

beast. Where we choose to go from here is crucial to whether we are in the process of sparking serious global change or whether we are merely in the death throes of another cycle of resistance.

If we don't want corporate activity in our neighbourhoods, let's chuck the corporations out. If we don't want the police or the government flexing their muscle in our neighbourhoods, let's stop recognizing their bogus authority and encourage others to do the same. Let's link our communities together – not through state or business initiatives – but through people who share a common struggle. If we believe in making changes and creating something better, and if we are prepared to take the risks and put in the time, then let's do it. Let's not let Carlo's death be in vain. Because when one of us catches a bullet, a club, or a jail sentence, a little bit of all of us dies. But together we are alive, and together we can, and we will, win.

Protecting the Movement and its Unity: a realistic approach

by El Viejo (excerpt from an email)

Genoa showed that antiglobalization has become a vast social movement: 300,000 people demonstrated, despite the most intense criminalization campaign conducted since Prague and Gothenberg. And opinion polls in countries as different as Greece, Switzerland, France, and Italy indicate that a large majority is in favour of the movement.

To this massive popular pressure, our rulers (right and 'left') have not made even the slightest, the most reformist concession over the past three years. They have only one answer: police violence. Their plan is simple: frighten as many as possible so that they stay home and condemn the radical part of the movement; radicalize and criminalize the rest.

We must all abandon (at least in the short run) our self-important illusions that we can persuade or impose a single perspective on the whole movement. Debate must continue of course, but whatever our particular position within the

demonstrate, demanding payment of back salaries, and the reinstatement of benefits, cut as part of austerity measures. Police respond with tear gas.

>> **August 29** >> Farmers in South Cotabato, Philippines join with local Earth First! activists to destroy genetically engineered corn. Tearing down fences and tearing up fields, the activists destroy the test site in five minutes. Police leave the scene when

confronted by the media, while Monsanto employees photograph the protesters, all of whom escape successfully.

>> **August 30-31** >> All major South African towns and cities are nearly shut down as nearly four million people participate in a two day strike against privatization and lay-offs. A union spokesperson says: "We want to broaden the public sphere and limit the

space in our society that is dominated by unelected, undemocratic, profit-driven forces."

>> **August 31** >> Over 20,000 people march against the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, saying that racial apartheid has been replaced by economic apartheid.

>> **September 2-7** >> A massive grassroots campaign, the Cry of the Excluded, organizes a

movement, the really subversive approach is to think how to protect the whole movement and make it grow. This is true of movements in general, and even more of this one in particular, for whom diversity is a central value and goal. Any attempt to hegemonize the movement is a blow against it.

Over and above our very real differences, paradoxically we actually need each other. Without the 'radicals' this whole movement wouldn't have existed and would now be quickly recuperated, co-opted. Without the 'reformists,' we would be isolated and wiped out. We are at once opposed and allied. And the sooner the regime can drive a wedge between us, the more difficult it will be for us.

So we would like to say to the 'nonviolent' side: If you try to impose nonviolence without discussion as though it was obviously the only legitimate means, you will lose all credit with the young radicals, for you will appear to align yourselves on the position of the police and to implicitly accept the idea that the changes needed are possible without challenging the rules of the game set by the regime, and its legitimacy. Should we really scrupulously respect the property of multinationals amassed through murder and exploitation? Rightly or wrongly, violence of different kinds has been inseparable from practically every movement for radical change in our culture, and has often been considered necessary to provoke real change.

The 'Black Bloc,' as such, doesn't really exist. There are just different persons and groups – often dressed in black – who share the opinion that destruction of property, and in some cases violence against police, can be an effective and

legitimate political tool. Implicitly, they invoke the legitimacy of self-defence against a regime whose own illegitimacy and incredible violence is every day more obvious.

So repeating the enemy's revolting propaganda about these people (that they are purely destructive, nihilists, etc.) will not moderate or dissuade them. On the contrary, it can only confirm their desperate suspicion that they are alone in a sea of corruption and political naivety. On the other hand, it is urgent to start a serious debate on the pros and cons of violence with them. Because we have been through all this already. We have seen the most generous and determined of a generation abandoned in isolation cells, suicided or killed. And the world is in too bad a state to let history go on stuttering.

To the 'Black Bloc,' we could say: We refuse to renounce the right to violence as a legitimate right of self-defence against an inherently violent system. And that is an important idea. But at the same time we recognize that perhaps our principle demand is a less violent society and that the movement that builds that society must resemble the society we want. So our violence must always be as minimal as possible. We won't win by force; we will win because people like our practices and the ideas behind them. And the right to self-defence is just one of our ideas. Let's not get hung up on it or identified politically only with that.

Another of our ideas is precisely that we want a less macho society, in which force isn't the only recognized way of deciding things. And that idea is much better expressed by nonviolent direct action, by the sober and determined

refusal to accept injustice. Yet another idea is that we are for a diverse and non-hierarchical society in which all can be heard, without being silenced by the behaviour of others.

It is also important that our movement should not always be expressing rage, but also the joy, the life and laughter of a real movement of liberation. We want to leave this grey and violent world behind, reproducing it as little as possible in our forms of struggle. All these ideas, and more, are as important as the legitimacy of our violence, and can all be eclipsed by the excessive imposition of violent methods.

Victorious movements are ones that can adapt to circumstances, use violence when really necessary, but also humour, music, reason, patience – being stubborn in one case and negotiating in another. Flexibility is the secret of survival for any living thing.

Anyway, no one part or tendency of the movement can seriously expect to convince the others in the short term. And if they seek to destroy the others, they will assure the victory of the enemy. For me, consciously trying to spoil other groups' game or to impose their opinions on others is the only thing that can de facto put a group outside the movement.

Whether those who do this kind of thing consider themselves anarchists or autonomous or pacifists, they are acting like Stalinists. The movement must be like the society it is building: a place of autonomy, diversity, and respect.

Objectively speaking, this movement would not exist without the 'radicals.' It was nonviolent but illegal action and the Black Bloc that reawoke the world's political imagination. But without the mass of 'moderates,' the radicals would all be in jail already. Is it not possible for us to see, beyond our narrow views, how to preserve the whole movement, keep ALL of it as safe and wise as possible, make it grow?

The debate will continue. But there are also other urgent things to discuss. In particular, how to profit from the truly historic opportunity that the human tide of Genoa is a small part of. The regime has not appeared so totally illegitimate for decades. In three years, the antiglobalization movement has practically become a subject of consensus.

Anticapitalism is following close behind.

national popular referendum throughout Brazil on the internal and external debt. Over six million Brazilians vote that the government should cease payments on the external debt.

>> **September 4** >> Environmental groups protest outside the Brazilian Congress in response to a controversial bill which would allow farmers to clear larger areas of the Amazon for agriculture. The new

bill stands to increase the proportion of forest that can be cleared for export farming, from 20 per cent to 50-80 per cent.

>> **September 10** >> Two thousand people defy security forces and flood Midan al-Tahrir in central Cairo, Egypt, in solidarity with the Palestinian intifada. Demanding an end to US aid to Israel, the protest is the first public demonstration in the square since 1977, and

launches a revitalization of Egyptian activism, particularly among women and students.

>> **September 13** >> Mexico City is brought to a standstill as thousands protest in response to plans to impose taxes on certain foods and medicines.

>> **September 13** >> Villagers from the Kajang community of South Sulawesi, Indonesia carry out a traditional ritual as part of a demonstration against