

**In Genoa**, the Group of Eight (the leaders of the seven most advanced industrial nations plus Russia) brought their war of terror to the people. Finally, with no holds barred, this was to be a pre-emptive murderous assault against every political and organizational hue, every colour of action and allegiance. All were to be beaten, laid low before the might of the 'gang of eight,' the Mafiosi of neoliberalism. As the days of action accumulated, it became increasingly obvious that the state might soon resort to its monopoly on deadly force. By the end of 20 July 2001, after thousands had participated in direct action, often in the face of police ambush and unprovoked attacks, Carlo Giuliani lay dead, shot in the head and repeatedly run over by the Carabinieri.

The next day a 300,000 strong demonstration sustained hours of police attack, culminating in chaotic retreats, street fighting, and many injuries and arrests. That night, sleeping activists were beaten in their sleeping bags in the Diaz school, donated by the City of Genoa and opposite the Indymedia Centre, hospitalizing over 60 of the 93 people arrested there. Gianfranco Fini, the Deputy Prime Minister of Italy and leader of the National Alliance, a 'post-Fascist' party, had been at police headquarters for two days. Encouraged by Berlusconi, Blair, and Bush, who made their support of the police public despite the death of Carlo Giuliani, Fini pushed just a little further, and the results were all too bloodily predictable.

Genoa was a key moment; for many in the North it was the moment when the war came home, not the silent, everyday war of repression, poverty, and exclusion, but the visible war waged by an empire that will tolerate no breach in its façade. It was also a moment to mourn our loss, to pause and consider tactics, and to re-group, plan, and think. What follows is a collage of descriptions, experiences, and reflections that came from this process, a mosaic within which the Genoa protests might be glimpsed.

## Genoa: the new beginnings of an old war

Extract from email 'Death and Terror in Genoa' by Ramor Ryan

The walls went up around the old quarter of Genoa, enclosing the G8 and their cohorts: huge heavy walls of concrete and metal, like medieval fortifications or prison fences, walls to keep the people out, the world leaders penned in.

Genoa is a beautiful renaissance city carved out of a treacherous mountain slope that seems to slide irrevocably into the sea. Its pulsating streets, the mystery of its dense labyrinth, and the expansive calm of the seafront created a surreal theatre for the battle that would consume it. Leading up to the summit, the authorities closed down the airport, the main railway stations, and severely restricted access by road. Aside from the centre of town (the red zone), which was completely forbidden to citizens, the area surrounding the red zone was also restricted (the yellow zone) with people enduring random stop-and-searches. Local people fled the town in droves, and most businesses closed for the duration of the summit. The G8 had transformed Genoa from a thriving commercial and tourist metropolis to a war zone under a form of martial law.

As if to justify the extraordinary security measures, the media reported various bomb scares and explosive finds, all of which protesters viewed sceptically. No groups claimed responsibility, and these are not tactics used by the alternative globalization movement. The Italian military

brought in an array of defensive missiles, and war ships were stationed in the bay. A state of paranoid terror was created to dissuade protesters from coming, and to criminalize the protesters who did.

Friday 20 July. The aim was to shut down the G8. The strategy was to attempt to breach the fortifications from a variety of positions. The tactics were direct action. The first task was to break through the myriad fortified police lines. The strongest contingent was the *Ya Basta/Tute Bianche* grouping, numbering more than 10,000 militants. They used a previously successful tactic of wearing layers of protective padding and helmets while using plastic shields to push through the police lines. Some wore gas masks. The preparations began with talks and then training sessions. Resembling an army preparing for war, men and women, predominantly young and Italian, spent all morning taping up their fragile bodies with foam and padding. The atmosphere was tense, the mood defiant. It really seemed anything was possible. There was an ecstatic mood of celebration when we finally set off on the two and a half mile march to the city centre, an endless sea of bobbing

helmets, a vast array of flags of every hue and colour, led at the front by a long line of *Tute Bianche* militants behind a wall of plastic shields.

Despite all the ominous reports, we swept down the wide boulevard confidently – we were so many! Like an unstoppable river! So many people prepared to use their bodies to break through, to defend themselves, to struggle.

*“El Pueblo Unido, Jamas Sera Vencido,”* we chanted. *“Genova Libera!”* *“E-Z-L-N!”*. Rage Against The Machine blasted from the mobile PA – *“Fuck You, I Won’t Do What You Tell Me!”* screamed along by thousands. It was momentarily powerful and wonderful. Then about a mile from the red zone, the police attacked us. First a frantic barrage of tear gas, lobbing over the front lines, deep into the heart of the demonstration; nobody here had gas masks. The poisonous gas first blinds you, then hurts, and then disorients you. It is immediate and devastating. The people, packed in tightly, panicked and surged backwards. The chaos was manic. Five hundred heavily armed riot police stormed the front lines. In brutal scenes and despite brave resistance, the *Tute Bianche* militants’ defence crumbled and they were battered.

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>> **June 15** >> Over 50,000 workers from 126 South Korean unions stop work, despite the strike being declared illegal by the government. All Korean Airlines flights are canceled and efforts by the police to arrest 14 union leaders of the airline are blocked by workers. Nearly 9,000 hospital workers later join the strike, taking action against government plans to restructure.  
>> **June 15-17** >> Thousands converge on Gothenburg,

Sweden to participate in the For Another Europe conference and the Reclaim the City street party, counter points to the summit meeting of EU heads of state. Despite protest groups’ prior negotiations with authorities, a campaign of criminalization, including scare stories in the media about “armed terrorists” creates a climate of fear and tension. Police SWAT teams armed with laser-guided machine guns besiege the

convergence centre, using freight containers to barricade streets, while police with dogs and horses attack, arresting 200 people inside. This pattern of containment and provocative policing continues throughout the summit, culminating in police firing live rounds into the crowd at the street party, hitting three people, and sending thousands into panic. Months later, despite conclusive evidence that Swedish police

People screamed, turned, fled, falling over each other. We retreated up the road. The sky was heavy with gas and helicopters hovered overhead. A water cannon blasted away, throwing bodies around like paper bags.

