



## Statewatch analysis

### Italy: Making sense of the Genoa G8 trials and aftermath

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**This analysis seeks to identify some of the key points for understanding the outcome of the trials involving demonstrators and police officers in relation to events during the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001, and to investigate the implications for public order policing and the right to demonstrate.**

The events of 19-21 July 2001 represent a wake-up call in terms of the brutality of policing and pre-emptive criminalisation used against a mass popular and international demonstration. It resulted in the death of protester Carlo Giuliani and in thousands of people from the European Union and beyond experiencing an array of repressive measures. These measures included temporary detention in humiliating circumstances and physical violence. The two key trials of police officers concerned events at the Bolzaneto barracks, which was turned into a make-shift prison to hold protesters for the duration of the summit, and the *Diaz* school. The school was used as a dormitory, where a late-night police raid, justified on the basis of fabricated evidence (a Molotov cocktail brought into the school by police officers), and spurious claims (for instance “the presence of black tops”) resulted in injuries to scores of protesters, many of whom were sleeping when they were attacked.

The main trial involving protesters saw 25 people (supposedly members of the so-called “black block”, or others acting in association with them) charged with offences including “destruction and looting” for carrying out violent acts in the streets of Genoa during the days of the summit. The alleged acts included smashing the windows and doors of shops and banks they entered, stole from and vandalised and fighting and hurling missiles at the police. There were also legal proceedings into a number of specific incidents, such as the shooting of Carlo Giuliani by Carlo Placanica, a young *carabiniere* conscript (the police force with military status) and instances in which police are accused of unlawfully attacking protesters. The case against Placanica was shelved on request from the prosecuting magistrate who argued that the shot may have been deflected by a rock and that, even if this had not been the case, he had fired in self-defence as the *Defender* vehicle he was riding in had come under attack from demonstrators. Another notorious case, involving a police officer kicking a defenceless minor in the face, which was shown on television news programmes, ended with an out of court settlement.

#### Asymmetrical justice

Although events in Genoa marked a watershed in the policing of protests in Europe, with one protester shot dead and broken limbs and other injuries inflicted on hundreds of protesters, they did not happen in a vacuum. They had been preceded by worrying scenes of coercive policing at demonstrations in the cities of Seattle, for the WTO ministerial conference in 1999, Gothenburg for the EU summit in June 2001 (which set precedents including the holding and ill-treatment of protesters without charge in a make-shift detention centre until the event was over and the firing of live ammunition by police resulting in one protester, Hannes Westberg, ending up in a coma for several weeks) and Naples

(where, again, arrested demonstrators were ill-treated) for the Global Forum on e-government in March 2001. The latter was identified in Italy as the event that set the tone for what happened months later, on a far larger scale, in Genoa.

More recent events, at least in Italy, have confirmed that demonstrators are likely to face more serious charges than they were in the past. There have been attempts by prosecutors to lower the burden of proof needed to secure convictions through notions such as “psychological connivance” in cases in which personal responsibility in incidents and violent actions is difficult to pin down.

On the other hand, the responsibility of police and law enforcement officers and officials, and the possibility of charging them, is undermined by the difficulty of identifying who was responsible for specific actions (they wear uniforms and helmets, thus their faces are seldom visible), and by the shortcomings of a criminal justice system that appears not to view the sanctioning of abuse as a priority. This is epitomised, for example, by the absence of a crime of torture in the Italian penal code. Had it existed, it may have been applicable to the treatment protesters were subjected in Bolzaneto. The argument that violent incidents are caused by a few “rotten apples” belies their scale and the fact that large numbers of officers from Italy’s numerous security bodies routinely engaged in “fascist-inspired” behaviour and ill-treatment of protesters. For example they mocked, slapped and struck people who were detained at the entrance of Bolzaneto in a “reception committee”. It also means that the higher echelons in the chain of command are unlikely to face the consequences of failures in guaranteeing public order and the right to demonstrate.

