

VENOMOUS BUTTERFLY PUBLICATIONS

Summits, Counter-Summits and Social War



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refusal to succumb, the various anonymous acts of revolt and sabotage carried out every day, in which the real challenge, the real movement of resistance – and beyond resistance to attack – exists. Why waste time at the planned confrontations organized by those who merely desire “fair trade” and “true democracy”, when we can attack the operation of trade and the state everyday wherever we are? These latter forms of daily struggle are what demonstrate the most important thing: that *we are everywhere*.

Wolfi Landstreicher

INTRODUCTION: INSURRECTIONARY ANARCHIST PRACTICE AND SUMMIT DEMONSTRATIONS

The development of an insurrectional anarchist practice on a projectual basis requires us to be able to look at what we have done critically. When our aims are sufficiently clear and we begin to develop more precise ideas of how to accomplish these aims in practice with others, the arm of critique becomes a most useful weapon in the concrete reality of struggle. However, in this realm, it cannot be reduced to simplistic acceptance or rejection, to the binary logic of “yes” and “no”. Rather it must involve a careful examination of the actions we have chosen to take in light of our aim of destroying the social order through an insurrectional process. If we find that a particular type of action has taken us down a wrong path, then we start over without regret. The ability to recognize mistakes and start over from scratch if necessary reflects the creative imagination and passionate intelligence that any healthy insurrectional movement—no matter how small—would have.

Unfortunately, history—including that which we ourselves have lived—is usually treated as mythology, that is to say, as a higher reality to be venerated or as a theology to be examined only on a doctrinal level to find the true account. Anarchists, in particular, have tended to create tales of great moments out of their past. This mythologizing approach turns our history into a series of “glorious defeats” rather than an ongoing struggle in which many mistakes were made and in which many amazing projects were accomplished. Defined as a series of great moments and glorious defeats, our history becomes useless to our ongoing struggle. Rather we need to examine events in terms of what we can learn that is practical to our present struggle, not in order to erase the beauty and poetry that can be found in much of the history of revolt, but to enhance that beauty and poetry by making it practical to our daily battle against power.

Radicals of all sorts have mythologized the Seattle protests of 1999 against the WTO summit. Since then, similar protests confronting various major conferences, summit meetings or conventions of those in power have occurred. In most of these

demonstrations, very real acts of revolt occurred, and my solidarity is with those who carried out these acts. But most of these events were organized by political activists whose agenda was to make themselves heard—“to speak truth to power” as so many of these small time politicians like to say—and who were willing to negotiate with the authorities over these events. For the most part American anarchists have retained the mythology developed around Seattle and limited their discussions and critical analyses to the questions of property destruction and the nature of violence and nonviolence, keeping these discussions on the moral terrain on which the left political organizers prefer to argue. None of this threatens the Seattle myth. Nor does it open the question that is far more interesting from an insurrectional anarchist perspective: what place, if any, do such protests have in our ongoing struggle, in our insurrectional project? In pursuing questions of this sort, each of us will draw our own conclusions and act in consequence, but if we do not ask such questions, we will continue to be dragged along by the agendas of power and its loyal opposition, running here and there to no avail, and complaining that the myth cannot be relived.

The texts published here are intended to encourage further discussion of these questions.

Wolfi Landstreicher

blocking of the locks at the transit stations in Barcelona – that scare the masters, especially when accompanied by well-directed, anonymous sabotage.

Of course, there have been and will continue to be real rebels who go to these counter-summits. Though I don't agree with their strategy, this does not mean that I deny them solidarity when they face charges for actions carried out in these contexts. Critical solidarity can recognize real revolt even within a strategy with which one disagrees. This is why, while the counter-summit organizers are busy with press conferences and other publicity, it will often be anarchists who reject the counter-summit strategy who are nonetheless in the forefront of solidarity activity with those facing serious charges.

Some counter-summits are described as “victories” or “successes”. No doubt, the events in Seattle caught the rulers by surprise and did succeed in momentarily breaking through the image of social consensus and social peace, exposing the rage that is seething below the surface. But this was not repeatable. The first question we needed to ask was not “how do we do this again?” but rather, “where do we go from here?” It is precisely because most people asked the first question that Seattle was so quickly brought back into the spectacle.

