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Dialogue between John Holloway and Vittorio Sergi

Of stones and flowers

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l)

Dear Vittorio,

[<https://divergences.be/local/cache-vignettes/L400xH300/clown-b15a9.jpg>]

The events at the end of the anti-G8 march in Rostock on Saturday 2 June, when there was an outbreak of prolonged and violent fighting between some of the demonstrators (the so-called "black block") and the police, disturbed and challenged me. I felt critical of the violence of the black block, but also felt the need to discuss and understand. I think a lot of people on the march felt the same way - critical but wanting to talk and understand rather than condemn (there were, of course, others who simply condemned the action, but that is not my position).

I wanted to discuss with you in particular because I know you were in the middle of the battle and because I have a very great respect for you and I think we can discuss honestly and without disqualifications. The aim for me is not to win an argument, not to come to an agreement, but to understand.

[-] 1) Let me explain the way I experienced the march :

My friends and I did not have a pre-established place of affiliation on the march. We walked along the march before it started, looking for an attractive place to insert ourselves. We walked past the large block of people (generally young, mostly men) dressed in black, many with hoods and many with their faces masked. We inserted ourselves finally near the front of the march, just behind the samba group with their drums and their dancing. From our perspective, the march was very big, colourful and fun. There was a massive, but at that stage inactive, police presence at the side of the road. We were particularly impressed by the clowns and the way in which they went up to the squadrons of police and made fun of them, imitating them, blowing bubbles at them, dancing around their cars and so on.

When the march reached its end-point, the harbour, I felt it had been a successful, enjoyable and colourful march. The "black block" arrived shortly afterwards and a friend I was with remarked that it looked as if they were ready for a fight. A minute later the fighting broke out, with columns of heavily-armoured police rushing back and forth and lots of young people dressed in black throwing stones at them. This was the first I saw of the violence which would dominate both the reports in the media and many of the discussions in Rostock over the next few days.

[-] 2) I think there are three main reasons why I found the violence disturbing.

Firstly, I felt that it was the unfolding of a two-sided, predictable ritual. There were two sides prepared for battle, two sides who knew that, once the preamble of the march was completed, there would be open, violent conflict, in which the majority of people present on the march would be mere spectators. What was disturbing was the predictability and the symmetry of the conflict. In this there was a sharp contrast with the clowns who confronted the police in an unpredictable and absolutely asymmetrical way : in terms of sexuality, movement, dress, behaviour, solemnity and so on, the clowns were the opposite of the police, whereas the black block, in terms of uniform, sexual composition, disposition to violence, solemnity were very like the police.

Secondly, I was disturbed by the macho tone of the black block. Although there were some women and perhaps some older people, the block was dominated by young men, and the atmosphere generated was of the sort often associated with large gatherings of young men : aggressive, boastful, insensitive to the feelings of those who surrounded them.

Thirdly, the action was divisive. It seemed to me to go against the wishes of the great majority of those present, and caused considerable resentment among many. The participants in the action seemed to dismiss the feelings of the other demonstrators as irrelevant. I had the feeling that the other demonstrators were in some way being labelled as reformist or non-revolutionary. In other words, the action was identitarian, imposing a label upon others and dismissing their feelings as unimportant. An anti-identitarian approach would recognise other people as being self-contradictory and try to find a way of stirring the contradictions within them.

A very different and more sympathetic reading of the action would be to say that that was precisely the aim of the violence : to appeal to the hatred of the police and to move people to action. Someone in one of the discussions compared throwing stones at the police to occupying a house : in both cases you help people to overcome their fear of authority. This argument I can understand, but I think it is probably not true, in the sense that I think the action probably did not have this effect. I think the clowns' mockery of the police was probably far more effective in demystifying state authority.