Another interesting element concerns the timing and outcome of the trials. Demonstrators who were found guilty have been sentenced to long terms in prison, whereas officers have emerged from the proceedings with lower sentences than might have been expected. Further, their appeals will run long enough to stop them serving their sentences because the term set by the statute of limitations will have expired. Another aspect that is worth noting involves the treatment and possible sentences envisaged in proceedings for attacks targeting property and those involving violence against people, both in terms of clashes in the streets, raids such as the one on the Diaz school and violence to which people who were held in custody and unable to defend themselves were subjected.

### **Sketches from the key trials**

Firstly, it is worth looking at the sentences requested by the prosecuting magistrates in the trials and to what crimes they were related. We will then look at the rulings in each trial.

**Bolzaneto:** In the Bolzaneto trial, involving 45 defendants, the longest sentences requested were: five years eight months and five days for “ABG”, three years, six months and 25 days for “GVT”, who was in charge of medical services, and three and a half years for deputy *questore* “AP” and head superintendent “APo”, the highest-ranking police officers on the scene (both of them from the *Digos*, the state police’s general directorate for special operations), and three others. The main charges included “abuse of [public] office” (art.323 of the penal code), “abuse of authority” (art.608) and “private violence” (art.610) against people arrested or held in custody. Thirty defendants were acquitted in a trial which highlighted that the Italian legal system does not perceive torture in custody to be a criminal offence. The latest attempt to incorporate it was unsuccessful as the government of the time sought to introduce it on condition that the violence involving torture was “repeated”.

*“ABG” was the prison police officer in charge of security and the organisation of services in Bolzaneto. He was identified as being responsible for ordering that prisoners be held in stress positions facing the wall with their legs spread and arms held up for long periods. He also knew about a series of other incidents that amounted to “degrading and inhuman treatment”. “ABG” himself was accused of violent acts, insults and vexatious and humiliating treatment of prisoners. “ABG” was also identified as being responsible for violent acts against the plaintiffs and, as officer in charge, for instigating others to do likewise. Specific incidents*

*involving him included violence aggravated by the use of a truncheon, banging someone's head against the wall, spitting at a detainee [not proven, according to the court], comments such as "you have no dignity", and forcing someone to march with his right hand raised in a fascist salute.*

By virtue of their rank and job description on the day, "AP" and "APo" also had a duty to ensure that detention was carried out within the bounds of the law. The charges against "AP" included violent acts such as kicking someone in order to force them to say "I am a shit", slapping someone and threatening children to coerce them into signing reports on their arrest.

Evidence from the 252 people who passed through Bolzaneto (197 arrested, including those from the raid in the Diaz school and 55 held temporarily) told of how they were variously: "threatened, insulted and struck with a truncheon", "forced to say 'viva il duce' [hurray for Mussolini]", "struck with kicks and blows, beaten in a cell with punches to the kidney", "cursed, struck with boots and a truncheon, causing bleeding...", made to stand with legs spread, struck in a cell, made to wait in a corridor and then fainting", "burned with a cigarette", "kicked, punched", "beaten on the nape of the neck and shoulders, badly beaten in the infirmary, forced to go to the toilet and threatened with sodomy", "spat at", repeatedly "struck on the genitals and legs" "made to kneel and punched twice in the face and kicked in the bottom", received "sexual insults in the toilet, forced to place her head in the squat-toilet", "sprayed with irritating gas, taken to shower where an officer strikes him", "had his ponytail cut off", "hand burned with a lighter", "made to listen to *faccetta nera* [a fascist anthem] on a ringtone", "beaten and feels ill, is kicked and spat at on the floor, is made to strip and rest on all fours and bark like a dog".

Individuals subjected to these forms of treatment came from across Europe (Spain, Switzerland, England, Germany, France and Lithuania) and beyond (New Zealand, Canada, USA, Morocco, Turkey). The prosecuting magistrate notes that most of them testified willingly.

