

Alessandro Portelli

## Generations in Genoa, July 2001<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Parents and children, complicity and concern

On July 17, 2001, in Monterotondo, a small town twenty miles from Rome, a father drives his son to the station. The son, Bruno Lupi, has just turned eighteen; he is going to Genoa to take part in his first mass demonstration. The father, Tonino Lupi, is the mayor of Monterotondo. He plans to follow on to Genoa a couple of days later, with the town council's delegation, wearing his official red white and green band, accompanied by council members and uniformed local police carrying the town's processional banner. The occasion is the summit meeting of the so-called G8 group, the heads of state of the world's eight most industrialised nations. A number of organisations and groups ranging from the extreme fringes of the 'alternative globalisation' movement to church pac-

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of an project carried out with a multigenerational group including students (Francesca Pappalardo, Lorenza Parisi, Brunella Pinto, Susanna Trifiletti) and teachers (Lalla Di Cerbo and myself). The project is under the aegis of the Circolo Gianni Bosio in Rome; the original tapes are preserved in the Circolo Gianni Bosio's 'Franco Coggiola' Sound Archive.

ifist groups have called for a protest against the meeting and its agenda. Hundreds of thousands are expected, and will indeed arrive.

On the evening before he is due to leave with the town's delegation, Tonino Lupi gets a phone call: his son Bruno has just been arrested in Genoa.

*When my wife comes home, my thought is, 'Oh my God, how am I going to tell her?' Anyway, I did tell her and I guess we were braver than we expected; especially my wife. So we began to make all the necessary phone calls; we had this lawyer's number from the Social Forum.<sup>1</sup> And we made an appointment for the next day. We planned to leave very early in the morning, but in the end my wife couldn't take it any more, and anyway it was impossible to sleep, so we left [in the middle of the night].*

*One reason we couldn't sleep was that when my wife came home from work there was this frightful scene — the death of Carlo [Giuliani]<sup>2</sup>, seasoned by the fact that when my wife came home and saw Carlo's image [on television], his physical structure, the shape of his head especially, looked a lot like Bruno, and it was a disaster. [After] we realised it wasn't him, we felt better — better for ourselves, but that image — how can you sleep with that image on your mind, with the agony of identifying with the parent who lost that son... we were out of our minds, completely out of our minds. So we started out, at 1 a.m., in the middle of the night. The city banner went off the next day, with a man from the council accompanying it — I called them at 8 am and told them to go ahead without me, since I was busy with something else entirely...*

It took Tonino Lupi, his wife, and their lawyers four whole days of frantic phone calls and fruitless inquiries at police stations all over Genoa before they could locate their son at the Alessandria jail, where he had been taken along with dozens of other demonstrators, after being arbitrarily arrested, held illegally, beaten, abused, and tortured in the police barracks at Bolzaneto, in one of the worst police and state brutality cases of postwar Italy.

**Bruno Lupi.** *As soon as we arrived [at Bolzaneto], the beatings began; I was one of the last to come out of the police van, and I saw the lineup of the people as they went in, as they received their dose of beatings as a welcome to the Bolzaneto barracks, as if to say: look, this is the way things are going to be. We were made to stand still against the wall with our hands held up, and we were kept in that position all the time we stayed there, all night. It was such a difficult*

<sup>1</sup> The Genoa Social Forum was the umbrella organisation that provided both a forum for debate and logistical support to the demonstrators.

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Giuliani was killed by the police during the demonstrations in Genoa (see below).

*stance to hold that when they took you out so they could enjoy themselves, dump you in the passageways and beat you up at their pleasure, you felt almost a sense of relief, you'd almost rather take the beating than have to stand still in that position. There were some who just couldn't keep standing that way, especially older people, perhaps those who had been already beaten up in the streets or had been handled more roughly when they arrived at the barracks. But those who couldn't take it suffered the consequences: the penalty was torture, literally torture, and the methods of torture at Bolzaneto were many and diverse, both on myself and on those I was able to see at my right and left, and to go by the screams I heard all around me. We were all kept in big dark rooms, and the only times we were allowed to move were either when some officer wanted to have his fun, or we were sent to be fingerprinted, identified, photographed.*

*Even when we were visited by the doctors, the first doctor I saw I was almost relieved, but I soon realised that he was a paramedic from the penitentiary police who was playing a game of asking us where we were hurting so that he could touch us and hit us just there. The boy I shared a cell with later in jail had had all his piercings torn out, just like that.*

*And of course in order to go from my room to identification I had to go through a passageway and it was lined on both sides with special cops and they beat us up all the way, freely. I remember, the first time I came back from identification, I was asked to renege the values of antifascism and to scream Viva il Duce [Up with Mussolini]. At first I demurred, but then, after the encouragement of kicks and cuffs, I muttered the word as I went back to my cell, and so did the others.<sup>1</sup>*

On the same day, my wife and I were driving south for our vacation. Our ears were glued to the radio. We, too, had a son in Genoa. The protest was expected to be massive and diverse. On the one hand, unions, church groups, political parties, boy scouts, nuns, even city mayors with banners representing local governments and institutions. On the other hand, the young people, for many of whom this was their first mass demonstration, indeed their initiation into political activism,<sup>2</sup> along with the multiform constellation of groups that made up the massive youth protest movement that had cut its teeth in Seattle and Prague. And, as this story shows, the

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<sup>1</sup> In May, 2005, forty-five members of the police force, including top-rank officers, were indicted for the abuses at Bolzaneto. The prosecuting judge wrote: *It is hard to see how, for instance, forcing a person's head into a toilet bowl may be considered merely an "form of correction that is not permitted". Such actions, in their cruel gratuitousness, appear to be far from any idea of "correction", whether permitted or not, since their aim is not to limit and control a person's liberty, but to humiliate them'* (reported in *il manifesto* and *la Repubblica*, May 17, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Antonella Valentini: *'Me and four girl friends, totally clueless, we didn't even know what this G8 was, but anyway I felt I had to go'.*

two elements were often connected by kinship ties: the protagonists of the events in Genoa were the young people, but the actual participation and resonance of the event was multigenerational and widespread.