If the breaking of the spectacle's spell in Seattle had been more than momentary, insurgents would have attempted to take the social war to another level. Here and there some did. But can anarchists and revolutionaries honestly speak of any counter-summit since then as any sort of victory? If so, in what way? Those in power continue to make their decisions over our lives daily. These protests really haven't produced a significant ripple in this process. And those involved in the counter-summits aren't even able to create horizontal, non-hierarchical relationships among themselves, let alone find methods for connecting with the dispossessed in the places where they are protesting. Even for the protesters, it seems these demonstrations remain just another spectacular event in the media's eternal now, disconnected from their daily lives where the real decisions of the rulers have their effects. Again, it is not counter-spectacles that really challenge the spectacle. We cannot keep on letting our opponents choose the time and place of the battle. It is our daily

its roots in our daily lives. We can think of it in terms of different ways of carrying on a war (since indeed a social war is going on): when one side is aware that it is greatly militarily overpowered, it makes no sense to use a military form of confrontation (particularly not a spectacular one in which the stage is set up by the enemy). Rather one should rely on unpredictability, anonymity, and invisible omnipresence (“Riva is everywhere”) – i.e., attacking at any time from any place without seeking to be seen. The very opposite of “counter-summit” non-strategy. Of course this requires ridding ourselves of the evangelistic tendency and the idealistic conception of how revolutions occur that is the source of this tendency. If we actually look at various insurrections and movements of revolt that have sprung up recently in the world (Argentina, Algeria, Bolivia, Ecuador, etc), not one of them began because the populace suddenly recognized the need to destroy capital, the state or civilization in any theoretical sense, but rather because the circumstances of their lives angered them enough to act, and having lost faith in the authorities to deal with their demands, they acted directly discovering the methods of horizontal communication for moving such action forward. So we don’t need to find ways to preach anarchy and revolt to the world or to show off our rebellion, we simply need to rebel ourselves, in our daily lives, against all that stands in the way of our freedom.

Anarchist proponents of counter-summits have asked, “Is it acceptable to allow our global masters to convene their banquets of power without a challenge?” Of course not, but this is why we need to challenge them *daily* wherever we encounter their projects in our lives, throwing unexpected monkey wrenches into the works, so that when they meet they will do so with the fear of not knowing when, where or how their projects will be attacked. This is the real challenge to their activity, as an analysis of their failure to ratify agreements in Cancun shows. Miami, where the police closed down the city, proves that closing down a city when it is expected challenges nothing. The masters themselves will order it if they find it convenient. It is the unexpected blockades of normality – the wildcat strikes of transit workers in Italy, the blockades of Basilicata in the same country to prevent the building of a nuclear waste plant there, the

OUR GAME OR THEIRS?: Anarchists at the anti-WTO demonstration in Seattle

When world economic leaders came to Seattle at the end of November (1999) for a summit meeting of the World Trade Organization, they were confronted by a mass protest involving some 40,000 people. Most of these protesters were well-behaved, nonviolent members of leftist, labor and environmental groups. Enough of these groups were dedicated to what they called “nonviolent direct action” to actually keep delegates away from the conference for most of the first day, and for this I give them credit. However, the nonviolent tactics of their blockades also left them as sacrificial offerings to the tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets of the cops who had no “nonviolence code” to follow.

But not all of the demonstrators played by these rules. Some anarchists (numbers are hard to determine since they were in several small affinity groups that were constantly in motion) attacked a number of corporate targets causing millions of dollars worth of damage. Because they kept in motion, these anarchists apparently, for the most part, avoided attacks by the police. They also attracted local individuals from the exploited classes who joined in the trashing and looting of businesses.

Not surprisingly many of the leftists and other proponents of nonviolence were aghast at the actions of the anarchists, referring to them and to the locals who joined them as “thugs” and “hooligans” and complaining about the lack of police to keep these spoilers of their pretty party in line. But some of the “nonviolent” activists did more than whine. Some actually went so far as to play cop themselves, forming blockades to protect a Niketown superstore and a Starbucks café and even physically attacking potential property-destroyers. To those anarchists who still view the left as allies, this should clarify where the lines are really drawn in the struggle.

The vast majority of the demonstrators in Seattle were there to protest the WTO as the most blatant representation of globalization. This is viewed as a new phenomenon, an aberration of the present social order, rather than an inherent

aspect of capitalist development. This may well explain how some of the “nonviolent” protesters could put so much effort into protecting the property of multi-nationals. They are not interested in destroying capital, simply in reforming it, and one can’t very well reform what has been demolished. But globalization has always been an aspect of capital, since its nature is to expand. In order to end globalization, one must destroy capital in its totality. And that project requires a willingness to attack it—physically as well as socially.

The anti-WTO demonstration raises many questions for insurrectional anarchists trying to create a clear projectual basis for their struggle, questions regarding the relationship of such events to an ongoing life project of revolt and attack against the state, capital and this entire disgusting social order.

protect a Nike shop from looting by local youth – and even more so of later summits. Like the ruling authorities, these petty alternative authorities learn from their experience – and the levels of control from all sides has increased drastically at these demonstrations, in a precise attempt to prevent surprising elements or bring them back into the spectacular framework as quickly as possible.

