



WHAT HAVE WE DEMONSTRATED?



**Toward a practical analysis
of the place of demonstrations
in the ongoing struggle against domination**

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<i>El Paso Occupato (Turin, Italy)</i>	

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 organizing trips for bored alternative-antagonistic tourists, even to exotic and distant destinations, that thus 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 taking action 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 other hand, that which is materially extremely dangerous is the spreading of film, video and photographic cameras everywhere, even in “our own” ranks. The instrument most used by repression for control is the identification and repression of individuals. It is necessary to eliminate among ourselves first of all this practice, this stupid and useless habit of filming and photographing. Representation, the spectacle of reality cannot do anything but lead our actions astray.

—El Paso Ocupato, Sunday, July 22, 2001

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, a little house...)

For the great collective questions, no one is responsible: pollution, hunger, disease, war and so on, we never find those who are responsible. And we are left there to wring our hands, powerless.

There is the one who has come down to the street with these feelings long since rationalized, who has felt them emerge during the 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 lead to a mere picnic. So many have destructively expressed their own anger and fury against a system which is, indeed, a black block, a block that doesn't leave space for any other method, least of all that of the self-determination of one's own life. Every imprisoned being, eventually rebels, no matter how large and comfortable her cage may be.

Then we can also say that the police would have charged people regardless, that they did charge those who did nothing, that they waited for nothing else, that they like to beat, that, in any case, the atmosphere was that of intimidation, but the fact is that 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 anyone who has seen the endemic violence of the institutional demonstration, of its blocks, of walls, of divisions, even before the direct violence, knows that the responsibility is that of the State and of its protectors, rather than provocateurs. Their very existence is a provocation, a threat.

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, certainly not only some anarchists (now that everything interests us except riding the tiger), have expressed and lived their own anger without mediations.

INTRODUCTION: *INSURRECTIONARY ANARCHIST PRACTICE AND LARGE-SCALE DEMONSTRATIONS*

The development of an insurrectional anarchist practice on a projectual basis requires the ability to look at what one has done critically. When one's aims are sufficiently clear and one begins 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 and 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.

One recent event that has been mythologized is the series of demonstrations blockading the WTO summit conference in Seattle in 1999. Since then, similar demonstrations confronting various major conferences, 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 at least in the United States, 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 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 of far more interest from an insurrectional anarchist perspective: what place, if any, do such demonstrations have in our ongoing struggle, in our insurrectional project? It is not a matter of refusing to go to such events, but of going, if one so chooses, with a clear intent, in a way that flows out of and back into one's daily struggle. 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 small bits of news that I have heard about the events in Prague and about various solidarity demonstrations around the world indicate that there were some explicitly anti-capitalist events and that there was far less domination by "nonviolent" activists. Below are a few texts intended to encourage further discussion of these questions. Though most deal with the protests surrounding the various summit meetings, I have also chosen to include an article about a large scale protest by poor and indigenous people in Brazil and one about protests at immigrant detention centers in Australia, since these events have their own element to add to the discussion of the place of demonstrations in the development of an anarchist insurrectional project.

that, by voting and accepting the terms of democratic management, accept being governed by this and by 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 legitimized by voting.

We understand: even if there were a million people, they would have been democratically considered a minority. The voters have decided otherwise, they have voted for others, and those elected democratically decide for everyone. Several millions of people have elected these powers. The others continue to try. Scratch, scratch, maybe one day it will 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 should do it. But when we find ourselves in the streets again for the second, the third, the hundredth time, after years of bearing limitations, oppressions, injustices, repression, violence, that are imposed by decisions from 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 it 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 paycheck, that way it is less painful); it is not the one who fines us, in the end he's only doing his job; it isn't the one who teaches us how to behave from the time we're children—we must have common customs—and afterwards if there are those who don't do these things, patience and endurance; it is not those who govern us, in the end they merely act as an expression of the majority of us; it is not the one who beats and arrests us—someone has to do it—and then it is not by force that those "below" make themselves heard.

