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Anarchist / Black Bloc Motivation

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This anonymous article was found on the web. Many seem to be confused or angry at those who have used street fighting tactics in Genoa. By explaining the motivation behind using these street fighting tactics, especially from the Black Bloc perspective, this article hopes to sooth some of that anger. The article also suggests some ways we as a movement can move forward concerning the disagreement over forceful or non-violent direct action.

Firstly, I am an anarchist, and this has been written because much of the anarchist position on street fighting tactics needs to be explained, especially after the murder of the brave street fighter Carlo Giuliani.

Nobody should expect radical change to be a comfortable and easy process. Many people are angry, and confused by events in Genoa, this article is designed to help turn some of that anger and confusion into constructive ends.

Because the anarchist movement is an anti-authoritarian one of free thinkers I, of course, only talk for myself, but I believe many feel the same thing.

Genoa

This isn't just a dogmatic defense of the Bloc in Genoa. The Black Bloc made mistakes I'm sure, and there are issues on how the Bloc can weed out problems, however I still believe in the Black Bloc and it's tactics for many good reasons, which are:

1. I don't believe we should have a seat at the table with people like the G8, WTO, IMF etc, as you can't reform capitalism in anyway more than just blunting some of the sharpest corners.

As such that is why I don't support the lobby groups like Greenpeace who would seem to want to ride some of the wave of support the anti-globalization movement has been getting, and turn it into a place at the powerfuls table. Further more anarchists don't think elite groups of lobbyists are any substitute for fighting towards the real and long reaching benefits that direct democracy would offer.

2. I don't believe that you can use some sort of mass peer pressure on the system to be nice, as many pacifist protestors seem to think. This is because, as I said, you can't reform capitalism much, as it will fundamentally always exploit people. The only permanent change is getting rid of capitalism, not asking it to reform itself.

This is on top of the issue raised by Tony Blair, who said:

“We recognize and praise the role that peaceful protest and argument have played, for example in putting issues like debt relief on the international agenda.”

A statement which could be taken in the way he wants you to take it, or as it could mean that he likes peaceful protests because of the little to no change it bring towards the fundamentals of the system yet helps to (when used exclusively) disarms dissent by giving the system the illusion of being democratic (something we know it isn't). I, and many others, believe the latter meaning and therefore aren't content with solely street partying capitalism and oppression out of existence.

3. I believe that showing people fighting back against security forces isn't in all cases disempowering or turns people uninvolved off.

Quite the opposite to the mild to non-confrontational approach of many other activists I believe that the only way to stay credible is to be as confrontational as appropriate to our opponent (in this case the G8 ministers).

Effective, not symbolic, confrontation is what *really* shows we are serious, and attracts more people to the movement (as opposed to counter summits, manifestos, marches etc, however these thing also have a very important role to play).

4. I think this movement has got as far as it has because of its diversity. The above groups that I have written above in the other points, while I disagree with them on some issues, I still welcome them to the movement, want to co-operate and agree not to interfere with their activities (a show of respect many anarchists don't get in return).

These four points, I believe, are held by a large number in the anti-globalization movement and they help to justify the Black Bloc action.

Justifying the Blocs' Tactics

This article isn't an argument to say that forceful direct action is always appropriate. As such I would also hold open the possibility that what has happened in Genoa by the Black Bloc was the wrong thing to do, either in part or wholly.

Writing tactics such as the Bloc off because of some mistakes is too simplistic.

Confrontation

The debate between if to use force or non-violence is one that should really be dropped. In its place should be the much more useful debate of what is the

best confrontational tactic for the situation. It is neither street fighting nor non-violent action that draws people to the movement, it is the level of confrontation.

Take Seattle as an example to illustrate this point. There was mostly non-violent action there *and* most of that non-violent action was pivotal in the successful blockade. The effective blockade in turn showed our confrontation to our oppressors that we needed to kick-start the movement. Post Seattle people were attracted to the movement by the fact that the WTO was effectively disrupted, not that peaceful protesters were beaten, as some like to think.

When you look at all the anti-globalization events it can be seen that they all hold in common a simple equation, they succeed because they aren't a simple demonstration, they are an active confrontation.

Now look at how tactics have developed, from Seattle to Prague, from Melbourne to Quebec, both non-violence and street fighting have been effective in developing an inspiring confrontation.

However, more and more, the role of non-violence committed activists in achieving confrontation to those we oppose has dropped off dramatically, in favor of this 'carnival protest' model which is, on the confrontation scale, only symbolic resistance at best.

It has been the anarchists and the Black Bloc in particular, and more and more groups like Ya Basta!, that have kept tactics fresh and relevant by planning how to challenge the walled city approach now used by the powers that be to protect their meetings.

But Violence is a Problem

I'm not dismissing comment made by people who disagree with violence; in fact I would encourage a dialogue between the differing factions, a dialogue that would hopefully think up improved tactics.

An example of the cross faction tactics we need would be the tactic of separating the different street fighting/non-violent factions into their own section so that people can choose their level of involvement. Admittedly this tactic fails sometimes in that it doesn't address the fact that police won't always respect the difference, but this is the kind of thing we need to think around and improve upon.

Stop the Violence by Being Effective

This single biggest issue that needs to be addressed is one that concerns committed non-violence activists themselves. Since Seattle they have, mostly, failed

to come up with new non-violent direct action tactics that maintain confrontation between us and our oppressors and adapt to the current way summit are organized.

Those committed non-violent direct action desperately need to abandon the blockade model, and to dismiss the protest march/street party approach as their only response as both are ineffective in disrupting these summits.

In Genoa those who are prepared to street fight would welcome feasible non-violent tactic for crossing into the red zone and disrupting/closing down the meeting of the G8.

In return for fresh and effective non-violent tactics, I believe, the Bloc would abstain from using force while the tactic still works. But, as everyone know, those committed non-violent direct action tacticians came up with no such plans, they just contented themselves with a symbolic resistance, something that will always be intolerable to those who demand radical change.

What Would Gandhi Have Done?

Consider, what would have Gandhi done? Would he have sat outside a conference gate, or marched around the center, knowing that this would disrupt nothing, or would he have (perhaps) scaled the fence, or done something else (ie encourage a general strike)?

I personally, and many other, can't stand to see people getting passively beaten up, and we will defend ourselves if attacked, but we will respect those who have their own tactics. If non-violent direct action theorists come up with something effective then it will be supported.

“Non-violence Teaches Us . . .”

One problem with forums like Indymedia is the endless rhetoric paraded as arguments, such as how 'violence beget violence' etc etc. Those people need to be less elitist, get off their high horse and realize that people who street fight have thought about all these points as well, and just disagree.

As such if you want a change in tactics, if you want to stop the street fighting, you're going to have to come up with an alternative that remains confrontational. One of the worst aspect of the movement now is the way that people content themselves on blaming others for failings of the day as a way of dodging their own responsibility to adapt to changing situations.

An Appeal

Finally I would like to appeal to those who street fight and those who believe in non-violent action alike:

1. We must stay united; without each other we are the isolated bland force that the state and capital has out maneuvered time and time again over most of the last 50 years. Each faction needs to actively avoid a split by influencing the members within each that move to create a division over dogmatic interpretations of ideology.
2. We, forceful and non-violent direct actionists, need to work together to consider how to confront our oppressors in their planning our oppression, with the aim of disrupting/shutting them down non-violently ideally and primarily, but forcefully if necessary.
3. We need to broaden our actions both in membership demographics and in tactics, including non-anti-summit actions. Radical change is unlikely to come about just through shutting down these meetings (but it would be a good start).

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