Blackbeard’s story of his participation at the Cancun summit protests in GA #15 is particularly revealing in terms of what this has come to mean. The protesters at these events find themselves sucked into hierarchical and vertical methods of organizing activities, methods that help to keep the actions – even the tearing down of a fence or the suicide of a Korean farmer – within the framework of the spectacle. None of this is really surprising when one considers that the organizers of these events are the same folks who organize the Social Forums, small-time wannabe politicians whose questioning of capitalism only goes as far as “fair trade, not free trade” – you can imagine how foreign any critique of civilization is to them.

The summit in Cancun has another lesson to teach us as well. It was one of the extremely rare occasions in which the decisions that the great powers had already made before the summit failed to be automatically rubber-stamped by the poorer nations. Only the most self-deluded activist looking through the narrow tube of her or his ideology could believe that his was due to the alternative spectacle outside. In fact, a significant number of poorer nations (and even a few wealthier nations like South Korea) have been rocked by ongoing unrest roused by recent hyper-exploitive economic policies (those known as neo-liberalism). Governments have been threatened and a few even brought down by large-scale movements of revolt. But these movements have not taken place in the protest areas in front of the summits, but in the places where those in revolt live and directly experience domination and exploitation. These ongoing movements of revolt where people live their lives are what turned the Cancun summit into a stalemate, showing once again where the real struggle takes place.

So one does not challenge the spectacle by creating a counter-spectacle, but by moving outside of its framework and attacking

ON PROPERTY DESTRUCTION

When the question of counter-summits comes up, it is necessary to bring in the critique of the spectacle – that social relationship in which the image mediates all social activity. As a matter of fact, the real decisions of our rulers are made daily, out of any limelight, and their summits are precisely the *image* of decision making, a spectacle. If the real activity of capital, of the state, of civilization is the ongoing social hell that surrounds us every day, then real resistance to it happens precisely here, in our every day lives, on the streets and in the villages wherever we may live. Since the summits are a spectacle, the counter-summits, which simply follow in their steps, are the same. Certainly, individuals vent their rage at these events, and may even momentarily break out of their roles, but the question must still be raised: is the spectacle itself challenged or are the protests just another scene in the drama?

In Seattle, the sincerely rebellious element took both the authorities and the organizers of the event by surprise, managing to temporarily break through the spectacle. But this only happened precisely because of the element of surprise. It was only a matter of weeks before the event had been completely recuperated into spectacular frameworks even in anarchist circles, with the sad result of people trying – and inevitably failing – to repeat the event over and over again. One of the essential traits of spontaneity and surprise is that they *cannot be repeated*. Their force can only be maintained precisely by the refusal of repetition. The positive elements in Genoa (the participation of local poor and exploited youth in some of the trashing and looting and the willingness of a substantial number of people to defy *Tute Bianche* control of the event) also carried the element of surprise simply because things got way out of the organizers' control. But Genoa also revealed quite clearly who has the military force for direct confrontation. We need to begin to develop a practice of revolt based on a different conception of force, a method of attack not based on direct face-to-face confrontation, but on discovering and attacking the fragile points of the social order wherever we are.

It seems that anarchists forget that these counter-summits are organized by someone. This was true of Seattle – where certain of the organizers and other good leftist sheep even tried to

The property destruction that some people carried out at the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle has put fear into the hearts of certain leftists. From some of the organizers of the April 16 demonstration against the IMF, one heard denunciations of such actions and accusations that their perpetrators were “outside agitators” (whatever that could mean in a mass demonstration open to the public). “Peacekeepers” expressed their willingness to cooperate with “peace officers” by pointing out these “outside agitators”. Thus, they leave no doubt which side they are on in the struggle between insurgents and the power structures.

Others are less strident. They don't condemn such actions per se, but must point out that now is not the time for revolution, that such actions give anarchism a bad public image, that we must wait to act until we have the masses with us and must be content for now with educational activity. These ones have also chosen to side with the present social order for now, to keep the peace that maintains exploitation.

Those who choose to keep the peace will never transform anything. It will always be those whose passion for life agitates them to attack the present reality fiercely and who, for this reason, are driven out by the peacekeepers, who will move toward the only significant transformation there can be, the destruction of the present social order.

These agitated outsiders, these “hooligans” and “thugs”, will find all politicians from the wealthiest Republican to the protector of the public image of anarchism aligned against them, because insurgent passion and energy are dangerous weapons aimed at all forms of politics, threatening the comfortable position of the loyal opposition as much as that of the ruling parties.

SEATTLE IS QUITE FAR AWAY

(brief analyses of Italian confrontations translated from *Terra Selvaggio*, July, 2000)

The months of May and June in Italy were characterized by the presence of confrontations at various types of summit conferences, all introduced with the same slogan: blockade the work of the enemy. All this on the emotional wave of Seattle, Davos and Washington, and on the long trail of the so-called anti-globalization movement. This term, which is on the tongues of everyone today, seems to be able to contain a bit of everything, thus getting around the differences that are still clear among those who go down to the plaza under given circumstances. Certainly, the short term objective is more or less the same for almost everyone, and that is to blockade a certain event whether it be Tebio [a biotech conference held in Genoa] or the OCSE summit, but the distinctions remain quite clear, especially between those who govern parties or lead movements and those who want to have nothing to do with governing or rulers. And it is certainly not a question of subtleties that goads us to make the due distinctions.