At the entrance to the barracks there was a multitude of officers from different police and prison service bodies, including plainclothes officers referred to as the "reception committee" by the prosecuting magistrate. They created a hostile environment by kicking and "spitting, issuing insults, political insults and threats, which were particularly serious when they were directed at women and were sexually demeaning". Marker pens with different colours were used to separate different kinds of detainees, a procedure described as "disrespectful". During the search, belongings were thrown to the ground, damaged and sometimes never returned. The positions in which individuals were held for long periods included kneeling against a wall with their legs spread, or on tiptoes with fingers against the wall. Political insults against left-wing political figures, ditties supporting fascist dictators and anti-Semitic comments were heard, amid frequent mocking reference to Carlo Giuliani's death and comments such as "welcome to Auschwitz".

Different phases of the detention led to different types of abuse. The treatment of the detainees in the infirmary was deemed particularly noteworthy as it was a moment when one might expect some understanding. But the vexatious treatment continued as they stood naked, for search or health-related reasons, in the presence of a number of prison police officers. The question of how they received their injuries was omitted, earrings were sometimes removed brutally, and going to the toilet was a harrowing experience in which ill-treatment and a complete lack of privacy prevailed. Moreover, the punishment meted out was no better for people who had physical disabilities, such as a Moroccan who had a prosthetic leg and was physically assaulted when he could no longer maintain the position he had been ordered to hold. A man who was very short was referred to as a "paedophile midget".

The court convicted 15 of the 45 defendants, with "ABG" sentenced to five years imprisonment, "MLP" to three years and two months, "AP" and "APo" to two years and four months each, "DM" to one and a half years, "AG" to one year and three months, "GVT" (in charge of the medical service) to one year and two months, five others to one year and three others to between five and ten months imprisonment. The sentences against ten of those convicted were suspended. Of the remaining five,

three saw their actions effectively condoned by virtue of a general pardon approved for sentences of less than three years in 2006 to relieve the problem of overcrowding in Italian prisons. There was a three-year tariff discount for the two remaining offenders, “MLP” and “ABG”.

Nonetheless, as appeals have been filed against the guilty verdicts proceedings will last longer than the statute of limitations allows and nobody will serve a prison sentence. It is also worth noting that the sentence recognised that inhuman and degrading treatment took place in Bolzaneto and that “fundamental human rights were substantially compromised”, in violation of article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Italian Constitution.

## **The 25 demonstrators**

The trial against 25 protesters saw one acquittal. Fourteen defendants were sentenced to between five months and two-and-a-half years in relation to clashes arising from a *carabinieri* attack against an authorised march on 21 July in via Tolemaide and subsequent confrontations; one received a five-year sentence for injuring the driver of the *carabinieri*'s Defender 4x4 vehicle from which Carlo Giuliani was shot in Piazza Alimonda. Ten people who were found guilty of “destruction and looting” as part of the “black block” were sentenced to between 6 and 11 years in prison. Cumulatively, the 24 who were found guilty received sentences amounting to 110 years.

Another significant aspect of the ruling was that the claim filed by the Council Presidency (the Cabinet) calling for the demonstrators to pay for the harm caused to Italy's image (the value must be set in civil court proceedings) was accepted by the court. Thus, it was the demonstrators' violence and not the police's brutality soiled that Italy's image. Finally, the statements of four officers (two from the police and two *carabinieri*) have been sent to the public prosecutor's office to investigate whether they should be prosecuted for perjury.

One specific offence that the prosecuting magistrate charged the defendants with was “destruction and looting” (art.419 of the penal code, the most serious charge applicable for public disturbances). This is a crime that, if proven, has a sentence of between five and 12 years. The prosecuting magistrate requested a total of 225 years for the 25 protesters regardless of whether they were identified as taking part in the “black block's” destructive spree (including the entry and smashing up of a number of estate agents, banks and commercial premises, the burning of cars and erection of barricades in clashes with the police that included the throwing of Molotov cocktails) or in clashes in the street during authorised demonstrations. The highest sentence requested was 16 years for “CM”, a woman identified as having taken part in different acts involving the “black block”. Sentences of between ten and 15 years were requested for seven others. At the other end of the spectrum, the shortest sentences requested were either six or six and a half years for ten defendants. The duration of their violent behaviour and whether they were repeat offenders were factors taken into account, along with mitigating circumstances. Other considerations were the use of weapons, acting in a group of more than five people and the intent to provoke public insecurity. The increasing use of article 419 is viewed as an important development by activists, because it is an offence that has passed from being exclusively reserved for popular revolts or insurrections to incidents involving football hooliganism and political demonstrations.

