

# **Violencia representada e imaginada. Jóvenes activistas, el Black Block y los medios de comunicación en Génova**

Por JEFFREY S. JURIS

On July 21, 2001 the Italian White Overalls- Tute Bianche- declared symbolic war on the G8 in Genoa, joining tens of thousands of anti-corporate globalization protesters from around the world in a ritualized siege of the “red zone” that had been established by the Italian authorities to protect the G8 summit. The urban terrain of resistance (Routledge 1994) was divided up into different spaces to accommodate diverse forms of political expression, including color-coded pacifist, White Overall, festive Pink Bloc, and militant Black Bloc direct action tactics. Soon after the siege had begun, however, symbolic confrontation between protestors and police gave way to brutal repression on the part of the Italian state. For many observers, Genoa has become synonymous with protest violence, a metonym evoking visual images of tear gas, burning cars and young black clad protestors hurling stones and Molotov cocktails at advancing lines of heavily militarized riot police. Equally evocative are the haunting visions of twenty-two year old Carlo Giuliani’s hooded corpse lying prone in a pool of his own blood after being shot twice in the face and then backed over by an armored police jeep. The world was further shocked by pictures of dried blood on the stairs, floors and walls of the Diaz School, where a special unit of the Italian police carried out a brutal nighttime raid against sleeping protestors after more than 300,000 people had taken to the streets earlier that day. Images of street battle cascaded around the world through global mediascapes (Appadurai 1996), helping to construct a mass mediated image of the Battle of Genoa as an iconic sign of wanton destruction and senseless violence.

The following article explores the phenomenon of political violence within the anti-corporate globalization movement through a concrete ethnographic analysis of the anti-G8 protests in Genoa. Although I examine the dynamics of low-intensity state terror elsewhere (Juris n.d.), this article primarily emphasizes the relationship between performative violence among militant youths and mass mediated constructions of violence. Given their spectacular, highly confrontational nature, militant tactics tend to dominate media coverage of political protest, forming a crucial terrain in the broader politics of signification over what constitutes effective and legitimate forms of dissent. What is the relationship between performative activist violence and its representation in the mass media? How does the dynamic interplay between militant youth activism and mass mediated constructions of violence influence the outcome of political protest? How have these dynamics influenced tactical debates within the movement itself?

## The Emergence of a Global Network-Based Movement

Nearly 50,000 people took to the streets to protest corporate globalization at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle on November 30 1999. A diverse coalition of environmental, labor and economic justice activists succeeded in shutting down the meetings and preventing another round of trade liberalization talks. Media images of giant puppets, tear gas and street clashes between protesters and the police were broadcast throughout the world, bringing both the WTO and a novel form of collective action into public view. Seattle became a symbol and battle cry for a new generation of activists, as anti-corporate globalization organizing networks were energized around the globe.

Although what became known as the anti-globalization movement was largely born in Seattle, diverse networks and historical processes actually came together there, producing a new model of social protest, involving direct action, NGO-based forums, labor marches and rallies, independent media, and the convergence of economic justice, environmental, feminist, labor and international solidarity activism. As the slogan from the mobilization against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) during April 2001 exclaimed, "The movement did not start in Seattle, and it won't end in Quebec!" Activists have thus alternatively traced the genealogy of the movement back to the Zapatista Uprising, the campaigns against the North American Free Trade (NAFTA) and the Multilateral Investment Agreements (MAI), student-based anti-corporate activism as well as radical anarchist-inspired direct action, bringing together traditions from the United States, Great Britain, Italy and Germany, among others. Inde

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mobilizations offer concrete goals around which to organize, while they also provide physical spaces where activists meet, virtual networks are embodied, meanings and representations are produced and contested, and where political values are ritually enacted. Public events can broadly be seen as “culturally constituted foci for information-processing (Handelman 1990: 16),” while direct actions, in particular, generate intense emotional energy, stimulating ongoing networking within public and submerged spheres. The next mass protest was organized against the World Bank (WB) and IMF in Washington, D.C. on April 16, 2000, while the movement went truly global during actions against the WB/IMF in Prague on September 26, 2000. Activists came from around Europe, including large contingents from the Spanish State, Italy, Germany and Great Britain, and other parts of the world, including the United States, Latin America and South Asia. Solidarity actions were held in cities throughout Europe, North and South America as well as parts of Asia and Africa.

The first World Social Forum (WSF), which was organized in Porto Alegre, Brazil during January 2001, coinciding with the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, represented an important turning point, as the movement began to more clearly emphasize new and existing alternatives to corporate-led globalization. The unexpected success of the first WSF was significantly magnified during the subsequent two editions, which drew 70,000 and 100,000 people from around the world, respectively. Much more than a conference, the WSF constitutes a dynamic process, involving the convergence of multiple networks, movements and organizations. Whereas PGA remains more radical, horizontal and broadly libertarian, the WSF is a wider political space, including both newer decentralized network-based movements and more hierarchical forces of the traditional left. Meanwhile, mass actions continued to intensify and expand during spring and summer 2001, including the anti-FTAA protests in Quebec and increasingly militant actions against the European Union in Gothenburg, the World Bank in Barcelona and the G8 in Genoa, where widespread police violence culminated in the death of an Italian activist and a brutal nighttime raid on the Independent Media Center. Mass marches and rallies the following day brought 350,000 protesters to the streets of Genoa, and hundreds of thousands more around Italy. Many feared further violence after September 11, as activists were targeted by anti-terrorism campaigns, but the level of confrontation has since greatly subsided.

Mobilizations continued to grow after 9/11, including a gigantic half-million person march against the European Union in Barcelona in March 2002. The Global Justice and Anti-War in Iraq movements increasingly converged during fall 2002 and winter 2003, leading to anti-war marches involving millions around Europe, including a November demonstration of more than a million protesters during the European Social Forum in Florence and a February protest in Barcelona involving nearly 2 million people. Meanwhile, the third edition of the World Social Forum drew 100,000 participants in January 2003. Several hundred thousand Global Justice and Peace activists converged on the border of France and Switzerland the following June to protest the heavily militarized G8 summit being held in the small mountain town of Evian, while thousands of Mexican and other activists from around the world descended on Cancun to challenge the WTO Summit in September 2003.

## Meaningful Violence

Performative violence is a form of meaningful social interaction through which actors construct social reality on the basis available cultural templates. As Anton Blok (2000: 24) points out, “Rather than defining violence *a priori* as senseless and irrational, we should consider it as a changing form of interaction and communication, as a historically developed cultural form of *meaningful* action.” Violence has both practical-instrumental and symbolic-expressive components (Riches 1986: 11). The former involves the attempt to directly transform the social environment, while the latter emphasizes the communication and dramatization of important social ideas and values, although the distinction is one of degree. I use performative violence to refer to symbolic ritual enactments of violent interaction with a predominant emphasis on communication and cultural expression.<sup>1</sup> In the context of political action, performative violence can be seen as a mode of communication through which activists seek to effect social transformation by staging symbolic confrontation based on “the representation of antagonistic relationships and the enactment of prototypical images of violence” (Schroder and Schmidt 2001: 10).

