

## Disinformation and subversive agitation in the alterglobal movement

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### Overview

The analysis and study of the operating methods of social movements and the ideological content linked to the same, can easily be traced on the basis of open sources, which after adequate reinterpretation using the methodological approach to sociology of social movements, and the French school of psychological warfare, those of Géré and Pisano in particular, reveal the significant role that alterglobal movements play in the social destabilization of political (both local and national), military (national, NATO, and USA), economic (nationals and super-national), and training (public schools and universities) institutions.

In demonstration of the above, **Part 1** of this essay will focus on a number of highly significant Italian alterglobal movements with an initial analysis of the ‘No Dal Molin’ movement using the sociological approach to social movements, and in particular, the analyses made by Gianni Piazza and Loris Caruso (partially considered in previous articles). Our attention will then be directed to an analysis of the military infrastructures developed by the Comitato Pace e Disarmo (Peace and

Disarmament Committee) originating from a study group of the Rete Lilliput network in Italy’s Campania region. We will then consider the sociological analysis of the ‘No TAV’ movement made by Donatella Della Porta, the leading Italian expert on alterglobal movements. Lastly, we will analyze the ‘Onda’ (Wave) movement in light of the thought of social movement sociologist Loris Caruso. **Part 2** of this essay will concentrate on the role played by disinformation in the context of the alterglobal movement and a number of highly significant alterglobal movement documents through an analysis of the same using Géré’s approach, on one hand, and using Pisano’s interpretative grid to contextualizing the operating methods of the alterglobal movement, on the other.

### Part 1

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According to the sociologist Gianni Piazza:



“the first demands of No Dal Molin movement were mainly focused on health and environmental issues due to the

increase of pollution (air, water, noise, electromagnetic and radioactive pollution), which the enlargement of the American base would cause, besides the negative economic impact on the residents’ business; yet, the entry of other players in the network of the

protest (environmental association, pacifist movements, anarchic groups and more radicals opponents such as social centers and trade unions) widened the interpretative patterns to other themes: from the rights of local communities to decide on the use of their territories, to repudiation of war, of US and NATO bases and of the militarization of the territory. The No Dal Molin mobilization goes past the *Nimby* principle, because the players involved are not just local people (citizens committees), but also groups and



associations with universalist identities (ecologists, trade unions, far left and extraparliamentary parties), but also because those who protest are concerned both with local and global issues, turning it into a NOPE mobilization, with heavy pacifist and antimilitarist features (local people do not want military bases neither in their 'backyard', nor in someone else's), investing

directly the national and supranational level of government"<sup>1</sup>. Once detected, the reasons, not less important are the protests carried out by the society and antagonist movements: "No Dal Molin diversifies the protests: from the occupation of Vicenza's railway station, to the permanent garrison in front of the disputed airport; from the sit-in in front of Montecitorio to the organization of the national demonstration of February 17<sup>th</sup>, which involved around 200,000 people across the streets of Vicenza. (...) In the meantime, once the works of construction have begun, the mobilization goes on with many initiatives, among which the occupation of the prefecture (...), of the railway tracks, the occupation of the site of the civilian airport and the roadblocks"<sup>2</sup>. In few words – to emphasize the national and supranational impact of these demonstrations – quoting Piazza would be sufficient. Regarding the Italian scene, Piazza observes: "No Dal Molin mobilization hardly affected the national government as well, influencing the decision of the newborn Democratic Party to break its alliance with the far left wing (Sinistra Arcobaleno) at the latest political elections"<sup>3</sup>; and concerning the international front: "despite the change of the US administration from Bush to Obama, American and Italian politics regarding Camp Ederle does not change, as recently stated by the national security vice-president

<sup>1</sup> Francesca Longo – Antonello Mangano – Gianni Piazza – Pietro Saitta, *Come i problemi globali diventano locali*, Edizioni terrelibere.org, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, pp. 24-25.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, pp. 26-27.

of the Congress, Loretta Sanchez: ‘We will discuss the Dal Molin case at the G8 as well, but (...) there will not be any reassessments. All the decisions have already been taken by both governments. The plan and the budget have been voted by the Congress’ (Mancassola in [www.ilgiornaledivicenza.it](http://www.ilgiornaledivicenza.it) 16/04/09). Nevertheless, the protest of Vicenza is still affecting the decisions of the US government, bringing the Pentagon to considering the idea of moving the F16 based in Aviano (Udine) to Poland, due to the increasing ‘hostility’ towards American installations which started with the extension of the base in Vicenza.”<sup>4</sup>