Of the 24 defendants who were found guilty, “CM” was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment, “PF” and “VV” to ten and a half years, “FL” to ten years (all with three years probation), “FA” to nine years, “CC” to seven years and ten months, “VA” to seven years and eight months, “AC” to seven and a half years, UD to six and a half years, “MI” to six years, “MM” to five years, “PP” to two and a half years, “DP” to one year and eight months, “DAAF” to one year and six months, “DRF”, “DAF” and “DPA” to one year and five months, “BD” and “CS” to one year and four months, “FA(2)” and “TF” to one year and two months, “FTO” to eleven months, “DIM” to six months and, finally, “CD” to five months. The sentences against ten were suspended, of the 13 who had their prison sentences of less than three years fully “pardoned” [see above], and the remaining eleven had three years of their sentences condoned. Thus, the longest sentence to be served is eight years, with two others serving

seven and a half years, one serving seven years, one serving six years, and six others serving between two years and four years and ten months.

The sentencing explanations filed by the court threw up some interesting details. Firstly, the charges of destruction and looting were thrown out with respect to incidents not pertaining to the black block's vandalism. Clashes with police, arising in the context of the march in via Tolemaide that developed around the sites of the main demonstrations in central Genoa, were deemed to be a reaction against "arbitrary acts by public officers" initiated by a *carabinieri* unit that was not supposed to be there. Thus responsibility for the incidents was deemed to have been shared between the protesters and police acting outside their remit of guaranteeing public order. The court's reconstruction of the incidents leading up to the clashes around the authorised march saw video material that often contradicted the testimony of police officers. The reconstruction found that the clashes were started by an unprovoked launch of teargas by a unit of *carabinieri* that had been instructed to go elsewhere [Marassi, where the so-called "black block" was engaged] and to use a different route so as to avoid the bulk of the demonstration. The instructions had been ignored. Constant references to large-scale confrontations and missile throwing that forced the police intervention were not visible in the film footage submitted to the court, with the exception of one or two isolated objects.

Thus the firing of teargas canisters (including some that were fired at body height contravening public order guidelines) and initial police charges when the demonstration was not only on its authorised route, but essentially peaceful, are described as "unlawful", "disproportionate", "needless" and "arbitrary". The widespread use of dangerous weapons that were not *carabinieri* regulation issue is well documented and they were used against demonstrators before there was any reaction. In the words of the court:

*the acts ... reached levels of violence [that were] entirely unjustified, in some cases well beyond the limit of gratuitousness ... They are people who did not take to the streets to maintain or re-establish public order, but to cause harm and arouse fear that are entirely unlawful*

The sentence explanation also says that in the first two phases of the police operation, as well as subsequent clashes in the side-streets:

*the arbitrariness of the conduct of public officers constitutes a reason of justification for the conducts of resistance ascribable to private individuals.*

In subsequent charges involving armoured vehicles:

*if possible, even more ... arbitrariness in the conduct of public officials can be appreciated.*

Pointing to the breaking down of barricades, "their manoeuvres in the midst of the crowd, the chasing of demonstrators fleeing on foot even on sidewalks" violated public order guidelines, [extracts from "*Motivazioni*", chapter II, pp. 184-194].

These, and other considerations, ruled out charges of "destruction and looting" in relation to protesters involved in these and subsequent clashes. However, causing criminal damage, attacks against officers and vehicles (some of which were set alight), the throwing of missiles, the erection of barricades, and even the stealing of two mopeds that occurred subsequently, resulted in demonstrators being found guilty. It is also worth noting that the firing of teargas prevented any possibility of negotiations between a contact group and police officials that were expected to take place in an attempt to symbolically breach the "red zone" once the demonstration had reached the end of its agreed route.