Violent performances largely function through non-verbal, spectacular forms of iconic display (Beeman 1993; Zulaika and Douglass 1996: 11-12), providing grassroots activists with valuable symbolic resources, as Joel P. Rhodes points out in his study of performative protest against the Vietnam War: “For small militant groups with limited resources... violent performances against the symbols of the American system proved the most economical and visually arresting way of immediately achieving a symbolic victory over their more powerful adversaries, while concomitantly radicalizing potential support” (2001: 3). A similar argument can be made about contemporary militant groups engaging in performative violence against the symbols of global capitalism. Beyond political communication, performative violence is also productive in another sense: the forging of political identities. On the one hand, violence can help establish boundaries between different groups (Bowman 2001), while on the other hand specific forms of violent performance can become associated with particular oppositional identities, styles and practices (Feldman 1991, Peteet 2001, Peterson 2001). Moreover, aggressive violent performances often involve the kind of risk taking and bravado traditionally associated with male rights of passage and the achievement of masculine political identities in many parts of the world (cf. Gilmore 1990).

Beyond how violence is culturally performed, it is also a powerful symbolic icon. Violent imagery and cultural representations of violence are ubiquitous and are made to do various kinds of ideological work. For example, the mass media and entertainment industries produce and circulate images of violence to capture audience share, while states use violent images to project power through military parades, ubiquitous display of weapons and even broadcast images of war itself (Aijmer 2000: 10; Schroder and Schmidt 2001: 10). As Goren Aijmer (2000: 7) points out, violence “is a forceful element in the imaginary order, and iconic idiom incorporated into many different sorts of symbolic textures. In social discourse violence emerges as a sign with many references and endlessly purposeful for intended action.” In the

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<sup>1</sup> Given that it involves ritualized symbolic activity, performative violence is often used interchangeably with symbolic violence. In order to avoid confusion with Pierre Bourdieu’s (2001) more restricted use of the latter term, however, I use performative violence here.

context of political protest, activists use violent icons to communicate radical confrontation, while riot police employ violent display, including military style uniforms, helmets and shields, to project power and authority (Fillieule and Jobard 1997).

Moreover, mass mediated representations of violence are crucial to the dynamics of political protest. As Bauman and Briggs (1980) have explored, violent performances can be extracted as texts, removed from their initial setting and reinserted into entirely new discursive contexts. The ability of the mass media to decontextualize images of performative violence and reinsert them within alternative interpretive frameworks is a central component in the dynamics of hegemonic struggle. Militant activists stage spectacular violent performances, in part, to gain access to the commercial media, which are constantly in search of sensational stories and images. Everyday forms of routine protest often go unnoticed, while the iconic images of burning cars and pitched street battles between masked protestors and militarized riot police are instantly broadcast through global communications networks. At the same time, police and government officials can manipulate violent images, decontextualizing and reinserting them within narratives that frame protestors as dangerous criminals or terrorists engaging in random, senseless acts of violence (Gitlin 1980). State media politics seek to divide movements by cajoling moderate sectors into condemning militant violence or, alternatively, to associate all protestors with violence in order to justify indiscriminate physical repression. The possibility always exists, however, that more liberal ('progressist' in Europe) elements of the media elite will portray the police as responsible for the violence, thereby enhancing movement legitimacy. It is largely through these media wars of symbolic interpretation that social movement struggles are waged in the information age.

## **Entering the Urban Terrain of Resistance**

On the heels of recent violent escalations in Barcelona and Gothenburg, the declaration of war by the White Overalls and the intransigent posture of the Berlusconi government, the question of protest violence and repression was high on everyone's minds leading up to the siege in Genoa on July 20. Moreover, the constant surveillance- including secret police and helicopters, the overwhelming presence of thousands of highly militarized riot cops and carabinieri units, the erection of a fence around the no-protest zone and a spate of purportedly anarchist bomb scares had created a climate of tension and fear. It was in the shadow of this emerging terror campaign that activists made their final "battle plans," involving an elaborate process of debate and negotiation over the use specific tactics, the physical division of the urban action space and how to coordinate among diverse networks. Along with hundreds of radical, largely non-violent international activists, I decided to take part in the festive Pink block, together with many young protestors from Barcelona and the Spanish State. On the day of the siege itself, we arrived at the Piazza Kennedy convergence center around 11:00am to make our final preparations. The atmosphere of nervous excitement temporarily overwhelmed the mounting tension from the previous days as people finished making their costumes, wigs and props. At around 12:00pm, the samba band began an improvised drumming circle by the Piazza gate, and the crowd of 600 Pink Blockers filled in behind them. A few minutes later the march took to the streets; our siege had begun.

As we moved ahead down the large boulevard on the Southeastern side of the red zone-dancing, drumming and letting out the occasional disco chant- my eyes began to water, as we all noticed the familiar smell of tear gas. The major confrontation was not supposed to begin until 1:00pm, which gave us an inkling of what kind of day this might become. I glanced toward the left, where a crowd of several thousand had already begun a pitched street battle near the fence. Riot police were launching tear gas canisters at a crowd of several thousand carrying large black and red signs, while small groups of hooded, black-clad protesters began darting about, throwing back the canisters, along with rocks and bottles as well. "That's the Cobas march," someone pointed out, "it looks like they've gotten mixed up with the Black Block." Eager to get to the northern side of the city, we hurried past the fray. Just before we entered the tunnel that would take us over to Brignole station, a group of several hundred young anarchists dressed in dark colors, hoods, handkerchiefs and the occasional stick joined us toward the back of the march. "They must be from Pinelli," I thought to myself. Things did not look good.

On the other side of the tunnel, we realized that several large containers had sealed off our route. After a brief spokescouncil meeting, we moved up into the hills earlier than anticipated. As we moved along parallel to our initial trajectory, we noticed several heavily armed police lines had taken up positions along many of the side streets. We continued down the other side of the hill, before heading over to the large boulevard leading up to the Plaza Manin, where the pacifists had assembled. Just before reaching the boulevard, we came to a terrace that afforded an excellent view of the city below. I recorded the following in my field notes later that evening:

"It was now unmistakable, the clouds of tear gas had become larger and darker. There were clearly loads of tear gas in the air, as we could feel it in our eyes all the way from the terrace, and the smell was incredible. However, many of the clouds we saw began to appear like real smoke. There were two or three huge clouds of thick, dark smoke rising up in the distance. The city was clearly ablaze".