And then, at bottom, what really is this globalization of which so many speak? Perhaps the process of the expansion of markets towards the exploitation of the poorest countries and of their resources and away from the richer countries? Perhaps the standardization of culture and the diffusion of a dominant model? But then, why not use the term civilization that certainly sounds less menacing but is fitting, without the necessity of a neologism. There is no doubt that the media—and not just the media—have an interest in mixing everything in a vague anti-globalization soup. So it's up to us to bring clarity to things, to make deep critiques and act in consequence. And the latest confrontational events indicate clearly how few there still are who want to take a road that is indeed troublesome to the powerful and how steep such a road is.

What would appear to be positive about these events is the possibility of rendering the movement visible, of growing numerically and of reopening the debate on certain matters. But, in fact, these are revealed to be pure illusion. Visibility really

SUMMITS, COUNTER-SUMMITS AND SOCIAL WAR

"We are at war, even if the images of spectacular daily life try to make us believe the contrary.

We have not chosen these social conditions ourselves, we can only choose from what position to fight."

—Quale Guerra, *Winter 2003-2004*

"The enemy must not know where I intend to give battle. For if he does not know where I intend to give battle he must prepare in a great many places. And when he prepares in a great many places, those I have to fight in any one place will be few. [...] if one knows neither the battleground nor the day of battle, the left will be unable to aid the right, or the right, the left; the van to support the rear, or the rear, the van. [...] Therefore, when I have won a victory I do not repeat my tactics but respond to circumstances in an infinite variety of ways."
—Sun Tzu

We are living in the midst of a social war that has been going on for as long as there have been classes and states – that is, since the beginning of civilization. If most of the time this war is a cold war in which rule through fear – whether fear of the direct repressive violence of the rulers, or that of some ephemeral menace such as “terrorism” or “crime” from which the rulers are supposed to protect us – maintains a tenuous social peace, anarchists and revolutionaries desire it to ignite in the form of social insurrection and revolution and act in this direction. It is on this level that the debate on counter-summits can be of interest, raising questions about how to develop a principled strategy for battling the social order.

When I speak of a *principled strategy*, what I mean is a strategy or methodology for ongoing revolt against this world that in its very practice reflects our desires and dreams of how we would want to live. In other words, methods and strategies for struggle in which self-organization, horizontal relationships and communication, direct action, the refusal of hierarchy and delegation, and autonomy from every institution that would try to represent our revolt are maintained as we carry out our attack on this civilization of domination and exploitation.

population must understand that Big Brother is not just a televised transmission. And us?

Let's again take up a thread that comes from far away. Günther Anders wrote in the 1950's, "Hiroshima is everywhere", and in the 1980's, "Chernobyl is everywhere". Some rebels against the technologized world in the 1990's said, "Mururoa is everywhere" (at the time when the French government subjected that island in the Pacific to murderous nuclear tests). Two years ago, other comrades claimed, "Genoa is everywhere". Because revolt explodes without limits and against every spectacle, because 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 with the struggles of these times and those that will be, we have wanted and still want to strike other paths. Because following the logic that "This time it is close to my home" one does not escape the circle, since summits will always occur close to someone's home. Because the real conflict is elsewhere. There are other ways to oppose the armoring of the cities and the valleys in which we live, ways 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

just becomes media spectacle, by fittingly affected methods, and the debate has reopened, but the customary manipulators of thought conduct it. They are journalists or leaders, self-elected spokespeople of the protest. The white overalls* are a clear example of this, lined up at table in their appointed encounters with the forces of order which are staged expressly for the video-cameras. Not by accident then, these "encounters", which occur when the other realities of the protest are far away, become the primary focus of the journalistic services. They are as false as all the information given to us and provide excuses for allowing Casarini and company speak in the name of all. Whatever one thinks of numerical growth, unfortunately the growth that follows certain events is mostly made up of people locked into hierarchical models who don't so much as turn up their nose in the face of a leaflet in which the new defenders of calm impose their control, and don't feel the need themselves to make the siege that their leaders only feign. Then, there are exceptions.

So Seattle is quite far away from here, but this is of no importance. In any event, we should not repeat something nor perpetuate its myth, but rather seek out our own pathway to liberation and decide how to realize it.