Secondly, the punishment of some protesters was deemed to have implications that went beyond the actual events that took place, as is indicated in the explanation of the sentences by the court:

*The black block does not systematically seek contact with police forces, which they only meet on few occasions, or opposition with other forms of protest, that they meet directly only in Piazza Manin; theirs can be read as the message of a “global”, totalising protest, destructive towards anything they come across. In doing this, they leave in their path a landscape of rubble: banks and shops destroyed and emptied, cars and barricades set alight and a deep sense of insecurity, in other words, the disturbance of public order, that will also project its effects onto the clashes of the afternoon of the 20 July, making them somewhat more serious.*

*For this reason, it would be a mistake to minimise the reach of these people’s behaviour on the basis of the factual element that they seem to strike, or rather, to act ruthlessly, only against things, external expressions of the right to property. What happened in those days in Genoa must be read not only as a chronological sequence, but also according to a “logical” sequence in which what is done precedes what happens later, not only temporarily, but also in the conscience and awareness of the protagonists beyond the evidence, which is lacking in this case, that the conduct of the different groups may somehow have been agreed or co-ordinated between them.*

Thus, their destructive spree was deemed to have altered the situation and to some extent have given the go-ahead for the repression that followed.

**Diaz:** In the trial into the police raid on the Diaz schools complex, 16 out of 29 defendants were acquitted and 13 received sentences adding up to 35 years and seven months in total.

As there has been some confusion on the matter, it should be noted that the four-storey Pascoli school hosted a media centre, the Genoa Social Forum’s legal and medical assistance services, Indymedia and other activist media groups, and had a gym and office facilities such as photocopying. The Pertini school had become a dormitory for protesters. The raid on the Diaz schools complex took place just before midnight on 21 July at the end of the summit when many people were leaving the Pascoli media centre or sleeping, or preparing to do so, in the Pertini school. Two columns of police officers arrived on the scene. The first person they came across while approaching the schools was English media activist Mark Covell, who was badly beaten in spite of raising his hands. He was injured so badly that in a later radio communication one officer suggested that he may have died; he had sustained life-threatening injuries.

In the Pascoli school, much of the violence was directed towards lawyers, doctors and computers belonging to media activists. Hard drives were confiscated and people were made to sit facing the walls and, in some instances were beaten. In the Pertini school, almost all of those present were arrested (93); 75 were taken to Bolzaneto, and the extent of the violence against them is demonstrated by the fact that 70 were injured. Three people ended up with very serious injuries, one of them in a coma. The descriptions of the beatings in the victims’ evidence make for gruesome reading: one notes that after a situation on the first floor, (described by one officer in court as “Mexican butchery”), on the ground floor there were:

*these officials who were in the gym when this happened. I also remember very well the fact that at a certain point these officials, while [...] someone was still beating some of us, these officials turned around, I remember well because this... in that moment I interpreted this as a gesture, as if they wanted to turn a blind eye before a prank that these police officers were carrying out*

The basis for the attack on the Diaz schools complex was claimed to be an intense bombardment of police cars with missiles carried out by numerous people, presumed to belong to the “black block”,

hours earlier (at around 21:30). That the complex may have been where they were hiding supposedly justified the police intervention because it aimed to find weapons or explosive material. However, the evidence was at best contradictory. The service report from the night spoke of a “bombardment of large stones from various directions” and an attack against officers and their vehicles. Witnesses agreed that there was a lot of shouting aimed at the police cars but only a single bottle was thrown.

A meeting to organise the raid took place in the *questore*'s (police chief in a given town or city) office, presided over by the now-deceased *prefetto* (government official responsible for security) Arnaldo La Barbera, in charge of preventive policing. It was attended by Francesco Gratteri (head of the *Servizio Centrale Operativo*, SCO, central operative service) and his deputy Gilberto Calderozzi, Giovanni Murgolo (deputy *questore*) and Spartaco Mortola (head of the Genoa *Digos*, police special operations general directorate). Vincenzo Canterini, head of the Rome mobile unit, was informed by Valerio Donnini of the need to bring together his unit for the operation. Deputy Head of police, Ansoino Andreassi, expressed scepticism and did not take part in the meeting.

