

SO THAT THAT JULY TURNS OUT TO BE A THREAT

On the trial of the rebels of Genoa

On March 2, 2004, the trial against twenty-five demonstrators accused of "devastation and looting" for the rebellion against the G8 in July 2001 opened in Genoa. And it is just the beginning, a testing ground aimed at perhaps even wider judiciary operations. It is an *exemplary* trial in every sense: for the type of charge (which has very few precedents in Italian history and which anticipates several years in prison), for the way in which power has prepared the terrain for the plays and vendettas of the court, for how the whole business illustrates the obstacles that every collective movement of individual liberation has to face in the courthouses and in the streets.

Anticipated by twenty arrests ordered by the attorney's office of Cosenza in November 2002, and by twenty-three more arranged a little later by the attorney's office in Genoa, this trial wants to send everyone a clear message: the uprising of Genoa will have its scapegoats. It is quite obvious that what is at stake goes beyond the July revolt itself to project its dire shadow over the future. As an example, one can take the initiative, promoted by the attorney of Genoa, to acquire a space on the Ligurian newspaper *Il Secolo XIX* to publish the photographs – taken by a surveillance camera laced on the street – of two demonstrators with the aim of identifying them. On that occasion, the crime of "psychic participation" made its public appearance again: in substance the state affirms that it is not necessary to directly participate in acts of revolt in order to incur the favors of repression, rather it is enough to be present where they happened without preventing others from carrying them out; in short, without turning into police agents. We add that those arrested in Cosenza were explicitly made an indecent offer with some success, which in consequence would become a constant: the "renunciation of violence" in exchange for release from prison – and we will have an even more precise picture. What is on trial now is not this or that action, this or that act of sabotage, but rather the attitude toward the institutions and, more generally, the refusal itself of the social order and life as subjects that it imposes. Collaborators or enemies: this is the ultimatum that the state launches at everyone.

This is also the sense in which the continuous propaganda that the various Ministries of Fear are orchestrating around the concept of "terrorism" can be understood. Especially since the attack on the Twin Towers, the demonstrator who breaks windows is equated with the revolutionary who shoots down a man of state, and the latter is equated with the kamikaze who blows up a crowded bus. Thanks to this self-interested confusion power has tried to hide the meaning of the days in Genoa: on one side, a social uprising that involved thousands of individuals willing to bring down the order of money and truncheons; on the other side, the state that threw off its mask, thus revealing its true assassin's face. For anyone who did not want to draw any lessons from that July, what more could we add that power has not amply shown by beating and killing in the streets and by humiliating and torturing in the enclosure of its barracks? What could we add about the inanity of anyone who asks the courts for Truth and Justice, as if a single truth and justice could exist on both sides of the barricades? Haven't the government, the rulers and the judges

been explicit in absolving and promoting the murderers and torturers in uniforms, like always?

In the same way that the machinery of control cuts up neighborhoods and cities with its barriers and check-points, its surveillance cameras and squadrons, the inquisitors cut up events with their inquiries and legal codes. Public ministers Canepa and Canciani – two neo-specialists in the hunt for rebels – are merely refining the work started with the militarization of Genoa and continued through the attacks, the murderous bullet of Alimonda plaza, the raid against Diaz, the tortures in Bolzaneto and other barracks, the arrests and expulsions in the following days and months. In relation to the investigations, public minister Silvio Franz, well-known for covering up state scandals, has carried out a leading role thanks to the aid of a collection of experts notoriously linked to the sphere of the *carabinieri* and of neo-fascists.

It is up to those who have not forgotten that contagious rebellion which conquered the streets, to those who don't want to let the blood shed by the hand of the state's cops dry up in their mind, to furnish all the weapons needed for solidarity toward the demonstrators on trial. This is the meaning of the modest notes that follow.

In defiance of numberless counter-investigations that have ended up complicating what was so very evident through the *totalitarianism of the fragment*; in defiance of the chattering with which the specialists have covered up this uprising and the slander with which the political pack of hounds has besmirched it, we want to retrace a threatening history in order to put it back in play.

Secret appointments

A mysterious appointment exists between the generations that have been and our own.

Walter Benjamin

A few days before the G8, some Genoans went to a carpenter in the historical center of the Ligurian capital with the request that he prepare pieces of wood to be assembled as poles. The old craftsman immediately grasped the intentions of these unusual clients and told them what *they*, those of his generation, used in conflicts with the police. The memory goes back to the revolt of July 1960, to the young people in striped t-shirts, in the working class neighborhoods of Genoa. The old man explained that, in order to face the charges of the riot cops, the insurgents made use of the stockfish left to dry outside of the numerous fish shops of the alleys. The vendors passed them to the rebels, but not before having immersed them in the water tank to make them sturdy and effective. The paths of the historical center are no longer the same, so our friends left there with their collapsible poles. But a few days later, these pieces of wood will be a sort of baton between two generations of uncontrollables and rowdies.