What now? People looked to the *Tute Bianche* leadership in all this horrible disarray but there was no Plan B. Silence from the microphone that had been commanding us to follow their directions the whole march. People retreated further and further, eventually sitting down. The *Tute Bianche* leaders told people to hold this space, this nowhere space over a mile outside the city centre, signifying nothing. Meanwhile the frontlines struggled to hold on, and the fighting was intense, the tear gas volleys raining down, the police hitting out viciously, as the plastic shields shattered, the helmets cracked. Injured people were rushed to the back, injuries to the head, people who had been shot in the face with tear gas canisters. We were defeated before having even begun the nonviolent direct action tactics, active defence crushed in the face of decisively brutal police tactics. As the majority of the march sat down further up the road, thousands of others streamed off into the side streets. The right side was blocked by the railway track, but the left side was a labyrinth of tight chaotic enclosed streets.

Open new fronts! Break through police lines at two, three, four different points! A couple thousand people stormed into the side streets. The *Tute Bianche* loudspeaker requested people to stay put on the road, far from the red zone. In a beautiful old *barrio*, the battle raged. Protesters charged up tight streets flinging stones at the police lines.

The police, protected head to toe, amassed behind shields and flanked by armoured vehicles, responded with tear gas and by flinging back the rocks. The ferocious spirit of the protesters rather than the paltry stones pushed back the police lines. Then barricades were built, with dumpsters, cars, anything at hand. The front lines retreated, nursing wounds and poisoned eyes. The more seriously injured were carried to ambulances. One man was carried by with blood spurting from his eye where a canister had hit him. New people rushed to the front, others tore up the pavement for ammunition. A tall Irish man fell back, saying, "We almost got through, we just need a few more people ...!"

Another surge, everybody rushed forward on two or three different streets. Some riot cops got stranded in their retreat and hand-to-hand fighting ensued. The people fighting are not necessarily in black, although some are masked. Some have helmets. It is not the Black Bloc, and there are no agent provocateurs. This is a militant energy driven by people who have said – "Ya basta! (enough), fuck the police", with rage, energy, resolve. They move forward; tear gas everywhere, the police retreating. An armoured vehicle is captured and the occupants flee. It is smashed up and set ablaze. This armoured *Carabinieri* truck, symbol of what they hate, is ablaze and everyone is cheering and filled with rebel joy. Someone sprays "We Are Winning!" on the side of the carcass of the armoured beast. Now they are almost in Piazza Alimondo. They are pushing the police back, two, three blocks, the protesters are euphoric, storming forward, overwhelming the despised *Carabinieri*.

Getting closer to the detested wall of the G8; “Here we are,” they chant, “We resist!” Hundreds strong, they pour into the expansive Piazza Alimondo. Two police vehicles drive recklessly into the crowd, one drives away, the other stalls; people rush towards the vehicle. Then shots ring out. Plastic bullets? No, the ominous thud of live ammunition. The air heaves. The protesters stop, reel around, and flee. Carlo Guiliani was 23 years old. A rebel. The papers belittled him, called him a ne’er do well, a bum, a hobo. But we know him as a comrade and a revolutionary. He fought the paramilitary police bravely, fearlessly. He was involved in the Zapata Social Centre of Genoa. Zapata lives. Carlo’s death was not heroic, nor tragic. It was the consequence of his life, how he lived, how he resisted. Moments before he was shot in the face, Carlo probably felt the extraordinary rebel joy of this spontaneous uprising against power in the little side streets of Genoa. He died instantly, or when the police drove over him, not once but twice, as if to make sure he was dead, really dead. For the police, Carlo had to die. Now they must kill us, because we are beginning to really threaten their power. Carlo was murdered. We are all Carlo.

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creatively edited video footage used as evidence, heavy jail sentences are passed on many of the 600 arrestees. UK prime minister Tony Blair declares that “there is no place in democracy for an anarchists’ traveling circus that goes from summit to summit with the sole purpose of causing as much mayhem as possible.”

>> **June 18** >> Students and ordinary citizens join striking bus drivers in the streets of Jakarta, Indonesia,

jointly declaring that the proposed removal of fuel subsidies will make it impossible for bus drivers to earn their living without raising fares. Police respond with plastic bullets and tear gas, and 42,000 Indonesian military personnel are put on high alert after running battles in the streets. Local authorities decide that rather than maintaining subsidies, they will increase bus fares by 30 per cent, vastly compromising the ability of

poor people to get to work.

>> **June 18** >> In Zimbabwe, protesters block roads in response to a 70 per cent rise in fuel prices. The Congress of Trade Unions renews its threat to call a general strike if the Government does not revoke the price rise.

>> **June 21** >> Special Agent Chocolate Supreme generously delivers a blueberry tofu cream pie to the

**“Genoa is Bupyeong where the Daewoo Motors workers were bloodied, is Ulsan where Hyosung workers protesting against restructuring were threatened with knives, and is also Yeoido where striking cement-mixer drivers were attacked by police armed with axes and hammers. What is definite at this time is that there can be no compromise between neoliberal globalization and lives of the workers and people. They have already started to aim their guns and proclaim war against the peoples around the world.”**

– **Mi-Kyeong Ryu, Secretary of KoPA (Korean union association) in Genoa, comparing it to repression experienced by Korean workers**