SOME OF OUR REFLECTIONS ON THE DAYS IN GENOA

from
El Paso (Turin, Italy)

The heated commentaries about the events (above all, obviously, those coming from the institutional press) report the accusations from the heads of the organizations present in Genoa that speak, almost unanimously, of provocateurs in conspiracy with the police (thoroughly filmed and photographed), or, in a minority of cases, of hooligans let loose to take action who, nonetheless, played games with the police giving them the 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 these people, 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 determination of the protest of thousands of people in matters that touch on everyone in direct and indirect ways.

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

The G8 is nothing. Nothing is decided there. But it is a symbol. And there were those who wanted to protest symbolically against it. With different ways and limits.

And at this point it is necessary to understand its limits. 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—as those same powers have rightly 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

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.

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 armored 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

* A sadly prophetic statement.—translator.

Let's digress for a moment. It is not at all strange that the mass media has rebaptized 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 its 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, councilors, 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. At bottom 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

ON PROPERTY DESTRUCTION

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.

SMASHING THE CLOCKS OF DOMINATION

On April 22, the government and the ruling class of Brazil wanted to celebrate the 500 year anniversary of its "discovery" by Europeans prepared to dominate and exploit the resources and people of the land, imposing expansionist and mercantile value. Globo network, Brazil's largest entertainment corporation, has been the main promoter of this celebration. For several years, Globo has been putting on events promoting this celebration, and has built big clocks in all the state capitals of Brazil in celebration of the 500 years.

But during the week that ended on April 22, there was a large mobilization of indigenous people, students, landless and others to demonstrate against the nationalist and capitalist ideals behind the celebration.

It was the largest mobilization of indigenous people ever known in Brazil. The indigenous people were going to Porto Seguro—where the Portuguese arrived in 1500 and where the official celebrations would take place on April 22—went through Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, where they shot their arrows at the Globo clock until they stopped it. One of them managed to enter the national congress and pass through security with an arrow in his hand pointing at one of the most powerful men in Brazil, Senator ACM, the "emperor" of the state of Bahia.

The president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was afraid of going to Porto Seguro on April 22 due to the mobilization of indigenous people, the landless and people in general to demonstrate against the celebration. Even a week before the celebration, this pathetic ruler still wasn't sure if he should go, he was so worried about his security. One television news media head condemned the landless as anti-democratic because they made the democratically elected president afraid to go where he

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 maneuvers of the police, these clashes wouldn't had such a favorable 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 to 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*?

* Most notably, in Italy, the *Tute Bianche* (White Overalls), closely associated with Ya Basta!—translator.

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 favor 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

wanted in the country--an accusation that reveals more about the real nature of democracy than anything else.

In fact, the democratic state declared war on the people: on the indigenous, on the landless, on blacks and on anyone who wanted to go the demonstrations in Porto Seguro--or more accurately heated up the war the exploiters perpetually wage against the exploited. Thousands of cops and soldiers stopped the landless, indigenous, blacks and other protesters on the roads of Porto Seguro. In the last several weeks before the celebration every car or person that tried to enter the city was searched for dangerous items.

There was a big confrontation on the road in which a group consisting mostly of indigenous people, but also of landless, blacks, workers students and anarcho-punks battled the police. 150 people were arrested. One heard more about the violence and the protests than the celebration. The democratic state of Brazil was forced to show its real face by using police tactics in its attempts to quell the mobilization and celebrate the 500 years of domination. But of course we know that behind every democracy stands the gun and the billy club--to enforce the "will of the people".

The landless movement planned its own "celebration" involving the intensification of land occupations.

In many cities the Globo clocks--the main symbol of the celebration and a heartlessly ironic reminder of how the time of domination weighs on the exploited--were smashed in the last week before the celebration. In Fortaleza on April 18, 400 students and workers smashed the clock and fought the police. In Recife on April 22, landless and homeless people threw Molotov cocktails at the clock. It was said that indigenous people smashed the clock in Rio de Janeiro, though this has not been confirmed. In Porto Alegre--a city run by leftists in a state run by leftists the clock was completely burned on April 22. In Florianopolis, on the same day, around 300 people--most of them students--threw some paint on the clock and organized a demonstration and more direct action, taking over a park that has been closed by the mayor. There were eight arrests and several injuries, including that of one person who was shot in the face

with a rubber bullet. It is likely that the Globo clocks in some of the other 20 odd cities where they were built were also attacked.