I later learned that several groups of what appeared to be Black Bloc had begun smashing windows and torching cars and buses in the zone near the White Overalls action. We continued moving toward the boulevard. Our plan was to turn left and march down toward the red zone fence, where the pacifists would later stage their sit-in, and then move over to the next plaza. At that point, we would begin our action at the fence, while the Pink-Silver march would separate and move over to another section of the red zone. However, when we got to the boulevard, the pacifists had already begun their descent, and we were trapped at the intersection. By this point, our contingent had grown to over a thousand, and people began getting nervous about a major stampede if the police decided to attack. The pacifist march was so large, that they took up most of the boulevard from the red zone up to the Plaza Manin, so in the end, we decided to move along side them and down a small street leading over to the next plaza.

At that point, however, instead of dividing into separate blocs, a large group began descending toward the fence, while the rest milled about the plaza. I noticed several police lines moving toward us from the small street we had just marched from, sealing off that escape route. A police charge seemed imminent, so I moved up toward the top of the hill to maintain a safe distance and get a better view. All of a sudden, one of the French women in the crowd near the fence erected a large metal cable, which she climbed to the top of the fence. The police began firing water canons at her, dousing the protesters behind her with

chemically treated water. The crowd became agitated, and people began throwing bottles and sticks at the police on the other side of the fence. Moments later, the police began a brutal charge with batons and tear gas, unleashing severe panic as protestors frantically scattered toward the upper end of the plaza. Meanwhile, a small group of us, who had taken up a relatively secure position on a nearby stairwell, quickly fled up hill to avoid another charge. The morning's tense calm had given way to a generalized panic and fear.

The Pink Bloc eventually regrouped at the Plaza Manin, which was filled with hundreds of ecologists, pacifists and feminists who had never left the concentration there earlier that morning. Shortly after meeting up with my affinity group, a few dozen Black Bloc activists suddenly appeared from the other side of the hill. Several of us spoke to them, explaining that this was a non-violent zone, and that they would be better off heading over to another part of the city. After they moved on, the Pink Bloc assembled next to the plaza, but after just a few moments a large police helicopter flew directly overhead and began firing tear gas canisters at the crowd. Before we had a chance to realize what was happening, the police attacked us from the side streets with more tear gas and batons. I quickly ran up the hill once again, and when I turned back to look through the clouds of gas, I could see riot police brutally clubbing peaceful protestors, including many pacifists. The Black Bloc was nowhere to be seen. Meanwhile, I could hear horrible screams from the midst of the chaos. A group of protestors suddenly began running toward me, followed by charging riot cops. Overcome by panic, I quickly turned around and began fleeing up the hill to escape.

## **Militant Protest in Genoa**

Like many protestors in Genoa, I had several encounters with what appeared to be the Black Block, but it was impossible to say whether they were activists, right wing infiltrators or police *provocateurs*. In fact, the ambiguity, uncertainty and rumor helped contribute to the epistemic murk through which state terror operates (Taussig 1987). As we moved through the urban terrain of resistance, not only did I see devastated automatic bank tellers and shattered windows of transnational corporations, there were also burned out cars, ransacked storefronts and broken glass everywhere. The city looked quite literally like a war zone. Black Bloc performative violence generally has a very specific communicative logic: destruction of the symbols of corporate capitalism and aggressive physical confrontation with the state. Although there are often tactical disagreements within particular Black Blocs, destructive actions targeting the cars, homes and shops of ordinary people tend to fall outside the bounds of accepted militant signification, as one Black Bloc activist explained after Genoa, "The majority of the Black Block supported the practice of destroying property only when it was an important symbol of capitalism (like banks), or transnational corporations with a history of human rights violations."<sup>2</sup> In this sense, Black Blocs performative violence tends to be neither random nor senseless.

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<sup>2</sup> Cited from testimony by Alien 8 (Riera 2001: 187-189).

The Black Block is not an organization, or even a network, but rather a specific set of direct action tactics enacted by groups of young militant anarchists at mass protests.<sup>3</sup> Although tactical repertoires vary with each group and action, they often include the destruction of private property, usually banks and transnational storefronts, ritualized confrontation with the police and a series of more specific practices: such as “de-arrests,” marching in small, compact groups with elbows linked or jail solidarity. These tactics are connected to a broader militant style, including the use of black pants and jumpers, combat boots, and black masks or *bandanas* to cover the face, and an aggressive, confrontational attitude. Masks are worn for instrumental reasons- to protect activist identity for individual security, but also serve certain iconic functions, such as expressing collective solidarity through anonymity or portraying archetypical images of youth rebellion. Black Bloc styles and practices can be seen as the physical embodiment of a political vision based on anti-capitalism, physical confrontation and a total rejection of the market and the state. Such values are communicated through specific stylistic codes and signifiers and highly sensational ritualized violent performances.

In the context of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, Allen Feldman (1991) has explored how political narratives construct alternative political ideals that reflect divergent performance styles of violence, encapsulating very different moral orders. The “hardman” engaged in hand-to-hand physical combat in which status and reputation through the willingness to risk the body were central, while the “gunman” represented the mechanization and rationalization of paramilitary violence. Diverse performative styles of violence can thus represent very different political ideals and identities, which communicate alternative political messages. Militant protest tactics, such as those associated with the Black Block, involve the enactment of a specific style of violent performance through distinctive bodily techniques, styles of dress, ritual symbols and communicative practices. The typical image of the Black Block activist reflects a highly masculine ideal of militant rebellious confrontation. Moreover, as Abby Peterson (2001) has recently argued in the context of Sweden, militant activists construct their identities through emotionally powerful embodied ritual performance that both constructs the militant body as the ground of political agency and produces an “embattled” activist identity, as she explains:

“These ‘we/them’ distinctions are most vividly experienced and emotionally compelling in ritual confrontations with movement adversaries. Violence, or simply the potential for violence, in ritual confrontations by the militant high-risk action groups we are analyzing, enacts and re-enacts this theme of ‘we’ contra ‘them’, thereby cementing both sides in the struggle. Violence is a bearer of meaning for these groups. The emotions of embattlement render the cognitive message of the ritual- ‘forces of good in a righteous struggle with the forces of evil’ - compelling. Emotions generate meaning and actions become meaningful through the lived/living experiences of ritual confrontation” (ibid: 55).

Within the anti-globalization movement, performative violence provides an important mechanism through which militant activists construct radical anti-capitalist identities. Black Block images, tactics and discourse circulate through global communications networks and

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<sup>3</sup> The Black Bloc tactic initially surfaced among young protesters during the 1992 protests against the Gulf War in Washington, D.C., although they modeled themselves on the practice and styles of the German Autonomes, or radical squatters. Subsequent Black Blocs were organized in 1992 at a San Francisco protest against the 500 Years Discovery of America celebration, in April 1999 during a Philadelphia protest in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and then in Seattle in November 1999 and every major anti-globalization protest since (See Riera 2001: 173- 180).

are ritually enacted throughout the diverse local sites of the network. Violence is thus not only tied to the production of political identities among discrete, bounded groups; similar dynamics are also at work among flexible, decentralized network formations. Moreover, outside the context of mass anti-globalization actions, young militant activists engage in everyday forms of cultural resistance, particularly in the context of urban squats and social centers, which often leads to more localized ritual conflict with the police during eviction actions.

