

EDITORIAL

DEMOCRACY BESIEGED

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Despite the clashes in Genoa, the anti-globalisation movement and democratic governments should work together to preserve the world from a conflict between 'McWorld' and *Jihad*. They have very similar targets, foremost among which is their common aim of defending human rights and protecting poor countries from the increasing power of corporations. Outside of a close relationship between democratic governments and the anti-globalisation movement, there is no way to achieve global equity and a global governance of resource flows. While the anti-globalisation movement is more nimble and popular than democratic governments, democratic governments are more authoritative and powerful than the anti-globalisation movement. This 'Holy Alliance' has become even more necessary after September 11.

The violent clashes that took place in Genoa during the Summit of the Group of Eight (19th-20th July, 2001) highlight the difficulties standing in the way of effective dialogue between democratic governments and the anti-globalisation movement.¹

¹ The three-day summit took place under siege conditions. As 20,000 security forces struggled to seal off the port area of Genoa, some demonstrators managed to get into the fenced-off 'red zone' where the leaders were meeting. Dozens of demonstrators and police were injured. On July 22 a 23 year-old man was shot by a 'carabiniere' (Italian paramilitary troops) while he was joining in a mob attack on a vehicle in which the troops were sitting: the first time someone has died in demonstrations against globalisation since the movement surfaced in Seattle in 1999. Italian President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi said he was shocked by the demonstrator's death and urged protesters "to immediately cease this blind violence".

Things, however, are changing. Nowadays the movement has changed its tactics and is taking a more educational approach, abandoning street-protests for more "teach-ins" and "candlelight vigils". The movement is displaying remarkable resilience. America's pain will not silence its claims against the impact of global capitalism in the Second and Third world. However the movement is conscious of the danger that its clamour against capitalism could sound like a justification for terrorist attacks against the symbols of western civilization, and it has been compelled to isolate and expose its violent clusters.

At the same time, it has become apparent that democratic countries must defeat terrorism not only in a military fashion but also socially and culturally. This could be achieved by spreading the benefits of the globalisation throughout the whole world. Despite the violent clashes in Seattle, Göteborg and Genoa, democratic governments should not miss out on the opportunity to form a new "Holy Alliance" together with the anti-globalisation movement in order to defend human rights and construct worldwide democratic institutions. Democratic governments and the anti-globalisation movement have common targets and interests. In particular, they both want to ensure effective human rights protection at a time when the anarchic power of international corporations is on the increase.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair defended the police behaviour in Genoa: "*It is difficult to police things in situations where you do have a small minority who are prepared to come along and throw petrol bombs and use violence*", he said. He argued also that the tragedy had detracted from important work of the summit: "*These issues like, global change or helping the poorest countries in the world – it is important we come here and discuss these questions*" (Ansa/Reuter). To have a global vision of the G8-Summit in Genoa, see.: "I popoli di seattle", *Limes. Rivista italiana di geopolitica*, 3/2001 (espec.: Francesco Vitali, "Vita e morte dei gruppi antiglobalizzazione al tempo di Internet", Elisa Marincola, "La galassia dei centri sociali", Federico Fubini, "La battaglia degli OGM, nuova frontiera fra Europa e Usa?", Silvia Trabalzini, "Monsanto, la padrona dei semi gm"); "L'Italia dopo Genova", *Limes. Special Issue*, sept. 2001 (espec.: Antonio Sema, "Limoni e sangue: a che servivano gli scontri di Genova", Luca Rastello, "Movimenti e distanze da Porto Alegre a Genova e, si spera, ritorno"; Francesco Martone, "Dopo Genova nulla è più come prima"; "Globalizzazione, violenza, democrazia", *MicroMega*, 4/2001 (espec.: Giuseppe Caccia, "Il movimento e i suoi nemici", Gianfranco Bettin / Luca Casarini / Massimo Cacciari, "Dopo Genova, mentre Manhattan brucia").

Paradoxically, in Genoa, while the "Seattle people" were protesting against "G8 and Corporations", the Eight Leaders approved a document entitled "Beyond debt relief", which implemented a strategy intended to eradicate poverty in the poorest countries. The strategy of G8 is founded on "three fundamental pillars":

- a) To open the markets of industrial countries to the exports of poor countries – liberalizing market access for their exports is the only way to allow poor countries to exploit the benefits of specialization and contribute to faster world economic growth.
- b) To facilitate Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) and technology transfers into Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- c) To reduce the gap between poor and rich countries by increasing the mobilization and efficiency of resources channelled into the development of the social sector. A special role should be played by the World Bank to promote the creation of dedicated Trust Funds through donations by the more industrialised countries.