Perhaps I am saying that in any action, the question of its resonance is very important : not that the action should be judged simply by its resonance, but that its capacity to resonate with the rebelliousness that exists in repressed form in most people is of very great importance. Not only that but that resonance is a question of a-symmetry. That which we want to stir inside people is their anti-capitalism, and the only way in which we can do that is through actions that are anti-capitalist in their form, actions that propose ways of behaving and ways of relating that are quite unlike those of capitalism. The resonance of asymmetry seems to me the key to thinking about forms of anti-capitalist action.

3) In explaining why I feel disturbed and challenged by the events of 2 June, I do not simply condemn the violence. It is clear that the violence used by the demonstrators was virtually nothing compared with the violence exercised every day by capital against us. I accept too that there may be circumstances in which the use of violent methods strengthens the movement against capital. But this is the problem : the action in this case seemed to be separated from any consideration of its effect on the movement as a whole.

I may well be wrong about this and I may be quite unfair in much that I have said, but then I would be glad if you could explain it to me (and to anyone else who may read this).

Best,
John

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II)

Caro John,

Your letter, in which you express your criticism towards the violent clashes of the 2nd of

June in Rostock, seemed to me an excellent opportunity to begin an honest and necessary discussion. I will try to answer all your major questions. My reply is not motivated by the abstract need to bring forward an apology of violence or of the "black block", but by the urgency to explain, as a participant myself, the reasons, problems and state of an open process of rebellion.

The march of June 2nd had, in all its aspects, a ritual and predictable character. The fact that it would take place before the beginning of the summit cast a shadow on the following days, when more radical groups would confront a long week of actions without the coverage of a great event during the days of the summit. The march also constituted an effort to represent a united movement, despite its differences. This aspect is closely linked to the customary dynamics of summits and counter summits which has, for the past ten years at least, constituted one of the main public expressions of anti-capitalist movements around the world.

On the other hand, due to the precedents in Germany and the rest of Europe, the march of June 2nd had a different air to it ; there was energy and hope for a new drive for social movements : that also explains the large number and strong militant spirit of the participants.

All organized political subjects, from the clowns you mention to ATTAC and the "black block" itself, wished to be represented and have their space of representation on the big stage. And so did the police, actually... it had announced the biggest security operation of its history, with a contingent of 17,000, and it couldn't fail...

The so-called black block was created as a large group of affinities, made up by various smaller groups which varied as to composition and geographical origin. The etiquette (black clothes, covered faces) should not fool anyone as to the diversity of subjects present.

The Dissent ! group took up the role of a "hub", i.e. a centre of connection and distribution of information amongst groups which were more inclined towards direct action and did not consider it convenient to participate in the Block G8 alliance, which due to its broad and plural character included, amongst others, important reformist subjects such as ATTAC and the German section of the European Left party, known today as "Die Linke".

Thus, the block included anarchist groups from many different places (Poland, Germany, Denmark, Holland, England, United States, Greece, Catalunya), as well as autonomous groups from Italy, Sweden, France, Euskadi, Switzerland and Germany, amongst others. Also, many anti-fascist groups which in Germany do not have a sole organization but are largely influenced by the Antifascistische Linke Berlin (part of the Interventionist Left, i.e. also of the Block G8 coalition) joined the Block from the bus bearing the slogan "Make Capitalism History".

The block thus included 3,000 to 5,000 people who defied the ban on covering their faces and carrying sticks and other instruments of self-defence in the marches. The common intention of the participants in the block was to directly attack the private property of banks and corporations, as well as the police. There were also discussions as to measuring the amount of force which could be employed according to the response of the rest of the

march ; almost the majority agreed on acting in a way which would not harm it.

So I do not believe that this choice was in total contrast with the spirit and intentions of the rest of the march. Maybe of one part, but then again there is always a great deal of differences in this kind of international marches. However, throughout these years it has been established that all forms of protest should have the right of "citizenship", in the boundaries of respect for others. Also, the block did not wish to stay in the background or fringes of the march for a political reason. Radical forms of direct action are also a part of the movement and militant groups involved in that kind of action, or simply those who support it or individually participate in it, respect other forms of struggle ; there would be no sense in separating them.

