to be represented by those who were the self-proclaimed leaders of the good spirit of the protest and therefore in the right — having to cleanse the procession of any unwelcome presence.)

But fortunately, anarchists are often bad prophets.

We are amazed and immediately loved these comrades, even if perplexity still persists within us, the distance not so much from the method, but rather from the various interests, the perspectives that diverge, but don't keep us from considering them our comrades. The thing that no one says is that in Genoa class conflict manifested itself, that it expressed itself in this form as well: the attack of the exploited against the structures of capital and against the cops who defend it. All the embodiments of exploitation disgust us in earnest, not symbolically, not democratically. The social war is not our invention.

The second reason for our surprise: the reactions of the tute bianche. It is useless to widen the discussion, that the Genoa Social Forum in its totality expressing itself as it did is absolutely a consequence of its very nature and reason for being. In reality — and this is why we are surprised at our surprise — even that which these whitewashers of our house, or more, have said and done is perfectly fitting with what they are. And we have learned to recognize this quite

well over the years, from times when they didn't use certain disguises, but others that fooled even us, when, due to our naivety and superficiality, we managed to conceive of them as distant comrades in struggle. We were diverted by a language that we heard, undoubtedly — I repeat — due to our stupidity, as less offensive than what, to our surprise, it would become. Its calls for autonomy and class struggle perhaps appeared ironic to us, even though we had not understood that the direction of that irony was diametrically opposed to what we would have hoped. Now the jokes have become clearer, their political capacities have been refined (still at a level of extreme cultural impoverishment, but we should not forget that the entire political scenario has suffered a fierce intellectual abasement, along with all society that plods along in its magnificent informational ignorance), their names have appeared unequivocally flanking those of the class enemies. And yet, even in all this, an oppositional component plays a role, hauled out as an artifice at the most opportune moments, or instead held back, as a provocation by a neo-vanguard outside prime time, or a residue of adrenaline rising again as when — youth, at bottom, when all of us feel a bit like anarchists... — they played at conflicts with the police, a practice that still continues to rouse a certain sympathy. Of course, we recall that in those days they didn't use harnesses and the turtle formations (but did they really do this or was it just a folkloric invention of journalists? We ask it here again) and amenities of this kind, but the agreements with the political police were already a recurring and noted practice in the streets.

Now, why are we surprised when their spokespeople disassociate themselves from the violence of the black bloc at first, in order to later recant and express rage for the repression that shot someone to death?

Why not believe that they would take advantage of this situation? A comrade is dead, killed by a carabinieri. A comrade put his life at risk, while the vultures wretchedly begged the repression not to strike their procession of honest and correct disobedients, but that it be applied elsewhere, to those who don't respect the rules. As soon as this happened, hypocritical and convenient indignation, expressing the shortest memory in the world, explodes flaming from the eyes of the corpulent leader of the white-washers when he gets wind of the occasion that a martyr, who was still an enemy until the moment in which the murderous bullet struck him (wouldn't it have been sufficient to arrest and beat him democratically in the barracks?), was offered to them.

But the only thing truly surprising remains our surprise in the face of all this. Is it necessary to remind ourselves of the other occasions in which we have had means for knowing them in their deepest essence? When they have beaten us, "mistaking" us for fascists; when they have led us to believe that they possessed the determination to go beyond the threshold that makes them welcome to vice-mayors — senators — councillors — civil society? When they have willingly been responsible for police attacks against their own comrades (it is acknowledged that they call each other this) in order to gain a hearing from the minister of the interior? When they have announced or supported extremely reactionary demonstrations calling for severity on the part of state justice (against the very wicked fascists, racists, bullies, leaguists, criminals of the national unity, of course — rabble to put it kindly)? When they are candidates in elections? When they are allied to the allies of Haider? What more is necessary to open our eyes?