What is certain is that this type of confrontation, whatever problems it may cause, is utterly inadequate if separated from a widespread, daily struggle, not only because of the ease with which it is recuperated and used by power and its false opposition, but prevailingly because it is not at the summits of the WTO or the OCSE that our fate or that of the planet is decided. These summits are only a formal and spectacular moment, a moment that the powerful themselves are considering eliminating because of the problems it creates. The real decisions occur in other offices, in meetings without spotlights and in embassies scattered across the globe. To sum up, the future is not put at risk so much by a few dozen dandies who meet on occasion, as by hundreds of thousands of scientists, technicians

* A political group that evolved from the autonomia in Italy that negotiates and stages pseudo-confrontations with cops while playing the role of demonstration monitors.

and speculators who put new means and methods of exploitation into effect daily in every part of the world.

So then what do we do? Continue waiting for the dates the WTO sets for our confrontations, being led astray toward minimum results? Or decide for ourselves when, where and especially how to set out?

Here it is. This is one question on which it would be expedient to linger and reflect.

The same is valid, for example for the question of patents, including those on the genetic code. It is simply idiotic to claim protective laws are of any use in confronting 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 only 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 globalization would be unthinkable without the material basis furnished by the technological apparatus. We simply think about the things that are presented as principle factors in development and economic and military conflict: energy and information. This thing that can appear to be an unassailable Moloch is in reality a gigantic web formed by cables, antennas, substations, trellises and transformers that can be easily struck.

Riva Is Everywhere

The CGIL will be taking care of monitoring during the counter-summit in Riva. The outgoing police chief of Trento has pointed out – rightly – that the more demonstrators make themselves into police agents, 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 Municipality will make a villa outside of Riva available to the *Disobbediente* and their associates, granting them the right to demonstrate (always outside 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 prohibiting and suspending every exhibition or demonstration (including sports and cultural exhibitions) in more than twenty municipalities in the Trentino region. The police want empty streets, the

in the discourse of the reformists is the gap between the amplitude of the disasters that they denounce and the solutions that they propose.

On the one hand, they indicate the causes of these disasters to be the industrialization 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; in short, the very essence of the techno-industrial system. On the other hand, they propose... new laws, transparent rules, even citizen participation in the form of short term treasury bonds in the S.P.A.s⁴ that privatize 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 citizen, so proud of being so, want different laws. Somewhat as if, in the face of a downpour of acid rain, one were to suggest covering the head with an organic fig leaf. The proposals of the various social forums, reasonable in terms of political and economic rationality, are simply crazy from a concrete ad social point of view. It is not a question of denouncing a world in ruins, but rather of snatching the space for resisting and the time for attacking. 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 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 directly responsible for this absolute commodification (for example the big businesses 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 as well, it is a long chain of dependence and oppression that now presents us with an exorbitant bill. Only through autonomy toward industrial mass society and through open revolt against the state that defends it could something different be born.

⁴ Action associations similar to PACs in the US. - translator

WHAT HAVE WE DEMONSTRATED?

The events that occurred during the anti-WTO demonstrations last year caught nearly everyone by surprise. The forty to fifty thousand participants, the ability of demonstrators to significantly delay the proceedings, the extent of the property damage and the severity of the police response were all unexpected and seemed to leave many in a haze. Unfortunately this limited the level of significant critical discussion about the event. The months that have followed have seen several attempts to repeat “Seattle”—in Washington D.C., in Philadelphia, in Los Angeles (I choose to write about events in the United States, because the “movement” here is the one I understand most clearly). In light of this, I think it is time to raise deeper questions about these events and their usefulness to an insurrectional anarchist project.

Unquestionably, during the demonstrations in Seattle, real acts of revolt occurred. Rage against domination expressed itself frequently and fiercely enough to cause significant damage. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the demonstrations in Seattle were essentially part of a political movement of dissent aimed at reforming capital, not a social movement of revolt. Were there ways to transform these events, to take them out of the hands of leftist politicians and out of the submissive logic of reform? Arguably, those who attacked property did transform things to limited extent and in a haphazard manner, but the shrewder of the leftist and labor movement leaders were quick to recuperate this for the political realm by pointing out that without these attacks the media would have paid scant attention to the protest and their own political message would not have gotten out. However, the best opportunities for opening things up into social revolt came when property destruction attracted people from poor, black neighborhoods. Anarchists were not really prepared for this and lost the opportunity for communication with other exploited people. On the other hand, the activist politicians were prepared, and recognizing people who did not share their political agenda, they responded accordingly. They banded together to block access to a Nike

store to these local black youth, thus blocking any potential for breaking out of the limits of politics and further indicating how little the left has in common with the exploited in this country. In the large demonstrations since Seattle, the political organizers have attempted to better coordinate events with the authorities in order to keep everything under control, to maintain social peace against both anarchists and unruly “outside elements”—angry local exploited youth for example.

The “anti-globalization” movement is not a social movement. It is a political movement, a movement of ideologues and activists, not of the exploited. There is no large-scale visible social movement of revolt in this country right now. Where such movements have existed, demonstrations have always played a part in the ongoing struggle, but as an outgrowth of that struggle, not as a political imposition upon it. The demonstrations of Seattle, D.C., Philadelphia and Los Angeles, being essentially political, were intended to demand that power act in a certain way. They were not – except in those specific incidents when some individuals broke out of the official framework – expressions of our ability to act for ourselves.