The tactics of the block was an escalation of actions which would lead to a direct confrontation once having reached the harbour, where most police forces were concentrated.

It is true that, as you mention, the block also aimed at motivating and involving the rest of the march in a resistance against the police and in attacking corporations and their façades. Indeed, that did happen when the police, frustrated at not being able to defend itself from the beginning, attacked the entire march as well as the people watching the concert. Those present reacted in many ways when that happened, from throwing stones to creating chains and advancing with their hands in the air, managing to contain the offensive of the police, despite the armoured cars and water tanks.

It is true that the block was made up mostly of young people and the fact that there were not so many women as men is an aspect of a differentiated participation in actions and initiatives ; however, that is something that occurs in many communities and organizations and depends on a broader problem surrounding the forms and languages of political action. Nonetheless, I was surprised by the number of women participating in the clashes, by much larger than what could have been observed in Italy.

You also consider the majority of young radicals as a lack of comprehension towards other forms of life and ages. On the contrary, I consider it to be a starting point, as well as a necessary form of construction of a common movement which, as always, begins amongst the young, due to the urgency, rage and passion with which the negation of the existing is exercised, "the negation of the negation" in practice.

Turning our gaze towards Mexico, Oaxaca for example, we observe a very different composition in the barricades, but that is due to a political and social "popular" form that exists only in few occasions and places in Europe. The division between young generations and the rest is deeper and relates to complex causes which also bear political implications ; however, this issue cannot be solved in one march.

Against those who speak of a depressed and apathetic generation, I felt, on the contrary, a lot of positive energy and passion in this contingent. Many different ways of living and a lot of decisiveness and will for conspiring and cooperating altogether in order to achieve a radical social change.

Action, in the case of a march, is not simply symbolic ; it seeks direct effectiveness. It has shown, for example, that the police is not invincible when put up against a multitude that seizes the initiative and cooperates. It has also shown that the struggle against an economic, social and military system cannot limit itself to events or public moments of representation (and mediation), but that it rather overflows and takes the initiative, it can

mark the time, space and form of a confrontation that can also be called class struggle, that it does not have to restrain itself to defending the few collective riches that still remain in hands of the people.

For this reason, I attach the document which resulted from the discussion between various groups that participated in the confrontation march of June 2nd and has been put up on the [Dissent](#) ! website.

Plan B has started already : join to the battle of joy

4 June 2007 - International brigades

There are certain moments when it seems appropriate, without it ever being a matter of calculation, to address everybody in a manner as simple and direct as possible. One of these moments has arrived.

We want to speak briefly about what happened on the 2nd of June in the city of Rostock during the demonstration against the G8. We speak, of course, from a partisan position, but one forged of multiple voices which at certain moments manage to become singular.

One of these moments has arrived.

This 2nd of June, thousands of people didn't wait for the ritual which we have so often been subjected to in this movement to play itself out : mobilizations, demonstrations, less than symbolic actions, conferences crowned with pat conclusions long ago prepared by some obscure functionary. Nor did they accept donning the worn out postures of those who pretend to be concerned with the state of the world and abandon themselves to a pious compassion for the most misfortunate.

These thousands, on the contrary, did not content themselves with reacting or resisting, but took the initiative, consciously attacking the places where, day after day, capitalist exploitation and the material effectiveness of the global civil war are extended. The G8 is not only the expression of the domination of capital over the world, a theatre of dubious quality where the leaders put onto the stage another ritual, one that serves to codify their rule over the lives of subjects. The G8 is the symbol of the suffering inflicted daily on millions of people. That we should be reproached for our violence when it is they who have their hands full of blood !

In the end what happened was very simple : free beings decided to collectively and practically oppose the symbols of capitalism and the baleful face of the state incarnated by all the police of the world. The assemblies and long speeches, if they are not followed by irruptions in the streets of our metropolis, produce only suspicion and resignation.