Notes on Summits & Counter-Summits

The Illusion of a Centre

Capitalism is a social relationship and not a citadel of power. It is starting from this banality that one can deal with the question of summits and counter-summits. To represent the domination of capital and the State as a kind of general headquarters (such as the G8, the WTO or some other organization) is useful to those who would like to substitute that centre of power with another centre: the political structures of the so-called movement, or better, their spokespeople. In short, it is useful to those who propose merely a change in management personnel. Not only is this tendency reformist in its essence and purpose, it is also collaborationist and authoritarian in its method, as it leads to the centralization of opposition. That's why these leftist opponents, who want so much to be heard by the "masters of the world", invest money and political hype on the summits, the dates of which they are often set with them. During these summits decisions that were made elsewhere are merely formalized, but this certainly does not disturb the various representatives of the social forums; after all, their opposition is also completely formal, consisting mainly of paid seminars where it is shown that neoliberalism is wrong and humanity is right, or, for the more lively, in some combative performance that is agreed upon with the police. Besides, how could an opposition financed by the institutions, represented by council and parliamentary members and protected by the grave-diggers of the workers' movement (we're referring to the security services entrusted to the CGIL¹ in collaboration with the cops) be real? The paradox is that people are called into the streets in the name of another possible world, but with the intention that... absolutely nothing happens. Each time that an oceanic crowd demonstrates peacefully, visibly supervised, they say that a great victory for the movement has been achieved. And yet these social pacifiers know quite well that their capacity to pose as negotiators with the institutions doesn't depend on the number of people that they lead into the streets (millions of demonstrators opposing the latest military aggression against Iraq have not worried the governments involved in the war), but rather on the power of mediation and repression they manage to put into practice — or to justify — against all social rebellion. In fact, if summits and counter-summits are so frequently talked about, if the representatives of the social forums have come together at the negotiation table and been flattered by the mass media, it is only because first in Seattle and then on other occasions, something happened: thousands of comrades and poor youth attacked the structures of capital and the state, upset police city planning schemes by opening up spaces for communication and clashed with the uniformed servants. Without this subversive threat — which is characteristic of our time together with the many insurrectional explosions that have shaken up the last few years — the bosses would have nothing to do with the various Casarini and Agnolettos.² Hasn't something of this sort happened with the unions? In more recent times they have been put in storage after they have been flattered by capital in times of great social conflict with the aim of dividing, demoralizing and denouncing revolting proletarians. So they are now forced to raise a loud voice against the very attacks of the bosses that they themselves once justified and ratified.

The "disobbedienti"³ spokespeople must then distinguish themselves from the bad ones, the extremists, the violent ones (i.e., those who practice direct action) and give political visibility to the others. On the one hand, therefore, the slogans of the social forums are perfectly suitable for the enlightened bourgeoisie: taxation of finance capital, democratic and transparent regulation over global trade, more state and less market, critical consumption, ethical banks, pacifism, etc. On the other hand, what they sell with their "democratic mobilizations" is a valuable commodity: the illusion of doing something against the injustices of the world. In this sense, counter-summits are a juicy spectacle. The few bad ones are repressed and the fair demands of the good ones are listened to: end of the story?

¹ The Italian General Confederation of Labour, a major trade union organization.

² Casarini and Agnoletto are spokespeople of groups behind the social forums.

³ The "Disobbediente" are the latest incarnation of the former White Overalls (Tute Bianche), a "radical" organization associated with the Rifondazione Comunista party in Italy that represents the practice of the newer theories of Antonio Negri. This involves working with the institutions to the extent not only of associating with a parliamentary party, but also of negotiating with police and municipal governments to organize demonstrations in such a way as to create a good media spectacle without causing real disruptions of the functioning of social institutions. This includes meeting with police to plan staged "direct actions" and "confrontations".

Power knows that it isn't so simple. The disgusting realistic proposals of the domesticated opposition have nothing to say to the millions of poor people parked in the reservations of the market paradise and repressed by the police. This was proved in Genoa: only during the clashes and the looting of supermarkets the young local proletarians united with the insurgents. In the meantime the White Overalls with their gaudy spectacles appeared to them as Martians or buffoons, those excluded from any political racket understood the language of revolt immediately.

A Gust of Unpredictability

There is no doubt that in Seattle and Genoa, and again more recently in Thessaloniki, a critique without mediation against domination and its false enemies was developed. Despite the fact that the dates were set by the bosses, the presence of the reformists in the streets was overcome. We say this, even though we were among those comrades who maintained that Genoa is everywhere because if domination and dispossession are in every part of society and in daily life, the attack doesn't need dates set by the enemy. We found interesting the practice of those who, deserting the stage of the "red zone" that was to be violated and the trap of full frontal clashes with the police, moved with agility, striking and disappearing (in this sense, the attack on the Marassi prison in Genoa is remarkable). This powerful gust of unpredictability, this subversive "federalism" of actions and groups, marked an important rupture with the logic of those who centralize the enemy in order to centralize the struggle (and render it symbolic). But we still think that to be in the place where the enemy does not expect you, far from the appointments, is the best way. Even in their most interesting aspects, the counter-summits limit this perspective. Moreover, even considering the importance of the revolts in Seattle and Genoa, it seems to us that chasing after such dates is becoming a cliché, and more, a devourer of energy: as soon as one counter-summit ends, preparation for another begins. The dates are fixed more and more by the mass media, to the point that, if many revolutionaries have demonstrated, for example, against the war in Iraq, almost no one has managed to express any practical solidarity with the insurgents of Argentina or Algeria. The clashes involving just the "militants" are often considered more important than authentic social and class uprisings.