Many young people went to Genoa as to a celebration, in a peaceful holiday spirit; others were ready for battle. The Berlusconi government had closed off a whole section of the city, the so-called ‘Red Zone’, and the symbolic aim set by some of the most extreme groups was to break into the Red Zone, either by passive disobedience or by fighting the police if necessary. On the other hand, the government and media had magnified the danger of violence and the presence of ‘agitators’. The new right-wing government was getting ready for a show of force; Cabinet members from the far-Right Alleanza Nazionale were actually ensconced in police stations and the strategic command centre. Tension was mounting, with the help of irresponsible news headlines (*‘demonstrators to hurl infected blood at police’ — la Repubblica*), a huge and threatening police presence and display, reckless announcements by self-appointed movement spokespersons (Luca Casarini’s ‘declaration of war’ on the G8 group). Thus, my wife and I were sharing in what was a widespread attitude among people of our generation, the Sixties generation: pride in the growth of our children’s social and political conscience, complicity in their active participation in this crucial event, and concern for what they might get themselves into.

***Brunella Pinto.** When Genoa came around — this is a story that really touched me: ‘Daddy, I’m going to Genoa,’ I said. And he said, ‘I expected you would. To tell you the truth, Brunella: I’m your father and, I wish you weren’t going because I’m worried about your safety. But I’m very proud that you are going and I would never tell you not to go. This thing will raise my blood pressure, give me a psoriasis break-out,’ — all the psychosomatic diseases that my parents have now they’re fifty, these 50-year-olds who saw their ideals fail miserably and now...*

## 2. Carlo Giuliani, *ragazzo*

It began almost as a holiday. On Thursday, July 20, the demonstration for the migrants’ rights was a joyful, intergenerational moment.

***Emanuele Profumi:** [The migrants’ march] was beautiful, there was a spreading of joy of all colours, it oozed cultural diversity from all pores, from that Buddhist monk in those strange clothes — ‘Who is he? ‘It’s a monk, I’m glad he’s here too’ — to a whole range of more ‘commonplace’ communities like the ones we see here. Senegalese, Moroccans, Pakistanis, it was beautiful. And then personal encounters, you*

*run into a school mate who's in Spain on the Erasmus project,<sup>1</sup> lovely meetings; but the whole atmosphere was different, you saw members of Parliament, like [Communist Party's Fausto] Bertinotti strolling and talking at their ease, a shifting square that was moving on...*

**Brunella Pinto.** *All right, Thursday was a magnificent thing, the migrants' march. It was, I think, truly one of the most moving days of my life, because I had never had the experience of being in the midst of grandparents, daddies and brothers — truly, from the generational point of view, it was amazingly satisfying, and a confirmation of the rightness of what you were doing — I mean, I'm not just a twenty-year old rebel kid, in fact that are some people in their fifties around me who are just as much rebels as I am... I'm not crazy, I'm not inadequate, here I am with three hundred thousand people who feel just as inadequate as I do, so I mean... maybe it's the others who are crazy. So you begin to see things from another point of view, you see mamas, you see children, you see people in wheelchairs — people in wheelchairs who later on will be beaten up...*

Danger and violence, indeed, were looming. The next day, while ambiguous black-clad groups of supposed protesters (known as the 'black block') were allowed to rampage almost undisturbed smashing windows and cars all over the city, the police made a completely unprovoked attack on the gatherings and marches being organised by even the most peaceful and harmless demonstrators. While some hit back, what took place was a veritable police riot. It would continue with the violence and torture at Bolzaneto, and with the bloody assaults in the middle of Saturday night on the demonstrators sheltering for the night in the Diaz school.<sup>2</sup>

**Gianni Di Domenico.** *Yes, it was shocking, both for those who were experienced, and having once again to confront a level [of violence] they probably thought they'd never have to face again, and the young, clearly, they were in shock. We had a number of first timers along with us, and I'll tell you they were... One of them was in the group that got caught up in that bloodbath at the Diaz school, one of the people you could see on TV being brought out on stretchers, just a bloody mask. I mean — you can imagine the mark such a thing leaves on you. It was grim.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Erasmus Project is the European Union plan whereby students can obtain credits from courses and exams taken at other universities in other European Union countries. Spain has been one of the most popular destinations for Italian Erasmus students.

<sup>2</sup> The events in Genoa are perhaps the best-documented event in recent history, as not only many TV and film crews were in attendance, but also most participants carried video and photo cameras. Among the several documentaries available, the most accurate and moving is Francesca Comencini's *Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo*. Several policemen and officers are currently on trial (as well as a number of demonstrators)

The dramatic and symbolic acme of the violence was the killing of Carlo Giuliani, a young man from Genoa, by a policeman who shot him from inside an armored police van which he supposedly thought Carlo was attacking with a fire extinguisher. It had been 25 years since the police had last killed a demonstrator in the street. To some, it brought back memories of earlier struggles<sup>1</sup>; but for the majority, for the young people who hadn't even been born when it last happened, it was an unspeakable trauma: *'We lost our virginity; I mean, this very naive movement was faced with the hardness of fact, of the real clash. None of us thought that the State's military aggression could go that far'* (Alessio Aringoli). As a slightly older activist put it: *'It's not as if we didn't think such a thing could happen, as if there was no foreboding that someone would try and cause a death. We had talked about it, we were prepared politically; but sentimentally, I think this generation was completely unprepared for what happened'* (Daniello Corradi). The shock was so unexpected, so unthinkable that they are at a loss for words:

**Antonella Valentini.** *This boy came running, maybe from piazza Alimonda [where Carlo was killed], desperate, with absolute despair in his eyes, and he screamed and said, 'They killed two, you killed two,' and he was trying to get on the stage and speak, so the news of Carlo's death reached us that way. With the police surrounding us, helicopters over our heads, and this boy crying, and for us it was an incredible blow, I can't even explain the sensation it was, to think that he was dead.*

**Arianna Lodeserto.** *What can I say, it was truly frightening, there are no words for it. All I remember is that I saw it on television [on the way to] Genoa, and it seemed absurd and violent... I remember that my friend and I were stricken and this thing really shocked us. This is one reason why I was so angry and I picked quarrels with people.*

**Emanuele Celestini.** *It was raining and we were on the steps of this stadium<sup>2</sup> and you couldn't get out because there was police all around, we had nothing to eat, we had nothing... in these puddles of mud, people trying to let the water out of their tents, and in the midst of all this I am sitting on the steps, and I remember there was this boy that when they announced this thing he burst into tears, heavily, and I was next to him and he kept saying 'He's a friend of mine, Carlo Giuliani'... I didn't cry for him for several days, and I lost I don't know how much*

<sup>1</sup> Pina Monaco: *'And all the feelings that I thought I had set aside with my education, with my advancing age, with growing up, it all came back as if I had been a young woman of eighteen, twenty years old, rage at the police, at established power, the people who beat my father, who beat me, in those crucial moments they use those, those means. I had this feeling that left deep, deep marks on me'.*

<sup>2</sup> The Carlini stadium, on the outskirts of Genoa, was another meeting point and shelter for the demonstrators.