We want to also recall another truth in relation to the combatants in the battle of Rostock : they are women and men originating from every corner of the world and have no need of an identity card to recognize each other, constitute gangs, and experiment new forms of life. We are the nationless who seek to destroy the frontiers - as much material as symbolic - which separate our lives, thought and bodies. We are made of multiple singularities who desire to join in order to create the conditions of a more ecstatic life. We come from everywhere, it is why we are everywhere. Those who affirm the contrary are

brazen-faced liars.

There is another truth : under every black mask was a smile, in every stone thrown against the common enemy there was joy, in every body revolting against oppression there was desire. We don't harbor sad passions and resentments, if that had been the case we wouldn't have fought and resisted for so long. Thus don't be deceived, look at those with whom you are connected, or whom you love ; perhaps you will find one of these bodies, one of these smiles, one of these hands engaged in the struggle. Joyful passions placed in common and joined to the assault on command - such is the secret of the battles waged in the heart of the asymmetrical conflict which opposes us to the sadness of the weapons and bodies of power. Individually we are nothing, together we are a power. Together we are a commune : the commune of Rostock.

We all arrived here with a personal and collective history, a history of struggle and battle waged in every corner of the earth. We don't want this event to be perceived as a simple continuation of the old cycle of struggle which, since September the 11th, has known so many disappointments. We believe on the contrary that the 2nd of June was the signal of a powerful and determined rupture with this phase of defeat and that this battle inaugurates new offensives. That this breach permits us to flee together to the other side of the mirror, the side of freedom.

And now comrades, we block the flows...

Long live the commune of Rostock and Reddelich !

International Brigades

June 2nd must also be judged in a broader time frame. During the following days, the same people that encouraged the clashes were involved in constructing and participating in many self-managed camp activities : from the kitchen to the collective bars, workshops, alternative media, parties, political and artistic workshops, the multitude (yes, mostly young...) returned to its everyday positive forms of action.

The massive blockades of the 6th, 7th and 8th were in benefit of the variety of forms of struggle and action ; none was more determinant than the others. Dissent !, as well as Block G8 and non-organized groups and individuals joined the marches and blockades, other forms of swarms... Everyone, from the most radical pacifists to the toughest anarchist groups, cooperated in order to avoid a violent escalation of the conflict and to make blockades effective.

That leads us to the conclusion that in the minds of most of the participants in the June 2nd march, the black block is but a transitory form, a swarm, and not the "army of the movement". It also adopts an aesthetic form that is closely linked to the influences of the "Autonomen" German movement of the 80s, as well as to the Anglo-Saxon anarchist movement, especially active in the environmental struggle. It is, thus, a transitory form, a kind of intelligent mob with a long history in radical dissent in Europe and the United States. The donning of black clothes and covered faces is of a practical utility in times of generalized video control. It also reflects the resonance of powerful symbols of rebellion such as the balaclava. From the Zapatistas of 1994 to Carlo Giuliani in Genoa in 2001, the rebels cover their faces in order to be seen.

The clashes of June 2nd and the following days urgently pose the question as to how to react against the repressive apparatus. Pacifism and its ethics cannot be an alibi for impotence, or worst, as in the case of ATTAC, for the collaboration with the repressive

military apparatus. However, there have been consistent pacifists, whom I have seen receive blows and gas discharges in the face for trying to break the police lines or resist in a blockade, on the ground with dogs and truncheons biting their skin. Nonetheless, we must work together in a wider and more coordinated sense in order to be able to defend autonomous spaces, in the countryside as well as the cities, defend strikes, road and train blockades, marches and meetings, in a growing state of siege and militarization, in Mexico as well as in Europe.

That is why I do not believe that the clowns that you so admire are an efficient response to these matters either. They have a very positive role in confusing and delegitimizing the authority and aggressiveness of the police, but we cannot all become clowns, neither will we always be able to stop tanks with flowers. We need everyone, we cannot disqualify anyone in this movement and uneven power relation.