So questions remain. Since an insurrectional anarchist project involves the refusal of politics, since one of its central aims and methods is self-activity, since our strength is that of the exploited and not that of “radical” politicians, is it really in our interest to keep putting so much energy into these political demonstrations with times and locations determined power? Though there is not a large-scale, visible social movement here, mostly invisible and often unconscious revolt does exist. So then, wouldn’t we do well to develop our own daily struggles against the exploitation we experience and, in the process, maybe discover other hidden wells of revolt among the exploited who are being excluded from this society and its political games? Clarifying our anarchist projects in this way, we can consider whether there are ways that we can intervene in these demonstrations that will open the situation up to revolt and the destruction of politics, to the self-activity of the exploited rising up against their exploitation and beginning to take back their lives. There are many questions to be discussed and explored along these lines. But this much is certain: anarchists cannot continue to simply tag along in the

only through terror: such terror is manifested in the exterior in the form of war and in the interior in the form of fear for the future (for example, fear of remaining without work) or through the repression of increasingly widespread social groups. On the other hand, decades of social pacification – in which every despicable act has occurred simply because nothing has been done to prevent the preceding ones, an incredible acceleration of degradation – have given power an arrogance without precedence. We have seen it at work, 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 liberalization of the principle “public services” on a global level. Among the many decisions in process, the most scandalous is surely that of the privatization of water, which may become a reality for the 144 member countries of the World Trade Organization. It is a process that started a while ago, since seven multinationals have contended for decades over the concession for bottling mineral water and in the last few years over the concession for managing the water system as well. The “Trento board for a social Europe” also dwells upon the privatization of water, and on its scarcity due to pollution, as the 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 instead subject to who knows what public debates...; besides, weren’t the state institutions supposed to save us from the savage market?), what is equally scandalous

technological apparatus; that city planning is the continuation of the social war with other 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 must understand what links a lager for undocumented immigrants to the stadiums into which war refugees are loaded, certain poor and working-class neighborhoods patrolled by the police to the various Guantánamos scattered throughout the world, some evacuation operations utterly disproportionate in relation to the declared aim (entire neighborhoods evacuated in order to defuse some implement from the first World War) to the rationing of electrical energy carried out without warning – in the style of the 1920’s – by the ENEL³. 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. They upset traffic circulation, they put surveillance cameras everywhere, they install noxious antennas over the roofs of our homes, they criminalize more and more behaviors: 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 responds. Meanwhile, they are even privatizing the 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

leftist politicians’ spectacular displays; otherwise, we will become nothing more than the most inept of the politicians. Instead, however we choose to act, we must act projectually, with purpose, fully aware that the schemes of the left are sad and pathetic compared to the dreams of the exploited when they rise up in revolt discovering their most dangerous passions.

³ The national electricity board in Italy - translator

SEPTEMBER 26

In Prague, demonstrations disrupted meetings of the World Bank and the IMF as several thousands people took to the streets. The demonstrators divided into a few groups identifiable by color and apparently related to the sort of actions one wanted to be involved in. Large numbers of demonstrators attacked police and delegates, financiers and journalists with stones. In conflicts with police, molotov cocktails were used as well, catching several cops on fire. The police used water cannons, tear gas, dogs, concussion grenades and even rocks in the attempt to quell the disruption. However, people continued to attack the faces of capital as they roamed the streets smashing store windows and hotels and burning one car. Over 950 people were arrested, experiencing various forms of physical and psychological torture, including sexual abuse, in the prisons[...]

There were solidarity demonstrations through out the world, and I have received reports of two of them. In Portland, Oregon, a Reclaim the Streets party started at 3:30 pm with music and dancing, blocking a downtown street. Eventually people decided to head to Pioneer Courthouse Square where a permitted parade was to occur. Along the way a billboard was revised. Upon arrival at the square, people found nothing happening and took over Broadway Street blocking access to Nordstrom, a large chain department store, and writing various anti-capitalist slogans on the pavement. A standoff began when riot cops on foot and on horse arrived. The mounted police pushed through the crowd using pepper spray. People were slow to give in before this intimidation and some threw various objects at the cops. Upwards of twenty people were arrested some suffering injuries. Most of the people involved in this demonstration were neither anarchists nor activists, but street kids and ravers pissed off about the world they were born into without a choice.

In Berkeley, California, a march and a mass bike ride came together for a street party at the intersection of Shattuck and Center Streets. A bonfire of newspaper dispensers was the center

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. Often more importance is ascribed to clashes that almost exclusively involve “militants” as compared to authentic social and class uprisings.