Performative violence- including the accompanying bodily techniques, dress codes and iconic symbols- also helps constitute particular subcultural youth styles (cf. Hebdige 1979). Spectacular subcultures are systems of communication through which diverse forms of discourse and fashion are adapted, subverted and transformed through subcultural bricolage (Clarke 1976). As Dick Hebdige (1979: 102) explains, “The communication of a significant difference, then (and the parallel communication of a group identity), is the ‘point’ behind the style of all spectacular subcultures.” Within many anti-capitalist activist networks, squatting and the use of militant protest tactics, styles and icons thus comprise central elements of an alternative radical youth counterculture.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the production of identity and difference, however, particular stylized performances can also communicate more directed political messages, such as rejection of the dominant social order, or radical confrontation with the symbols of global capitalism and the state. The prevailing anarchist ideology throughout much of the European autonomous movement stresses the creation of autonomous cultural spaces, the politics of everyday life and direct confrontation with the police. In this sense, Black Block tactics and imagery can be seen as the active use of specific counter-cultural styles and practices among young militant anarchists to engage in spectacular rituals of resistance.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as Carles Feixa (1998) points out, alternative youth styles and practices have become globalized. Militant Black Bloc counter-cultural styles and tactics thus circulate through global communications networks, providing cultural scripts that are enacted by militant activists in their local settings and at mass anti-globalization actions.

The Pinelli social center served the base of operations for the Black Block in Genoa, while many militant internationals slept at the nearby Sciorba stadium.<sup>6</sup> The first of the evening planning assemblies took place on July 16, where a decision was made to separate from the Genoa Social Forum because of their restriction on sticks, rocks and firearms. By the second assembly, the number of participants had doubled to several hundred, including activists from the United States, Italy, France, Germany, Greece and throughout Europe. The evening

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<sup>4</sup> In his comparative study of youth cultures in Catalonia and Mexico, which includes a comprehensive review of the social science and anthropological literature on youth, Carles Feixa (1998: 84) defines youth cultures as, “the way in which the social experiences of youth are collectively expressed through the construction of distinctive lifestyles, situated fundamentally in their free time, or within interstitial spaces of institutional life.”

<sup>5</sup> For Birmingham School authors (cf. Clarke et. al. 1976), youth subcultures represent a ritualized strategy for symbolically resisting class domination. Among the militant activists considered here, there is a more or less conscious appropriation of alternative subcultural styles and practices- including ritualized violence- in the context of sustained political resistance, which operates both symbolically and instrumentally. My conception of militant youth as active agents is largely in line with recent criticism of the Birmingham School for portraying youths as passive, which is reinforced by their language of resistance (Caputo 1995: 21-22; see also Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995).

<sup>6</sup> This brief account is largely taken from an anonymous declaration included in a recent Spanish-language edited edition on Genoa (Riera 2001: 191-222).

before the siege, a large bloc from Pinelli decided to march together with COBAS in the Southeast. They moved over to Albaro (Alvaro?) Park that evening in order to be closer to the beginning of the action. They were supposed to meet up with another group from Pinelli the following morning, but the police had surrounded the social center. In the end, a group of 500 Black Bloc militants marched together from the Park toward the center of the city to join up with COBAS, as an activist recalled:

“We arrived at the point where there were other masked comrades and red flags from COBAS. We entered, had a meeting and some of us moved toward specific objectives. As our target was a bank, the police arrived from the right. There was a brief scuffle where some Molotov cocktails and rocks were thrown... The police appeared to stop their repression briefly, so we took advantage of the opportunity to make some barricades with garbage containers, wood and anything else we could find. We set some of the garbage containers on fire while a part of our block, a group of about 300, continued attacking the face of capitalism: the banks and gas stations”.<sup>7</sup>

Small groups of Black Bloc anarchists carried out similar actions throughout the day against banks, transnational corporations and gas stations as well as pitched street battles with the police, including barricades, stones and Molotov cocktails. When it became too dangerous, many activists removed their masks and black clothing to avoid detection. The following day, the 10,000 person-strong Black Bloc at the unitary march never came together. Instead, smaller groups joined the march, engaging in periodic actions against specific targets. After the police attacked during several points of the demonstration, ongoing street battles resumed during much of the day. There were also several confrontations between non-violent and Black Block protesters, as one militant reflected, “The ironic thing is that a group that says they have moral principles is willing to inflict us physical harm and turn us in to the police- what many of us consider to be their worst enemy- because we have different tactics from theirs, because we are ‘violent.’”<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the more directed violent performances, which communicated clear anti-capitalist messages, there was also a great deal of indiscriminate violence against ordinary cars, storefronts and buildings. Because these actions did not fit within the established ritualized patterns of militant performance, many activists, including militants themselves, suspected that the Italian police had used provocateurs and/or right wing infiltrators. Moreover, several Black Bloc activists commented that the police had allowed them free reign to carry out their actions, while selectively repressing peaceful protesters, as one activist commented, “There has been much speculation and some evidence of police/fascist infiltration in the Bloc. The truth is that the fact that we could meet up, stay together for an hour and a half, and make it the center of the city without the police stopping us seemed a bit surprising, especially because they were arresting other groups.”<sup>9</sup> Others noted that just before major police attacks on peaceful protesters, a Black Bloc group would often pass nearby, almost always escaping repression.

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<sup>7</sup> Cited in an anonymous testimony from Riera (2001: 202).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid (2001: 211).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid (2001: 182).

## Media Representations of Violence in Genoa

Given that social movements wage their battles, in part, to transform the dominant understandings of political reality, the mass media provide a crucial terrain for the politics of signification. Images of violent confrontation can both attract media attention through what John B. Thompson (1995) has called “struggles for visibility”, but such violent performances can also be decontextualized and reinserted into hegemonic narratives that seek to marginalize young militant activists as criminals and “deviants” (Gitlin 1980; Hall 1974). The mass media are actively engaged in the production of social reality. As Todd Gitlin (1980:2) argues, the media “name the world’s parts, they certify reality as reality- and when their certifications are doubted and opposed, as they surely are, it is those same certifications that limit the terms of effective opposition. To put it simply: the mass media have become core systems for the distribution of ideology.” Economic and political elites disproportionately shape media discourse through the concentration of media ownership, the advertising system and reliance on government and business experts and more occasionally through overt disciplining and censorship (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 2).<sup>10</sup> Due to such powerful ideological “filters”, the mass media tend to (re)produce cultural meanings that are in line with the dominant interests in society. As Stuart Hall (1982: 64) points out, through the active work of selecting, presenting, structuring and shaping, the media are involved in the “active labor of making things mean.” They do this through the use of widespread media frames, which Gitlin (1980: 7) defines as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual.” However, media framing does not follow a simple logic of determinism; rather, dominant meanings are produced through cultural struggle in the context of a particular balance of social forces (Hall 1982: 70).