We know very well why many comrades go to counter-summits: wide-spread direct action and the generalised clash with the cops is only possible in mass situations. As the possibility of attacking is quite low elsewhere, only in crowded situations can a certain sort of street guerrilla warfare be tested. Other kinds of actions can be realized at any moment and they are not in any way incompatible with a certain practice in the streets during counter-summits. And yet we think that in the long run such a practice limits the autonomy of analysis and action (in the face of many social conflicts we have just stood there looking on) and tends to become in spite of itself, a sort of extremist model within the "disobedient" caravan. And again, why on earth does power publicize so many summits in which decisions that have already been made are ratified? All this seems to us to be a great occasion for the police to study and experiment with anti-riot techniques. It's like homeopathic treatment: tiny doses of the virus of subversion in order to reinforce its immune system in view of much broader social plagues. It must know how the bad ones move and organize themselves, and with which good ones it is possible to dialogue in such a way that nothing really changes.

An Experiment in the Open Air

But above all, summits constitute a form of experimentation to see what level of oppression people are willing to put up with. By bringing a bit of Palestine, with its checkpoints, its permanent red zones and its armoured patrol cars around every corner, into the "rich West", power is saying to its subjects that, until proven otherwise, they are criminals; that nothing is secure enough for the police and technological apparatus; that city planning is the continuation of the social war with different weapons. More than sixty years ago, Walter Benjamin wrote in his Theses on the Concept of History that "the state of exception in which we live has become the rule". If this is true, we have to understand what links a concentration camp for immigrants without documents to the stadiums where war refugees are loaded, certain poor and working-class neighbourhoods patrolled by the police, or to the various Guantanamos scattered throughout the world, or to some operations of evacuation that are clearly disproportionate to the declared aim (for example, entire neighbourhoods evacuated in order to defuse some implement from the first World War) or to the rationing of electrical energy carried out without warning — in the style of the 1920's — by the ENEL.⁴ Up to now it is a question of successful experiments that confirm what a comrade wrote in the 1970's: the people of capital are a stoic people.

⁴ The national electricity board in Italy

They upset traffic circulation, they put surveillance cameras everywhere, they install noxious antennas over the roofs of our houses, they criminalise more and more behaviour: no one says a word.

Summits are the concentrated representation of all this, the legal suspension of every right. “What’s going on?” the average citizen asks, forced to take a detour in order to go shopping. “Nothing, it’s just the anti-globalization people,” the woman at the supermarket answers. Meanwhile, they are even privatising drinking water, while the police are everywhere.

But precisely because it is a concentrated representation of a daily situation, the practical critique must be widespread and constant, for example through the destruction of video cameras and other systems of electronic surveillance. It is important to map out the locations of the instruments of control, spreading awareness of them and theoretically supporting the necessity of attacking them.

The New Ugly Face of Domination

Power is increasingly brazen. On the one hand, the masters know that the current social conditions, increasingly marked by precariousness and dependence on commodities, can be imposed only through terror: such terror is manifested through war outside and in fear of the future inside (for example, fear of remaining without work) or through the repression of more and more social groups. On the other hand, decades of social pacification — in which every despicable act has been passed simply because nothing has been done to prevent the passing of the preceding ones, in an incredible acceleration of degradation — have given power an arrogance without precedence. We have seen this, for example, in Genoa, in the beatings, the torture, the murder of Carlo Giuliani. And it continues. The new police chief of Trento is Colucci, police chief in Genoa during the G8 summit, a certified pig. He will be managing the summit of foreign ministers of the European Union that will be held at Riva del Garda next September 4 through 6. Do you understand the message? A Trento committee “for truth and justice” has found nothing better to do than to invite him to a public confrontation.

Acid Rain and Fig Leaves

The foreign ministers who will be meeting in Riva on September 4 through 6 must achieve a common platform to present at the WTO summit in Cancun, Mexico on September 9 through 13. The topic is the General Agreement on the Trade of Services (GATS) that anticipates precisely the liberalisation of the principle “public services” on a global level. Among the many decisions in process, the most scandalous is surely that of the privatisation of water, which may become a reality for the 144 countries who belong to the World Trade Organization. It is a process that has been going on for some time, as for decades seven multinationals have contended over concessions for the bottling of mineral water, and in the last few years over concessions for managing the water system as well. The “Trento board for a social Europe” is also interested in the privatization of water, and on its scarcity due to pollution, as a mark of the most unbridled neoliberalism. Apart from the usual complaints about the non-democratic aspects of these agreements (as if those made by individual governments were on the contrary subjected to who knows what public debates...; and, weren’t the state institutions supposed to save us from the savage market?), what is equally scandalous as concerns the reformists is the gap between the size of the disasters that they denounce and the solutions that they propose.