The protest against the Dal Molin military airbase in Vicenza began in 2006 and was organized by the *Coordinamento dei comitati cittadini* and the *Osservatorio contro le servitù militari*. The ideological composition of the first organization – Caruso points out – has Catholic and trade union origins (as assessed by Caruso), while the second, born in 2006, was developed by activist social centers, Emergency, Ya Basta!, the CGIL national trade union, the Verdi/Green party and the ARCI Italian Recreation and Cultural Association (which among other initiatives, this organization had promoted events against both the European Gendarmerie and the Carabinieri Peace-keeping Training Center). The reasons behind the protest lie in the little or entire lack of use of instruments of democracy in the decision-making process that led to the Italian government’s consent

to the expansion of the US military airbase in Vicenza, in its radical critique of the moderation and opportunism of the moderate Left led by Romano Prodi, in its rejection of political parties as institutions and of representative democracy in general, in the profoundly anti-military pacifism that was both Catholic and non-sectarian at the same time, in its refusal of consumerism and capitalism, and lastly, in the policy of power politics dictated by political realism. The operating methods enacted include – using Pisano’s expression – the techniques typical of subversive action: the **collection of signatures to petitions** – supported by both the Lega Ambiente Environmental Defense League and the Rete Lilliput network –, the **legal action** (appeal to the TAR Regional Administrative Court through the Codacons Consumer Defense Association), the **torchlight procession**, the **occupation** of the square in front of City Hall, the **Argentine practice of beating pots and pans as drums**, the **unauthorized entry** into the Vicenza Prefecture and City Council meeting, the **occupation** of the Basilica built by Palladio and Vicenza Airport, **roadblocks** outside the airbase and **obstructing the laying** of optical fibre in the airbase area. Statistics show as many as 42 protest demonstrations in 2007. The

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, pp. 27-30.



efficacy and numbers of these demonstrations gradually decreased in the following years, however: “they are having more and more trouble involving in the protest the ample sectors of the local population that they had succeeded in involving in previous years. The definitive groundbreaking of construction work eroded the basis for the sense of efficacy of protest actions. (...) It may be said that the opposition to the new airbase was defeated.”<sup>5</sup> The Yes to Dal Molin movement – in other words, the citizens in favor of the expansion of the airbase – was composed primarily by centrist-rightwing coalitions in the Vicenza City Council, Confindustria, the Association of Italian Industries, Confcommercio, the General Commerce Confederation, Confartigianato, the craft sector’s labor organization, and Confagricoltura, the Italian Farmer’s Confederation, a coalition that did not prove capable of obtaining significant consensus with the public or effectively contrasting the protest movement, however. Despite their

wavering and ambiguous stance, there is no doubt that the RC Renewed Communist Party, the PCDI Italian Communist Party, the Verdi/Green party and the CGIL national trade union provided significant support, at least at the outset. Thanks to support from organizations of this kind, the number of people who took part in the demonstration against the expansion of the military airbase eventually reached 15,000 participants. Catholic organizations like Famiglie per la Pace (Families for Peace), the previously mentioned Rete Lilliput network, ACLI, the Italian Catholic Workers’ Association, the Beati costruttori di pace, and AGESCI, the Italian Boy Scouts and Girl Guides Association were particularly significant in their opposition to the expansion of the airbase. Internal divisions in the center-leftwing coalition (the support given by Prodi and Parisi to the expansion of the airbase contrasted with the opposition of the radical left) had a profound political significance: “The Dal Molin question contributed to the fall of the Prodi government. Two senators – Rossi and Turigliatto – nearly became local heroes in both Vicenza and Val di Susa because they were considered counter-examples to the existing model of politician”<sup>6</sup> characterized by opportunism and double-crossing. In other words, we cannot fail to note:

1. The determinant role played by the activist social centers and the local trade unions;

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<sup>5</sup> Loris Caruso, *Il territorio della politica. La nuova partecipazione di massa nei movimenti No Tav e No Dal Molin*, Franco Angeli, 2011, p. 86.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, p. 79.