The mass media are thus crucial sites for the production, distribution and contestation of hegemony, which can be understood as those dominant values, beliefs and ideas in society that support the prevailing distribution of power and authority and are taken as “common sense.” Although hegemony is always open, fluid and contested (Williams 1977: 13), there is structural bias toward those groups, demands and frames that coincide with prevailing hegemonic principles. In liberal capitalist societies, however, there are often disagreements among elites, and oppositional groups “can exploit self-contradictions in hegemonic ideology, including its journalistic codes (Gitlin: 1980: 12).” Although major crises can lead to hegemonic transformation, social conflicts that challenge core assumptions- such as private property or the legitimacy of the state- are most often muted, tamed and incorporated within hegemonic frames, as Gitlin (Ibid: 271) notes, “demonstration is treated as a potential or actual disruption of legitimate social order, not as a statement about the world.” Hegemonic media frames tend to construct militant social protest, particularly when it challenges core assumptions about the market and the state, as dangerous and criminal. In this context, violence emerges as a key terrain of struggle. On the one hand, violence is an important form of media entertainment, and the news media thrive on spectacular images of violent confrontation. Moreover, as the novelty of protest wears off, the media demand more and

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<sup>10</sup> Herman and Chomsky (1988) also mention anti-communism as the “national religion” as an important media filter in the context of the United States. The emergence of anti-terrorism has largely appropriated this function.

more spectacular and violent forms of action. For young militant activists, then, violence represents a potential resource in the struggle for public visibility. On the other hand, the dominant media discourses tend to frame protest violence as a heinous crime against society itself, as a grave threat to the prevailing moral order (Hall et. al. 1978: 68).

Through their rebel styles, threatening imagery and confrontational tactics, young militant activists thus lend themselves to dominant media frames that would construct them as political deviants. The news media appropriate and reinterpret images of protest violence as “senseless”, defining its purveyors as social problems as opposed to legitimate political actors. Stuart Hall (1974: 267) has pointed out that, “Under certain circumstances, legitimate political minorities are subjected to severe ‘status degradation’ ceremonies, and are lumped with more marginal groups. They are then subject to quite different forms of public opprobrium, stigmatization, and exclusion. They have been symbolically delegitimized.”<sup>11</sup> Images of young masked, black-clad activists throwing stones or Molotov cocktails, particularly when linked to scenes of shattered glass, burning cars or street combat, serve as powerful icons denoting generalized destruction. Moreover, Black Bloc styles, particularly their masked faces, resonate with received forms of terrorism iconography, as Zulaika and Douglass (1996: 204) have recently noted:

“If there is an emblematic stereotype of guerrillas or terrorists in action, it is of the masked men/women holding submachine guns. It is not their weapons but rather their masked facelessness that is the perfect icon for their expatriation from society. Withdrawal of face is denial of social interaction and personal responsibility. If the very act of concealing the face is charged with symbolism, the persona typified by a faceless mask is beyond the human sphere”.

Once again, a stylistic form- in this case the mask, which is used by activists to protect individual identity and communicate collective solidarity- is removed from context and reinterpreted through dominant media frames as a sign of the savage “other”. Militant styles are thus linked to prevailing mass media discourses of terrorism and fear. Images of protest violence can be used by the state to criminalize and delegitimize entire movements by alienating their base of potential support and isolating them politically. This strategy helps to explain the use of agents provocateurs (cf. Gitlin 1980: 188). Moreover, such strategies can serve to justify brutal state repression against political protest. Alternatively, images of protest violence can be used by the state to distinguish between peaceful majorities and violent minority fringes in order to politically divide social movements and reinforce their least confrontational elements.

As might be expected, given the history of previous anti-globalization mobilizations as well as the actual intensity of violent conflict on the ground in Genoa, iconic images of violence figured prominently in the media coverage of the anti-G8 protests. Mass media representations of protest violence initially helped raise the level of tension and fear in the days preceding the protests, then reproduced classic images of anarchist street violence during the days of action themselves, and finally shifted toward a more critical stance with

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<sup>11</sup> According to Stuart Hall (1974: 268), the following extra-parliamentary forms of action are often considered “deviant” political activities: “student militancy and protest (confrontations with university authorities, sit-ins, occupations, etc.), militant extra-parliamentary demonstrations, which might involve conflict with the police; urban rioting and rebellion (e.g. Watts) and urban insurgency (e.g. Ulster); sporadic incidents of bombing incendiarism, attacks on property for political reasons (Weathermen or ‘Angry Brigade’ activities); squatters’ movements, rent strikes, militant tenants’ action; ethnically-oriented ‘Black-Power’ or Panther-style activities.”

respect to Italian law enforcement, as widespread testimonies regarding police violence and abuse became available. The initial state media strategy, based on raising the level of tension and then using images of protest violence to delegitimize certain sectors, if not the entire movement, was initially successful, although testimony from the raid on the Diaz School and widespread abuse led to a transformation in the dominant media frames.

On July 17, 2001, for example, several days before the protests began, media reports were dominated by the explosion of a letter bomb at a police station in Genoa, severely injuring a carabinieri officer, and another bomb scare outside the Carlini stadium- the home base of the White Overalls. The main headline on the front page of *La Repubblica* reads, “Genoa, a day of fear,” followed in smaller print by “Letter bomb injures a carabinieri. Another attempt foiled.” Just above the main headline is written, “The tension around the G8 grows: the anarchists are investigated.” The headlines indicate a situation of chaos and fear, which is already being linked to anarchists, while the accompanying image of an urban crime scene portrays the police as the calm defenders of order. Moreover, a special insert called “The Movement’s Hidden Enemies,” makes light of the GSF accusations that the letter bomb was placed by the Italian secret service (*La Repubblica*, July 17, 2001, p. 1). A front-page story in the *Corriere Della Sera* directly links the bomb scare to militant anarchists, as the headline says, “Black Bloc radicals against the non-violent.” The article text goes on to explain that, “the first analysis of the investigation has led to a possible clue that leads to the insurrectionary anarchists.” (*Corriere della Sera*, July 17, 2001, p. 1).