It is no surprise that the celebrators would use the supreme symbol of the measurement of exploitation to celebrate the anniversary of the beginning of their domination in the region, and it is no surprise that those rising up against their rule would attack this monstrous symbol of the rule of measured time over their lives.

GENOA IS EVERYWHERE

(This statement was issued by some anarchist from Turin, Italy about a month before the G8 summit in Genoa)

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

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.

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 just becomes media spectacle, by methods fittingly affected, 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 [a political group that evolved from the autonomia in Italy that negotiates and stages pseudo-confrontations with cops while playing the role of demonstration moderators] in this are a clear example, 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, as false as all the information given to us and excuses to have Casarini and company speak in the name of all. Whatever one thinks of numerical growth, unfortunately that which 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.

Then, 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 prevailing because it is not at the summit conferences of the WTO or the OCSE that our fate or that of the planet is decided. These summit conferences are only a formal and spectacular moment, a moment that the powerful themselves are considering eliminating because of the problems it creates.

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

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.

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.

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 and technicians 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.

WHAT HAVE WE DEMONSTRATED?

The events that occurred during the anti-WTO demonstrations last year caught nearly everyone by surprise 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 real 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

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

fullness of life. Capital is forcing an equality of conditions upon us—in impoverishment and precariousness. It is necessary to reject this false mathematical equality that turns us into ciphers. There is beauty in difference, and borders, like all institutions of control, seeks to suppress our experience of that difference in order to reinforce the false unities based on imposed identities. Only where differences can intermingle freely can that which is unique and truly individual in them come to the fore, that which constitutes the real human wealth that is beyond every economic consideration. It is this beautiful idea that can give our struggle to tear down every fence, every prison every border, every state and the whole social order of capital and power the ferocity to push on against all odds.

really prepared for this and lost the opportunity for communication with others of the exploited. 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, thus 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 in the United States 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 and emphasis on 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 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.

Protests at the Woomera center began on the 25th with chanting and some damage to the center. On the 26th, there were several demonstrations at various centers and one in Sydney in solidarity with these protests. At Marbinong, two hundred anarchists, socialists and other supporters met with immigrants who were not in the camps to protest outside the center there. Arrangements were made for the people in the camp to send out messages over the fences with balloons. As people came to the fence with these messages, some began to shake it. A high-ranking cop ordered people away from the fence. In response, they shook it harder and almost knocked it over. Horse cops were brought in to protect it. People began chanting such things as "No more cages", but the words were less significant than the fact that the noise of the chants made it impossible for the cops to coordinate their activities.

In the wake of the demonstrations by sympathizers at Marbinong and in Sydney, on the 27th, the protests at Woomera escalated as some inmates attempted to dismantle the detention center there. Inmates had been stoning the staff since Friday night. The authorities sprayed tear gas in an attempt to quell the uprising. The rioting inmates set fire to recreational buildings, a dining room, a school and the cleaning facilities. An administration building was also attacked, with stones. The authorities used water cannons against rioting inmates and attempted to build a secondary fence to keep them in. However, the rioters tore this fence down as fast as it was put up. By August 28th, they were using the pickets as spears against the guards as they attempted to escape throughholes in the fence.