2. The significance of Catholicism (the ACLI, the Beati i costruttori di pace, the Rete Lilliput network, and AGESCI);
3. As occurred during the war in Kosovo, this case also revealed the ambiguous role of the antagonist left – and particularly the RC Renewed Communist Party and the PCDI Italian Communist Party – who were more interested in using this public dissent to expand their own electoral base than in meeting the real needs of the population;
4. Despite the complex articulation of these demonstrations and their wide consensus, their objectives were not obtained due to the strong bonds between Italy and the United States of America.

In conclusion, above and beyond the ideological differences and the different choices of operating methods that distinguished the Catholic coalition and the antagonistic left in their opposition to the Dal Molin airbase, it is undeniable that these organizations composed and continue to compose the centre of gravity of the Italian alterglobal movement. At the end of his book, Caruso draws analogies between these antagonist movements and the 1968 movement (in the criticism by both of representative democracy and traditional leftwing parties) with their anti-Americanism, radical anti-Militarism, and the combat techniques that demonstrate the

extreme threat to national security posed by the No Global movement.

The book issued instead by the *Comitato pace e disarmo* on NATO and USA military bases in Italy is extremely important for our purposes especially due to the proposals and the critical observations it contains. On the whole, the book is characterized by its explicit advocacy of radical pacifism. The first part of the book is particularly interesting for the statements made by the Bishop of Caserta Monsignor Raffaele Nogaro, who believes that the production of arms is an absolute evil in itself and that humanitarian operations in the form of warfare export only violence, and that the so-called peace-keeping missions are nothing but armed invasions. From the purely institutional point of view – the prelate points out – the Catholic Church should explicitly condemn the increase of Italy's military expenditure. As regards the ideological advent of the *Comitato pace e disarmo* (Peace and Disarmament Committee), the editor states that it was the creation of a Rete Lilliput study group on the presence of military bases in Italy: in particular, Angelica Romano sanctions the complete legitimacy of the use of physical **obstruction**, telephone **obstruction**, unauthorized **occupation**, **popular protest laws** and **permanent garrisons** as legitimate means of non-violent protest. A large part of the book is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the US infrastructure in Italian territory and its cost. Particularly significant are the authors' highly critical observations of the increasingly closer bonds between universities and the military and

defense industry institutions in Napoli, forms of cooperation perceived as the militarization of both the territory and the university world. The feasible alternatives are provided towards the end of the book, and may be easily summarized as follows: the NATO and US military bases must be eliminated or converted for civilian use, unarmed, non-violent civilian defense must be pursued, and lastly, conscientious objection by the scientists involved in the development and construction of arms must be promoted.

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In the essay by Donatella della Porta and Gianni Piazza, both the objectives and the methods of anti-TAV protest movement by both local communities and other social and cultural elements (coming from the worlds of trade unions, pacifism, anarchy, environmental defense, etc.) are interpreted in terms of social movement sociology. As is commonly known, the protest against high-speed trains was started in 1990 through the coordination of various environmental protection associations, which together with other associations effectively mobilized in 1991 against a convention organized by Confindustria, Fiat, the FS National Railways and the Regional authorities, promoted in support of the validity of the principles behind the TAV. The associations involved in the mobilization were particularly significant – Gruppo Habitat, founded by Lega Ambiente, the WWF, and Prenatura. These organizations were subsequently joined by local associations, trade unions, and the

lower Val di Susa mountain communities. In this phase, lasting from 1995 to 1997, the protest campaign was constructed to both defend the territory and support the rights of local populations to decide their own destiny. Starting in 2003 – thanks also to the involvement of similar French associations – the protest began taking form in direct action, and more specifically, through **occupation, roadblocks** on the motorway, and **counter-cultural and counter-informational events** that culminated in the peaceful **protest march** in 2003 by 20,000 people. The importance of the motives for protest was such to drive the COBAS local trade unions, the Verdi/Green party, and the RC and PCDI political parties to support the claims of the citizens. An important role was also played by the activist social centers, especially in the creation of the so-called anti-TAV protest campgrounds. The scale of



the citizen's protest brought persons of unquestionable popularity and credibility on the Italian religious pacifism panorama – Padre Zanotelli, first, and then also Don Vitaliano della Sala – to make their own contribution to the protest, which intensified further in 2005 when the associations above were joined by various student unions, the FIOM-CGIL national trade unions, the