On the one hand, they indicate the industrialisation of agriculture, the concentration of populations in increasingly gigantic cities, the pollution produced by factories, the waste of drinkable water for industrial machinery and for cultivation intended for the intensive breeding of animals as the causes of these disasters. In short, they are the very essence of the techno-industrial system. On the other hand, they propose... new laws, transparent rules, even the participation of citizens through short term treasury bonds in the S.P.A.⁵ that privatise water. Thanks to the marvels of progress, there are whole countries in which a collapse of the banking system would leave the countryside without water, and these citizens, so proud of being so, want different laws. It is like suggesting covering one’s head with an organic fig leaf against a downpour of acid rain.. The proposals of the various social forums, reasonable in terms of political and economic rationality, are simply crazy from a concrete and social point of view. It is not a question of denouncing a world in ruins, but rather of taking space in which to resist and time in order to attack. It is not just a question of how radical one is in the streets. The point is what sort of life one desires, how much one has submitted

⁵ Action associations similar to PACs in the US.

her or himself materially and spiritually to an increasingly inhuman and artificial social order or, on the other hand, what relationships one is ready to fight for.

There is no need to go to Riva to oppose the water racket. Those who are directly responsible for this ultimate commodification (for example the big companies that bottle mineral water) are just a few steps away from us at all times. If the civilized can't even defend the water they drink — or at least understand that others do so in a clear and direct way — we can all just go to bed. In this case too, it is a long chain of dependence and oppression that is now presenting us an exorbitant bill. Only through autonomy in the face of industrial mass society and open revolt against the State that defends it will anything different come to exist.

The same is valid, for example for the question of patents, including those on the genetic code. It is simply idiotic to demand protective laws in the face of the entry of capital into the human body. Techno-scientific delirium, which consists of wanting to transform nature and human beings into a sort of variable of the computer, passed the point of no return some time ago. Any illusion of reforming a science that is entirely in the service of power is simply a dismal hoax. The actions that have happened in most countries against transgenic cultivation or against private and state laboratories that experiment on the human genome have shown quite well that the critique of mercantile reason has no need of spectacular dates.

More generally, what is euphemistically described as globalisation would be unthinkable without the material basis supplied by the technological apparatus. Just consider the things that are presented as principle factors in development and economic and military conflict: energy and information. What seems like an unassailable Moloch is in reality a gigantic web formed by cables, antenna, substations, trellises and transformers that can easily be attacked.

Riva Is Everywhere

The CGIL will organize the security service during the counter-summit in Riva. The outgoing police chief of Trento has rightly pointed out that the more demonstrators turn themselves into agents of police, the less need there will be of the latter.

After long negotiations between the social forum and the police force (managed obviously by national leaders), it seems that the Council will be making a villa outside Riva available to the Disobbediente and their associates, granting them the right to demonstrate (always out of town, in deserted streets) through Sunday. Riva will be closed, which means that the cops will simply block three access roads. The government commissioners' office has passed an order which prohibits and suspends exhibitions and demonstrations (including sports and cultural exhibitions) in more than twenty councils in the Trentino region. The police want empty streets, the people must understand that Big Brother is not just a television program. And we?

Let's take up a thread from far away again. Günther Anders wrote in the 1950's, "Hiroshima is everywhere", and in the 1980's, "Chernobyl is everywhere". Some rebels against the technologised world in the 1990's said, "Mururoa is everywhere" (when the French government subjected that island in the Pacific to murderous nuclear tests). Two years ago, some comrades claimed, "Genoa is everywhere". As revolt explodes without limits and against every spectacle, as the Apparatus expects an enemy that is not there and reveals its totalitarian character still more, we say Riva is everywhere. We will not be in the streets against the summit of the European Union, because in the struggles of our time and those in the future, we wanted, and still want, to strike other paths. One does not escape the circle by following the logic that "This time it is close to my home", since summits will always occur close to someone's home. And because the real conflict is elsewhere. There are other ways to oppose the arming of the cities and valleys in which we live, ways that are within everyone's reach. We want to free ourselves from the dictatorship of the number and from its worshipers. We know this is a perspective that may only give few results in the immediate sense, but it is by deciding for ourselves how, where and when to strike and tenaciously defending our reasons for it that we will cause individual and social insubordination to advance.

Some Roveretan anarchists

So That July Turns out to be a Threat

On the trial of the rebels of Genoa

On March 2, 2004, the trial against twenty-five demonstrators accused of “devastation and looting” for the rebellion against the G8 in July 2001 opened in Genoa. And it is just the beginning; a testing ground aimed at perhaps even wider judiciary operations. It is an exemplary trial in every sense: for the type of charge (which has very few precedents in Italian history and which anticipates several years in prison), for the way in which power has prepared the terrain for the plays and vendettas of the court, for how the whole business illustrates the obstacles that every collective movement of individual liberation has to face in the courthouses and in the streets.