Several days before protests began, then, the Italian press coverage contributed to a growing climate of tension and fear, while linking the Black Bloc to possible terrorist actions and representing the movement as divided between violent radicals and peaceful moderates. In the days before the action, various newspapers published battle maps indicating the different actions scheduled for the July 20 siege, while also covering the fence around the red zone and the preparations by the Italian police (See the July 18 edition of *Il Secolo XIX*, p.3). Tension continued to grow as the July 19 papers reported another spate of bomb scares. The major headline of *Il Secolo XIX* reads, for example, “G8, vigilance after attacks and false alarms,” while according to the sub-headline, “The tension climbs in an armored and surreal Genoa.” (*Il Secolo XIX*, July 19, 2001, p. 1). With the media stage set for violence and radical confrontation, the events on July 20th confirmed- even surpassed- all expectations. The headlines and images from the following day’s press coverage were dominated by two major themes: 1) the death of Carlo Giuliani and 2) violent scenes of a ravaged, war-torn city. Both *La Repubblica* and *Il Secolo XIX* presented various photographic sequences from Giuliani’s death taken by a Reuters photographer, which were instantly broadcast through global media circuits. For example, the front page of the July 21 *Il Secolo XIX* is dominated by a huge picture showing the young, masked protester seemingly getting ready to throw a large fire extinguisher at a police jeep. Meanwhile, a police officer inside the jeep is shown pointing his gun at the protester. The next image shows the van backing over the dead corpse of Carlo Giuliani. The text accompanying the photos and the lead article portray a situation in which a young anarchist is preparing to attack a police vehicle, causing a fearful young officer inside to fire in self-defense. The initial coverage avoids questions as to why the officer was carrying live ammunition, why an un-experienced officer was placed in such a dangerous position and why the driver backed over the dead corpse (*Il Secolo XIX*, July 21, 2001, p. 1). *La Repubblica* also showed an image of the dead hooded Giuliani lying in a pool of his own

blood, while the accompanying text depicts him as an “unwanted martyr”, as the article explains, “What some call the ‘People of Seattle’ now have a martyr that no one wanted. But it was the violence of a minority that sacrificed him, and the rage of the men in uniform, at the end of a cursed day.” (*La Repubblica*, July 21, 2001, p. 1).

The dead corpse of Carlo Giuliani is a powerful political signifier, but its ultimate meaning remains ambiguous. On the one hand, he is constructed as an innocent young victim of excess police force. On the other hand, however, his death is indirectly blamed on the violence caused by the protesters themselves. Moreover, just before he is shot, the hooded Giuliani is shown preparing to throw a fire extinguisher at a frightened officer inside a police jeep, situating the activist inside the movement’s violent anarchist fringe. The implication is that Carlo Giuliani has only himself to blame for his death. A subsequent article in *Time* uses the incident as a contemporary morality play demonstrating the line between acceptable democratic protest and tragically misguided activist violence, as the author writes:

“One man died in Genoa; a man, we must presume, who was swayed by the false promise that violence-not peaceful protest, not participation in the democratic process- is the best way to advance a political cause. It is not too much to hope that the next time his friends stoop to pick up a cobblestone, they will remember a lesson learned when plows first broke the Mesopotamian earth: You reap what you sow” (*Time*, July 30, 2001, p. 22-23).

Meanwhile, the Italian and international press coverage on July 21 was filled with image after image of burning cars, masked young protesters dressed in black hurling stones at the Italian police, heavily armored carabinieri firing tear gas and brandishing their shields, as well as the occasional image of a bludgeoned protester receiving first-aid. The ultimate villains throughout the coverage, however, are the violent anarchists associated with the militant Black Bloc. In *Il Secolo XIX*, for example, the major headline reads, “Genoa, blood on the G8,” while the sub-headlines just above read, “City succumbs for hours to the guerrillas. Throwing of Molotovs, incited by the anarchists.” Just below, one of the lead articles, entitled “Everyone Defeated,” includes the following text:

“The images are of a proletarian Genoa in a state of death, devastation and shaken by violence that has not been seen at other protests. There was the first death of an anti-globalization protester, 180 people injured; it is a depressed and humiliated city, shaken by a day of unending madness. Only the death of this young boy finally stopped the assault of the terrible Black Bloc, anarchists and professionals of urban guerrilla warfare, as well as the hard response of the police... A helpless city, invaded by tens of Black Bloc contingents that came with only one objective: destroy everything” (*Il Secolo XIX*, July 21, 2001, p. 1).

An article on the following page, placed next to an image of two Black Bloc militants hurling stones in front of a burning garbage container, begins with the following description:

“Black sweatshirts and pants, black ski masks and red handkerchiefs wrapped around them. Molotov cocktails, sticks, stones and crowbars. The classic image of the violent squatters, which the Genoa Social Forum has spent months working against, descended on the city of the G8, reducing it to a battlefield of car skeletons, burning barricades, devastated stores and aggression. The black block had a free hand in Genoa for four hours, until three in the afternoon... it unleashed the most disastrous urban guerrilla warfare ever seen around a summit” (*Ibid.*, p. 2).

The coverage in the Spanish press was somewhat less sensational, and it tended to place more emphasis on the role of the police. For example, the major headline in *El Mundo* on July 21 reads, “The Italian Police kill an anti-globalization demonstrator during the G8 Summit,” while underneath there is an image of a medic attending to Carlo Giuliani’s dead body (*El Mundo*, July 21, 2001, p. 1). The front page of *El Pais* is dominated by a large photo

showing a group of riot police marching with their shields drawn past Giuliani's corpse. The headline on the article below reads, "Demonstrator is killed by police fire in the ruthless battle of Genoa." Still, repeated images of iconic street fighting and depictions of militant violence are littered throughout both papers. For example, the front-page article in *El Pais* describes the street fighting from the preceding day in the following terms:

"The ruthless battle during the G8 Summit, which the most violent anti-globalization groups had predicted and organized, turned the center of Genoa yesterday into the stomping ground of a guerilla army without headquarters... The most violent groups went around with masked faces, attacking the stores in their way when confronted by the police, who did not hold back any element of strength at their disposal" (*El Pais*, July 21, 2001, p. 1).

Once again, the main lesson drawn by the Spanish Press is the distinction between legitimate peaceful protest and the criminal violence of the radical minority, as an editorial in the July 21 *El Pais* argues, "The fact is that unleashing of violence by autonomous groups does not represent the majority, which together with the ineptitude of the carabinieri, relegated all the political proposals, including those presented by the G8, to the background." (Ibid: 10). The *el Mundo* editorial goes further in its aggressive law and order stance, arguing that the peaceful majority should definitively break with the violent fringe:

"The only conclusions, right now, are that the anti-globalization movement will only survive with credibility if they make a complete break from those feared infiltrated hooligans, and that the major democracies, even as they listen to the demands of the most reasonable leaders of the movement, should revise their legal panoply to confront the permanent violence that follows our political leaders during their meetings" (*El Mundo*, July 21, 2001, p. 3).