ARCI, the World Social Forum, and numerous smaller anarchist movements. The essay's authors ascribe particular interest to the role played by the activist social centers, their widespread **counter-information activity**, and all the experience and skill in organizing protest activity they brought to the local protest movement. Another important antagonist is the trade union, and there is no doubt that alongside the COBAS locals, the FIOM national union played an important role. The authors naturally focus their attention on the protester's most urgent issues:

1. The defense of public health and value of the territory endangered by irrational objectives of economic development (the development of tumors linked to the use of asbestos and uranium);
2. The economic uselessness of the TAV and its extraordinarily high cost (a project they define as exorbitant and unnecessary, a mega-project of environmental destruction and waste of precious natural resources);
3. The need for the protection of the territory and the intrinsic incompatibility of the project, an idea that comes from the awareness of Lega Ambiente and the Verdi/Green party of the need to limit the waste of energy and the need to implement an alternative model of development, combined with the awareness that this public work is the work of speculators and

profiteers;

4. The need to improve local public transport, healthcare and social services instead of dedicating such enormous resources to a project that brings such little benefit to the local population;
5. The need for self-determination, or in other words, the use of democratic consultation in the context of participative democracy.

In terms of protest method or protest repertoires – defined by the sociology of social movements as a resource for those without power because protesters rely for success on the activation of other groups in the political arena rather than the direct use of power – the authors start from the concept of widespread information, in other words, from the awareness of the protest committees that the real information on the costs and damages of this project has intentionally been withheld. In other words, only a counter-information campaign would be capable of defining on a scientific basis both the real damage to the environment and human health on one hand, and any feasible alternative strategies on the other (as also documented by the study commissioned by the Association of Mountain Communities). Alongside the world of information, **non-violent action** represented the most common form of protest together with the **presidi** – which soon became authentic political laboratories, above all together with the activist social centers – **protest campgrounds**, the use of antagonistic legal

action (appeals to the TAR, the hearings of the commission for the petitions submitted to the European Union), **the theatrical performances**, the gigantic banners, the **hunger strikes**, **the candlelight vigils**, **the boycotting of the banks** funding the TAV project, and **counter-information** through Internet and therefore through the construction of web pages for both logistic-organizational and public awareness purposes (in addition to symbolic and protest effect). In the opinion of the authors, the response provided by political institutions both centrist-right and centrist-left consisted in: 1) passive exclusion strategies (by failing to inform the citizens and involve them in significant decisions, for example); 2) attempts at economic compensation proposals; 3) the militarization of the territory, and lastly, 4) attempts to divide and separate the protesters through selective cooptation.

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The analysis made by Loris Caruso of the Onda (Wave) movement – an important Italian student movement that arose between 2008 and 2009 – places initial attention on its protagonists: the students, teachers, and workers who protested by **occupying** university and high school structures, the **strikes**, the **demonstrations**, and **counter-information in paper and computerized form**. At the national panorama level, despite wavering and, all things considered, the opportunism and exploitation by certain parties of the radical left like the PRC and PDCI, these parties certainly played an

important role together with the Students Union inked to the PD; even if also the Sinistra Critica (Critical Left) and the Post-operaismo area (post-factory worker faction), the latter two components present primarily in Rome, also undoubtedly played significant roles. In the context of computerized counter-information, Retescuola (The School Network) contributed to the development of the infrastructure of the Onda (Wave) movement between 2008 and 2009. Caruso points out the important contributions to the Onda movement made by the No-TAV movement and the movements against the construction of the bridge over the Strait of Messina and the expansion of the US airbase in Vicenza. The degree of complexity of the Onda movement was such to involve the nation's leading provincial capitals, from Rome to Torino, Milano, Bologna, Pisa, Palermo, Catania, and Firenze. The Onda movement was formed of an authentic network capable of creating social and political protagonists around determined issues. Concentrating his attention on the Onda movement in the Milano area, the author emphasizes that among the various social forces that played significant roles in the Milanese mobilization against university reform, the self-managed activist social centers must certainly be included, together with the trade unions and the various student unions. On the other hand, especially in Milano, the student movement was able to rely on strong support from the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left. Trade union support came primarily from the CGIL national trade union and local



