

Death in Genoa

The killing of a protester mars the G-8 summit in Italy and renews concerns about the format of the global debate

By JAMES GRAFF GENOA

AT GENOA'S PIAZZA ALIMONDA, THE scene was set for violent tragedy. Smoke from burning rubbish bins mingled with tear gas and an acrid stench from the smoldering hulk of a police van in the nearby Corso Torino. Burned-out cars lined the streets. An automatic teller machine had been ripped out of a wall, banks and a real estate office trashed, stores looted. Demonstrators' makeshift flak jackets, fashioned from plastic water bottles and duct tape, littered the streets. Every uniformed figure became a target for some of the protesters; peaceful protesters and journalists became fair game for some of the police.

Injuries were inevitable. Death was likely, and it came in the midst of a pitched battle late Friday afternoon between Italian carabinieri and a group of militant demonstrators who isolated a carabinieri vehicle, its front end blocked against a wall, and smashed its windows with stones, boards and anything else available including a red fire extinguisher wielded by a 23-year-old demonstrator named Carlo Giuliani. In a sequence recorded by a Reuters photographer the young man, his face covered by a balaclava, raises the fire extinguisher, apparently intending to hurl it through the already-shattered rear window of the vehicle. A policeman points a handgun through the window and Giuliani drops to the street, bleeding profusely from the head. The vehicle backs up over the supine body and speeds away. Witnesses said they had heard two shots.

Giuliani, the son of a Rome labor union official, was the first fatal casualty—and to some, martyr—in an antiglobalization movement that has grown in strength and violence since the abortive ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle in December 1999. The blood-soaked spot where he died was covered with sawdust, then with red flowers ripped from a nearby public garden. Hours later,

sobered protesters stood at the site, some weeping. One used a spent tear-gas canister to pin down a note: "Made in G-8." Another added a newspaper with the headline "Here is your democracy."

That was a word being applied with different meanings on the other side of a 4-m steel-mesh barrier separating the protesters from leaders of the United States, France, Britain, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan, meeting in the 13th century Palazzo Ducale. The leaders, joined for Saturday's sessions by Russia's Vladimir Putin, hoped that they had fashioned a worthy agenda for their annual parley: \$1.2 billion for a U.N.-led Global AIDS and Health Fund to combat disease in the developing world; bridging the "digital divide" between the world's elite and the billions untouched by the IT revolution; pledging to work for "improved market access" for the developing world in a new WTO negotiating round to begin later this year. "The democratic process is working inside these doors, not outside it," said U.S. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. "The people who are trying to keep these meetings from happening ... are not helping the poor."

But as far as the more than 150,000 antiglobalists were concerned, the summit reeked of hypocrisy and alibi. "They may be elected, but no one said they could pursue a policy of exploitation against the Third World," said Emilio Küng, 77, in Genoa to commemorate his attendance exactly 50 years earlier at the World Festival of Youth and Students in East Berlin. "We're here to fight against a deeper division between the rich and the poor."

In fact, neither side of the divided city was a model of democratic order. Draconian security arrangements had sucked the lifeblood from the usually vibrant port city, its center sealed off, its shops closed, its streets bristling with a panoply of Italian security forces including carabinieri, mounted police, black-booted motorcycle cops, water cannon and armored personnel carriers. Where the demonstrators converged, the city looked in parts like a lawless war zone and in parts like a raucous folk festival.

Up the hill from the so-called red zone at the Piazza Carignano, a brass band played *Roll Out the Barrel*, girls danced over chalk sidewalk art and Italian demonstrators cavorted with a clothesline of underwear, mocking Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's admonition that residents take in their washing for the occasion of the G-8 summit. Beneath a statue of St. Paul on the 16th century Church of Santa Maria Assunta hung a sign in German: "Another world is possible. Against corporate hegemony and racism!"

The vast majority of the demonstrators came not to burn cars or battle police, but to bear peaceful witness to the powerlessness they believe they share with the world's poorest peoples. "We know they won't drop the debt because we're here," said Nabil Wakim, a history student from Lyons. "But it's better that we're here saying they ought to than not." There were scenes of peaceful demonstrators trying to restrain members of the militant "Black Block." But all demonstrators, in a form of self-fulfilling prophecy, saw the red zone security perimeter as a manifestation of the anti-democratic force behind the meeting of democratic leaders; on their side, the leaders saw the barriers as regrettable reaction to threats to disrupt their meeting by violence. "It's very symbolic that they have to put up these huge barriers here in Genoa," said Diego Jauregi, 28. By the end of the day Saturday, the casualties of this clash of cultures were more than 500 injured, most of them demonstrators, 126 detained and untallied millions of dollars in damages.

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Out of sight and smell of the blood and tear gas the leaders inside the red zone discussed regional conflicts like the Middle East and Macedonia and failed to bridge their gap on the Kyoto Protocol. They acknowledged the sluggish state of the global economy while asserting that "sound economic policies and fundamentals provide a solid foundation for stronger growth." Nowhere did they break new ground or produce new ideas for the pressing problems of the world.

That paucity of progress—and the mayhem surrounding the summit—gave new force to the question of whether such meetings should be held at all. "There's no event that's worth the life of someone," said Genoa Mayor Giuseppe Pericu. Even before Giuliani's death, European Commission President Romano Prodi said the summits had grown "extravagant and excessive" and it was time to "return to an organization which puts the priority on people."

In fact, no amount of fiddling with the concept is likely to allay the rejectionism of the anticapitalists. Elected leaders, after all, are not going to hand them world revolution. And for that matter, no one can make a credible case that abandoning international meetings will further the cause of a more equitable world. "These multinational processes do matter," says George von Furstenberg, a professor of economic and financial policy at Fordham University who was at Genoa. "In America, for instance, there are people in the State Department and elsewhere who see these meetings as an important way to sensitize President Bush to international affairs. Just knowing Vicente Fox isn't enough."

Refusing to bow to the protesters, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien vowed that his country will host next year's G-8 meeting undeterred—except that it is unlikely to be held in Ottawa as planned, but rather in some more remote venue such as Banff in the Canadian Rockies.

But hiding the summit in the hills would only emphasize the point that the demonstrators claimed they were making as they tore up the fair city of Genoa. Legitimate governments shouldn't have to spirit themselves away from their populations to discuss public policy and make decisions affecting the entire world. The other side of that argument is this: the movements that question the legitimacy of these governments must find a better way of challenging them than through protests that leave a young man lying dead in the street. —**With reporting by Greg Burke/Genoa**