By the way, we will always love flowers, but the days of putting flowers in gun barrels have gone by. The images of military helicopters flying above the heads of thousands of unarmed protestors, launching police assault troops, gas charges, water tanks and horses against the defenceless crowd speak of the madness and dangerousness of the police apparatus in our days. That is not insignificant. Put up against this phenomenon, most radical groups do not respond with militarization ; on the contrary, there is a conscience and a rejection of symmetrical violence, of hierarchic organization and authority. However, this does not mean there is not a search for forms of power, for ways of changing power relations through asymmetrical forms of resistance and attack.

I hope I have answered a few questions and maybe cleared some doubts. However, everything is under an open process of discussion and creation ; that is the positive aspect of today's movement. Rostock was a partial, but encouraging victory.

We continue to walk and discuss !

Saludos,

Vittorio

III)

Caro Vittorio,

We agree on much, but not on all. The question of the composition of the "black block" (or perhaps "black non-block") is not so important - although I do remain suspicious of any group composed largely of young men, and I would be even more suspicious of one composed largely of old men. And I agree that is important to see the march in the context of the week's actions, where the atmosphere was certainly a very good one of respectful unity-in-diversity. I also agree that violence is not the central issue : my argument is not a pacifist one. And yet the whole thing of the stone-throwing keeps worrying me. Let me emphasise again that I respect those who throw stones at the police. But for me respect cannot mean just a side-by-side co-existence : it means saying "we are comrades, that is why we must discuss our differences and doubts openly". That is what these notes are about.

We are at war. Let's start from there. The last twenty years or so (and especially the last five years) have seen a great intensification of capitalist violence against humanity. We can see this as the Fourth World War (as the Zapatistas put it) or as the war of all states against all people (as Eloína and I put it in an article a few years ago). The question then is how we should fight this war.

The notion of war is perhaps unfortunate, because it usually suggests a symmetry : one army fights another army, and there is not much difference between the organisation (the social relations) of the two sides. Generally, it does not matter very much which side wins : either way, the war and the militarization which accompany it signify a defeat for humanity, for the sort of social relations that we want to construct. It is generally the more numerous, better equipped, more cleverly aggressive side that wins.

There are two problems about thinking of the struggle for a new world in these symmetrical terms. Firstly, we would probably lose : there is no way we can match the military power of the capitalist states. And secondly, and even more important : symmetrical organisation means that we are reproducing the social relations that we are struggling against.

The question then is how we think about fighting this war asymmetrically. The enormous strength of the flowers in the guns and of the clowns confronting the police is that they emphasise this asymmetry. They say clearly "our strength is that we are not like you and that we shall never be like you."

You suggest that clowns and flowers may be important but that it is not enough. You say "we must work together in a wider and more coordinated sense in order to be able to defend autonomous spaces, in the countryside as well as the cities, defend strikes, road and train blockades, marches and meetings, in a growing state of siege and militarization, in Mexico as well as in Europe. That is why I do not believe that the clowns that you so admire are an efficient response to these matters either." But what does "defence" mean ? It does not mean "defence" in any absolute sense. The armed force of the state could overcome stone-throwers just as easily as it could overcome flower-carriers or clowns. Defence really has to be understood as dissuasion. How do we dissuade the state from exercising the full force of its armed power ? Is stone-throwing more effective in this respect than flower-carrying ? Probably not, because the dissuasive effect is not a question of physical strength but of resonances : of the resonances that the participants succeed in stirring throughout society. It is above all these resonances that impose limits on state action : the degree to which the resonances make the state afraid of the social reaction that might follow from a violent repression. Thinking in terms of resonances and reactions, we must ask : is it easier for the state to violently repress a group of stone-throwers or a group of flower-carriers ? Violent repression is possible in both cases, but I think it is probably easier for the state in the case of stone-throwers.