*weight and I came home in terror of the violence of the law, of the police.*<sup>1</sup>

Piazza Alimonda, the square where Carlo Giuliani was killed, has been renamed by the movement: 'Piazza Carlo Giuliani, *ragazzo*'. *Ragazzo* places him somewhere between a boy and a young man; it's a cosy, family term. *Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo*, reinterprets this icon as a representative of all those who were in Genoa in those days, but especially of the age group that had their first impact with politics and state violence then. *Carlo Giuliani, ragazzo* is also the title of a film that reconstructs the last day of his life through documentary images and a moving interview with his mother. Although he came from a very politically aware family, the film shows him leaving home that day with the idea of going to the beach, and just happening to get involved in the demonstration. This detail reinforces the sense that he was just one of many, not a hero, not even a militant — just a *ragazzo*.

This, in fact, is the term that many interviewees use to define themselves. The word *ragazzi* recurs systematically, for instance, in Alberto, a young man from Calabria, who has been in trouble with the courts for his participation in the movement. He says that '*the liberty tribunal has sprung several ragazzi from jail... we are optimistic, even the ragazzi, because some ragazzi were transferred from Trani [penitentiary] to Viterbo [jail]...*' From Genoa, he recalls '*two ragazze, probably seventeen, ragazzine, who wept profusely... This ragazza must have been twenty-one, twenty-two — at that time, that's how old we were.*' On the other hand, '*the ragazzi who are being investigated by the courts include older people, university teachers and 'Di Diamante Cirillo, we call him 'u ragazzu [Calabrese dialect], anyway he must be about fifty.*'

The inclusiveness of the word<sup>2</sup> suggests that, although not only young people participated, the identity of the movement and the meaning of the Genoa experience is defined by this age group, the *ragazzi*

<sup>1</sup> For some, the absurdity is enhanced by the fact that the police trainee who shot Carlo Giuliani was the same age: '*I am still trying to figure out what world is this that pits a twenty one-year old youth with a pistol in his hand against a twenty two-year old youth with a fire extinguisher. What world is this that pits two youths against each other?*' (Paolo); '*Back home in Puglia I ran into this kid who was in high school with me and he was a carabinieri [army police], he couldn't get a job so he took this course, he was born in 1980 like me, and they sent him to Genoa. He was on the other side, so we got talking — and I was shocked by this experience, and it upset him and he would talk about it. I wanted to ask him, what the fuck did you do? Do you not realise what this whole situation amounts to? [I wanted to talk to him] also because I haven't talked about it with anyone, not even my friends, because I didn't know how to say what I wanted to say, it was all too odd, it was kind of a shock. So I saw this young man as a victim, in fact, because all he wanted was a job, you see? He was as much at risk as that boy who killed Giuliani; they were all twenty-year olds in this shitty situation*' (Anna Carone).

<sup>2</sup> For lack of a precise English equivalent (the closest might possibly be 'lad'), I translate it here as 'young man' (or 'woman'), 'youth', 'boy', 'girl', according to the context.

who lost their political naiveté in the streets, the schools, the barracks, the jails of Genoa, where they discovered the violence of the State: *'If you were in Genoa on July 18 and 19, you really had the sense of a generation that had come there full of anger, but with no intention of destroying everything — determined to break into the red zone, but not to cause a massacre. Yet these events caused this generation to realise that they had to take another forward step in their ability to organise and actually get somewhere'* (Alessio Aringoli).

Aside from the political analysis, Alessio Aringoli's passage is interesting because of his reiterated use of another key word of the Genoa narratives: 'generation'. On the one hand, *generation* is a unifying concept in transnational terms, adequate to a movement that perceives itself on an international scale:

*Vittorio Di Cervo. This was a committed cross section of Italian and European, of international youth, from the industrialised nations in a globalised world, protesting on behalf of the poor nations but also putting forward the difficulties of their own future as young people belonging to the rich industrial civilisations.*<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, *generation* both bridges and articulates the different experiences of different age groups. Genoa was the confluence of an alternative globalisation movement that carried a generational label with peace and union movements that did not. Therefore, *'Genoa didn't just mark our generation, it marked a historical moment and therefore also different generations. The movement is a composite one, it isn't made up only of young people'* (Emanuele). To quote another, older, narrator: *'I think [Genoa] was a collective process of realisation, by a generation that so far had read about these things in books and had never been in such a situation. True, this is a generation that will be divided the day after Genoa, will go on to many different things, will explode in many different ways. But it's proved one thing: it's proved that the radicalism of this generation is not a passing thing'* (Danilo Corradi).

Thus, Alessio Aringoli goes on to mark the *'difference in perception'* between his own age group and the *'bombastics'* of more seasoned political figures in their thirties or forties, like rank-and-file union activist Piero Bernocchi or the anti-Aids and peace activist Vittorio Agnoletto: *'Our generation is not into bombastics, but that's not because we are more moderate... our generation prefers to educate itself, because it trusts itself, it hasn't gone through all the betrayals from '45 onwards.'*

<sup>1</sup> Compare, however: *'I think Genoa left its mark primarily on an Italian generation. The movement gathers so many people, of so many nations, because it's an international and worldwide movement. But the events took place in Italy and marked Italy more. As far as I can see, it has left its mark on a generation that was in the streets; I don't know how far it marked those who weren't there'* (Eva Ciparisse).