Andreassi told the court that checking who was in the school was not the only purpose of the raid, as there had been disturbances that the police had been unable to prevent and the arrest of a number of people from extremist groups was possible. In the event, all 93 of those arrested were accused of forming a “criminal association aimed at destruction and looting”, charges that were thrown out by the Genoa court. The court also initiated proceedings against the police for violence against defenceless people on the basis of the evidence of those arrested. A sentence of five years was requested by the prosecuting magistrate for one officer (due to his involvement in planting Molotov cocktails in the school), four and a half years for ten others including “VC”, four years for seven officers, three and a half years for nine others, and three months for another. Charges were dropped against the last defendant. The charges involved falsehood by a public officer in public acts (art. 479), defamation, or the simulation of a crime used to accuse or charge someone (art. 368), illegal arrest (art. 606), causing bodily harm or grievous bodily harm (arts. 582 & 583) or conspiring in such crimes (art. 110).

The police officials involved in the organisation of the raid emerged unscathed from the trial, with the exception of “VC”, the chief of the unit to which most of the guilty officers belonged, against whom the longest sentence was passed. “VC” was sentenced to four years’ imprisonment, eight other defendants (“FB”, “CT”, “CL”, “EZ”, “AC”, “FL”, “PS” and “VCo”) received three years, “PT” three years and a fine, “MB” two and a half years and a fine, “MF” two years, and “LF” one month. Suspended sentences were given to “MF” and “LF” and of the remaining eleven officers, ten had their sentences pardoned; one (“VC”) had three years struck off his sentence. Nobody will serve these sentences as appeals have been filed and the statute of limitations will intervene before a firm sentence is handed down.

### **Political and professional accountability, activists as a “subversive association”**

One of the most surprising aspects of the Genoa affair is that many of the high-level officials from the ranks of both the police and *carabinieri* have since been promoted even, in some instances, when found guilty. Not only was public order not preserved but substantial evidence surfaced showing how they actively undermined any possibility of the G8 taking place with any semblance of normality. Vincenzo Canterini has been promoted to the rank of *questore* (police chief); Francesco Gratteri, acquitted in the Diaz trial, is now the head of the *Direzione Centrale Anticrimine* (Central Directorate against crime); Giovanni Luperi, also acquitted in the Diaz trial, passed from being the co-ordinator of the European task force investigating anarchist insurrectionalists to being head of the analysis service of AISI (internal security intelligence agency). Alessandro Perugini, the officer who was caught on camera kicking a youth in the face and was found guilty in the Bolzaneto trial, has been promoted.

The same applies to politicians involved in the events. The then interior minister, Claudio Scajola, has again been given ministerial responsibilities (as the minister for productive activities) after the Berlusconi-led coalition won the election in May 2008. Gianfranco Fini, now president of the chamber of deputies, was present in the *carabinieri*'s operations control room in Forte San Giuliano and claims

that he was there merely to greet them and offer support. As deputy prime minister, and in the absence of Berlusconi who was at the summit, he was the highest government representative, and has repeatedly condemned criticism of law enforcement officers, to whom he expresses his gratitude for defending Genoa. This is the position frequently voiced by members of the current government. Yet these promotions and the lack of accountability for police officials in charge during the days of the G8 had also been obvious under the centre-left government.

Meanwhile, activists around Italy have faced a series of trials. The trial for “subversive association” against the “*Rete del sud ribelle*” in Cosenza, which recently ended in an acquittal against which an appeal by the state prosecution service is pending, showed how some prosecutors are willing to construe disturbances, during demonstrations and anti-establishment discourse, as not far removed from terrorism (see *Statewatch* news online, November 2002, *Statewatch bulletin* Vol. 13 nos. 2 & 3/4). In a trial against activists in Milan relating to an anti-fascist demonstration on 11 March 2006 during which clashes occurred, the use of “destruction and looting” charges against protestors led to prosecutors demanding prison sentences of up to nine years. They were lowered by a third due to fast-track proceedings being used to try them, and eventually resulted in four-year sentences (*Statewatch*, Vol. 16 no. 3). On the other hand, we have seen from the outcomes of the trials how, even in the presence of extreme forms of unlawful violence by police officers, it is highly unlikely that they will be subjected to similar sentences.