According to G8, increased trade will stimulate economic growth in the poorest countries. This can be achieved by eliminating all the remaining trading-barriers with these countries, and extending, across the borders, unrestricted duty free and quota free access for all products originating in LDCs. This emerges from the document itself:

"The challenge is how to encourage larger and better FDI flows to LDCs, where these flows can play a key role in promoting development and knowledge diffusion, enhancing access to scarce managerial skills and marketing channels and providing a much needed stable source of external financing. Recipient countries have a primary responsibility in enduring in their efforts to adopt policies for attracting long term private capital inflows and enabling knowledge diffusion. The international community should adequately support these efforts by contributing to improve the overall framework disciplining investment, promoting adequate market incentives and providing developmental aid for capacity building, advisory services and information sharing".

Unfortunately the media at the time paid more attention to the demonstrations against G8 rather than to the contents of the summit.

In Genoa the anti-globalisation movement demonstrated against its most valuable allies in the world: democratic governments of developed countries. In fact, there is no way to achieve a global governance of resource flows and global fairness apart from initiating a close relationship between democratic governments and the anti-globalisation movement. They depend on each other to uphold the primacy of politics vis-à-vis global finance.

Globalisation compels us to continually update our political categories. We are accustomed to assuming a 'symmetrical' relationship between political decision-makers and the recipients of their decisions. In fact, this is the foundation of the modern nation-state. However, due to the digital revolution and processes of economic integration, this relationship is no longer so obvious. The nation-state is not able, as it was in the past, to guarantee basic levels of safety and social security. Nevertheless, people demand the same level of safety and social security. There are many examples of this. For instance, in the USA, the on-line vigilantes are succeeding in the fight against on-line fraud. The on-line vigilantes do not use any weapons or handcuffs. Their only weapon is the Internet. They discredit, libel and boycott people or firms that commit on-line fraud. This initiative is successful because, as the slogan goes, "*vigilante justice is better than no justice at all*". This slogan means: "*if the state cannot defend me, I'll find another institution that can do it*". In the Hobbesian way of thinking, that translates as: "*I need no longer respect the rule of the state*". After all, the Western world is the home of individualism and private enterprise. Thus, some months ago, the American people were encouraged to act like "*private attorney generals*". This is a manifestation of the deterritorialisation of law. In the recent past, this was justified by saying "*It's globalisation, it's progress*". Most American middle-class persons used to consider the decline of state as an inevitable price to pay for modernisation. The mentality and outlook have changed after September 11th. Everyone can understand that the anarchistic deregulation of both justice and safety can make western society extremely vulnerable and nowadays people request "*more state*" and "*more control*".

Who or what can answer this question? Can anything or anyone prevent a *corporation* from violating human rights (i.e., damaging the environment), if that corporation does not work within the borders of a democratic country? A country, especially a democratic country, cannot take away what it has not given or bestowed. If a firm does

not need the state to ensure its safety, it will not respect the rule of the government. A chaotic and unfair world is also the ideal environment for the development of terrorism. In short, democratic countries on their own cannot wage war on corporations to defend human rights and the rule of the law. They need the support of public opinion and the help of Non Governmental Organizations, such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International. NGOs and the anti-globalisation movement can transcend borders, informing and mobilising people against violations by corporations.

On the other hand, anti-globalisation movements also need national democratic governments to concretise their campaigns to help poor countries. For instance, the "debt" of the LDCs can only be addressed if the creditors (i.e. democratic developed countries) decide to pay up. Not all debtor countries are politically trustworthy. In some, human rights are systematically violated. In others, political corruption reigns. In the first case, debt relief would amount to financing despotism; in the second it would be a disincentive to achieving political reform.²