Anticipated by twenty arrests ordered by the attorney’s office of Cosenza in November 2002, and by twenty-three more arranged a little later by the attorney’s office in Genoa, this trial wants to send everyone a clear message: the uprising of Genoa will have its scapegoats. It is quite obvious that what is at stake goes beyond the July revolt itself to project its dire shadow over the future. As an example, one can take the initiative, promoted by the attorney of Genoa, to acquire a space on the Ligurian newspaper *Il Secolo XIX* to publish the photographs — taken by a surveillance camera placed on the street — of two demonstrators with the aim of identifying them. On that occasion, the crime of “psychic participation” made its public appearance again: in substance the state affirms that it is not necessary to directly participate in acts of revolt in order to incur the favours of repression, rather it is enough to be present where they happened without preventing others from carrying them out; in short, without turning into police agents. We add that those arrested in Cosenza were explicitly made an indecent offer with some success, which in consequence would become a constant: the “renunciation of violence” in exchange for release from prison — and we will have an even more precise picture. What is on trial now is not this or that action, this or that act of sabotage, but rather the attitude toward the institutions and, more generally, the refusal itself of the social order and life as subjects that it imposes. Collaborators or enemies: this is the ultimatum that the state launches at everyone.

This is also the sense in which the continuous propaganda that the various Ministries of Fear are orchestrating around the concept of “terrorism” can be understood. Especially since the attack on the Twin Towers, the demonstrator who breaks windows is equated with the revolutionary who shoots down a man of state, and the latter is equated with the kamikaze who blows up a crowded bus. Thanks to this self-interested confusion power has tried to hide the meaning of the days in Genoa: on one side, a social uprising that involved thousands of individuals willing to bring down the order of money and truncheons; on the other side, the state that threw off its mask, thus revealing its true assassin’s face. For anyone who did not want to draw any lessons from that July, what more could we add that power has not amply shown by beating and killing in the streets and by humiliating and torturing in the enclosure of its barracks? What could we add about the inanity of anyone who asks the courts for Truth and Justice, as if a single truth and justice could exist on both sides of the barricades? Haven’t the government, the rulers and the judges been explicit in absolving and promoting the murderers and torturers in uniforms, like always?

In the same way that the machinery of control cuts up neighbourhoods and cities with its barriers and check-points, its surveillance cameras and squadrons, the inquisitors cut up events with their inquiries and legal codes. Public ministers Canepa and Canciani — two neospecialists in the hunt for rebels — are merely refining the work started with the militarisation of Genoa and continued through the attacks, the murderous bullet of Alimonda plaza, the raid against Diaz, the tortures in Bolzaneto and other barracks, the arrests and expulsions in the following days and months. In relation to the investigations, public minister Silvio Franz, well known for covering up state scandals, has carried out a leading role thanks to the aid of a collection of experts notoriously linked to the sphere of the carabinieri and of neo-fascists.

It is up to those who have not forgotten that contagious rebellion which conquered the streets; to those who don’t want to let the blood shed by the hand of the state’s cops dry up in their mind, to furnish all the weapons needed for solidarity toward the demonstrators on trial. This is the meaning of the modest notes that follow. In defiance of numberless counter-investigations that have ended up complicating what was so very evident through the totalitarianism of the fragment; in defiance of the chattering with which the specialists have covered up this uprising and the slander

with which the political pack of hounds has besmirched it, we want to retrace a threatening history in order to put it back in play.

Secret Appointments

A mysterious appointment exists between the generations that have been and our own.

Walter Benjamin

A few days before the G8, some Genoans went to a carpenter in the historical centre of the Ligurian capital with the request that he prepare pieces of wood to be assembled as poles. The old craftsman immediately grasped the intentions of these unusual clients and told them what they, those of his generation, used in conflicts with the police. The memory goes back to the revolt of July 1960, to the young people in striped t-shirts, in the working class neighbourhoods of Genoa. The old man explained that, in order to face the charges of the riot cops, the insurgents made use of the stockfish left to dry outside of the numerous fish shops of the alleys. The vendors passed them to the rebels, but not before having immersed them in the water tank to make them sturdy and effective. The paths of the historical centre are no longer the same, so our friends left there with their collapsible poles. But a few days later, these pieces of wood will be a sort of baton between two generations of uncontrollables and rowdies.

Friday, July 20, 2001, after hundreds on rebels have liberated some neighbourhoods from the capitalist normality that is the coldest of icy monsters, a supermarket is transformed into a collective, free banquet. For a few hours, rebels and residents of the area freely help themselves, eating and joking and discussing. Even a journalist, paid to serve with his telescopic lens as others serve with their cudgels, is photographed by one of his colleagues as he comes out with two packages of mozzarella.