Friday, July 20, 2001, after hundreds on rebels have liberated some neighborhoods from the capitalist normality that is the coldest of icy monsters, a supermarket is

transformed into a collective, free banquet. For a few hours, rebels and residents of the area freely help themselves, eating and joking and discussing. Even a journalist, paid to serve with his telescopic lens as others serve with their cudgels, is photographed by one of his colleagues as he comes out with two packages of mozzarella.

In order for this mozzarella to meet those stockfish in a "tiger's pounce into the past", a social uprising was needed that could replace historical time with the time of revolt. An uprising that has upset both the plans of the Earth's Rulers and their guard dogs and those of the mediated and media opposition.

The thread of a history

What has happened now will be quickly forgotten. In the air, only an empty, horrible memory. Who was protected? The lazy, the miserable, the usurers. Those who were young had to fall... but the unworthy sit unscathed in the warmth of their living rooms.

Ernst Bloch

The G8 summit in Genoa was the occasion for a huge experiment in control and militarization without precedent in Italy: streets closed and armored with gratings over fifteen feet tall, the complete restructuring of traffic circulation, manhole covers preventatively welded... and more comical provisions were not lacking (underpants and socks removed from the balconies!). Many exasperated citizens left the city, which assumed the grim appearance of an enormous concentration camp. Twenty thousand men from all the armed corps of the state came together in the Ligurian capital in order to patrol it. Roadblocks were set up, body bags in which to put the possible dead ordered, selected snipers positioned on the roofs and frogmen stationed in the water. An authentic torture chamber was prepared for prisoners at Bolzaneto, the management of which was assigned to the gentlemen of the special prison anti-riot squad (the GOM). While the task of maintaining public order was entrusted mainly to the *carabinieri* [1], which formed the CCIR (*carabinieri* contingent for decisive intervention) for the occasion, constituted of soldiers commanded by officers of the elite *Tuscania* corps, active earlier in Somalia, Bosnia and Albania.

For its part, the state did not prepare to control a protest, but to deal with a war. It's not a matter of controlling demonstrators, but rather of clearing the board of enemies. In Genoa for the first time, the state experimented in such a systematic, explicit and widespread manner with the military logic that presides over international missions against its own people. In a demonstration of how the line of demarcation between external and internal enemies is disappearing in a world unified by the religion of money. In a demonstration of how power must test out in small scenarios what might be general in the future. After all, if war is considered a police operation, a police operation could well be considered a war.

The outcome showed one of the constants of military and technological expansion: everything that is prepared merely waits to be used.

The anticipated battlefield was the one that stretched around the "red zone". Here, in front of the gates and fences protecting the summit center, is where assaults of the demonstrators were expected. This is where the petty leaders of the mediated, media protest gathered their troops. This is also where the guard dogs of power were concentrated in order to repel the pressure of the discontented subjects who came to beg for their illusory rights. Everything seemed ready. A multitude of respectful citizens who cry out their reasons, the forces of order hired to repel them, the skirmish agreed to in negotiation in order to evoke and exorcise the specter of conflict, the journalists who hurried there from around the world, the final applause since, in the end, everything had to develop peacefully, summit and counter-summit. None of this came about. From their side, the institutions had no real intention of avoiding conflict, due to their clear desire to teach an unforgettable lesson to the ungrateful consumers of Western well-being. From the side of the movement, or at least one part of it, there were those who preferred to be protagonists of an explicit rebellion against the so-called Masters of the Earth rather than become a spectator or play a walk-on part in an agitated TV series to the profit of the mass media. Thus, the rebels were not seen around the "red zone". They preferred to desert the virtual conflict agreed to by the institutions in order to go and find the real conflict, the one without mediation. Despite showing up in the city and on the date set by the institutional agenda, several hundred enemies of this world, quite different from one another, without leaders or followers, without head or tail, would go where they weren't expected. Instead of launching themselves headlong against a supposed heart of domination, they preferred to go elsewhere, knowing well that domination has no heart since it is found everywhere. The physical spaces where the cult of money is practiced, where the stink of the commodity lingers in the air, where the lies of commerce are heard – and not the mere "symbols" of capitalism, as the leftist vulgate of the adorers of the existent claimed – would come to know the practical critique of action: banks would be attacked, supermarkets looted, dealerships set on fire.

A city can be beloved, its houses and streets can be recognized in our deepest and dearest memories, but only in the hour of revolt is the city truly experienced as our city: [...] ours, because it is a circumscribed space in which historical time is suspended and every act has value in itself, in its absolutely immediate consequences. The city is taken over in the escaping and advancing with the back and forth of the charges, much more than playing in its streets as children or passing there later with a girlfriend. In the hour of revolt one is no longer alone in the city.