Take the Zapatistas, for example. How do we explain the ability of the Zapatistas to resist (so far) a violent repression by the state ? Not so much in terms of "defence" but in terms of dissuasion. The Zapatistas have dissuaded the state from violent repression by being armed for self-defence, but above all by their communiqués which have resonated so strongly through the world. Maybe we should see the Zapatistas as armed clowns : by being armed but always acting in a way that emphasised their asymmetrical relation with the state. Their flight, with marimba and all, when the army attacked on 9 February 1995, is an outstanding example of that. Perhaps the greatest strength of the Zapatistas is that they have always understood war as a question of aesthetics, of theatre. The obvious contrast in Mexico is with the EPR, which is a classical armed organisation and has never succeeded (or perhaps tried) in stirring the sort of resonances that would act as a defence against a state.

Which is more radical, the EZLN or the EPR ? For me, without doubt, the EZLN, because they are constantly re-thinking the struggle, above all because they are far more asymmetrical in their relation to the state. But I can see that for some people, groups like the EPR may appear more radical, because they appear to represent a more direct and violent confrontation with the state.

The state, in its fight against us, constantly tries to weaken the social resonances of our movement, in part by pushing us more towards direct, symmetrical confrontation with it. If they succeed in doing that, then open repression becomes politically more easy for them. That is my worry : not a moral condemnation of stone-throwing, but that what appears to be more radical is in fact less radical and weakens the struggle against capital.

If we think of the issue in terms of the Fourth World War and how we fight that war, then I would suggest as a principle of the effectiveness of struggle that our struggle must be asymmetrical to that of capital. Asymmetry (the clear manifestation that we are not like them and will never be like them) is crucial to the strength of anti-capitalist resonances. There should be room for people who throw stones, but there must also be room for people who say that stone-throwing is not a very effective way of fighting (and of course that guns would be an even less effective way).

Saludos,

John

IV)

Caro John,

By a strange coincidence, I write these lines while returning to Italy from Mexico. I had to return for personal reasons, today, when a new confrontation is feared in the town of Oaxaca, where I was last week, when thousands of people who wished to celebrate the popular festivity of Guelaguetza were violently repressed by the police and the army, resulting in many men and women imprisoned and injured.

The reality of violence, of its menace and its use against the nonconformists, is presented over and over again as the reality of oppression, of inequality, of exploitation. That is, as a social relation.

And also as a form of organization, of military and militarized groups and apparatus, such as the army and the police. The history of these people is filled with this violence, its memory, in America as well as in Europe, records a long chain of violations, injustices, unpunished crimes perpetrated by these organizations, whose reason of existence lies in the defence of the State and capital.

Now, our discussion has led us to some important points, on which I still disagree with you : I agree with your approach on asymmetry. It is of great importance and an obvious significance in relation to the current situation. Parting from the inequality of power in the current social power relations, it is reasonable to think that no radical change will be accomplished in a symmetrical revolution, in a sort of topsy-turvy world, but rather through a diagonal change, a tearing, thousands of ruptures. This perspective obviously affects political practices and, therefore, practices of confrontation with the established powers. However, I believe it does not exclude open confrontation. I see the need for blending

various forms of action in this asymmetrical confrontation, in the same way that the forms of breaking the relation of violent domination which imposes relations of exploitation depend greatly on cultural differences and different historical heritages. For example, the same practice of participating in a demonstration is very different in Germany, against the G8, or in Oaxaca, this morning, in order to boycott the Guelagueta of the authoritarian PRI government, in the same way that participating in a pacific march in Pakistan, Guinea Conakry or Colombia can mean risking one's life. Thus, according to the context, the violence used by the people for their defence is of different forms and natures than the ones used by those in power, it has different political aims, it responds to different criteria, to that of the defence of dignity and not of the imposition of an abstract order and legality.

Obviously, aspects of symmetry and forms of coordination are also present. When we think of an asymmetrical confrontation with power we cannot ignore the issue of organization. Our action must be spontaneous and creative, but it must also be coordinated and organized along with others, so as to consider three fundamental aspects of the development of all revolutionary politics : time, space and, as Machiavelli pointed out, opportunity. Referring to a violent confrontation with the state forces, you say : "Firstly, we would probably lose : there is no way we can match the military power of the capitalist states. And secondly, and even more important : symmetrical organisation means that we are reproducing the social relations that we are struggling against."

