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Globalisation

European Summits at Gothenburg - police fire on massive mobilization

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Savage police repression will be the abiding memory of the European Union summit in Gothenburg in Sweden, which ended on Friday June 15, with three demonstrators wounded after having been shot by police.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/goteborg1.jpg>] First aid for shot demonstrator

As the streets of Gothenburg filled with groups of demonstrators, from the morning onwards the police attacked them with dogs, causing a violent response to the violence of the attack.

Throughout the day of groups of demonstrators were harassed by police officers on horseback - whereas the organizers of the afternoon demonstration had the agreement of the authorities that mounted police officers would not be used against demonstrators.

From the morning the police charged peaceful processions, trying to divide them - it was at this point in time the first barricades, later set on fire, were built to protect the demonstrators. Moreover, the latter were attacked on several occasions by bands of néo-Nazis, apparently tolerated by the police.

Speaking to the organizers about the anti-capitalist march, Tommy Lindqvist of the Socialist Party (SP, Swedish section of the Fourth International) denounced this attitude at a press conference held at 6pm on Friday: "the responsibility for what is occurring falls entirely on the police. They provoked the demonstrators from the beginning". [[1](#)]

Anders Svenson, representative of the SP on the June 18th demonstration steering committee (15,000 demonstrators) told the SP's weekly, *Internationalen*: "The media behaved scandalously, they echoed verbatim the police version of events without even trying to look at any other account of what happened". [[2](#)]

While the European heads of state may have been privately critical of Sweden's social democratic Prime Minister Göran Persson (television viewers saw French president Jacques Chirac tell him "This is very dangerous, you could have killed people"), the official line was different: For Blair "it is significant that we did not yield an inch to these people"; Jospin asserted that the demonstrators should "be dealt with absolute determination"; finally Otto Schilly and Daniel Vaillant, respectively German and French Ministers of Interior, both social democrats, meeting on June 17 in Berlin, called on the European Union to adopt "a common and tough attitude against this new form of extremist criminality which crosses borders".

While noting that "the exasperation of certain militant milieus and social layers is real ", Christophe Aguitton, in the name of ATTAC, stressed: "We are in favour of non-violent demonstrations. We do not take part and will under no circumstances take part in acts of a violent nature. But nothing justifies the use of the firearms which were employed in Sweden" [[3](#)]

Some organizations or networks in the movement against capitalist globalization, like the German autonomes, try to surf on the increasing exasperation of the radicalized youth who see their future obliterated by the stranglehold of the multinationals on the common goods of planet.

These organizations, not much interested in the extension and or the mass basis of the movement, try to transform the demonstrations into scenes of looting. In Gothenburg the provocations of the Swedish police helped to swell their ranks.

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In its leading article, Internationalen wrote: "the attitude of the Socialist Party towards individual terrorism and rioting as a political method have not changed for some years. We condemn it and we carry out a political struggle to convince the youth who could be attracted by the violence of those dressed in black. It is a patient fight within the mass movement, alongside our comrades from work, to build the democratic and socialist alternative (...) After Gothenburg it is time to prepare for the Genoa Summit. And the conclusion drawn by the EU leaders after Gothenburg is neither to democratize nor to modify the neoliberal policy. On the contrary, the political and financial regime wants to be locked up more firmly in its shell. Genoa will be subjected to a veritable state of siege. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has already announced the mobilization of 13,000 police officers, the prohibition of access by air and rail and the installation of the leaders in a luxurious yacht somewhere on the Mediterranean (...)

At Gothenburg the leaders were only interested in banning demonstrations, and using water cannon and teargas, the generalization of body searches. In short, one step more towards a police state. This is the result obtained by the anarchist elements who prefer to act elsewhere when tens of thousands demonstrate in the streets against the regime (...)

But one thing should not be hidden. During these four days Gothenburg was the theatre of the most massive demonstrations against the policy of the European Union ever seen in Sweden. The thousands who organized three immense demonstrations without having recourse to any threatening attitude whatsoever are the true winners. They represent the future". [4]

[1] Quoted in "Swe-Crónica detallada de los sucedido en la ciudad de Gotemburgo durante las manifestaciones en contra de la Cumbre Europea", Equipo Nizkor, June 17, 2001.

[2] Internationalen, weekly of the Socialist Party, Swedish section of the Fourth International, June 19, 2001.

[3] Interview in Libération, June 18, 2001.

[4] Editorial, Internationalen, June 19, 2001.