In order for this mozzarella to meet those stockfish in a “tiger’s pounce into the past”, a social uprising was needed that could replace historical time with the time of revolt. An uprising that has upset both the plans of the Earth’s Rulers and their guard dogs and those of the mediated and media opposition.

The Thread of a History

What has happened now will be quickly forgotten. In the air, only an empty, horrible memory. Who was protected? The lazy, the miserable, the usurers. Those who were young had to fall... but the unworthy sit unscathed in the warmth of their living rooms.

Ernst Bloch

The G8 summit in Genoa was the occasion for a huge experiment in control and militarization without precedent in Italy: streets closed and armoured with gratings over fifteen feet tall, the complete restructuring of traffic circulation, manhole covers preventatively welded... and more comical provisions were not lacking (underpants and socks removed from the balconies!). Many exasperated citizens left the city, which assumed the grim appearance of an enormous concentration camp. Twenty thousand men from all the armed corps of the state came together in the Ligurian capital in order to patrol it. Roadblocks were set up, body bags in which to put the possible dead ordered, selected snipers positioned on the roofs and frogmen stationed in the water. An authentic torture chamber was prepared for prisoners at Bolzaneto, the management of which was assigned to the gentlemen of the special prison anti-riot squad (the GOM). While the task of maintaining public order was entrusted mainly to the carabinieri¹, which formed the CCIR (carabinieri contingent for decisive intervention) for the occasion, constituted of soldiers commanded by officers of the elite Tuscania corps, active earlier in Somalia, Bosnia and Albania.

For its part, the state did not prepare to control a protest, but to deal with a war. It’s not a matter of controlling demonstrators, but rather of clearing the board of enemies. In Genoa for the first time, the state experimented in such a systematic, explicit and widespread manner with the military logic that presides over international missions against its own people. In a demonstration of how the line of demarcation between external and internal enemies is disappearing in a world unified by the religion of money. In a demonstration of how power must test out in small scenarios what might be general in the future. After all, if war is considered a police operation, a police operation could well be considered a war.

¹ Italian military police force that acts as national against civilians.

The outcome showed one of the constants of military and technological expansion: everything that is prepared merely waits to be used.

The anticipated battlefield was the one that stretched around the “red zone”. Here, in front of the gates and fences protecting the summit centre, is where assaults of the demonstrators were expected. This is where the petty leaders of the mediated, media protest gathered their troops. This is also where the guard dogs of power were concentrated in order to repel the pressure of the discontented subjects who came to beg for their illusory rights. Everything seemed ready. A multitude of respectful citizens who cry out their reasons, the forces of order hired to repel them, the skirmish agreed to in negotiation in order to evoke and exorcise the spectre of conflict, the journalists who hurried there from around the world, the final applause since, in the end, everything had to develop peacefully, summit and counter-summit. None of this came about. From their side, the institutions had no real intention of avoiding conflict, due to their clear desire to teach an unforgettable lesson to the ungrateful consumers of Western well being. From the side of the movement, or at least one part of it, there were those who preferred to be protagonists of an explicit rebellion against the so-called Masters of the Earth rather than become a spectator or play a walk-on part in an agitated TV series to the profit of the mass media. Thus, the rebels were not seen around the “red zone”. They preferred to desert the virtual conflict agreed to by the institutions in order to go and find the real conflict, the one without mediation. Despite showing up in the city and on the date set by the institutional agenda, several hundred enemies of this world, quite different from one another, without leaders or followers, without head or tail, would go where they weren’t expected. Instead of launching themselves headlong against a supposed heart of domination, they preferred to go elsewhere, knowing well that domination has no heart since it is found everywhere. The physical spaces where the cult of money is practiced, where the stink of the commodity lingers in the air, where the lies of commerce are heard — and not the mere “symbols” of capitalism, as the leftist vulgate of the adorers of the existent claimed — would come to know the practical critique of action: banks would be attacked, supermarkets looted, dealerships set on fire.

A city can be beloved, its houses and streets can be recognized in our deepest and dearest memories, but only in the hour of revolt is the city truly experienced as our city: [...] ours, because it is a circumscribed space in which historical time is suspended and every act has value in itself, in its absolutely immediate consequences. The city is taken over in the escaping and advancing with the back and forth of the charges, much more than playing in its streets as children or passing there later with a girlfriend. In the hour of revolt one is no longer alone in the city.