² "7. Debt relief – particularly the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative – is a valuable contribution to the fight against poverty, but it is only one of the steps needed to stimulate faster growth in very poor countries. We are delighted twenty-three countries have qualified for an overall amount of debt relief of over \$53 billion, out of an initial stock of debt of \$74 billion. We must continue this progress. 8. In particular we look to countries affected by conflict to turn away from violence. When they do, we confirm that we will strengthen our efforts to help them take the measures needed to receive debt relief. We confirm that HIPC, in conjunction with reforms by the countries to ensure strong domestic policies and responsible lending by donors, is designed to lead to a lasting exit from unsustainable debt. 9. Beyond debt relief, we focussed our discussion on three mutually reinforcing elements: a) greater participation by developing countries in the global trading system, b) increased private investment, c) initiatives to promote health, education and food security. 10. Open trade and investment drive global growth and poverty reduction. That is why we have agreed today to support the launch of an ambitious new Round of global trade negotiations with a balanced agenda. 11. While opening markets through global negotiations provides the greatest economic benefit for developing countries, we fully endorse measures already taken to improve market access for the least developed countries (LDCs), such as Everything But Arms, Generalised Preferences and all other initiatives that address the same objectives. We confirm our pledge made at the UN LDC III Conference to work towards duty-free and quota-free access for all products originating in the least developed countries. We support efforts made by LDCs to enter the global

National governments, although strong in their popular vote, are not strong enough to be able to face such complex and often unpopular issues alone. Aid to the poorest countries involves several changes (and maybe restrictions) of the western way of life and standard of living. First of all, the free circulation of LCDs' goods and produce in our markets could result in losses to local firms and farmers. So, therefore, to be able to invest in poor areas, western governments have to reduce public spending affecting thereby the middle class. To achieve effective aid policies in favour of LCDs, governments need the support of anti-globalisation movements. Furthermore democratic governments also need "global" support: the recipients of political decisions are nowadays "global". So, NGOs and anti-globalisation movements can denounce attempts by corporations to condition or boycott the political sphere.

In a nutshell, human rights policies need a "Holy Alliance" between democratic Governments and the anti-globalisation movement. This alliance has become even more important after September 11th. It is futile to categorise the anti-globalisation protesters with the terrorists, accusing them of destabilising the world order. These protesters are the product of western civilization and their objections are not fundamentalist but liberal. Anti-globalisation claims focus not on world order but on world disorder. Activists are seeking new and improved ways of defending human rights in the globalisation era. We should recognize that the same deregulated disorder that benefits corporations is the very disorder in which terrorists act. The present aggressive neo-liberalist trend stifles all political regulation in the global sectors, all institutions of legal and political

trading system and to take advantage of opportunities for trade-based growth. 12. Increased market access must be coupled with the capacity to take advantage of it. Thus, to help developing countries benefit from open markets, we will better coordinate our trade related assistance to: a) provide bilateral assistance on technical standards, customs systems, legislation needed for World Trade Organisation (WTO) membership, the protection of intellectual property rights, and human resource development, b) support the work of the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance encourage the international financial institutions to help remove obstacles to trade and investment, and establish the institutions and policies essential for trade to flourish, c) urge countries to mainstream trade expansion by including it in their poverty reduction strategies (*Final Official Notice of the G8 in Genoa, Jul. 21, 2001*)

oversight, all attempts at democratising globalisation and institutionalising economic justice. It insists on total freedom from government interference in the global economic sector. But should the national governments weaken, it will be extremely difficult to preserve safety as well as to defend human and civil rights.

What has become apparent to us after September 11 is that in the global era there is no "*clash of civilizations*", but a collision between modernity and its critics. Most Muslim people do not want to destroy western civilization at all. They are only terrified of modernity and its costs, just like the Seattle or Genoa demonstrators who protested against the costs of globalisation. Thus the no/global protesters could be the best allies of democratic governments in the fight against terrorism. After all, terrorism is the dark side of the "*global casino*", i.e. of absolute market freedom from political interference. Both governments and the no/global movement want a fairer and more ordered world, like Moslems who desire a more respectful and equitable worldwide order. Democratic governments must work to preserve western civilization from turning into a "*McWorld*". If that were to happen, a clash between "*McWorld*" and *Jihad* (like the title of one of Benjamin R. Barber's latest essays) would be inevitable. The only way to fight terrorism is by globalising both human rights and civic institutions, extending democracy to the global market. Cultural monism (i.e. the conviction that liberalization plus deregulation equals worldwide happiness) is the best partner of terrorism.