Following the Diaz trial, there were cries of “shame” in the courtroom. Politicians from opposite ends of the political spectrum referred to “one of the saddest pages in Italy’s history” or to the defeat of “the violent campaign against the forces of order carried out so far by some people”, as a majority of them were acquitted. The German Green party MP Hans Christian Strobele, who visited the school and German prisoners in the aftermath of the Diaz raid and published a report (*Statewatch News Online*, August 2001), spoke of a “defeat for justice” in relation to the “heavy and premeditated violation of human rights” and the failure to attribute any responsibility to police officials. Nonetheless, he notes that:

*Having managed to conduct an investigation against important police officials, having managed to charge them, having uncovered their lies about the Molotov [cocktails] or the phantom attempt to knife an officer, is already an important result. I know, from direct experience as a criminal lawyer, how difficult it is to bring pieces of the state apparatus who feel untouchable to trial, in every country in the world.*

It is important to consider that, in spite of the slightness of punishment meted out to those responsible, the trial and its findings document, recognise and condemn a number of very serious abuses committed by members of law enforcement agencies. Professionals engaged in fighting the cases and the judges interpreting the material available to them should be commended, in spite of an overall sense of dissatisfaction with the outcomes at the trials.

### **Keys for research**

Regarding the general outlook adopted in the build-up to the G8, Professor Salvatore Palidda of Genoa University has identified some keys for research. He notes that it coincided with a stage in a neo-conservative shift that included a trend towards:

*discouraging peaceful negotiations, diplomacy and formal respect for the norms of the State based on the rule of law to benefit permanent war, and hence, of the supremacy at all costs for the strongest actors. This trend is based on an increasingly heightened asymmetry between force and power on one side, and the weaker actors [on the other].*

Palidda highlights the alarmist campaign conducted by the media, a “worrying” militarisation of the city, the suspension of certain rights including the closing of the courthouse and university campuses,

or the curtailing of freedom of movement for EU citizens (see *Statewatch Vol. 11 nos 3/4*), alongside a policing operation organised by the higher echelons of the police and a choice of personnel to be deployed that:

*did not agree with the goal of guaranteeing the negotiated and peaceful holding of the protest demonstrations*

The use of the *Tuscania* military battalion, with experience in conflict situations abroad (including in Somalia in 1997, an operation that was followed by accusations of torture including the use of electricity during interrogations), as well as a special unit headed by Vincenzo Canterini that was reportedly incited to “teach the reds a lesson...” points in this direction. The bringing together of military and public order operations is another aspect that he considers to have direct relevance. For example, the incidents leading to the shooting of Carlo Giuliani, in which *carabinieri* who had been in military operations abroad were involved.

He also highlights the fact that while members of the so-called “black block” (and there have been allegations of them being infiltrated by agents provocateurs) were engaged in vandalism they could have been isolated and their activity curtailed. A decision was made to go after the bulk of largely peaceful demonstrators, and to conflate the identities of the anti-globalisation movement and the “black block”. Noting that the police force does not only comprise violent fanatics but also moderate and democratic components, he argues that the current context (“frame”) is contributing to their marginalisation. It has discouraged them from contributing to revealing the mechanisms, dynamics and actors that were responsible for these events.

## Sources

*Exhaustive information including transcripts and court documents about the Genoa trials is available at: <http://www.processig8.org>*

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*Gothenburg, June 2001: report on the trials (Buro Jansen & Jansen), March 2003: <http://www.statewatch.org/news/2003/mar/04goth.htm>*

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See also: Statewatch’s Observatory on reactions to protests in the EU:

*<http://www.statewatch.org/observatory3.htm>*

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