Furio Jesi

After the passing of the rebels, who curious people and youth of the neighbourhoods would frequently join, nothing was any longer as before. Cars, as mobile boxes that transport workers to their daily condemnation, became toys with which to amuse oneself and barricades with which to stop the police. The siren song of advertising that poisons the spirit and commodifies bodies was silenced. Electronic eyes were blinded. Journalists were driven away. Looting transformed commodities to pay for into free goods to share. Through colourful writing, the walls were freed from their dismal greyness. Streets, docks and buildings were used as arsenals. The city plan, modelled on the needs of the economy and refined by the imperatives of social control, broke down under the fire of the uprising. Quite quickly, the impossible became possible: the prison of Marassi, mostly emptied in order to leave space for eventual arrests, was attacked. The same fate struck a carabinieri barracks. For their part, the men in uniform spread all the violence that they could. Those who have accused the black-clad rebels of having provoked the repression would do better to take note that the police and military operations were already planned and organized as a preventative form of deterrence in the face of it all. In fact, it was not the result of an excess of zeal, of too much tension or of inexperience, but was rather the true face of state terrorism that raged unfettered, launching its armoured vehicles at breakneck speed against defenceless demonstrators. This is what really determined the generalized spread of revolt. The very thing that was supposed to stop it, the police intervention, ended up feeding it. In the course of a short time, thousands of demonstrators who were peaceful up to then joined the rebels and began to fight against the cops, leaping into a desperate guerrilla battle. Even among the militants of the political rackets whose leaders called for calm, moderation and non-violence, there was much insubordination.

The ideology of disobedience² itself would experience its first disobedients. A little more than an hour after their demonstration started, the good intentions of the Tute Bianche were shattered. When the leaders of the white overalls again exhorted journalists in their train not to confuse them with the violent after coming across the first shell of a

² This is a reference to the Ya Basta!/Tute Bianche/Disobbedienti/ Social Forum milieu which negotiates spectacular acts of “disobedience” with the authorities for media consumption.

burnt car, when the smoke that rose in the distance was still distant enough that it could be ignored, the charge of the carabinieri in via Tolemaide put an end to the simulation. Despite the negotiations beforehand, this time there'd be no spectacle: the cops attacked in earnest! Deaf to the appeals of their petty leaders who called them to give up, to not react, many Disobbedienti began to fight against the men in uniform, with the help of other demonstrators who rushed to confront those who were attacking them. For a few hours, there were no longer violent or non-violent, men or women, social democrats or anarchists, militants or common people, building surveyors or unemployed, but only individuals in revolt against the guard dogs of the existent and the life that is imposed. It was during these conflicts that Carlo Giuliani was killed. He was not a "block bloc" person. He was not an anarchist. He was not a provocateur. He was not an infiltrator. He was only a young man who had reacted to state violence. Not one of the few, but one of the many.

Let's be clear on this point. In the days that followed, all the career politicians that infest the movement initially took their distance from what happened, accusing the rebels of being a handful of "provocateurs" and "infiltrators" who had intentionally sabotaged a great peaceful date with their actions, causing a historical occasion for being heard to be lost. The entire pack of social democratic dogs — the same ones who had raised so much dust and noise up to that time and who therefore believed themselves to be the vehicle of history — spilled an ocean of slander on them, reviving the old Stalinist tradition of the "hunt for the plague-spreaders". This was a way of venting their rancour against those who decided to escape their control, revealing their presumed authoritativeness in all its falseness. It was a way of closing one's eyes in the face of the end of their political project, the vainglorious inconsistency of which came out in all its wretchedness at the end of those days, pathetically trying to relaunch itself. Those who are so indignant that hundreds of comrades went to Genoa with the intention of inciting a rebellion, making a minimum of preparation in this direction and trying to avoid the trap of direct conflict with the police, should reflect more on who aroused the spirits for months, promising assaults and invasions without having any intention of carrying them out, without giving the least consideration to the possible consequences. They should reflect more on who raised the white hands of non-violence to the skies as a sign of surrender and not of dignity, helping to send thousands of defenceless demonstrators to certain defeat. And perhaps to pose a few more questions: can one be truly "non-violent" and collaborate with the state, the greatest expression of violence? Who could denounce those who smashed shop windows in Genoa? Maybe those who smashed bones, heads and teeth? Maybe those who were indignant about trampled gardens and then consider workplace deaths normal? Or even those who want to invade the "red zone" of privilege from the "grey zone" of collaborationism? If anyone who attacks a bank is an infiltrating provocateur, how might one describe those who advise a government minister, discuss with a member of parliament and make contracts with a police chief? That Friday furnished some answers.

Saturday, July 21, political calculation and fear took the upper hand over rage. The various militant political rackets organized themselves to distance and purge their true enemy: all the uncontrollables who had made their plans fail so miserably. As is well-known, that evening the police, unbridled in their absolute certainty of impunity, carried out the attack on the Diaz school, the temporary office of the Social Forum. Everyone there was brutally beaten by the enraged officers. A seemingly incomprehensible action, because along with the rest, the cops beat some of their best allies who had distinguished themselves in their work as informers the whole time. In reality, this episode fits perfectly into the military logic that governed the operation of the forces of order. The proof of the strength of the Italian government had to be shown once and for all.