I do not agree. Given that we are going through the "Fourth World War" and that the violence of power is not simple defensive, i.e. it is not presented as a police officer safeguarding a bank, but rather as a thief who enters our house in order to steal, we must consider defence as necessary and pledge our commitment to the possibility that asymmetrical forms of confrontation could also put the military power of capitalist states in a difficult position.

If we think that it is not possible, that it is not possible to put an end to the oppression of the armed groups of the state, then symmetrical confrontation for gaining power (and control over the repressive bodies) would once again be the only tragic options for us, who are underneath.

My second comment is on your mention of the EZLN. I agree with your observation about the theatrical and ritual sense of this army of indigenous peasants. From their point of view, I have even heard the militaries being called "brothers". The Zapatistas do not dehumanize the enemy, they try to conserve its human face and, to this moment, they have managed to avoid fratricide war with the paramilitary groups despite their numerous crimes. Their form of political struggle has been, without doubt, peculiar and the fact that the conflict in the South East of Mexico has not ended in carnage, as happened ten years ago in Guatemala, is without a shred of doubt something positive that partly depends on the EZLN itself. However, we must consider that the EZLN had, and still has, a disposition to war. In this sense, I do not believe this organization should be considered more or less radical than the EPR, for example. To this day, the latter has a *modus operandi* which is much closer to forms of the past, more openly confrontational and focused on the enemy army ; however, despite its clear Marxist-Leninist political positioning, it would adopt markedly asymmetrical forms of guerrilla warfare if that were to lead to a tactical advantage. We could rather say that, from our point of view, the EZ had the capacity to adapt and innovate its forms of political action, and its experience of "asymmetrical" struggle is a good base for thinking about possible forms of revolutionary political struggle in the near future.

Despite our differences, I agree with your concern about the need to turn asymmetrical struggle into a virtue of the anti-capitalist movement, to express our rejection towards the system in a negative, non-dialectical way.

Taking "Fourth World War" seriously amounts to admitting that there is a system of violence set up against us. Therefore, our strategy of confrontation cannot be accused of triggering the repression ; maybe it can supply media elements for its justification, but then again we know that the latter can occur without the need for an effective excuse.

You say : "It is above all these resonances that impose limits on state action : the degree to which the resonances make the state afraid of the social reaction that might follow a violent repression." The resonances of our action can indeed put a limit, dissuade the State, and there will be, no doubt, marches and actions where it will be better to throw flowers instead of stones. However, as the recent history of the people of Oaxaca shows, there are moments when it becomes clear that violence comes from above, against our flowers and our dancing.

We began our discussion in the protests against the G8 in Germany and ended up in the streets of Oaxaca, without a conclusion, it would seem...

We know there is an ongoing confrontation, made up by different simultaneous confrontations, and that the security machinery of all States is being militarized and organized against the "internal enemy".

However, we also know that our victory, from a revolutionary perspective, has to commit to the defeat of war and of the enemy at the same time.

It would be meaningless to win a war and lose dignity.

How this is possible, we can only found out in practice.

Ciudad de México - Madrid, 23 de julio de 2007.

Vittorio

V)

Caro Vittorio,

You are right, of course, that we are talking not just of Rostock but of many different situations in the world that require different responses.

Thinking of Mexico, there is one image that keeps on coming to my mind in the last few days : the famous photo of the Zapatista women literally pushing back big armed soldiers who were trying to invade their village. This photo has been very widely circulated all over the world and has undoubtedly had an enormous political impact. For me it illustrates the force of asymmetry, but it could be argued that it also creates a romantic, unreal image of the conflict in Chiapas. Perhaps one way to close the dialogue (for the moment) would be to leave that image as a question.

Ciao,

John