



World News (Rome Letter): Protesters gear up for Genoa 's G8 summit

The 'Seattle People' are on the way, headed for Genoa .

PADDY AGNEW

Some are travelling by ferry from Spain and Greece; others by train from Calais, Milan and Rome; some by bus from the UK and Ireland; others by motor car, motorcycle or pushbike from various parts of northern Europe. Their idea1 fina1 destination is Genoa 's Palazzo Ducale, foca1 point of next month's GS summit.

In the week that the newly-elected Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, will finally receive a mandate to form the 58th Italian government of the Post-war era, it is not difficult to predict that the GS summit will represent the first serious test of his new executive.

At first glance, you might imagine that Mr Berlusconi, a man with a finely-tuned eye for the photo-op, would be more than delighted to host a summit of the world's mightiest makers and shakers. By coincidence, when he last held office one of his first acts was to preside over the Naples G7 meeting in July 1994.

Generally perceived to have been a well-organised and successful summit set against a splendidly theatrical Neapolitan backdrop, that Naples G7 represented one of the few bright moments in the otherwise short, sharp and stormy seven months of the first Berlusconi government.

The Seattle People, of course, represent the difference between Naples 1994 and Genoa 2001. For those of us who attended Naples, the closest we came to a Street disturbante was when we tried to gate-crash the one and only news conferente held by President Clinton.

Otherwise, that summit took piace amid the relative indifferente of Neapolitans, happy to stay indoors during the whitehot July heat and only mildly put out by the traffic deviations prompted by the inevitable security measures.

Genoa next month is likely to be different. For example, just 10 days ago Luca Casarini, a self-defined, anti- GS spokesman told a news conferente in the Palazzo Ducale: 'We will penetrate the security zones. We will use our bodies to stop the international delegations.'

Initial estimates suggest that anything from 100,000 to 200,000 demonstrators, representing more than 360 associations or movements, are likely to converge on Genoa . They will come, not only from al1 over Europe, but also from Africa, Australia, India and South America.

For some, it will be an opportunity for a mega-demonstration against a somewhat ill-defined 'globalisation'.

For others, it will be an opportunity to highlight an infinite variety of environmental issues.

For yet others, more specifically-politica1 causes, such as those of Turkish Kurds, Palestinians, Zapatista guerrillas and Basque separatists, will provide the spur, while the plight of sacked Daewoo workers in South Korea is likely to receive an honourable mention in dispatches.

From the security viewpoint, Genoa is a policeman's nightmare. The Palazzo Ducale is in the 'historic centre' of Genoa , surrounded by a network of tiny medieval streets that make 'crowd control' practically impossible.

Not surprisingly, the whole centro storico area is likely to be declared off limits to al1 but the summit delegations and, of course, the 28,000 or SO Genoa citizens who live there and who may well be issued with some kind of Pass.

An 18,000-strong police force, armed with an impressive array of riot equipment, will be on hand.

Italian intelligente services have already tried to make the policeman% lot, if not a happy one, at least more straightforward by categorising the various shades of Seattle Person likely to take to the streets in Genoa .

That classification ranges from the anti-globalisation, environmentalist lobby (expected to be peaceful and to concentrate its energies on the Genoa Socia1 Forum that will run parallel to the summit) to those categorised as 'window-smashers' (McDonald's windows are a particular favourite) and moving on to those worryingly inserted in a 'black' category and allegedly just itching for a fight.

The consideration, too, that neither President Bush nor the even more recently-elected Mr Berlusconi are without their critics is sure to add a further element of conflict to the G8 .

Many may find it impossible to resist the temptation to express their dissent on such a prominent World stage. The Genoa GS is likely to be very hot, in more senses than one.