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El Paso

Some of our reflections on the days in Genoa

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Sunday July 22, 2001

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organize trips for bored alternative-antagonistic tourists, even to exotic and far destinations, that don't touch them closely in their daily lives.

Some general and abstract critical notes: the danger of these demonstrations is that even the most determined and sincere subside when it is only on these occasions that one can express oneself, that is, only when there are mass situations, when the satisfaction of agitating is shared by many, and when these actions are disseminated by the media: the dangers therefore are the renunciation of projectuality and self satisfaction.

On the contrary, that which is materially extremely dangerous is the spreading of film, video and photographic cameras everywhere, even in our own ranks. The instrument most useful by repression for control is the identification and repression of individuals. It is necessary to eliminate first of all amongst us, this practice, this stupid and useless habit of filming and photographing. Representation, the spectacle of reality, cannot do other than deviate our actions.

El Paso, Sunday July 22, 2001

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The heated comments about the events report (above all, obviously coming from the institutional press) the accusations from the heads of the organizations present in Genoa that speak, almost unanimously, of provocateurs in combat with the police (thoroughly filmed and photographed), or, in a minority of cases, of hooligans let loose to agitate, who played games with the police giving them an opportunity to attack the bulk of the peaceful demonstration.

The first observation that one can make is that these accusations have been methodically repeated for 25 years every time a street demonstration escapes the control of its presumed political organizers. To hear that there are always hot heads, comrades that blunder, people that 'fall into provocations' (fascists or police), or, in the most scandalous cases, infiltrators.

This is the only justification of those who try to manage and use the wills of the protest of thousands of people in arguments that touch everyone, in direct and indirect ways.

There are thousands of motives for protesting: a meeting of powers, the most powerful in the West, protected by thousands of men fully armed, the same men that in the first instance, everyday, everywhere, apply the decisions of the powerful.

The G8 is nothing. Nothing is decided there. But it is a symbol. And symbolically there were those who wanted to protest against them. In diverse ways and terms.

And at this point it is necessary to understand its terms. To contest democratically (in the accepted meaning of the so called organizers and exponents of 'civil society', this means without offending, without doing damage, without defending oneself) also means to understand — just as those same powers have remarked through their spokespeople — that these powers represent nations in which democracy reigns, that they have been democratically elected, and that they therefore represent all those that accept voting and accept the terms of democratic management, being governed from this and from that ordering politics. It is a system that doesn't leave gray areas: one accepts it or not. In this sense, those who thought of protesting democratically were practically demonstrating only the disappointment of an institutional minority about the decisions of the government that they themselves have legitimized by voting.

We understand: even if there were a million people, they would have been democratically considered a minority. The electorate has decided otherwise, they have voted for others, and those elected democratically decide for everyone. Diverse millions of people have elected these powerful. The others continue to try. Scratch scratch maybe one time it'll be your turn to command.

What is the use of a demonstration of a minority? To let off steam, to show that we do not agree, to try to put pressure on our governors to make more just decisions . . . maybe because we must do it. But when we are in the streets, even for the second, the third, the hundredth time, after years of bearing limitations, oppressions, injustices, repression, violence, that are imposed by decisions on high, something else happens. It happens that we remember the anger of when we suffer wrongs, how it is impossible to manage one's own life because in each of its aspects we are limited and repressed by a system that has fabricated predefined platforms from which is impossible to escape. We understand how it may not even be possible to know who is responsible for that which befalls us.

Our employers are not responsible — if it wasn't for them we wouldn't eat; it's not those who make us pay taxes (now they take them directly out of the stipends, that way it is less painful); it is not he who fines us, in the end he's just doing his job; it isn't he who teaches us how to behave from the time we're children — we should have common customs — and afterwards if there are those who don't do these things, patience and endurance; it is not he who governs us, in the end they merely act as the expression of the majority of us; it is not he who beats and arrests us — someone has to do it — and then it is not with force that the divisions that keep some 'below' are created. . .

In this way, when in everyday life we understand that things don't work, no one is ever at fault, no one is responsible, they all have a justification, and it is not possible to do anything, if you don't beg, vote and ask for a few more crumbs (for some more money. . .).

For the great collective questions, there are not responsible ones: pollution, hunger, disease, wars, we no longer find those who are responsible. And we are left there to wring our hands, impotent.

There is she who has come down to the street with these feelings long since rationalized, who has felt them emerge during hours in the street. And so many have vented their anger, have exploded, understanding how, in these demonstrations, we have nothing else to do that doesn't bring you to a mere picnic. So many have destructively expressed their very anger and fury against a system which, indeed, is a black block, a block that doesn't leave space for any other method, much less that of the self-determination of life. Every imprisoned being, eventually, rebels, no matter how long and comfortable her cage may be.

Then we can also say that the police would have charged people regardless, that they have charged those who did nothing, that they didn't expect anything else, that they like to beat, that the atmosphere was in any case that of intimidation, but the fact is there was no other sensible way to behave when faced with 8 powers that decide for everyone and that surround us with thousands of armed men.

And he who has seen the endemic violence of the institutional demonstration, of its blocks, of walls, of divisions, even before direct violence, knows that the responsibility is that of the State and its protectors, independent of provocateurs. Their very existence is a provocation, a menace.

When we protest against those who govern the world, we cannot use measured means. The system wants someone (or some people) to govern everyone, and the individual can do nothing. And in these days thousands of individuals, not only some anarchists (now that everything interests us except riding the tiger), have expressed and have lived their own anger without mediations.

They know — the organizers, the mediators, the institutional politicians — that no one, neither us, nor them, nor anyone in the streets yesterday or in the future, can govern protest, can restrain the fury of those who are constrained every day to live under the aegis of the State, of laws, of justice. They — the so called pacifists, social democrats, and reformists — cannot do anything but retrace the systems and methods of those that they say they are contesting: hierarchical and specialist organizations, delegation, representation, control, censure, repression. Power against power. They disappear. Or they resign themselves to