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Statement in Support for the Call for a Tribunal of the Events in Genoa, Italy

Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin

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Several people have written to me from Genoa, telling me of what they suffered during the recent protests there. I join in with those who are beginning to call for an international tribunal to investigate the police murder of Carlo Giuliani, and the brutal attacks upon the Genoa Social Forum and the Italian section of the Independent Media Center by Italian police and security services. These attacks were clearly organized by the Italian state security and political forces, working in consultation with the secret police agencies of the G-8 nations. The decision for this brutal repression was made earlier at a Spanish conference of police officials in Europe this past February to decide upon how to beat back the anti-globalization movement. I had made a statement denouncing this meeting at the time, alerting protesters that much more severe repression was coming.

It seems the government's plan coming into the Genoa G-8 meetings was to use both militaristic terror and public me-

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dia misinformation campaigns to undermine the protest movement. Evidence now being unearthed shows that undercover operatives clearly formented violence, even though some of it was from persons defending themselves during demonstrations from random cop attacks. The use of deadly force had apparently been discussed and approved months before the demonstration as a tactical measure to intimidate and demoralize protesters, so Guilian's death was almost a certainty. Further, the mass arrests and continued court frameups of over 50 persons must be addressed immediately. I join in with those demanding their immediate release, and the dropping of all the bogus criminal charges they are facing by Italian authorities. But it seems government officials are now going around arresting other persons well after the events, and they must be made to stop.

The severe police beatings of GSF and IMC activists, and the use of covert tactical units to literally pummel sleeping people in their beds has to be addressed immediately, and their assailants exposed and punished. (These pigs beat people in their beds while they begged for their lives screaming "pacifist, pacifist...I am a pacifist"!) We must counter lies of the government that the government went after these people thinking they were fighting an Anarchist paramilitary "Black Bloc", and that the hammers and other workmen's tools were "weapons". None of this can be used as justification, this was police terrorism, and the movement must expose it.

Since the state will not do it, then the movement must stand ready to do it. These fascist attacks by the government cannot be passively accepted. This should show us that the issue is not the violence or nonviolence of the demonstrators, but the fact that an effective capitalist protest movement is in existence which challenges the social order, and scares the hell out of the governments of the world. That is the *only consideration* of the State, it has never been a neutral arbiter of these events, and hey, the cops use a diversity of tactics to put down demon-

stration: brutal repression on the one hand (as in Genoa), or soft cop public "fronts" of "protecting the rights of everyone", including political demonstrators, on the other hand. This latter scam of "officer friendly" is far from the truth.

It's important also that nobody be fooled into thinking that expelling Anarchists from future demonstrations by those middle class NGO's, who would compromise or sell out to the capitalist forces, will somehow make such demonstrations more effective or afford them protection from police batons. The Anarchists in this movement are not merely trying to win "civil rights", but to overthrow the system of capitalism entirely, so they are not afraid to fight the cops in the streets. They have no faith at all in any of these rich men and their representatives. They had a right to rebel against the cops and the capitalists, and I am not sympathetic for calls to "nonviolence" and Martin Luther King, jr. "tolerance tactics". King only got concessions from the government when the masses rose up in rebellion, that was why he and his pacifist politics were virtually superseded by the Black Power Movement of the late 1960's, and the youth stopped listening to him. We used to say to those who preached nonviolence,...tell the white man to be nonviolent". So I would say to the pacifists, tell the cops to be nonviolent, not the Anarchists! But it isn't violence they object to, but the use of self-defense, violence in the hands of the people.

This movement has a great deal of potential and militancy, but, IMHO, the weakness of this movement is the same of others that have arisen but failed among white radical youth, like the Left tendencies of the 1960's it ends up "speaking for the poor" (or the workers, etc.) and fighting in their behalf. You cannot speak for poor people or Black people in Africa or America, no matter how sincerely motivated. Myself and an increasing number of others are beginning to question the entire thrust of the movement on a number of grounds, not least of which is the lack of people of color in the leadership or membership.

That is a legitimate question which has doomed many social revolutionary movements in the past.

We also have a tactical disagreement on the one hand, as to whether the radical ultra-Left can sustain the battles in the street at the site of international conferences like the Genoa G-8, and whether the movement should now begin to understand that its task is both to mobilize globally and organize *locally*. Police racial profiling, homelessness, poverty, mass imprisonment of the youth, the death penalty, prisoners' human rights, and other issues are things which Black and people of color understand and would fight for, but which the anti-globalization movement has yet to adopt. It is clear to me and others that the reason that this movement is so white and middle class is because it does not involve itself in the *revolution of daily life* in the cities of the metropole where many of the real battles of poor people are taking place, instead of congresses where the rich hold their meetings. There people of color (immigrants and native born) are brutally policed (and even murdered) by the internal security forces in the inner cities of New York, London, Los Angeles, Brussels, Chattanooga, Toronto, and other cities based on an agenda of racism and political repression. The cops enforce poverty and injustice with the most brutal tactics, and only when the people rebel, as they did in Cincinnati, will the issue even receive any attention.

The whole world is now a ghetto, but the fact is that while the anti-globalization movement, made up of white Anarchist youth and NGO's, is just beginning to experience police repression at its demonstrations, it is a constant feature in the lives of peoples of color all over the world. It is also a reality for all those who live under IMF/WTO-imposed dictatorships in the 3rd and 4th world countries. Hey, let's not forget what the New York cops did to repress the Million Youth March a few years ago, in the USA any group of young Blacks is suspect, and the cops are called in.

There is a call for an international tribunal to be held on October 20-21, to expose this police murder and brutality, and the police state repression which took place in Genoa, and I support it. This is not just a "European matter", or an "Italian internal affair", and I believe the tribunal's "judges should include people from Mexico, South Africa, India, and other parts of the world, who understand the crimes of these cops first-hand, along with Anarchists, students and other activists who were there. This tribunal has to investigate all of the government's tactics in this matter, must demand payment of reparations for all those injured and unfairly arrested by police, and forced to pay to replace the IMC's electronic equipment which was smashed or grabbed by police in unlawful raids, and it must secure the release of political prisoners, must set the record straight for the people of Italy and of the world to see this tragedy for what it was: a bloodthirsty plot by the Italian government acting as the snarling police dog for the rich nations of the G-8. It should run Leonardo Berlusconi and his corrupt government out of power, and perhaps indict him for murderous conspiracy, and yes, the cops should be put on trial with him.

But more than anything, we cannot let this police state terrorism stop us from continuing to challenge the WTO/IMF/WEF, and other such international institutions; not let them stop us from street protests against their actions, whatever tactics we are forced to or decide to adopt to make our point. It's already been proven that Fredrick Douglass, the 19th century African American slavery, was right in something he said over 150 years ago:... "power concedes nothing without a demand." We cannot now ask for permission to protest against these gangsters who masquerade as "statesmen" and "elected popular leaders". They're thugs and we can prove it!

Love and struggle,

Lorenzo Komboa Ervin