Genoa

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300,000 thousand people were in Genoa to protest at the G8 meeting in July ? the biggest anti-capitalist demonstration we?ve seen in years.

But our peaceful demonstrations were all attacked by the police, who tear-gassed us, arrested us, beat us, chased us and finally murdered one of us. We didn?t take it lying down and fought back and defended ourselves as best we could. If the police thought that they were going to weaken us, demoralise us and isolate us, they were wrong.

Revolution organised a coach load of people from Britain to go to Genoa ? once there we hooked up with other Revo members from all over Europe. We were staying at a stadium called Stadio Carlini. A huge thunderstorm erupted as got to the stadium ? but we didn?t care. Nothing could dampen our spirits that night.

The stadium was abuzz. Thousands of people talking politics, playing music, drinking and generally just kicking back. We were staying with Ya Basta ? the Italian white overall ? who were organising the biggest and most lively demo and we were going to be right in the middle of it.

We were all up early the next morning. There were people everywhere, making body armour out of cardboard, foam, empty plastic water bottles and loads of tape.

Everything was so well organised. There were people who were going to protect the demo ? they looked the business ? shields, motorbike helmets, gas masks, body armour and big steel capped boots was the uniform of choice. There teams who were to deal with the tear gas, and others who had supermarket trolleys loaded with energy drinks and water, and lots of first-aid people. It made you feel great to see all this and we knew this was going to be a day to remember.

We got together in front of the big stand. Everyone kept wanting our Revolution flags ? lots were saying ?yeah, revolution, that?s how we?ll deal with the G8 bastards?.

The demo set off about 1:00pm. There must have been about 20,000 people on it ? mostly young people.

Other demos had already started. There was a big trade union demo the other side of the city, and a pink block demo which was out to have a party, the French group ATTAC & Globalise Resistance. There was also women?s demo. There were probably about 40,000 people in different parts of the city. The other demos were big too, but we were on the largest, and most militant.

As we marched we were chanting ?Libré Genova?. The city was shut down, but all along the route people were out on their balconies waving. They gave us food, hosed us down with cold water, and clapped. It was great to have the local people supporting us.

As we marched down towards the red zone we could see smoke from the northern part of the city. We
were approaching an intersection at the bottom of the hill (where the road narrowed) when the police attacked.

They first dropped tear gas on us from the helicopters. Then they fired more gas at us. There was so much gas that even those with masks couldn’t take it. Panic set in and people made a hastily retreat. We didn’t panic and kept ourselves together. People regrouped quickly. Many moved into the side streets to try and get around the police. More gas was fired. People fought back throwing rocks and bottles. Cars were turned over, people made makeshift barricades out of bins, anything to stop the police from being able to charge the crowd.

The police would be pushed back a little, then they would fire more gas and charge again. We’d regroup and push them back again. It went on like this for a few hours.

In the end we were overpowered by the police and had to retreat. Some of us were near the top of the hill when all of a sudden a load of police came up a side street and tried to take the intersection and split the demo and trap all those still retreating up the hill.

We stood our ground. Others joined us. We formed a line. A few rocks and bottles were thrown at the cops just to let them know that they were not going to take the intersection without a big fight. They didn’t move an inch.

When everyone was back together a defensive line was formed at the back of demo to protect it. We could see two water cannon trucks screaming up the road. The police began to bang their shields with their batons. They were going to charge us.

Then they water cannoned us. We turned and ran. Volleys of tear gas started to land all around us. The cops were so close you could almost feel them breathing down your neck. If you fell or were caught you knew you were going to get beaten to a pulp. With eyes stinging and lungs in agony as they filled with tear gas thousands of us had to run about 800 metres to safety. The cops in the end were too slow and unfit to keep up.

Back at Carlini stadium all the Revo people from around Europe regrouped ? no one was missing and no one was hurt. We all headed to the convergence centre to eat and drink.

At the convergence centre the mood was upbeat but angry. It was then that we heard that Carlo Giuliani had been murdered by the police ? shot twice in the face at point blank range. Everyone was outraged. Stories began to be swapped about what had happened. It was soon clear that we had all been attacked that day.

Everyone was in shock about the death of a protester ? none of us expected such a level of violence and repression from the police and lots were visibly shaken. But there was a bond starting to form between the thousands who were there that got stronger over the next two days.

The next day was even bigger. Tens of thousands of trade unionists from all over Italy and many from the rest of Europe marched through the streets. The papers said about 250,000 people marched. It was electric.

In the afternoon we heard that the G8 meeting closed early. We didn’t know why but all along the demo people began cheer. It felt a hundred times better than when your football team scores a goal.

But the police were still attacking the demonstration. They blocked it from marching for an hour but then let
it go. The Black Block were in operation in the areas around the demo and the police were using the excuse of chasing them to fire teargas at the demo on certain points. When the demo had reached the northern part of the city, the police repeatedly fired tear gas at it in an attempt to disperse it.

That Saturday night was to be the night of terror. The police were all over the city arresting anyone. They raided the pub we were drinking in and arrested two comrades from Germany. They were released two hours later without being charged but the police did kick and punch them while they were in the station. A school around the corner was raided and 90 people beaten up and 60 of them were hospitalised.

Many people were imprisoned for days without being charged. Some people have stated they were tortured by the police. Women were told they would be raped. Many were made to sing fascist songs.

We were later all forced to evacuate the Stadium we were staying in. Afraid of being targeted further by the police we hurriedly packed or things and marched through the night to a safer place. We were escorted by some media and by local people in cars giving us directions.

We?d stayed in another school but we had just got to sleep when we were woken up and had to move once more. We felt like refugees ? afraid, not knowing what was happening and being forced to move at a moments notice. We finally got to safety.

We left Genoa the next day, and headed down the coast to a campsite we had organised, where for the next few days we relaxed, talked about what had happened and about other political questions facing the movement and what we wanted to do in future. We lived communally and had some kick arse parties before we got back on our coach and headed home.

In the days after Genoa there was massive marches all over Italy and throughout Europe over the death of Carlo. The sense of outrage amongst ordinary people was amazing. The Italian trade unions had some of the biggest marches.

This was the best thing about Genoa: the solidarity afterwards. The police didn?t succeed in isolating us. They just got the anti-capitalist movement more support amongst ordinary working class people. It also helped to unify the movement further.

All the state repression and violence is showing an increasing number of activists that the institutions of global capitalism, the G8, World Bank, IMF, etc, will not go quietly, and that the state is there to enforce and protect the privileges of a few.

We will be back at their next meeting ? with bigger numbers, and hopefully even more determined. But the message we will bring ? one that is gaining support all the time ? is simple: one solution, revolution.

Carlo Giuliani will not be forgotten.

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