A Deafening Babble

Everyone who has anything to say, come forward and shut up.

Karl Kraus

The revolt ended, and the commentary on it by journalists, specialists and experts began. And the more the accounts and interpretations of what happened grew, the more its crystalline clarity diminished. The revolt in Genoa in its lived totality has been cut up and dismembered into so many tiny particles. Everything has been ground up and reduced to powder so that nothing can be seen anymore. Naturally this formidable work of mystification has been carried out in the name of truth. The truth that many expect and demand to be pushed through in the halls of the courts.

And yet, everyone knows what really happened. It is indelibly etched in the memories and the flesh of the thousands of demonstrators who were there. And Genoa has precisely demonstrated the absolute practical uselessness and the frequent dangerousness of cameras and video cameras. Apart from the police, who profited from them in identifying

and denouncing many rebels — a task made easier by the omnipresence of carriers of telephoto lenses — , and the journalists who collected their wages for the work carried out, of what use was all this camerawork? What's the use of showing the entire world that the vice-chief of the Digos³ in Genoa, Alessandro Perugini, kicked a boy who was stretched out on the ground, immobilized by the cop's colleagues, in the face? Has he been put in a position where he can no longer repeat his endeavour, because he was caught in the act? Has a court condemned him; has he been kicked out of the police force and replaced with a well-educated officer, respectful of the constitution? Not at all, quite the opposite. With rather macabre humour, the state named Mr. Perugini as the Italian representative for an international campaign against torture in the world.

The belief that it is sufficient to expose the abuses of power in order to force it to its knees is an ideological illusion, deserving to disappear like all ideologies. Goodness knows they felt wretched, these idealists who believe in the light that vanquishes the shadows, at the news that the experts of the magistrature observing the video established nothing less than that it could have been a stone launched by demonstrator deflecting the bullet that killed Carlo Giuliani. A whitish puff that appeared suddenly above his head a moment before his death would show it. It is really true that in an image, everyone can see what they want. And in a competition of images and chatter between alternative and institutional media, it is useless to hide that the latter will always win.

Just as there is no use waiting for any truth from an image, in the same way we cannot expect any justice from a verdict. Because the courts are institutions of the same state that ordered the bloodbath that happened in Genoa. Why should judges ever condemn men who are habitually at their service? Let's get rid of the pious and reassuring commonplace that claims that a difference exists between the state of law and the state of deed, as if there were two entities that must be brought together in order to have justice. The state invents its law and applies and modifies this law as it believes best, knowing that it is just a question of wastepaper. The torturers who ripped up the ID cards of the arrested in Bolzaneto, shouting, "here you have no rights, you are no one", expressed the undisguised nature of the state, of which they are the loyal and obedient servants.

The Illusion of an End

The courage of the impossible is the light that breaks through the fog, before which death's terrors fall and the present becomes life.

Carlo Michelstaedter

All that is remembered of the days in Genoa is the brutality of the cops. The joyous aspect of a subversion of daily life has been almost completely buried. But the uprising of three years ago is still there, threatening in its incompleteness. So threatening that in the meantime its meaning has not only been eroded by state reason that has imposed an endless war, but also by slander, mystification and dismissal put into action by all those — in uniform or overalls — who were supposed to guarantee order and security in the streets of Genoa, with the results we know so well. So threatening that hundreds of direct actions against power (from sabotaged ATMs to blocked trains, from attacked police stations to damaged scientific institutes, from burnt diplomatic cars to wrecked Italian branch offices and dealerships) have been carried out in the weeks and months after Genoa throughout the world. So threatening, finally, that after the fog of representation, power is preparing the cement of imprisonment.

Against state vengeance and in spite of those who make use of the odious division into good and bad, already realized in the streets, before the judges (maybe justifying the conflicts with the cops as a legitimate response to the charges, but condemning actions against the structures of the state and capital that happened earlier...), it is the meaning of that uprising that we must affirm, against pacifiers and investigators. Because revolt explodes, well beyond the dates set by power, in the place where the game is really played: in the totality of our lives. This is where we will encounter, together with the social conflicts to come, the desires of those who fought with courage in Genoa. The place of a crime called freedom in which innocent and guilty do not exist.

So then no court, isolating and attacking the accused, will place its seal on those days.

³ Political police.

Elephant Archives

Where is the Festival?
Notes on Summits & Counter-Summits

guerrasociale.org 2005. Elephant Editions 2005. Translated by Venemous Butterfly Publications.

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