

Beware of White-Dressed Cops: Some Italian rioters contrast Ya Basta's Image with the Reality

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2002

The tute blanche (White Overalls) are already well-known in the European and American protest movement, being well recognisable with their uniform and protection pads in the front lines. They undeniably showed their reformist and reactionary core to the worldwide movement in Prague, but still they fail to get the adequate response true revolutionaries should give them, which is the same deserved by blue-dressed cops. That's why we consider it necessary to spread info on them, their tactics and their lies.

The tute bianche/Ya Basta comes out of the bigger and more sold-out social centres of northern Italy, like Leoncavallo in Milan, Rivalto in Mestre and Pedro in Padova. Just giving a good look at these places, it's easy to understand now the tute bianche can't be other than reformist: here you find never-ending compromises with authority, collaboration with political parties, big events described as DiY, well-defined hierarchies and leaders, pretend-to-be-rebel identities sold with gadgets and smoke liberation fests, and annual incomes larger than in many companies.

With their statements and their actions, tute bianche play a hard-looking role, and are desperately trying to have more adepts among those opposing globalisation, but they cannot hide the truth of their relationship with Green and Leftist parties (actually, many Giovani Comunisi, youth section of the Italian party Rifondazione Comunista, are part of tute bianche) and of their own involvement in politics (some of their leaders like Casarini and Farina took part more than once in elections, even the 2001 ones, and are those same going on TV to declare war on the police for the Genoa G8 summit, backed by men in balaclavas!). Can we consider politicians on our side of the barricades? We think not, even if they wear balaclavas to look cool and hard, or speak of battles against power to get our complicity.

Actually we have to beware of them, since we know that when they say "battles in the streets" or "Seattle-style protests", they mean something completely different, permitted marches with planned routes, no direct action and no civil disobedience. What made the Seattle example really inspiring was the element of surprise, with multiple street blockades and direct actionists attacking Capital outlets. What tute bianche sell as "Seattle-style" is a protest where everything is already decided for you, and the decision is: no riot, no action, no individuality, no disobedience

(even to their rules).

We saw them in action many times in Italy, and the show is always the same. Part one: they declare war, fill their mouths with big words and say they will besiege and close down whichever meeting / forum. Part two: they ask for permitted marches and collaborate with police and political parties taking part in the protests (sic!). Part three: they appear at marches with their pads, helmets and protections, display in the front lines, take care that nobody has the insane idea of smashing bank or multinationals' windows and that the march can take place without any 'problems'. Part four: this is the most important one, here is where they try to get revolutionary credibility ... clashes with police! They used to confront police at the end of the route with plastic shields and no offensive object, pushing in order to pass the 'red line'. But these clashes are fake ones! They usually take place when most protesters have gone away, but TV cameras are still present, and last just a few minutes (which would be a very stupid way to clash with police indeed). Moreover, you can easily notice that cops hit mostly only on the shields, avoiding heads or other body parts and don't use tear gas, which is their favourite weapon during real clashes or riots. What these co-ordinated clashes work for is to build consensus on their facade of hard core protesters, while giving no hassle to Power in practice. Their aim is to catch more and more potentially angry people, willing to practically attack Power and its meetings, and take them on a do-nothing-and-look-at-us fluffy aside.

Another important role they play during protests is also that of white-dressed cops. Many times tute bianche tried to isolate, demask or physically attack those who passed to action. In May 2000 at the biotech forum Tebio protests, they even distributed a leaflet with a sort of '10 commandments' to follow during the march. Commandment #2 read "nobody can put in practice spontaneous acts of any kind", while #11 similarly stated that "during the march no personal or collective action has to occur" and #8 that "you can throw nothing that has not been decided by the organisers". And they also didn't forget an invite to grass with commandment #12, inviting "to inform tute bianche of anything happening". On that occasion these white cops couldn't stop a block determined to attack banks and multinational stores during the march, but some days later they went to the square that hosted this block to threaten them for having ruined their show (and of course they didn't forget to do it with their white-cop uniforms on). More examples come from Ancona, where in May 2000 they lined up between anarchists and cops, or Bologna, where a couple of months earlier at an anti-fascist demo they preferred the usual fake clashes rather than attacking fascists (which was done by others, later attacked and threatened by tute bianche!). Another example has been Prague, where they both made futile clashes, a fake attack at a McDonalds and prevented real acts of destruction.

It is clear that tute bianche are a dangerous infiltration in the revolutionary and protest movement, and a big obstacle for the genuine fight against capitalist power. It is time for worldwide comrades to know it, in order not to do again the error of collaboration and complicity. Actually, it is time to get rid of them! Knowing that they'll try to lead the Genoa G8 protests, and are already preparing their show ... will you take a part in it, or will you ruin it with revolt?

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Retrieved on July 22, 2009 from www.insurgentdesire.org.uk
From *Green Anarchist* #67, BCM 1715, London WC1N 3XX

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