

Ya Basta ? Disobedienti

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The Ya Basta movement, cosponsor with RTS of PGA, has its origins in the Italian ?self-managed social centres? for young people and the socially excluded. Its militants were also heavily involved in the squatters? movement and set up a radio station (Radio Sherwood).

It was formed after Italian militants participated in the first Zapatista Encuentro in Chiapas in 1996. It set itself the dual purpose of supporting the Zapatista struggle and fomenting the struggle against neo-liberalism in Europe. Ya Basta attended the Amsterdam Euromarch in 1998, ?squatting? a train, and repeated this tactic in mobilisations from Prague to Nice. Ya Basta has inspired others in Spain, USA, Belgium, Finland and Britain (the WOMBLES) to set up similar groups

In 1998, they set up the tute bianche or white overalls. White was meant to symbolise and challenge the ?invisibility? of people on the margins of social life, the unemployed, the homeless, illegal immigrants. Ya Basta! demanded a ?universal basic income and better conditions of life for everybody?.

Its tactics centred on symbolic confrontations with the police. Their militants wore ?armour?, made of polystyrene foam and rubber inner-tubes and carried plexiglas shields to ward off police batons. They wore gas masks against teargas and pepper spray and used mobile barriers for pushing through police lines. This equipment is manifestly ?for defensive purposes only? and its purpose is to show ?who starts the violence? as well as to assert the ?right to self-defence?.

The tute bianche, however, carried no offensive weapons of any sort, sticks, bottles, etc.. They did attempt, however, to push through police lines, using bolt cutters to bring down the perimeter fences at summits. In other words, they had a specific variety of NVDA which assumed the limited use of force by the state.

Ya Basta and the tute bianche were involved in the international S26 demonstration held in Prague, They sent a delegation to Mexico to accompany Marcos and the Zapatista caravan to Mexico City early in 2001. They played a prominent role in Nice, Davos, Naples and Gothenberg often being stopped at frontiers. But at Genoa their push-and-shove tactics suffered a terrible defeat. Faced with savage police attacks and mass helicopter tear-gassing, many were injured and their column, attempting to reach the ?red zone?, was broken up.

The Ya Basta! leaders abandoned the battlefield, though their ?disobedient? youth fought on very courageously for hours. After the battle, the Ya Basta leader Luca Cassarini, admitted his NVD tactics would not work if the state forces played for real: i.e. were willing to kill people. His conclusion was to avoid confrontation; itself a confession of the bankruptcy of his strategy

There are also serious defects with their tactics of non-violent confrontation with the police. When the objective is for demonstrators to penetrate police exclusion zones, the presence of a row of Ya Basta/tute bianche, if their non-violent pushing fails to move the obstruction, becomes willy-nilly a barrier against the more active elements. De facto, they become an extra row of police preventing those not inhibited by

NVDA prejudices from exercising their chosen means of struggle.

In their own way, they are thus as one sided and dangerous as the Black Block and the autonyms, who also have a fetish ? for violent offensive tactics, even when these can be used as provocation by the police and where the masses will be left as passive bystanders or, worse, be subjected to police attack without having the means to defend themselves.

In fact, the expedient use of both non- and violent methods, offensive and defensive tactics is vastly superior. But for this you need leadership, disciplined units and command structures, even in the context of a united front. In short, you need a workers? militia.

To their credit, they denounce state racism and the criminalisation of immigrants, including Albanians. They have been instrumental in founding Razzismo Stop ? an association for the defence of immigrant rights. Also they claim to have built the ADL (Workers Defence Association), which is based on workplace collectives, and is linked to one of the Cobases. Ya Basta also works with the MPs of Rifondazione comunista and has recently joined them in electoral blocks.

Nevertheless, they claim to have ?abandoned old ideologies? and ?cut the chains to Marxist orthodoxy?. They claim to be ?Zapatistas?, ideologically. That is, they have abandoned the language of class and the struggle for state power. They celebrate the plurality of ?visions? rather than aspiring to any single programme. They have adopted the ?discussion until consensus? model as opposed to democratic decision-making. Like Sub-commandante Marcos, they talk of popular empowerment and eroding the power of the state.

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