

At the time of the violence at Gothenburg

Saturday 3 December 2005, by [AGUITON Christophe](#) (Date first published: June 2001).

This article is the adaptation of an interview realised for the newspaper Liberation, copy n°6248, 18/06/2001. The Swedish police had used firearms against demonstrators at the occasion of a European Council, in Gothenburg, discussing new measures of work “flexibility” and reduction of social protections in the European Union.

Nothing justifies the resort to firearms which were used in Sweden, the first time in a demonstration in a country of the European Union since its creation... We have to be in favour of the non-violent demonstrations. Besides an organisation like ATTAC has never participated and will never participate to acts of a violent nature.

We face a double trend. On one hand, there is an overall extension of the fight against the “liberal globalisation”; opinion polls are showing an increasing anxiety of the majority of the people. On the other hand, we can see the exasperation of some militant circles and sectors of society which are the first victims of the reorganisation of the capitalism, unemployed persons’ demonstrations or workers conflicts such as Cellatex (last July, dismissed employees threatened to poison a river in the Ardennes, France, editor’s note).

Since Seattle, there is no summit which is doubled by one counter summit and by larger and larger demonstrations. Everywhere the expressed demands are the same: answer social aspirations (fight against the disparities, growing job or social insecurity), environmental aspirations (refusal of multinationals taking control over the planet common wealth) or democratic aspirations (people want to weight on the choices which determine the future of the planet).

There is no confusion of targets, on one side international institutions (WTO, IMF...) having often little democratic mandate and on the other side the democratically elected chiefs of state (European summits). At the beginning, the European Union was not conceived as a strictly economic entity. Now, it appears henceforth as a stepping stone for the “liberal globalisation”, where the social and political issues are not enough taken into account.

Actually, the world social movement is by nature internationalist and it is not, on the whole, anti-American or anti-European. There is no risk of a return to “sovereignism” or to nationalism. But, while on environment issues, Europe makes progresses, almost nothing is done on social subject. The Union appears to be more a device for eroding the social progress and the public services rather than a tool guaranteeing new rights.

One should so understand the impatience and the frustrations of hundreds of thousand activists who still not see inflection in the policies. The first question that our governments should address, is why the anger rises up and how to get the means for another policy. There is a deep transformation of the capitalism, its functioning and its rules. And faced to this overall transformation, the reactions are multiple. There are the demonstrations during summits and also reactions expressed against the redundancies made for the stock-exchange conveniences (Danone, Marks and Slip-over). There is

the Irish vote against the treaty of Nice, a sign of a real social and democratic unrest, or a considerable ascent of the abstention, in France, in the United States, in Italy. Finally, there are campaigns against the debt or for the institution of the Tobin tax or the conferences as Port Alegre, which pave the way for alternatives.

Thanks to this, the question is no more, as in the 70s, in the great majority of the cases, to conquer the Power via revolutionary organisations, but to find other ways for radical protest. We can see especially the emergence of much wider alliances, with the peasant organisations, numerous NGO, the syndicates (as the American AFL-CIO), and the associative world.

P.S.

* Translation: Nicolas Wolff, volunteer translator.