This leads him to criticise in generational terms Bernocchi's justification of burning American flags: *'We have the feeling we're starting from scratch again, and when you start from scratch you don't feel like burning an American flag because you don't see this as a gesture that creates unity, but rather as an offence to the people who were killed. You don't want to be part of the imaginary<sup>1</sup> created by that gesture, you want to build another imaginary. I'm sure that, in terms of imagination, if we had sent someone fifteen years younger than Agnoletto [to the TV talk shows], maybe not as good as him at explaining things, he would have given a better sense of who we were.'*<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The cell phone generation

*Antonella Valentini. I didn't have my cell phone with me, and now luckily I've got rid of it, I'm free of that hellish gadget. And my mother kept trying to call me on my friend's cell phone soon after the news of Carlo's death, but the connections were breaking up, and after a while here's my mother's voice screaming that she can't hear me. 'Antonella! Antonella! How are you?' — in floods of tears too, she was sure I was the person who was dead. She had terror in her voice, you know, she was in terror because she couldn't hear me, I tried to calm her down, 'Hey, no, mama, don't worry, I'm all right, I'm here with the news people.' And after I'd finished talking to my mother I burst into tears, hysterically, I don't know how long it lasted, I just broke down and cried.*

Genoa 2001 was perhaps the first massive demonstration of the advanced technology era. Hardly any of the demonstrators went without a photo or video camera, which makes Genoa one of the most minutely documented events of recent history (not to mention the countless public and independent film and video crews). Most importantly, the majority of the people involved were equipped with what has become, especially in Italy, a real generational icon: the cell phone.<sup>3</sup> Luca Conte, who worked at the movement's media centre (before it was destroyed by the police raid at the Diaz school),

<sup>1</sup> In the sense imaginary domain, imagination. The Italian word in the original is widely used in student and politically engaged circles. [My thanks to Alessandro Portelli for this explanation — Editor].

<sup>2</sup> From another point of view, the presence of these more seasoned figures was also reassuring to some, apart from anything else as evidence that they weren't too different anyway: *The humanity of those people you see all the time, of course Bertinotti, but not only him — Frisullo [a peace activist involved in the cause of Kurdish freedom], Agnoletto the spokesman, you hear them talk in a meeting improvised right there in the midst of that siege, in the midst of the police hunt on demonstrators, and they express their humanity, beyond political considerations, they express the drama that is unfolding and their awareness of the drama of these people who have been assaulted, enhanced furthermore by the information they probably had more than we did, and this is another thing I remember with pleasure' (Emanuele Profumi).*

<sup>3</sup> Italy was in the mid-2000s the European nation with the highest concentration of cell phones. If we set at 10 the ratio of cell phones to the population in Italy, the next highest was Germany, with 7.4: *la Repubblica*, April 8, 2005.

aptly sums it up: *'The main source of certification<sup>1</sup> of those events, in my personal opinion, is still deposited in the digital memory of the cell phones, the memory of the voices, the telephones, the mothers, the aunts, the brothers, the cousins, all involved in a search for information and knowledge, both from the point of view of affection but also as a way of taking a stand, of expressing their indignation.'*

One reason for the almost universal diffusion of cell phones, at least in Italy, is that it is both a way for young people to stay in touch with one another, and a way for parents to keep a watch over their children. In the days of Genoa, both functions were enhanced with a vengeance. On the one hand, *'There were things happening in parallel, really, people were on the cell phone with people in other segments, lawyers and doctors going around, everyone was in contact'* (Chiara). On the other hand, and most importantly, the cell phone bridged the distance between those who were there and those who weren't — and especially between the concerned parents at home and the young people in the streets.

**Rossella Marchini.** *So, on Thursday I remember there was the migrants' march, and I followed it through the radio and then in the evening I talked to Alicia who was excited and happy because there were so many of them, because it was a joyful thing, a lovely demonstration, she was happy. And I was happy that I was going too, I was leaving the next day. Friday, but Friday was a dramatic day because I was listening to the radio, about the different marches and the attack on the Red Zone, I heard about this young man's death live and I remember being in terror because the radio — I heard those tapes several times later — they said 'someone has fallen, there's a fatality, yes... no...' — something like that, and then I heard that it was a girl and of course I knew my daughter was there and I couldn't get her on the phone because she hadn't been heard from all day, once in a while she had texted us, 'it's OK, don't worry, I'm not there,' but you kept hearing about others who were wounded, I remember I was afraid for her, for all those young people. Then at night I talked to her, and she said, 'Mama, don't worry, everything's all right.' It had rained and poured that night, her tent was soaked, I mean, it was quite a tale. The atmosphere was suddenly changed from the day before, and from what she told me and from what I heard everything was changed, so that night we left for Genoa.*

Thanks most of all to the cell phone, Genoa was happening all over Italy, and the cell phone was the material embodiment of the emotional concern that linked Genoa to the rest of the country, and perhaps of Europe. Emanuele Profumi told me how he and his

<sup>1</sup> In the bureaucratic sense, i.e. an official document testifying to the validity of something. [Editor].

friends managed to stay out of the way of the police because the father of one of them, who was following the events on TV at home, told them on the cell phone how the police was moving and what were the safe places in town.<sup>1</sup>

***Pina Monaco.** I was a bit jealous [of my daughter and her father] who were there, because they told me down the cell phones that it was a huge demonstration, that it was diverse, my daughter was telling me that there were a lot of young people, even young people in wheelchairs, there were people of her father's age that were old, as she put it. Anyway, I was sorry I hadn't gone because I guess I'd paid too much attention to a subconscious fear of violence. I wasn't hearing anything of the kind, yet subconsciously I was afraid. So I lived it that way, staying in touch with them, and on TV — and what really turned my life around, at a certain point, was this great fear when I heard of the first clashes. I called my daughter's father and heard that he was worried because he had lost contact with our daughter and our daughter's friend in the midst of the tear gas, and he said he had never smelled such a strange smell and had such an acrid sensation in his lungs and in his throat.*

*At that point I went literally berserk, because he couldn't find her; he has high blood pressure, he couldn't get the phone to work, then at last I managed to call him and he was about to faint because his blood pressure had gone up, the sun was hot, the air was filled with this wretched tear gas, and he found a corner in an alley and a lady from the window threw water on him and he recovered some and began to walk as if he had always known the city of Genoa, at last he contacted our daughter [on the phone] and she told him how to meet her, and then they told me that they met, both crying their eyes out. My daughter told me the story on the phone, she tried to reassure me, yet what really shocked her was the beatings they were going on, two young girls were almost paralysed, a boy in a wheelchair beaten up, and they wanted to help him, they got away safe but she was left with this dramatic memory of this boy.*

#### **4. Parents and children in Genoa**

***Enrica Bartesaghi.** For me, Genoa 2001 was a tragic reality check. It isn't as if I wasn't in touch with the world — at least, I didn't think I wasn't, I read two newspapers a day, I kept up. Sara, my daughter, who then was 21 had explained why she was going to Genoa, and I agreed with most of the reasons that led her and so many others there. I guess up to 2001 I was a bit detached. I thought I had already done my share in terms of demonstrations and being on the front line, and somehow we could make room for*

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<sup>1</sup> Conversation at Villa Mirafiori, Rome, April 15, 2005.

