

Assassini: the day after

extract from email report by Uri Gordon

Saturday arrives, and until noon it seems like the march will go through peacefully. I don't join, not seeing the point of walking four hours in the sun, and stay instead at the media centre with a girl who is too afraid to leave there. The march begins, and I go to a high place to see it from above. I can't believe my eyes. The police massively attack part of the demonstration for absolutely no reason, tear gassing the whole area, including the parking lot that serves as the Genoa Social Forum convergence centre, and a nearby beach. Some people are forced to jump into the sea just to escape. The march breaks up; more than 150,000 people fill the beach promenade for miles, some dispersing to side streets. The riots go on, spread again all over town. People at the back of the march manage to retreat, others choke and get beaten up. Some Black Bloc-ers advance to defend them, and again the sights of burned cars, defended retreat lines, smashed windows, and wounded protesters.

Then, on Saturday night, on the pretext of looking for the people who had caused the violence, the police come outside the media centre where I am. This is the headquarters of the mainstream, nonviolent NGOs in the Genoa Social Forum. Certain that they're about to raid the building, I run up to help barricade the top floor, trying to buy time to get rid of sensitive material. I get cut off; the barricade has already closed. I climb to the roof, and see them entering the school opposite the centre. They start smashing people up, screams

and shouts all over the place. And then they're in our building. I try to get back down and almost run straight into the hands of the police. I turn around and escape back up – I still don't know how they didn't see me. The roof is empty now, and I find a niche to hide in, some kind of a store-room that has a window off the roof. The police are now all over the building, and I later hear that all the people had to stand with hands against the walls of the halls. Police gathered all journalists, and then searched the rooms. They confiscated mini discs, digital cameras, and 'weapons' such as Swiss army and kitchen knives.

I spent the longest 30 minutes of my life in that enclave, certain that if I were found I'd be killed. I just breathed, avoided the helicopter searchlights and waited for it to pass. At the end, activists came onto the roof and I knew the police had gone. I stepped out, and saw hundreds of police down the street, and ambulances coming in to clear the carnage at the opposite school. People were screaming "Assassini!" and "We won't forget." They had beaten up everyone to the extent that most of the people could not walk out and had to be carried in stretchers out of the school. I don't know how many people were badly injured because we lost count of the amount of stretchers carried out of the school, but they brought about 30 ambulances for the injured people. The police also brought at least one body bag outside, maybe two, and at the time we thought there might be more people dead. [It was later revealed that the body bags were used to transport the injured, as paramedics had run out of stretchers.]