trade unions, and was predictably expressed through the strikes that began in October, 2008. The nerve centers of the **strikes** were located at the Faculty of Political Science, the Brera Academy, the Politecnico, and the Bicocca. Together with the strikes, student demonstrations and assemblies offered another vehicle for encounter and communication, in addition to instruments like manifestos, handbills, banners, and **counter-information via Internet**, and even a new method of protest: lessons in open air. The essay appropriately mentions that the world of training and education provides a significant basin for mobilization, noting how the Onda movement was able to count on support from a number of protagonists in the alterglobal movement. In Milano as in Rome, the Onda movement openly manifested its distrust in the representative democracy of the political parties and staked a claim to a more participative democracy and an expanded democracy, in the same way as during the protests against the expansion of the military airbase in Vicenza and the TAV high-speed railway line in Val di Susa.

## Second part

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According to Gèrè – President of the French Strategic Analysis Institute – disinformation consists in *the processing and deliberate communication of false information that has been explicitly masked and manipulated in order to present every appearance of authenticity*. It is therefore clear that the line

between disinformation and propaganda is fine indeed, to the point that disinformation can be referred to as “black” propaganda. The difference lies in the means of transmission and intentions. As regards the alterglobal movement and the USA’s war against terrorism in particular, the position that the alterglobal movement in its entirety has assumed following the 9-11 attacks can be easily summarized in a dichotomy typical of a cognitive approach to the history of disinformation: war is an intrinsic evil because it is not an instrument suited to the settlement of conflicts between nations. Combating terrorism through the instrument of warfare is entirely unacceptable: the roots of Islamic terrorism lie in the injustice created by neo-Liberal globalization. The alterglobal movement sees in US policy and its choices an evil that is just as bad as Islamic terrorism on one hand, while indicating its own choices the only possible course of action and delegitimizing existing military and political institutions, on the other. In order to illustrate the disinformation procedure being enacted by the alterglobal movement, its fundamental documents must be considered. The **first** is undoubtedly the *Statement on Globalization* issued by the *World Social Forum* held in Beirut in November 2001, whose authors believe that the USA’s war against terrorism is merely an excuse to increase its worldwide hegemony and increase the gap between rich and poor nations. The **second**, with a similar dichotomy in interpretation, was drafted by *the Assembly of the People’s* UN spokesman Flavio Lotti in Autumn 2001, and portrays a world afflicted by a

shocking number of wars and attacks against the planet's biosphere and natural resources promoted intentionally by neo-Liberalism on one hand, with the alterglobal movement as the only political entity capable of offering a realistically feasible political and economic alternative, the only entity capable of opposing the war against terrorism and the world's current injustice and disorder, on the other. The **third** document to be taken into consideration was produced by one of the leading Italian Catholic pacifist associations, the *Rete Lilliput* network, in 2006, and states that it is useless to hide the merciless logic of war behind expressions like "humanitarian intervention" or "exportation of democracy", because wars are merely a consequence of a neo-Liberal economic system and are never an acceptable alternative. In this regard, a large part of the alterglobal movement claims that the vast majority of military campaigns waged by nations, particularly those by the USA and Israel, are on the same level as their avowed enemies – Islamic terrorism. Terrorism and the war against terror are the two sides of the same coin.

A document issued in 2002 by the *World Social Forum* in Porto Alegre – the **fourth** document to be considered – states that the war against terrorism has struck down civil and political rights, that the war against Afghanistan was waged using terrorist methods, and that its primary scope is the preservation of US dominion. Equally significant are the concepts, expressed in the **fifth** document to consider, issued by the *Attac Italia* movement: the war(s) started by