*the children so they could make their own way. So I didn't go to Genoa because one reason was that I didn't want to look like the anxious mama who follows her daughter to her first big demonstration — though I kept in touch from home, along with my husband, through the radio, television, and all.*<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, not all parents stayed at home. Some, like Pina Monaco's partner, went with their children; many more went to Genoa independently, like the mayor of Monterotondo was supposed to do before his son got arrested, like many political activists of all generations did. Although the identity of the movement was mainly generational, its composition wasn't: *'I don't think it's a movement of young people. Young people are in the lead, but to me it looks like a movement of women, of children, of old people, of nuns'* (Esther Koppel). On the other hand the young people in Genoa were aware of the presence of people of their parents' generation: *'They also beat up the Cobas [rank and file teachers' union], they might have been my father's colleagues'* (Emanuele Profumi). The adult figures present at Genoa included politicians as well as clergy, teachers as well as news people, and most of the participants in the migrants' march; but also the whole support structure of lawyers, doctors, paramedics, that was to become so crucial after the police riots at the Diaz school and the disappearance of the deportees at Bolzaneto, was essentially made up of older people.<sup>2</sup>

After the killing of Carlo Giuliani, the Left Democrat party unexpectedly withdrew its participation from the protest in Genoa.<sup>3</sup> After the news of the beatings, the raids, the arrests, however, many parents just couldn't stay away and left on their own initiative. *'I felt like a mama lion,'* says Enrica Bartesaghi, who later became an organiser in the 'Truth for Genoa' committee. And they went — and, as if to emphasise the urgency of the moment, they went in the middle of the night.

**Ugo Balzametti.** *I had decided I wouldn't go. Of course when I came home, talked with my wife, when we shared our emotions, our fears, our concern, and especially the tension as to how our son might cope with this situation that was so unprecedented for him, so tragic — know-*

<sup>1</sup> Esther Koppel: *'I tried to stay on the side, I didn't want to be the Sixties mama that tells her children how to organise a demonstration, how to carry on an occupation, how to write a leaflet because that's how we did it. And I have seen many parents act exactly this way.'*

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Marvelli, a paramedic, reverses the story of parents worried about their children, describing his wife and his twenty-year old son at home, hearing on television that he had been beaten and wounded — *'I think those were the darkest hours for my mother and my wife — and my son.'*

<sup>3</sup> *'We had found out from some comrades that we might have gone on a bus, but the bus was cancelled, and this was at the root of something else, our anger, of our disappointment when we heard that in the light of what had happened on that day, the Left Democrats had decided not to participate in the demonstration the next day'* (Ugo Balzametti).

*ing he was on his own, though with so many comrades, and not being able to be near him — it unleashed an element of protectiveness but also of political anger, an explosive mix. We had known political tension in the years of terrorism, of '77; but this mixture, this weaving together of emotion, of protective feelings towards a piece of your own flesh and of political anger, had become something we could scarcely control so we decided to take a special train that left for Genoa at midnight.*

So Genoa witnesses fathers and mothers going from place to place in search of their missing children. Tonino Lupi and his wife drove 300 miles to Genoa in the middle of the night after their son's arrest. *'Along the road we tried several times to reach the Questura [central police office] on the phone; after we reached Genoa, we made dozens of phone calls and the answer was always, "call this other number". We were unable to get any information from the central police office; no one had any information, at noon, at one p.m. of the next day still there was no list of those who had been arrested. The lawyer told us, "Many of them have been taken to Bolzaneto." So we went to Bolzaneto; there was a bunch of police there, we asked for information, they answered very rudely at first, then I guess my wife managed to win one of them over, and he told us our boy had been taken to Alessandria and his medical record didn't show any serious damage.'*

Rossella Marchini and her husband grab one of the last night trains to Genoa after she hears the news from her daughter. They reach Genoa at 6 in the morning:

*We walked and walked and everything was closed, even later on, it was a completely deserted town haunted only by young people with their sleeping bags, people who had got off the trains, but it was a ghost town really, you could see bank windows, shop windows broken, cars smashed up, there was no sign of life from the city, only from us invaders.*

They go to the stadium where their daughter was last heard from, she is not there, and they keep walking, looking for something to eat in the deserted city. *'We slipped into the hospital — they didn't let us in the front gate because that's where they had the wounded from the night before and visitors were not allowed, even though we didn't look like young people. So we managed to slip through the back to the bar, grab a croissant and a cappuccino, use the toilet. And this opened the way for other young people — until the staff realised they were coming in to use the toilet, it was the only available toilet in town, and they closed the gate and didn't let anyone else in. We had this 70-year old lady from the New Foundation Communist Party along with us and she needed to use the bathroom, so this family let us into their house and let us use the toilet and have a wash.'*

The town was locked and in terror, but there were cases of individual solidarity (like the lady who gave water to Pina Monaco's partner). On the other hand, the scene where these older adults could open the way to the bar for the young people represents a new role of these older adults: they were bringing relief and some sense of protection to the stranded, shocked, and bruised young.

We went back outside and I remember this terrified girl, a young girl, she might have been my daughter's age, she started following us and she said, 'May I come with you, may I come with you, where are you going?' And then she called someone and said, 'Look, don't worry, I borrowed an orange shirt because of course just my luck, I had to be wearing black on a day like this, and don't worry because I am with this older couple and we look like a family.' I was so desperate to hear that someone could feel reassured from being with me, when I was in such panic because I had no news of my daughter.

