

**During the protests in Genoa (July 19-21, 2001) the Italian newspaper Corriere della sera referred to GK as the “father of the black bloc” and asked him to respond to the some questions. Here is the English version:**

dear professor, here are my questions. I need also some information about your biography and about your engagement as activist (I read you were in Seattle, do you know some Black Blockers?)

Regards Davide

In which humus (ideology, way of life, age, class, tradition...) can Black Bloc find its adherents? Why are Black Blockers so young? Here in Italy, in Genoa, most of them was 17-20 years old. The other part of the antiglobalization movement is really older. Do you think that the Black Bloc could move toward a radicalization? I mean, after the violence against multinationals and private properties, part of the movement could arrive to terrorist acts? Affinity groups form during the riots in a sort of spontaneous way. But the direct actions seem to have behind a real project that begins months before the summits. Which kind of organization have a global anarchist movement? And which is the role of new technologies as Internet? John Zerzan is cited as the ideologue of the Black Bloc. Which are the thinkers of the movement? Do you know if the nihilists as Nietzsche or Dostoevskij could have influenced the movement? Black Bloc tactics seem to me as a sort of postmodern guerriglia. May be, this is the reason why for the police is so difficult to confront with them. And what could do the overnments? Black Bloc (from its return on the field in 1988 in United States) is already 13 years old. Is a tactic destined to last? I mean, in the XXI century is the urban warfare the only way to protest? Which is the political basis of the movement? Some nihilistic positions may belong to rightwing rebels too. In the streets of Genoa, there were also right extremist. Is there a zone of encounter? Do you have an idea about the number of Black Bloc worldwide? Do you know which are the toughest (Greeks, Basques, Germans...)?

Dear Davide,

Here are the answers to your questions.

The Black Bloc represents the complete negation of everything existing. The international networks forged in the crucible of street actions and confrontations are the seeds of an alternative to capitalist globalization.

Not all Black Bloc people are young. The fact that so many youth are involved today shows the movement's resiliency, its capacity to renew itself from generation to generation. The tradition of militant street confrontations alongside large, peaceful protests can be traced at least to the anti-war movement in the US in the 1960s. Some veterans of the 1960s movements are involved in Black Bloc activities today. In dozens of poor countries, militant anti-globalization protests in the 1970s and 1980s rekindled the fire of total opposition to the existing system. I think particularly of Venezuela in 1989 when at least 300 people were killed by the army and police. The fact that so many people around the world are opposed to the institutions of global capital means that the massive mobilizations involve many types of people. The Black Bloc is the cutting edge of the knife aimed at the throat of the few hundred corporations that control our species' productive powers and turns them into instruments of profitable impoverishment and unnecessary destruction rather than humane development and beautiful construction. The Black Bloc hates the ugliness of the global

culture of capitalist consumerism, not least because it means disease, impoverishment and death to millions of people at the periphery of the world system. According to the United Nations, 40,000 children under the age of 5 die *every day* of unnecessary causes. The Black Bloc refuses to be “good Germans” in the face of this contemporary holocaust.

I hope the movement is too intelligent to move toward terrorist activist. We have seen the repeated failure of this tactic and strategy—notably in Italy in the 1970s. The conscious spontaneity of the Black Bloc relies of popular participation and people taking to the streets, not on the armed actions of a handful of people. The brutality of the police in Genoa is the state’s attempt to deny people the freedom to assemble and protest—to force it into the underground.

The Black Bloc is not entirely anarchist. The Black Bloc of northern Europe in the 1980s scarcely contained any anarchists. Autonomy and anarchism today have the same symbol—the circled A—but to equate them is to misunderstand the movement. After the fall of Communism, anarchism is a ready-made ideology used as a crutch by many to comprehend the world and explain their desires. Others prefer to think for themselves and develop freshly their ideas, tactics, strategy—and most importantly—their desires. Since radicals are today largely denied access to the mainstream media, the internet has been invaluable as a means of mobilization and information. As the web’s capacity to handle larger amounts of data improves, mini-TV stations will emerge. The diversity and proliferation of web sites and internet communications contribute to the movement’s lack of centralization and ideological uniformity—phenomena many people mistake for anarchism. The spontaneous formation of affinity groups in the streets, the coming together of activists from many language groups and cultures, the forging of a new identity (the Black bloc) is but one indication of the important role of militant street actions in the creation of social movements.

There are many individuals and groups that have influenced the Black bloc. The most important person in this regard is Subcommandante Marcos, who also wears the black ski mask worn by the Black bloc. Actions, not words, speak most eloquently to the Black bloc.

The Black bloc are a swarm of mosquitos attacking an elephant. Governments could seek to redress the global poverty, militarism, racism endemic to society today, rather than to protect privilege and power.

Militant street confrontations are a crucible of psychic reworking of needs and desires. They are a theatre of reality. After Genoa, one Black Bloc participant told me it “changed me more in a few days than in the preceding years of meetings.” Another person called it the “most important experience” of her life. If we accept that consumer culture is a form of colonization, then the Black Bloc’s destruction of MacDonald’s, Nike, banks, etc. are a concrete decolonization—a freeing of space from corporate control and creation of autonomous zones not controlled by the police. As Fanon long ago discovered, violence plays an essential role in decolonization movements. The controlled violence of the Black Bloc is not only a psychic reworking of individuals in the streets, it has recalled to memory 1968 and other moments of opposition to the system as a whole—aspects of people’s desires repressed by decades of deadening consumerism and debilitating comfort. The rationality of

the existing global system is today increasingly questioned—thanks in no small measure to the sparks flying from militant confrontations.

The Black Bloc differs from immensely from the right—most importantly around the fundamental issue of racism. In Germany in the early 1990s, only Black Bloc people fought the Right in order to rescue hundreds of immigrants under attack from rightwing neo-Nazis in Hoyerswerde (1991) and Rostock (1992).

As far as numbers are concerned, those who say don't know, and those who know don't say. The Black Bloc is an international phenomenon crystallized from decades of experience. As an alternative to the parliamentary and guerrilla paths, its significance is vital to those who oppose the rottenness of the existing global system.

No I do not know anything about the Black Bloc in Italy.

George Katsiaficas

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