We know very well why many comrades go to counter-summits: wide-spread direct action and the generalized clash with the cops is only possible in mass situations. Since the perspective of attacking elsewhere is extremely minoritarian, only in greatly expanded situations can a certain sort of street guerrilla warfare be tested. Other actions can be realized at any moment that are not in any way incompatible with certain practices in the streets during counter-summits. And yet we think that in the long run such a practice limits autonomy of analysis and action (in the face of how many social conflicts have we just stood there looking?) transforming it in spite of itself into a sort of extremist model within the “disobedient” caravan. Not to mention that it would still be a matter of asking why on earth power publicizes so many summits in which decisions that have already been made are ratified. All this seems to us to be a great terrain for the police to study and experiment with anti-riot techniques. A kind of homeopathic treatment: power is inoculated with 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 another form of experimentation: seeing what level of oppression the population is willing to put up with. Bringing a bit of Palestine, with its checkpoints, its permanent red zones and its armored patrol cars around every corner, into the “rich West”, domination is informing its subjects that, until proven otherwise, they are criminals; that nothing is secure enough for the police and

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 bad few repressed and the good ones heard in their just demands: end of story?

Power knows that it isn't so simple. The disgustingly 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. There was a bit of confirmation in Genoa: only during the clashes and the lootings of supermarkets did the youths from proletarian neighborhoods unite with the insurgents. While the White Overalls with their gaudy spectacles appeared as Martians or buffoons in their eyes, those excluded from every political racket immediately understood the language of revolt.

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 demonstrated. Despite the dates being set by the masters, the direction by reformists in the streets was leapt over. We mention this, even though we were among those comrades who maintained that Genoa is everywhere: that if domination and dispossession are in every part of society and in daily life, attack has no need for dates set by the enemy. We have found interesting the practice of those who, deserting the stage of the "red zone" that was to be violated and the trap of frontal clashes with the police, moved with agility, striking and disappearing (notably, in this sense, the attack on the Marassi prison in Genoa). This powerful gust of unpredictability, this subversive "federalism" of actions and groups, signified 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 hold that being in the place where the enemy does not expect you, far from the appointments, is the best perspective. Even in their most interesting aspects, counter-summits limit this perspective. Besides, without taking anything away from the explosions 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

of this party that went on for a few hours. When people were forced to leave, a group of 200 or 300 people meandered through the streets smashing windows at a McDonald's and two banks and slashing the tires of police cars. The only person arrested had left the crowd and was caught alone in a park. After the second bank was hit, the crowd dispersed, aware that the cops would crack down soon.

There were encouraging aspects in each of these events. In Prague and Berkeley, the events showed a far greater clarity about the necessity of to oppose capitalism itself and to attack its institutions and those who uphold them than I have seen in previous demonstrations against the global economic institutions. In Portland, most of the demonstrators were street kids—homeless and poor young people who hang out in the square—and, however naïve their tactics, their intransigence in the face of the police shows a true rebellious spirit. In exploring the question of what place demonstrations may have in the development of our project of ongoing struggle against power, events such as these need to be carefully examined. Each of these events seems to have escaped many of the problems of previous demonstrations in which activist organizations tried to keep everything within framework of democratic dialogue. But are these events part of an ongoing daily struggle or will an S26 myth develop, transforming these into events above life, above deep critique, as happened with Seattle? My solidarity is with every act of revolt, every attack against power and its protectors, but in order to make these as sharp and well aimed as possible, we need to hone our practice with critical examination and attack with ever increasing clarity.

AND AFTER QUEBEC?

As the political leaders of the American nation-states met to plan the newest trade agreements in Quebec City, protesters converged to disrupt the proceedings. Months in advance the city authorities had seen to the construction of a huge fence with the aim of keeping the protesters as far away from the summit meeting as possible.

From nearly three thousand miles away, it isn't easy to know exactly what happened. The myriad accounts from journalists, the varieties of leftists and reformists, anarchists and black bloc participants, etc. present a chaotic and frequently fuzzy picture of events. It is clear from the outset that there were those who were determined to destroy the boundary mad by the fence. People climbed on it shook it and breached it in a few places. Police tried to protect the fence with huge amounts of tear gas as well as rubber bullets. Some of the protesters fought back using stones, sand-filled bottles, hockey pucks, molotov cocktails and the tear gas canisters that the cops had shot at them. Some of the people who broke through the fence attacked a bank and property of a few multinationals, but most of the violence was concentrated in the ongoing battle between cops and protesters.