All over Genoa, people are looking for one another, and parents are looking for their daughters and sons. *'Her father and I found out some days later — because as far as we knew she had disappeared in Genoa on Saturday night, until Monday at noon, when we found out that she was in the Vercelli jail'* (in Piedmont, two hours drive from Genoa). Families, lawyers, news people were milling around the Alessandria jail, trying to communicate with their daughters and sons inside, and awaiting their release.

**Tonino Lupi.** *So we went to the Alessandria jail, where two hours later this lawyer joined us and was able briefly to contact Bruno. We gave him this letter where we tried to reassure Bruno that in spite of everything we were near him and would do all we could to put an end to that adventure.*

*As the young people started coming out, we realised how they'd been treated. I was struck especially by this philosophy teacher from Catanzaro [in Calabria], a man of about 50, bruised all over, in total shock from the experience he'd gone through. There were these journalists outside the jail, they tried to interview him, and he was so afraid that he couldn't utter a single word, he only wanted to get away. The only thing he said was, 'I didn't do it, I didn't go to the demonstration, I wasn't well, I stayed in the Cobas tent camp and they got me there.' And there were three Spanish kids from the international peace brigades, a Swiss boy who told me his story. And we heard about this young man, this man from Syria, who had a wooden leg and couldn't keep standing all the time, so every once in a while he let go and the police beat him with their clubs until he managed to get up again.*

## 5. Coming home

*Alberto.* So we left, and in fact I went back home to Paola, in Calabria. I got there at 8 a.m. I called home to say, look, I'm here. At the time I had this cell phone with the battery always down, and I had kept it turned off all night, so I called from a phone booth, and my mother answered, all in a fret — 'I thought you were still in Genoa, they arrested a lot of people, they beat them...' When I had called home in the afternoon I told them I would spend the night in Genoa in a place where everyone else was staying — and then the others talked me into going home, but when my family got up in the morning and saw the news with all these young people beaten up, battered, the raid, my folks thought I was one of them too. So I remember that phone call, that's one of the few things I remember clearly — all that had been happening at the Diaz school, but I had come home.

*Tonino Lupi.* My wife's concern, and mine as well, was that this thing might have left [our son Bruno] with psychological problems, so in the next few days we had him meet with a psychologist from the public health service, who reassured us entirely about Bruno's emotional state. The psychologist's only concern was that Bruno was worried that in the future he might be unable to participate freely in demonstrations because of a possible police record following his arrest.

Not everyone got over it as easily: many still speak of recurring nightmares, of an instinctive fear of the sound of helicopters or of the sight of uniformed police; and while most people found in the events at Genoa a further reason for being politically active, some were literally shocked into inaction.

As they come home, the young veterans of Genoa must cope with two interconnected problems: dealing with the trauma of the experience, and explaining and sharing it with the family. Locking themselves in their own space ('As soon as I got home, I went to my room and stayed there for two hours' — Antonella Valentini): or finding safety in sleep, are ways of isolating themselves, thinking things over, and bracing for the impact with the world of those who weren't there and whose only information came from the biased versions in the official media.

The attitudes of parents vary according to political opinions and the extent of involvement in their children's experience. But all share the same mix of protectiveness toward the children who had been in danger, and resentment for the worry and fears these children caused them. A recurring image of protectiveness is that of the mother's vigil next the sleeping daughter or son:

*Pina Monaco.* In the first place, like all of us, I felt just like a mother and a mama lion — I mean, I couldn't believe my daughter was here after all I'd heard, after what she told me of her friends who were

at the Diaz school and had managed to get away before the tragedy, of this friend of hers who was spitting blood... So the first day I had this mother's attitude, I'd go look at her asleep in her bed, it may seem a bit pathetic and ridiculous, but I'm thinking of what might have happened, of what happened to Carlo, that could have happened to any other young person, that could have happened to my daughter.

**Brunella Pinto.** *When I came home I think for me it was the hardest part of all of Genoa. I found my father with high blood pressure, my mother at death's door from an asthma attack. The first night I was in Rome, I went to sleep, because I hadn't slept for three days. And as I slept I could feel my mother's presence, my mother's vigil, next to me, as I slept, and that's when I understood many things. When I woke up I had to face her, because, no matter what, my parents are still my first point of contact with the world.*

Then the time comes to wake up and come out of the room. Some parents are politically hostile, but allow sympathy for their children's trauma to take precedence over political difference: 'So here was my father, who thinks the opposite from me and we often argue, but anyway I saw that he was shaken. We argued hard later on, but at first he saw I was in shock and left me alone' (Emanuele Celestini). In other cases, the clash is immediate, as politics and anxiety converge to make parents blame the kids. Antonella Valentini came from a conservative Southern Catholic family; she had told her mother she was going to Genoa, but tried to keep her father from finding out. But he knew, and she knew he was tense.

*We talked about it openly when I came home; and we had this cousin from down home in for dinner and I was supposed not to say anything about being in Genoa because my parents didn't want it known. [After I came out of my room] there were scenes from Genoa on TV, and this cousin began to chant, 'Beat'em up! Beat'em up!' So I got up, and he realised I'd been there. The next day my father sided with Berlusconi, and it saddened me, that they didn't understand, that they attacked me when I came home and my father kept saying they should have killed them all, since I hadn't been one of them. It weighed on my mind, that I had no one, even at home, to tell me, 'Yes, you do have a right to be scared, at least.'*

Ultimately, for all concerned it was an encounter with ambivalence. The mixture of pride and concern at the moment of departure takes the shape of a new mix of resentment and protection.