These detention centers, the state's "rational" response to the problem of control, are further evidence of the absurdity of borders and of the states that invent them. But the reality that has forced the refugees to take the road of immigration is pushing increasing numbers of people in every part of the world into landlessness, homelessness, the lack of any place to be. Thus, all of us who are among the excluded of this society find ourselves pushed into a precariousness in which we are all potential refugees. Our struggle against this situation must escape the logic of capital and the state. To do so requires that this struggle not be merely a struggle for survival, but a struggle for the

THE ABSURDITY OF BORDERS

Changes in the methods of exploitation have forced increasing numbers of people, particularly from the poorer countries, to take the path of immigration. Though useful to capital as a source of cheap labor, the numbers of such refugees has become so large as to present a significant problem of control for the states of those countries they enter. In an effort to maintain some level of control over this flood, the various states have created systems of detention centers, prisons for undocumented foreigners whose only crime is that of seeking refuge from poverty and in some cases political oppression without the proper papers. Even if these centers were built for the comfort of the inmates, taking their emotional and intellectual, as well as basic physical, needs into account, they would still be stealing away the lives of those individuals interned in the camps, placing their fate into the hands of bureaucrats whose priorities are the maintenance of power, profit and social control. But, for obvious reasons, these centers are not built for the comfort of the inmates. They are prisons with all the horror that implies. It is no surprise then that they are subject to frequent revolts, the healthy response of those whose dignity has been pressed beyond endurance, those whom the state, in its need to control every interaction, has pushed to the breaking point.

Australia is a destiny for many refugees from Asia and eastern Africa. These refugees arrive on the Australian shores to find themselves interned in these prisons without criminal charges. In June, seven hundred internees from three detention centers in Woomera, Port Hedland and Curtin escaped in order to go to town centers to protest their condition. More recently, on the weekend beginning August 25 and going through the 28th, a number of actions against the centers took place in Australia.

AS ANARCHISTS, WE HAVE REASON TO BE THERE ONCE AGAIN

(excerpt from a text published in *Anarchist Bulletin of Counter-Information and Action* #7, September, 2000, in Athens, Greece)

--Because it is a chance to meet with our comrades who will come from all around the world, a chance to promote continual communication of our struggles in a level of counter information, solidarity and experiences' exchange, and also a chance to directly create moments of social counter attack.

--Because we are interested in the development of a multi-form antagonistic movement, with anti-nationalist, anti authoritarian and anti-capitalist character, whose internationalization, now more than ever, is essential for its quality and its effectiveness against the globalization of the bosses as well as against those who "challenge" it through a patriotic position. Because we want a movement self-organized and subversive, and more than imagining it we're interested in acting in this direction.

--Because the conferences of the IMF and the WB, and the bosses' ceremonies generally, cause the discontent or the rage of thousands of people. Because the IMF and WB are instruments to promote globalization and thus responsible for its devastating consequences to people and nature, as those effects are expressed in the different places on the planet, either through economic development or war catastrophe, through the waves of immigrants and refugees and the desolation of the proletariat, through the conditions of exploitation and oppression that are exercised every day and everywhere.

--Because in the scratch crowd that is gathered for the "global days of action" we can detect a variety of groups and individuals who fight with different spear-heads--such as unemployment, racism, social discrimination, ecology, etc.--and who by being in the streets together, practically make a step towards surpassing

compromises, entrenchments and single issue conceptions. We can also spot a youth that is suffocating in the margins of life of the modern metropolis, social parts that the system criminalizes so that they will be surviving safe-guarded at the outskirts of the walls built around the corporate centers. A youth that through these mobilizations expresses militantly a new form of politicization against their absorption or crushing by modern domination, its values and the roles that it imposes. A "politicization" that is born in the ruins of the previous season of the exhausted pacifist illusions and the consumed trade union claims, and thus now more sweeping in defining its targets, more global in expression, more fluid in organizing and with less inhibitions toward being aggressive.

--Because its up to the people in revolt to sharpen social antagonism through international gatherings as well, to transform the temperament of dispute into social explosion. It's up to the fighters themselves to reveal the vanity of self-limitations and of appealing to the "sensitivities" of a fully armed regime, it's up to them to show that the resistance against the state and capital not only includes all the dispensable means of struggle but it also discovers new ones.

--Because as we have an answer for capitalism, the same way we have an answer for those who mediate the interests of state security with the movements: political parties and public service organizations who hustle to manipulate and incorporate everything alive that is socially created.