the US serve only to expand the nation's military dominance and proceed hand in hand with the process of neo-Liberal globalization, in the context of which NATO becomes globalization's armed right hand (this is the definition provided in most of the documents issued by Western Communist parties during the Cold War and in the documents signed by exponents of the Far-left from '68 through '77). One of the leading Italian representatives of the alterglobal movement, Attilio Agnoletto, expressed himself in the same way: the world today has no choice but to take the side of either neo-Liberalism or the alterglobal movement, a statement produced by a Manichean vision of the world. Also in regard to the Middle Eastern question, the position assumed by most of the alterglobal movement is quite clear and consists in an absolute refusal of the wall built by Israel in defense against terrorist attacks, in acknowledging the subjugation of European political powers, Italy, in particular, to the US and Israel, and in legitimizing the Palestinian people's right to self-defense. Of similar interest are the thoughts of Mao Valpiana, director of the most prestigious Italian pacifism magazine, *Azione non violenta* (Non-violent action) founded by Aldo Capitini in 1964. The article by Valpiana we now consider was published as an introduction in celebration of one of the most important media events in the history of Italian pacifism: the Perugia-Assisi March held in November, 2011. The author's thoughts can be easily organized around two central issues. The first is fairly obviously and attempts to provide readers with some

idea of the dramatic proportions of the world situation: *the world is becoming more and more insecure due to poverty and starvation, climate change, unemployment, mafias and organized crime. (...) Over one billion people suffer from malnutrition and lack drinking water; (...) the struggle against the unemployment of young people must become a national priority*<sup>7</sup>. The second issue is summarized in a presentation of the solutions to be applied: *we must stop making war and shift from military security to human security, from national security to common security; (...) against the perverse logic of national interests, away from a profit-based market and global competition; (...) and away from the financial speculation that is creating a political crisis in Europe while creating a dramatic increase in poverty*<sup>8</sup>. Valpiana's remarks must be reformulated in order to understand their real meaning through a simple process of linguistic decoding. Military security, as known by one and all, is guaranteed by military institutions, and consequently the illegitimacy of military security means supporting the idea of dismantling existing military institutions and their related military industries; the rejection of the concept of national security substantially means rejecting the arrangement of political realism and therefore the rejection of the choices made by all the Western and other nations in the planning of their foreign policy. His unappealable condemnation of the market

and global competition amounts to an immediate refusal of capitalism; likewise, the criticism of international finance is nothing but a radical refusal – if only implied in this article – of the international economic institutions and central banks. Also the author's guidelines for solution: *invest in solidarity and cooperation, implement a new policy of non-violence and a new non-violent political culture, spreading the culture of peace at schools, promote and defend human rights, invest in the prevention of conflicts, promote disarmament, introduce new green, non-polluting technologies and lifestyles that are not based on individualism or commoditization, strengthen responsible civil society, and promote participative democracy*<sup>9</sup>, must be clearly reformulated in order to reveal the author's true intentions: firstly, in complete agreement with the radical pacifism movement, the author emphasizes the need to transcend the *modus operandi* of current politics and to remodel it to the dictates of the pacifism outlined by Aldo Capitini. Secondly, he intends to use schools as vehicles for systematic propaganda campaigns against the military and capitalism, relying on cooperation from teaching staff and school directors; thirdly, his hypothesized investment in preventing conflicts essentially means that the management of conflicts (previously performed by State, foreign ministers, and defense ministers) must be coordinated by pacifist organizations. Fourthly, the promotion of disarmament clearly alludes to

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<sup>7</sup> Mao Valpiana, "Appello per la pace e per la fratellanza dei popoli" 25 settembre 2011, *Azione Non violenta*, novembre, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p. 5.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, p. 6

the need to dismantle existing military industries; as regards the introduction of green, non-polluting technologies – and this fourth aspect, this alternative indicated by Valpiana – aims at replacing the current industries based on oil or nuclear energy with other types of energy (solar, wind power, biomass) managed under monopoly by companies or industries controlled by the pacifist movement. Lastly, and this is the fifth aspect, the participative democracy indicated by the author is nothing but the replacement of the existing representative democracy with a form of democracy that gives space and real power to the alterglobal movements and its representatives, who would in this way come to replace the present directors of Western nation policy. In short, the path indicated by Valpiana is undoubtedly a wide-ranging political program that aspires at radical changing the Western world's political and economic configuration.