**Brunella Pinto.** *And at first, she reacted in the way of those who had stayed home watching TV: 'You're the ones who provoked the police... he [Carlo Giuliani] was hurling that fire extinguisher... Yes, yes, the police may have been a bit violent, but you're the ones that provoked them, you threw stones at them...' And there my mother and I had*

*this tough generational clash — which, there always has to be this pathos is Southern families, you know? Nothing can be dealt calmly, in rational discussion... there always has to be someone fainting, someone with a asthma attack, someone yelling, ahhhh! This very Southern pathos, theatrical, Greek, we have it in our DNA. And this is especially true of my mother, so I remember that after screams, tears, this argument where I tried to talk, to make her understand, to express, I was almost trying to throw in her face what had happened to me, and she wanted to throw in my face what had happened to her back in Rome. So I remember that I couldn't take it any more, and I went to my room, and while I was in my room I could hear her talking to a friend on the phone, and she was saying: 'Look, it was the police that attacked them, look... they were unarmed, they didn't do anything, look...' So here was my mother taking my point of view; and I remember I burst into tears right then because I thought, these are the things that change the world.*

Genoa occurred at the very beginning of the summer holiday season. Hardly anything happens in Italy in August; so discussion about it was just resuming at the beginning of September when September 11 overrode everything. The young people who had been in Genoa felt silenced, as if their trauma was suddenly irrelevant: '*September 11 happened shortly after Genoa, and there was this [idea] that terrorists and those who opposed globalisation were more or less the same thing, and we who had been in Genoa could hardly even explain what he had gone through*' (Emanuele Celestini); '*At the University, I remember this poster with pictures of [Genoa] and then this poster disappeared and the tragedy of September 11 [replaced it]. I don't think it's right to set aside old problems in favour of new ones*' (Anna Carone); '*The government closed the inquiry on Genoa on September 11. The news was on page 12 of all the newspapers, while until September 10 [the Genoa inquest] was on the front page. As if another show had been put together and was taking up the first ten pages and the first twenty minutes on TV*' (Alessio Aringoli).

**Andrea Pagnani.** *September 11 gagged us, we were wiped out of the picture and so were the issues we had. We'd raised the question of globalisation, a new theme for debate in civil society; then this September 11 happened, and then the war began — and basically war is like a meat grinder for those who are directly caught up in it, but it's a meat grinder also for the life of society generally, for the political dialogue of countries that are not directly affected. So our leading role was overshadowed, because our issues require a wide debate in society but when there's a war on, they say 'we'll think about globalisation later'. By now, war is something we're all getting used to.*

## 6. Reversing the flow of tradition

*The young people have taught us all a lesson*

Pete Seeger

*What I have become is what Carlo made me become*

Haidi Gaggio, Carlo Giuliani's mother

Esther Koppel, a German journalist from a Jewish Communist family who lives in Rome, says: *'Perhaps I was wanting to participate in it through my sons, who didn't go.'* Those parents of the Genoa generation who came from the experience of the '60s had already lived through the sensation of reversing the flow of tradition, of the young educating the old, on their own account. Afterwards, though, the Sixties generation had been tempted to take on the role of repositories of tradition and experience, parents, veterans, founders, elder statesmen — again, as Esther Koppel puts it, the role of those who could teach the young how to organise a sit-in or write a leaflet because this is how it was done in our time. Suddenly, the young reversed the gaze, and decided their parents were either withdrawn, or naive: *'My father is such a sweet Sixties person. I mean, it really moves me. I mean, the way I see it, my dad's sixty-eightness<sup>1</sup> is so moving. Not that he's immature, not at all — but he has such beautiful ideals...'* (Brunella Pinto).

To some extent, Genoa was a case of the old following in the tracks of the young. For at least a part of the older generation, their sons and daughters' social conscience and the violence unleashed against them were a powerful incentive to get involved again in political activism. To quote Haidi Gaggio, Carlo Giuliani's mother: *'In the last two years, I've been all over Italy, and in the last two years I keep running into people who tell me: I'd gone back to private life — as in fact I also had done — and after Genoa I realised that you must not shut yourself up in your private world.'*

On the one hand, as we have seen, Genoa opened eyes to the fact that issues like the violence of the State and police brutality were not just a thing of the past, and even Fascism was not just history. In a way, it was like being hurled back to the past. But in another way, they were being drawn into a totally new situation.

**Danilo Corradi.** *Often, among ourselves, in those days, and later, too, we said: 'History is back in motion.'* And this was the feeling of those who for so many years had felt kind of left out of history, of anyone who still calls himself a Communist when it's no longer the fashion, at times when the student movement seemed merely a repetition of what their fathers, their mothers, their grandparents had done. Instead,

<sup>1</sup> In the sense of being a person from '68 — a made-up word that sounds a bit odd in Italian too. [Editor].

*as soon as we got off the train in Genoa, we all grasped immediately, felt in our bones, that we'd just joined a movement that was new. It was the explosion of a generation that had never been involved in politics, and part of another generation that had been involved but thought they were just moving in circles. Now utopia seemed to be in view again.*

Of course, the anti-globalisation movement is composite and heterogeneous; old practices and attitudes coexist with the new and alongside change, and often seem to suffocate this. But old rituals like flag burning or violence for its own sake are no longer effective or acceptable to most of the new radicals, even when they are still preached and practised by self-(or media-)appointed leaders and hard line groups. Now the whole mood was different, more truly festive and communitarian than at any time in the past: *'I remember watching on television, this campsite in the mud, all those unshaven faces, those tired, happy eyes. These young boys, I don't know how else to call them, slept twelve to a tent and radiated so much gladness, so much tenderness, because they could have been my sons. I always admired them very much, I was always very impressed with this attitude they had towards dialogue, much more than we did, this way of talking to people, this was non-violence really lived from inside, refusal to lord it over others'* (Esther Koppel). And it is precisely the contradiction between this festive mood and the explosion of violence that followed that made the Genoa experience so traumatic for all, participants and spectators.

They could have been my own children. In older adults, admiration, tenderness, the willingness to learn from the young are inseparable from awareness that they are still these young people's parents. Carlo Giuliani, *ragazzo*, 'could have been one of us' for the young; but he 'could have been my son' for their parents. And they look at their children as if *they* could be Carlo: indeed, as we have seen, on first hearing the news the news many *did think* it was their son or daughter who was lying dead on the streets of Genoa.

