

Genoa 7/21

By Starhawk

I think I'm calm, that I'm not in shock, but my fingers are trembling as I write this. We were up at the school that serves as a center for media, medical and trainings. We had just finished our meeting and were talking, making phone calls, when we heard shouts and sirens and the roar of people yelling, objects breaking. The cops had come and they were raiding the center. We couldn't get out of the building because there were two many people at the entrance. Lisa grabbed my hand and we went up, running up the five flights of stairs, up to the very top. Jeffrey joined us, people were scattering and looking for places to hide.

We weren't panicking but my heart was pounding and I could hardly catch my breathe. We found an empty room, a couple of tables, grabbed some sleeping bags to cover our heads if we got beaten. And waited. Helicopters were buzzing over the building, we could hear doors being slammed and voices shouting below, then quiet. Someone came in, walked around, left. I couldn't seem to breath deep and I had an almost uncontrollable cough-but I controlled it.

I lay there remembering we had lots and lots of people sending us love and protection and I was finally able to breathe. The light went on. Through a crack between the tables, I could see a helmet, a face. A big Italian cop with a huge paunch loomed over us. He told us to come out. He didn't seem in beating mode, but we stayed where we were, tried to talk to him in English and Spanish and the few Italian words I know: "paura" "fear" and "pacifisti." He took us down to the third floor, where a whole lot of people were sitting, lined up against the walls. We waited.

Someone came in, demanding to know whether there was someone there from Irish Indy media. We waited. Lawyers arrived: The police left. For some arcane reason of Italian law, because it was a media place we had some right to be there, although the school across the street was also a media center and they went in there and beat people up. We watched for a long time out the windows. They began carrying people out on stretchers. One, Two, a dozen or more. A crowd had gathered and were shouting "Assesini! Assesini!" The brought out the waking wounded, arrested them and took them away. We believe they brought someone out in a body bag.

The crowd below was challenging the cops and the cops were challenging the crowd and suddenly a huge circle of media gathered, bright camera lights. Monica, who is hosting us and is with the Genoa Social Forum, came up and found us. She'd been calling embassies and media and may have saved us from getting hurt once the cops finished with the first building. All the time there were helicopters thrumming and shining bright lights into the building. A few brave men were holding back the angry crowd, who seemed ready to charge the line of riot cops that was formed up in front of the school, shields up and gas masks on. "Tranquilo, tranquilo," the men were saying, holding up their hands and restraining the angry crowd from a suicidal charge.

I was on the phone home, then back to the window, back to the phone. Finally, the cops went away. We went down to the first floor, outside, heard the story. They had come in

to the rooms where people were sleeping. Everyone had raised up their hands, calling out "pacifisti! Pacifist!" And they beat the shit out of every person there. There's no pretty way to say it.

We went into the other building: there was blood at every sleeping spot, pools of it in some places, stuff thrown around, computers and equipment trashed. We all wandered around in shock, not wanting to think about what is happening to those they arrested, to those they took to the hospital. We know that they have arrested everyone they take to the hospital, taken people to jail and tortured them.

One of the young Frenchmen from our training, Vincent, had his head badly beaten on Friday in the street. In jail, they took him into a room, twisted his arms behind his back and banged his head on the table. Another man was taken into a room covered with pictures of Mussolini and pornography, and alternately slapped around and then stroked with affection in a weird psychological torture. Others were forced to shout, "Viva El Duce!" ! ! Just in case it isn't clear that this is Fascism. Italian variety, but it is coming your way. It is the lengths they will go to to defend their power. It's the lie that globalization means democracy. I can tell you, right now, tonight, this is not what democracy looks like.

I've got to stop now. We should be safe if we can make our way back to where we're staying. Call the Italian Embassy. Go there, shame them! We may not be able to mount another demonstration tomorrow here if the situation stays this dangerous. Please, do something!

-- *Starhawk*

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