Furio Jesi

After the passing of the rebels, who curious people and youth of the neighborhoods would frequently join, nothing was any longer as before. Cars, as mobile boxes that transport workers to their daily condemnation, became toys with which

to amuse oneself and barricades with which to stop the police. The siren song of advertising that poisons the spirit and commodifies bodies was silenced. Electronic eyes were blinded. Journalists were driven away. Looting transformed commodities to pay for into free goods to share. Through colorful writing, the walls were freed from their dismal greyness. Streets, docks and buildings were used as arsenals. The city plan, modeled on the needs of the economy and refined by the imperatives of social control, broke down under the fire of the uprising. Quite quickly, the impossible became possible: the prison of Marassi, mostly emptied in order to leave space for eventual arrests, was attacked. The same fate struck a *carabinieri* barracks. For their part, the men in uniform spread all the violence that they could. Those who have accused the black-clad rebels of having provoked the repression would do better to take note that the police and military operations were already planned and organized as a preventative form of deterrence in the face of it all. In fact, it was not the result of an excess of zeal, of too much tension or of inexperience, but was rather the true face of state terrorism that raged unfettered, launching its armored vehicles at breakneck speed against defenseless demonstrators. This is what really determined the generalized spread of revolt. The very thing that was supposed to stop it, the police intervention, ended up feeding it. In the course of a short time, thousands of demonstrators who were peaceful up to then joined the rebels and began to fight against the cops, leaping into a desperate guerrilla battle. Even among the militants of the political rackets whose leaders called for calm, moderation and non-violence, there was much insubordination.

The ideology of disobedience [2] itself would experience its first disobedients. A little more than an hour after their demonstration started, the good intentions of the *Tute Bianche* were shattered. When the leaders of the white overalls again exhorted journalists in their train not to confuse them with the violent after coming across the first shell of a burnt car, when the smoke that rose in the distance was still distant enough that it could be ignored, the charge of the *carabinieri* in via Tolemaide put an end to the simulation. Despite the negotiations beforehand, this time there'd be no spectacle: the cops attacked in earnest! Deaf to the appeals of their petty leaders who called them to give up, to not react, many *Disobbedienti* began to fight against the men in uniform, with the help of other demonstrators who rushed to confront those who were attacking them. For a few hours, there were no longer violent or non-violent, men or women, social democrats or anarchists, militants or common people, building surveyors or unemployed, but only individuals in revolt against the guard dogs of the existent and the life that is imposed. It was during these conflicts that Carlo Giuliani was killed. He was not a "block bloc" person. He was not an anarchist. He was not a provocateur. He was not an infiltrator. He was only a young man who had reacted to state violence. Not one of the few, but one of the many.

Let's be clear on this point. In the days that followed, all the career politicians that infest the movement initially took their distance from what happened, accusing the

rebels of being a handful of "provocateurs" and "infiltrators" who had intentionally sabotaged a great peaceful date with their actions, causing a historical occasion for being heard to be lost. The entire pack of social democratic dogs – the same ones who had raised so much dust and noise up to that time and who therefore believed themselves to be the vehicle of history – spilled an ocean of slander on them, reviving the old Stalinist tradition of the "hunt for the plague-spreaders". This was a way of venting their rancor against those who decided to escape their control, revealing their presumed authoritativeness in all its falseness. It was a way of closing one's eyes in the face of the end of their political project, the vainglorious inconsistency of which came out in all its wretchedness at the end of those days, pathetically trying to relaunch itself. Those who are so indignant that hundreds of comrades went to Genoa with the intention of inciting a rebellion, making a minimum of preparation in this direction and trying to avoid the trap of direct conflict with the police, should reflect more on who aroused the spirits for months, promising assaults and invasions without having any intention of carrying them out, without giving the least consideration to the possible consequences. They should reflect more on who raised the white hands of non-violence to the skies as a sign of surrender and not of dignity, helping to send thousands of defenseless demonstrators to certain defeat. And perhaps to pose a few more questions: can one be truly "non-violent" and collaborate with the state, the greatest expression of violence? Who could denounce those who smashed shop windows in Genoa? Maybe those who smashed bones, heads and teeth? Maybe those who were indignant about trampled gardens and then consider workplace deaths normal? Or even those who want to invade the "red zone" of privilege from the "grey zone" of collaborationism? If anyone who attacks a bank is an infiltrating provocateur, how might one describe those who advise a government minister, discuss with a member of parliament and make contracts with a police chief? That Friday furnished some answers.

Saturday, July 21, political calculation and fear took the upper hand over rage. The various militant political rackets organized themselves to distance and purge their true enemy: all the uncontrollables who had made their plans fail so miserably. As is well-known, that evening the police, unbridled in their absolute certainty of impunity, carried out the attack on the Diaz school, the temporary office of the Social Forum. Everyone there was brutally beaten by the enraged officers. A seemingly incomprehensible action, because along with the rest, the cops beat some of their best allies who had distinguished themselves in their work as informers the whole time. In reality, this episode fits perfectly into the military logic that governed the operation of the forces of order. The proof of the strength of the Italian government had to be shown once and for all.