*Stefania. The next day, this thing with [Carlo] Giuliani happened, and for me it was dreadful, I watched it on television and I sat all day in front of the TV, watching TV without saying a word, and I didn't even cook lunch or dinner. First of all, what can I say, I'm a mother, and this struck me terribly. I remember that my son wasn't saying a word either, and we sat there watching, annihilated. And when my son eventually said something and we found ourselves sitting together in front of the television, next to each other, it was truly a dreadful moment. And then the other dreadful moment was the raid... Those were truly dreadful days, and the sight of his parents... I still remember those moments, I wasn't doing anything in the house, I wasn't thinking of anything.*

As we have seen from the narratives of Pina Monaco and Tonino Lupi, many immediately identified with Carlo's parents. No wonder, then, that the two most important voices of the aftermath of Genoa were those of Carlo Giuliani's parents. Both had a long history of political engagement. His father, Giuliano Giuliani, was a union organiser; his mother, Haidi Gaggio, had been active in radical movements and in progressive teachers' organisations. After the first media reports described Carlo Giuliani as a vagabond and a sort of juvenile delinquent, as if to downplay the gravity of his murder, his father stepped forward to testify for his son's character and speak out against the repression and violence of those days. He became a public figure and spokesman: *'His father seemed to me a rather extraordinary person in the way he behaved, the way he spoke, while his mother, poor woman... I felt very close to her as a mother, but as a person I didn't find out much about her'* (Stefania).<sup>1</sup>

*'When I think of Carlo's parents, I think of his mother. I saw his father's picture in the papers and all — but she is the one I think of. I saw this documentary that [Francesca] Comencini made, this interview with this lucid, sorrowful mother, who reconstructed her son's final hours with such lucidity'* (Rossella Marchini); *'I would start from the mother. I admire people who suffer in silence very much. So I admire the mother very much because she kept her sorrow inside, because I think that a child's death is the most devastating thing for a mother'* (Pina Monaco).

Haidi Gaggio didn't in fact suffer in silence, but she never raised her voice. She involved herself in trying to reconstruct her son's final hours and the dynamics of his death. Closer in politics and feeling than her husband to the peace movement and to the young activists, she was able to convey the depth of her sorrow in a language that the new movement could understand and share. She received less media attention, but her message went deeper; she seemed to fill a near-parental role, providing the young people with a mature voice that could articulate their deeper feelings. In 2004, I talked to her for several hours. Carlo's memory was there throughout the conversation, but her life story was meaningful and fascinating in its own right.

**Sandro Portelli.** *Where do you come from, how did you become what you have become?*

<sup>1</sup> Later on, Giuliano Giuliani ran unsuccessfully for the city council on the Left Democrats ticket. Some had misgivings about this public role: *'His father, yes, he was balanced, though in some occasions he ought perhaps not to have appeared, but I mean these are venial faults... I'm not in a position to judge, he probably was right in explaining that his son was not a criminal as some papers depicted him, but — I have a lot of respect for their sorrow, I don't think I can condemn his father's public appearances, truly...'* (Pina Monaco).

*Haidi Gaggio. What I have become is what Carlo made me become. I am a daughter of the Swiss bourgeoisie, of the Swiss haute bourgeoisie on my mother's side, and of the people of Venice on my father's. So I am an odd mixture, and perhaps thanks to these roots I've always felt myself to be a citizen of the world and don't have a narrow concept of patriotism. I was born on May 11, 1944; I'm a daughter of the war. My parents already had three children and weren't planning on a fourth. I spent the first months of my life in a desecrated little church in the Veneto, sheltering from the air raids.*

*Carlo had an aunt he never knew because she died not only before he was born but even before I met Carlo's father, and today this aunt is considered a heroine of the Resistance in Greece: Elena Angeloni Gaggio. Which is why my daughter's name is Elena. In Greece, it was the time of the military dictatorship, of the colonels who had just come out with a statement claiming that the people of Greece were quite happy with the regime. And [the Resistance] had organised a bomb attempt, completely harmless because the bomb was to go off in front of the US embassy which in Athens is quite isolated from where people live, and was supposed to go off after the embassy offices closed. It went off too soon [and she was killed]. She and this boy from Cyprus were there, on a mission for the Resistance, with passports in the names of two Swedish tourists, they already had their plane tickets to Sweden. So I thought I had already paid enough of a price, because Elena was not only my niece's mother, she was also my dear comrade.*

*My children grew up with me singing them to sleep with songs of the Resistance, work songs, love songs, songs of death. They also grew up with me whistling some Mozart tune in the kitchen, they grew up with me cleaning the house with the radio tuned to Radio Three [the state radio's cultural channel], which used to be much better than today even though it still does its best in any way it can. I once wrote a piece because I was horribly upset by those shameful TV programmes, newspapers, even books that were written about Carlo, so I sent this article to some newspapers, and the director of Radio Three called me up and said, signora, I wanted to ask you whether we have offended you in any way. I don't remember her name, I know it was a woman, so I said, look, I haven't got the energy to listen to the radio any more, but if you are still the same I am sure you didn't offend me. There are so many pseudo-intellectuals who write just to fill up pages and sell newspapers, and even Carlo's pictures, Carlo's stories, help them make their profit. My life was one life until July 20, and a whole other life afterwards.*

*At first, my husband and I took two different roads. Right away, he had a big impact on television, on the media; I did everything I could to avoid it. And then, as I came in contact with the different strands of the movement, one day I was pushed — literally, because I re-*

sisted — pushed in front of a microphone, in Florence, and that became my second job: travelling around and making speeches. And along the road, I met the other children, all the children killed in this half-century and more. I should have told you earlier that my first demonstration was for Giovanni Ardizzone [killed by the police in Milan in 1960]. What I learned travelling around Italy was that it isn't true that they stopped killing with impunity twenty years ago; they kept on killing, in the streets, in the police stations, in the jails — but not out on demonstrations, not publicly.

The relationship with young people was a real revelation. Now I have a peculiar relationship because wherever I go I meet a certain type of young people, and I meet them as Carlo's mother, so I can't say I really know them. Some I know better because we've met several times, in Sicily, in Tuscany. I remember a wonderful arrival at Senigallia, in the Marche. I got off the train, and there were twenty young boys and girls, all waiting for me. Wonderful. We're still writing to each other. I refuse to join any party, partly because I learned that from Carlo — he joined the Communist youth organisation for a couple of years and then... Anyway, I talk to the young Communists, I talk to the *disobbedienti*<sup>1</sup>, and then I see that the young Communists are divided among themselves and it's a disaster, it's *THE* disaster. They'll have to learn on their own, because we certainly can't be the ones to teach them, we made even more mistakes than them. People often ask me: as Carlo's mother, what would you like to tell the young, what would you like to teach them? And I say: nothing; they're better than I am.

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<sup>1</sup> The wing of the movement that practises radical forms of civil disobedience.