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Utilizing the French methodological approach to psychological warfare – and that of Gèrè, in particular – we may easily interpret the *modus operandi* of the alterglobal movement in regard to the themes outlined above and in light of the following key concepts defined in the greatest clarity by Gèrè. Firstly, the alterglobal movement's intellectuals and political personages can be considered in every sense and effect **agitators**: “*The use of this little laboratory instrument (mixers or stirrers) used by students when handling*

*chemicals describes the activity of the individual assigned the name through metaphor remarkably well: he or she ‘agitates’ a determined environment. At the start, the term was fairly depreciatory. The ‘professional’ agitator ran the risk of being accused of being manipulated by foreign powers with the goal of destabilizing the nation and its social order. Soon, however, the term came to be adopted by revolutionary organizations who structured agit-prop as an working information structure. Can an agitator be a propagandist? Of course. And also a disinformant? Although the answer to that depends on the context, the objectives, and the methods chosen to influence public opinion, it goes without saying that an agitator will never refuse to disinform. Agitators conduct their political and strategic activity through manifestos and pamphlets that challenge established ideas and distort acquired ideas”<sup>10</sup> agitators who implement – through planned psychological action – **intoxication** “*This procedure is nearly identical to disinformation, and consists in the circulation of false news articles or generating an inverse conception of reality in a given individual. Practiced in times of both peace and war, the purpose of intoxication is to falsify the judgment of decision-makers and upset the activities of organisms”<sup>11</sup> and **the demonization** of the adversary “*This disinformation technique has been widely used throughout history. A***

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<sup>10</sup> François Gèrè, *Dictionnaire de la désinformation*, Armand Colin, 2011, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 218.

*group or a government utilizes facts, stories and rumors to present the adversary as a power of evil that carries things to a higher level beyond the realm of reason and calibrated judgment in order to crystallize animosity according to purely moral criteria, even in regard to an entire people itself. The operation is based on the capacity of Manichean constructions to radicalize opinions in areas of conflict and preclude the use of rational critical judgment. Far from examining subtle distinctions and objectively evaluating the logic of the other, this is the story of 'Might makes Right' and 'God is on our side'”<sup>12</sup>. In the end, the alterglobal movement’s delegitimization of existing military and political institutions in the eyes of world opinion aims at profoundly modifying its perception of reality – and especially civil society’s political and cultural choices on one hand – and presenting itself as the only alternative entity capable of managing the world’s political and economic power on the other.*

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The analyses of Pisano regarding non-conventional conflict that enable interpretation of the operating methods of alterglobal movements are equally interesting. His analyses theoretically classify the versatility of new wars with the denomination of *low intensity non-conventional conflict*. This conflict arises when two or more players – whether they be states or not – want to achieve subversive or

violent aims using neither the rules of representative democracy nor those of conventional warfare. Especially, low intensity non-conventional conflict is carried out by subversive agitation, terrorism, onset, civil war, revolution, coup, the formation of illegal or semi-illegal networks or misinformation. Well, in order to have a strategic classification of antagonist movements, we will focus on subversive agitation, and onset or insurgency. **Subversive agitation**, carried out by individuals belonging to political parties, or parliamentary or extra-parliamentary movements, aims to achieve political, ideological or religious targets using misinformation, incitement to civil disobedience, passive resistance, occupation of buildings, criminal damages, infiltration in peaceful demonstrations and in national or non-national structures to get them out of hand and, in the end, to use means of communications for psychological warfare. The ideological context that feeds the subversive agitation can be inspired by Marxism, Leninism, anarchism, radical environmentalism, nationalism, theocracy and far right universe. In any case, at least at the ideological level, religious and non-sectarian radical pacifism is a fundamental component in the alterglobal movement. **Onset or Insurgency** can follow the subversive agitation and implies partial or total territory control and national resources through illegal political organizations and paramilitary forces. Of course the onset involves armed fights and, most of all, implies significant operational planning skills that are carried out by guerrilla

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 172.

warfare and civil war as has occurred in Val di Susa.

*Views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of SAGE International*

### Images accessed 02/05/2012 –

No Da Molin poster:

<http://www.vicenza26.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/nodalmolin.jpg>

Vicenza in Italy:

<http://maps.pickatrail.com/europe/italy/map/vicenza.gif>

No Da Molin rally:

[http://3.bp.blogspot.com/\\_usDtPfc5xSw/TJpXcbIjiGI/AAAAAAAUk/Gr11yw2uf0/s400/1427\\_a1993.jpg](http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_usDtPfc5xSw/TJpXcbIjiGI/AAAAAAAUk/Gr11yw2uf0/s400/1427_a1993.jpg)

Anti-TAV protest:

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