--Because as was shown by the tactics of anarchist groups in the 19th of November in Athens, as well as by the tactics of the anarchist "black bloc" on 30th november in Seattle, there's no better way than the practice--and of course not the invocation--of a subversive plan in order to attack the political and economic elite and together to make your presence distinguishable and catalytic within a mish-mash of stalinists, nationalists or pacifist protesters.

--Because, when decisive and dynamic minorities know how to detect their targets, their friends and their enemies, then not only do they not fear to move among different or even hostile forces, but also their action may define the course of events. To ridicule the plans of repression, to incite and liberate the most radical

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

The march was flowing forward to the tune of whistles, drums and shakers when it all stopped because Ya Basta! had decided to hold an impromptu press conference in front of the police blockade on the bridge. Frustration was creeping into the activists who were prevented from getting to the front by 'Ya Basta(rds)!' crowd control. You could hear the police ordering the crowd to disperse, smell the tear gas, see the smoke and even feel the droplets from the water cannon without being able to confront the police and bring about a meaningful outcome to a mass gathering of people who had traveled here to shut down the IMF. And all because some people had decided for you that this was to be a non-violent protest.

Eventually when I got to the block of Ya Basta! activists they were spectacularly dressed in gas masks, helmets and white water proof macs stuffed with bedding to provide padding. The action at this stage waxed and waned with scuffles breaking out between single activists and police. Brief charges at the police with their own barriers were the most effective tactic 'allowed' but it was never going to move the police tanks. During the actual confrontations with the police, non-Ya Basta! people were not allowed to come back. The police finally did retreat all of five meters but did not seem particularly interested in arresting anyone. For more than two hours the 'White Overalls' were pushing up against police lines, but the bridge was thoroughly blocked by the armored police vehicles and it proved to be too difficult to break through to the Conference Center. They eventually left the bridge and joined up with the other marches on the way to the Opera House.

So it really did seem like a waste of resources (two or three thousand people) by Ya Basta! to try to boss the march into contradictory attempt to get across the bridge that they were never going to win. In the end the march was neither peaceful nor violent but rather a liberal 'Non Violent'.

YA BASTA(RDS)!

(I have chosen to reprint this piece from Do or Die #9, because it confirms what I have heard about Ya Basta! from Italian comrades. The group is not anarchist, nor is it anti-authoritarian in practice.)

On [September] 26th, the yellow march was led by an Italian group called Ya Basta!, who have made quite a name for themselves by dressing up in white overalls with lots of padding and protective armor and taking on lines of riot cops in this 'Michelin Man' get-up.

About five hundred Ya Basta! people were in front, followed by another two thousand or so activists from various different groups such as the PKK, Basque separatists, Spanish anarchists, unionists and international socialists.

Ya Basta! might have looked impressive in their white overalls and pads, but not so much to the people who were told off and attacked because they were carrying sticks and were prepared to fight the police on their own terms and not on those of the Ya Basta! bureaucracy. Moreover, on the way to Namesti Miru they constantly told off people for not walking in line, and then attacked others who decided to smash a MacDonalds with the excuse that it was spoiling their media image. It was becoming clear that Ya Basta! is a hierarchical organization with visible 'leaders' and spokespeople.

Ya Basta! originates from the social centers of Italy. They were first formed during the collapse of the Eastern bloc when a large section of the Italian autonomia movement started reconsidering their ideas on class struggle and communism, etc. Although the crude Marxist-Leninist approach to class and capital has been abandoned, it seems certain organizational characteristics still remain.

dispositions, to finally transform the presence of thousands of people in the streets into what it should be: a favorable factor for disturbing the order of domination.

--Because we are not at all willing to solve the problems of capitalism, beautifying it through "creative" proposals. We are not interested in plastic surgeries for the democratic mask of the state coalitions' dictatorship. Because we don't want to live "humanly" inside this nightmarish world, but to live without them. Because in this environment of global resistance that is formed, we find our social and class allies to transform the arrogant conference of the bosses into festivals of revolt.

--Because the capitalists, their institutions and their symbols are not invulnerable and because its nice when they become the targets of our rage.

Here and everywhere...

WE WILL BURN YOUR FUCKING BANKS

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 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.