A deafening babble

Everyone who has anything to say, come forward and shut up

The revolt ended, and the commentary on it by journalists, specialists and experts began. And the more the accounts and interpretations of what happened grew, the more its crystalline clarity diminished. The revolt in Genoa in its lived totality has been cut up and dismembered into so many tiny particles. Everything has been ground up and reduced to powder so that nothing can be seen anymore. Naturally this formidable work of mystification has been carried out in the name of truth. The truth that many expect and demand to be pushed through in the halls of the courts.

And yet, everyone knows what really happened. It is indelibly etched in the memories and the flesh of the thousands of demonstrators who were there. And Genoa has precisely demonstrated the absolute practical uselessness and the frequent dangerousness of cameras and video cameras. Apart from the police, who profited from them in identifying and denouncing many rebels – a task made easier by the omnipresence of carriers of telephoto lenses – , and the journalists who collected their wages for the work carried out, of what use was all this camerawork? What's the use of showing the entire world that the vice-chief of the *Digos* [3] in Genoa, Alessandro Perugini, kicked a boy who was stretched out on the ground, immobilized by the cop's colleagues, in the face? Has he been put in a position where he can no longer repeat his endeavor, because he was caught in the act? Has a court condemned him; has he been kicked out of the police force and replaced with a well-educated officer, respectful of the constitution? Not at all, quite the opposite. With rather macabre humor, the state named Mr. Perugini as the Italian representative for an international campaign against torture in the world.

The belief that it is sufficient to expose the abuses of power in order to force it to its knees is an ideological illusion, deserving to disappear like all ideologies. Goodness knows they felt wretched, these idealists who believe in the light that vanquishes the shadows, at the news that the experts of the magistrature observing the video established nothing less than that it could have been a stone launched by demonstrator deflecting the bullet that killed Carlo Giuliani. A whitish puff that appeared suddenly above his head a moment before his death would show it. It is really true that in an image, everyone can see what they want. And in a competition of images and chatter between alternative and institutional media, it is useless to hide that the latter will always win.

Just as there is no use waiting for any truth from an image, in the same way we cannot expect any justice from a verdict. Because the courts are institutions of the same state that ordered the bloodbath that happened in Genoa. Why should judges ever condemn men who are habitually at their service? Let's get rid of the pious and reassuring commonplace that claims that a difference exists between the state of law and the state of deed, as if there were two entities that must be brought together in

order to have justice. The state invents its law and applies and modifies this law as it believes best, knowing that it is just a question of wastepaper. The torturers who ripped up the ID cards of the arrested in Bolzaneto, shouting, "here you have no rights, you are no one", expressed the undisguised nature of the state, of which they are the loyal and obedient servants.

The illusion of an end

The courage of the impossible is the light that breaks through the fog, before which death's terrors fall and the present becomes life.

Carlo Michelstaedter

All that is remembered of the days in Genoa is the brutality of the cops. The joyous aspect of a subversion of daily life has been almost completely buried. But the uprising of three years ago is still there, threatening in its incompleteness. So threatening that in the meantime its meaning has not only been eroded by state reason that has imposed an endless war, but also by slander, mystification and dismissal put into action by all those – in uniform or overalls – who were supposed to guarantee order and security in the streets of Genoa, with the results we know so well. So threatening that hundreds of direct actions against power (from sabotaged ATMs to blocked trains, from attacked police stations to damaged scientific institutes, from burnt diplomatic cars to wrecked Italian branch offices and dealerships) have been carried out in the weeks and months after Genoa throughout the world. So threatening, finally, that after the fog of representation, power is preparing the cement of imprisonment.

Against state vengeance and in spite of those who make use of the odious division into *good* and *bad*, already realized in the streets, before the judges (maybe justifying the conflicts with the cops as a legitimate response to the charges, but condemning actions against the structures of the state and capital that happened earlier...), it is the meaning of that uprising that we must affirm, against pacifiers and investigators. Because revolt explodes, well beyond the dates set by power, in the place where the game is really played: in the totality of our lives. This is where we will encounter, together with the social conflicts to come, the desires of those who fought with courage in Genoa. The place of a crime called freedom in which innocent and guilty do not exist.

So then no court, isolating and attacking the accused, will place its seal on those days.

1. Italian military police force that acts as national against civilians.

2. This is a reference to the Ya Basta!/Tute Bianche/Disobbedienti/ Social Forum milieu which negotiates spectacular acts of "disobedience" with the authorities for media consumption.

3. Political police.

Guerra Sociale (2002-2010)
critica libertaria al capitalismo

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