Similarly, the July 21 edition of the *New York Times*, which includes images of riot police throwing tear gas and a militant activist hurling a Molotov cocktail on the front page, emphasizes the reasonable positions of the majority of anti-globalization protesters against the violence of the radical fringe, explaining that, "As in previous demonstrations- from Seattle to Gothenburg, where a man was shot and badly wounded by Swedish police- a small number of more radical youths, bent on battling the police, instigated a form of violence that most demonstrators did not condone." (*New York Times*, July 21, 2001, p. A7).

The Italian and international press coverage on July 22 was similar to the previous day's, focusing on the militant street violence that broke out during the large unity march. For example, the main headline in the July 22 *La Repubblica* reads "G8, another day of war," while the sub-headline underneath explains, "The Black Bloc devastates Genoa during the pacifist march: hundreds of injured." (*La Repubblica*, July 22, 2001, p. 1). An article in the *Corriere Della Sera* explains how, "From the back of the march the Black Bloc advanced rapidly in small groups, and was able to insert itself at three points: head, middle and tail. A precise strategy, the same used the first day with the Cobas to hide within the crowd and attack the police." (*Corrier della Sera*, July 22, 2001, p. 3). Meanwhile, a major headline in the July 22 *El Pais* reads, "The second day of protests against the G8 throws Genoa into chaos," while the sub-headline of the leading story on the second page observes, "The Largest anti-globalization protest to date infiltrated by organized violent groups." (*El Pais*, July 22, 2001, p. 1). There was also page after page of pictures of violent street battles, background stories regarding previous anti-globalization protests, the Black Bloc and the history of Carlo Giuliani, and interviews with spokespeople from activist groups and the Italian authorities.

Starting on July 23 and beyond, after the protests had ended, the dominant media frames shifted abruptly, focusing on the need for the G8 to change their summit format and take increased security measures to avoid future protest violence. Moreover, significant coverage began to be devoted to activist testimony regarding police violence and abuse, particularly in the Spanish press. For example, the July 23 *El Pais* describes the police raid on the GSF media center in the following terms, “In the middle of a generalized panic, journalists and members of the organization were obliged to lay down on the floor, face down with their hands in the air, in a scene reminiscent of ‘those experienced in Latin America during the 70s,’ as the President of the Genoa Social Forum later pointed out.” On the same page there is a testimony from a Spanish activist tortured in a police van. The column begins, “Before the voluntary lawyers of the GSF, Pedro, one of the Spaniards detained during the White Overalls demonstration last Friday, showed bruises left on his body during his detainment by the police. This is his story: I was in a Carabinieri van in which they beat me until the blood began pouring from my head.” (*El Pais*, July 23, 2001, p. 4). The July 23 edition of *El Mundo* includes an article outlining the accusations of police brutality by Italian activists, who demanded the resignation of the Ministry of the Interior, with the following sub-headline, “They accuse the Berlusconi government of brutal and irresponsible behavior.” (*El Mundo*, July 23, 2001, p. 20).

During the next few weeks, the Italian and International press fielded continued stories about the massive demonstrations in Italy against the Berlusconi government, the ongoing investigations into the police brutality in Genoa, and additional activist testimony regarding police violence and abuse. For example, the July 25 *La Repubblica* carried a story about the widespread abuse within the Italian detention centers, entitled “Bolzaneto, lawyers denounce the ‘widespread torture in the barracks.’” The sub-headlines reads, “Much testimony of violence in the station on the periphery of Genoa.” (*La Repubblica*, July 25, 2001, p. 4). Meanwhile, the Spanish press continued to present vivid activist testimony from the anti-G8 protests. For example, one prominent story in the July 24 *El Pais* carried the headline, “The Spaniards detained in Genoa denounce, physical and psychological torture.” (*El Pais*, July 24, 2001, p. 4). Despite downplaying much of the police violence in Genoa,<sup>12</sup> the *New York Times* published an article on July 23 about the controversy surrounding Berlusconi’s handling of the protests, explaining that, “But the rage Mr. Berlusconi sampled mostly stemmed from a police raid early this morning at the headquarters of the protest’s coordinators, Genoa Social Forum, a raid that the group’s spokesman described as a ‘massacre’.” (*New York Times*, July 23, 2001, p. 9).

The mass media did not just reflect or report on the space of terror that emerged in Genoa, they actively helped produce it. This was accomplished largely through the use of specific kinds of violent representations. Exaggerated stories of potential conflict between militarized battalions of protesters and police together with sensationalist reports of bomb scares and radical anarchists helped create an environment of tension and paranoia before the protests had begun. The Italian police took advantage of widespread fears and expectations of violence to promote militant confrontation, through their own heavy handed tactics and, most likely, through active provocation. Once the siege began, the mass media played their part by

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<sup>12</sup> See Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) report from July 30, 2001 at <http://www.monitor.net/monitor/0107a/genoafair.html>.

constructing images of wanton destruction carried out by marauding gangs of young urban *guerrillas*, placing the blame for such “senseless violence” squarely on the shoulders of the Black Bloc. Editorial commentaries then took advantage of the situation to distinguish between the reasonable majority and the violent minority, reinforcing the sacred status of peaceful protest and constitutional democracy. Although the Italian police consistently dealt with protestors indiscriminately on the streets, lumping militant and non-violent groups into the same sac, the main lesson stressed afterward through the mass media was the need for the movement to completely break with its violent anarchist fringe. Even the images of young Carlo Giuliani’s dead corpse were constructed as a morality tale about the tragic consequences of wrongheaded protest violence. Media images are multivalent however, and many people in Italy and throughout world interpreted images of Carlo Giuliani’s corpse differently- as a sign of excessive police force employed by an authoritarian regime. After a peaceful protest was ruthlessly broken up by the police the following day (despite attempts to blame the Black Bloc), and as testimonies became available about widespread torture and abuse, including the brutal raid on the Diaz School, the dominant interpretation began to blame the violence and chaos on the Berlusconi government, whose posture came to be seen as a threat to democracy nearly equivalent to that posed by young anarchists. At this point, the media frames shifted abruptly, focusing on activist testimony regarding excess use of police force in the streets, widespread physical and psychological abuse of detainees and, perhaps most of all, the vicious attack on sleeping protestors at the Diaz school.

## **Conclusion**

Hundreds of thousands of activists came to Genoa during the G8 protests to denounce the structural, symbolic and everyday violence associated with capitalist globalization, and specifically to provoke a political crisis by undermining the symbolic order from which the legitimacy of multilateral institutions such as the G8 derives. Most networks sought to achieve this through diverse forms of non-violent direct action, while others chose performative violence to achieve the same ends. The overall framework was a symbolic declaration of war on the G8, followed by a ritualized siege of the red zone. The Berlusconi government had other plans, however, and the Italian police responded by employing mass mediated images of anarchist violence to justify the transformation of a terrain of ritualized, symbolic protest into a horrifying space of terror.