It is important not to have illusions about what went on. While an active minority of the protesters made it clear that they held no illusions about having anything to communicate to those in the summit and instead put out the effort to disrupt business as usual, a large number of the protesters were there precisely to have their cause heard. While these delusional do-gooders were quick to complain about police excesses, they were equally quick to distance themselves from those who were ready to fight the cops and attack the institutions of capital. Some even went so far as to do the cops' work for them. As one woman put it: "It was the protesters not the police who controlled the crowd." The specifics of this control were manifest by the nonviolent protesters who stepped up to protect a bank from the attack of protesters who were more clear about their hatred of capitalism.

proclaimed to be a great victory for the movement. And yet these social pacifiers know quite well that their capacity to pose as negotiators with the institutions doesn't particularly depend upon the number of people that they lead into the streets (millions of demonstrators opposed to the latest military aggression against Iraq have not greatly worried the governments involved in the war), but rather upon 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 in Seattle first and later 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 – together with the many insurrectional explosions that have shaken up the last few years, a mark of the times we have entered – the masters would have nothing to do with the various Casarinis and Agnolettos². Hasn't something of this sort happened with the unions? Listened to and bribed by capital in times of great social conflict with the aim of dividing, demoralizing and denouncing revolting proletarians, in more recent times, they have been put in storage. For the time being, they are forced to again raise a loud voice against the very attacks of the bosses that they themselves once justified and ratified.

The "*disobbedienti*" 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 end up being 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"

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

NOTES ON SUMMITS AND COUNTER-SUMMITS

The Illusion of a Center

Capitalism is a social relationship and not a citadel for the powerful. It is starting from this banality that one can confront the question of summits and counter-summits. Representing capitalist and state domination as a kind of general headquarters (it's a question of the G8, the WTO or some other such organization) is useful to those who would like to oppose that managing center with another center: 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. Besides being reformist in essence and purpose, this logic becomes collaborationist and authoritarian in method, as it leads to centralization of the opposition. This is the source of the concern of these leftist adversaries, who are so anxious to make themselves heard by the "masters of the world", in investing money and political hype on the summits in which those in power more and more frequently set the dates with them. In the course of 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 in which it is shown that neoliberalism is wrong and humanity is right, or, for the more lively, in some combative performance opportunely agreed upon with the police. Besides, how could an opposition subsidized by institutions, represented by municipal and parliamentary councilors and protected by the grave-diggers of the workers' movement (we're referring to the monitoring patrols 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. Every time that a more or less oceanic crowd moves peacefully, visibly supervised, it is

¹ The Italian General Confederation of Labor, a major trade union organization. - translator

Once again the question needs to be examined: what is the project behind the summit-hopping and the ongoing street battles with cops? It is obvious by now that as anarchists we have little in common with a majority of the protesters who are full time activists with an agenda that challenges little. In fact, the anti-globalization movement is largely interested in reforming capital, not destroying it in order to transform the world, so we can expect to find ourselves perpetually confronting other protesters as well as police—they are not our allies.

Summit-hopping can easily become a substitute for struggling against capitalism and the state in one's own life. The summits are spectacular focal points that can draw attention away from the daily confrontations with capital as one attempts to reappropriate one's life in the face of its domination. Without an ongoing project of struggle aimed at the disruption and subversion of the social order wherever one confronts it, these summit protests are mere momentary irruptions. With such a project, the question becomes one of whether these summit protests can be useful in moving one's project of ongoing subversion forward and, if so, how. Every act of revolt has my solidarity, but I want to see these acts become more intelligent and focused, more clearly and consciously insurrectional.

SOCIAL WAR IN GOTHENBURG

The European Union summit meeting in Gothenburg, Sweden on the weekend of June 15 and 16 was met with what may have been the fiercest rioting yet to occur at a summit meeting. Confrontations began Thursday when police set up a blockade around a school where about one thousand demonstrators were staying. This led to fighting between police and demonstrators that lasted into the night.

On Friday, demonstrators took to the streets, setting up barricades, smashing shop windows and battling the police. The ferocity of the rioting forced those who planned the summit to cancel a dinner they had planned for government leaders attending the summit. For those who still have illusions about the nature of the struggle against capitalism, one can hope that the shooting of three demonstrators—with very real bullets—will dispel these illusions. The stakes in play in this game are high—this is social war.

Of course, summits like the one in Gothenburg are not the real center of policy-making for the leaders of the world, but they do represent the unity of purpose shared by the entire ruling class in maintaining their power. So it is rather fitting that each summit is confronted with open, public rebellion where any demands that are made are of far less significance than the destructive rage and joy of those in the streets. But these public confrontations are not the heart of the struggle. The social war that the ruling class has declared against the exploited is everywhere all the time. Consider the shots fired by police without provocation during the funeral march for Timothy Thomas in Cincinnati last April. The state knows its enemies even when they don't recognize themselves as such. Thus, our attacks against the exploiters need to spread. While the confrontations at the summits may publicize the existence of our response to the rulers, of our counter-attack, it is the small actions that anyone can carry out in their own daily existence against their own exploitation and domination—small

actions that can easily spread—that are the substance of our struggle against the social order. Having recognized the reality of the social war, it is necessary that we carry on our attack on every level that advances the necessary destruction of the present reality.