What was the relationship, then, between performative youth violence, mass mediated representations of violence and the overall impact of the anti-G8 demonstrations in Genoa? On the one hand, the sensationalist media coverage, before, during and after the protests brought a great deal of public visibility to the movement and, despite the overwhelming media focus on violence, to many of its political demands. Without the threat and potential for violence, it is not likely that the anti-G8 protests would have captured so much media attention. Moreover, images and discourses of militant confrontation helped radicalize and energize many sectors of the movement. On the other hand, the dominant media frames during the days of action were able to skillfully decontextualize and reinsert images of youth performative violence into a narrative of dreaded criminal, if not terrorist, deviance that threatened to isolate potential supporters and wrest legitimacy from the entire movement.

More often, though, the street violence was used to separate the “reasonable” majority from the radical fringe, thereby steering the movement in a more containable, reformist direction. However, when the levels of police brutality reached such extreme heights, many sectors of the liberal (progressist?) establishment became shocked and dismayed. The dominant media frames shifted toward condemnation of the Italian police and the Berlusconi government, which helped to energize and mobilize activist networks, while eliciting broad public sympathy for the movement. From yet another perspective, however, the physical and psychological terror inscribed on the bodies and minds of activists in Genoa produced lasting memories that may ultimately have served to blunt the combative edge among moderates and radicals alike. Although anti-globalization mobilizations have continued, and have even grown in numbers since, the movement’s radical confrontational spirit has remained muted.

What about the implications with respect to the debates surrounding violence within the movement? As we have seen, violence is a powerful cultural construct, and contests over what it means as well as when and where it can legitimately be used help construct alternative political identities among contending global activist networks. This involves what we might call a cultural politics of violence. Does property damage constitute violence? What about practices of self-defense? Are violent tactics effective and justified? If so, when, where and under what circumstances? The debates surrounding violence within the movement continued to rage after Genoa. Just after the anti-G8 protests, Susan George publicly criticized militant activist violence, as she asked:

“Are you content, demonstrators? I am not talking about the vast majority within the Genoa Social Forum. I know that you were terrorized, and some of you bloodied, and also not to those among the Black Bloc who were really police. Rather, I am talking to the authentic Black Bloc, who didn’t take part in any of the preparatory meetings that had been held for months, and who didn’t belong to any of the 700 responsible Italian organizations who decided to practice active non-violence”.<sup>13</sup>

George’s public statements unleashed a barrage of criticism within the movement, as they had done previously after the anti-EU protests in Gothenburg, although many agreed with her, particularly within ATTAC and the Social Forum process. On the other hand, many autonomous activists continued to support militant tactics, particularly as a form of self-defense, as the following statement reflects:

“Such was the negation in practice of the freedom of expression during the G8 Summit that even thousands of peaceful activists were forced to build barricades and throw all kinds of objects to avoid being steamrolled by police violence... All kinds of struggle... will be repressed without contemplation. The violence is not provoked by any of the organizations that form part of the anti-globalization movement. It is a natural part of the process of expansion of the capitalist system”.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond these two poles, many radicals publicly disagreed with Black Bloc tactics, but did not want to criminalize them either, as a member of “¡Ya Basta!”<sup>15</sup> explained:

“I was in Genoa, and I came back destroyed, tired, unhappy and drained, with the ligaments in my knees twisted and totally hoarse, and I told myself: no to the witch-hunt against anarchists, no to the

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<sup>13</sup> Cited in e-mail message posted on July 29, 2001 to the [bcn2001@yahoo.com](mailto:bcn2001@yahoo.com) listserv.

<sup>14</sup> Cited in Spanish-language document entitled “Manifiesto in Favor of Violent Direct Action,” archived at: <http://www.sindominio.net/fiambrera/web-agencias/nkotbb/textosnewkids/14.html>. This document goes on to provide three major justifications for violent direct action: 1) It is a form of expression, 2) It serves to transform the prevailing order, and 3) It is a way to do justice.

<sup>15</sup> Grupo de apoyo al movimiento zapatista. No confundir con el movimiento anti-ETA ¡Basta Ya!.

international criminalization of the Black Bloc... On the other hand, it is necessary to rethink a tactic that can be infiltrated and manipulated easily. This depends on the people who adopt this tactic, but it also concerns those who suffer the consequences of such permeability".<sup>16</sup>

Finally, many radical anti-capitalists associated with the Pink Block and Peoples Global Action continued to emphasize a networking logic- expressed on the tactical plane through "diversity of tactics". According to this perspective, the main lesson learned in Genoa was the need for increased dialogue, coordination and innovation, rejecting both criminalization and the aestheticization of violence, as an activist from MRG-Barcelona argued:

"The 'good activists' will have to choose between saving themselves by taking part in a witch-hunt against anarchists, or on the other hand, accepting 'diversity of tactics' and trying to criticize within this context, not leaving 'outside the movement' those, who in good measure, started it... All this without discounting that the police infiltrated the Black Bloc... With more sophistication, they took advantage of the lack of coordination between anarchist currents and the GSF to attack the Black Bloc just when they passed in front of non-violent demonstrations... One thing has become clear: we have to coordinate direct action with all other types of protest (peaceful and non-violent disobedience)... Who knows when a sit-in or a Molotov cocktail will be useful? It depends on the moment. And according to the Asian wisdom: always do what the enemy least expects".<sup>17</sup>

In many ways, however, Genoa provides an important limiting test case for diversity of tactics. Although elites often attempt to divide protesters into peaceful moderates and violent militants, police tactics on the streets of Genoa involved precisely the reverse: creating widespread terror by mixing so-called violent and non-violent activists in order to justify indiscriminate attacks against the entire movement. In these situations, maintaining separate spaces for different tactics may be impossible. Given the state's interest in provoking militant conflict, even relatively benign levels of performative violence may place other activists in extreme risk. Dialogue and coordination may not be enough. On the other hand, the state cannot always assume the political flak associated brutal terror tactics, as the political fall-out against the Berlusconi government after Genoa makes clear. Decisions regarding the use of specific protest tactics, then, have to take into account the specific nature of the political conjuncture. Indeed, after Genoa, and particularly in wake of September 11, activists have largely succeeded in reducing the level of violent confrontation at mass anti-globalization protests, although some would argue that mobilizations have lost their critical edge and become overly scripted. One thing is clear: tactical innovation and creativity are the most effective ways to confront state campaigns of repression and cooptation, while winning hearts and minds along the way.

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<sup>16</sup> Cited in e-mail message posted on July 25, 2001 to the [bcn2001@yahoogroups.com](mailto:bcn2001@yahoogroups.com) listserve.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Spanish-language document entitled "Info for a Puzzle," archived at: <http://www.sindominio.net/fiabrera/web-agencias/nkotbb/textosnewkids/11.html>.

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